

Outreach and Education Technical Committee

August 1, 2017

9:00 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.

Tampa, FL

Deignee/Proxy Attendees

The first discussion was of the use of proxy attendees in place of named Technical Committee members that cannot attend. The Committee reasoned that empty seats don't accomplish goals and that Committee members, especially agency personnel, should be able to send proxy attendees. Concern was expressed for allowing non-agency Committee members to use proxies. The Committee passed the following motion:

With unanimous support, the Technical Committee recommends allowing the use of proxy attendees subject to approval by Council Staff.

Electronic Communication Analytics

Staff provided an overview of the Gulf Council communications analytics. After lengthy discussion, the Committee came to the following four conclusions:

- It is normal and should be expected that there will be negative feedback on Facebook. The number of constituents reached through this medium make it worthwhile.
- The newsletter analytics should be tracked better. Next year, the Committee would like to see the readership and click throughs per edition, and see the Constant Contact and website analytics to determine if this is a useful medium.
- The Committee would like to take a look at the potential for streamlining the regulations app. Staff should gather more in-depth analytics for the next meeting and may consider making a concerted effort to promote its use in its current form.
- While Instagram is the most rapidly growing social network, especially among young adults, it may not be appropriate for Council use because it's a photograph based platform that does not encourage text or dialogue.

Next, the Committee summarized agency efforts and named appropriate contact people within each agency on the following topics.

Fish Measurement Outreach (Triggerfish)

TPWD –Field staff does instruct on fish measurement during Creel surveys and measurement techniques are taught in the Angler Education Program.

Enforcement is responsible for commercial size limit compliance. There is information dedicated to proper measurement in the regulations booklets. It was also noted that the triggerfish size limit in Texas is measured in total length, rather than fork length. This may be a cause of some angler non-compliance. Zach Thomas is the best contact for this issue.

FWC – The agency shows proper measurement techniques at many of their outreach events including trade shows and fishing clinics. They also distribute over 25,000 measuring tapes each year. There is a dedicated webpage for fish measurement and each species-specific measurement is shown on their species

profile pages (including Triggerfish). It was mentioned that the biggest issue anglers have is measuring by curving the device over the body rather than using a straight line measurement. Rich Abrams is the best contact for this issue

LDWF – There are proper measurement instructions in the regulations and techniques are taught at the Volunteer Instructor Program, as well as during outreach events and by field staff. They also distribute fish ruler stickers. Jason Adriance is the best contact for this issue.

NOAA- Engaged in targeted triggerfish measurement outreach with the Council in 2012.

Barotrauma and the use of venting and/or descending devices

TPWD- Used to engage in offshore trips to show anglers how to use descending devices, but have stopped after a study was published showing that venting does more harm than good. Zack Brown is the best contact person.

TX Sea Grant – Agents were handing out barotrauma devices.

FWC – Created a catch and release brochure that covers barotrauma and has a proper fish handling website and barotrauma video. They are currently conducting a citizen science program that is asking anglers to use descending devices so the agency can gather information on the barriers that prevent anglers from using the devices and to understand how to better encourage their use. It was noted that anglers need to learn when and how to properly use the devices. Additionally, each device has its benefits and downfalls, so anglers need to understand their options and choose what works best. Rich Abrams is the best contact person.

FL Sea Grant – Agents have taken a series of offshore trips with anglers to introduce them to descending gear. They completed a year-long project taking outdoor writers fishing and encouraging them to write articles on descending devices. Sea Grant has conducted an angler survey to gather an understanding of knowledge of barotrauma and the use of mitigating devices. They're also working with FWC to design a guide certification program that will include use of descending and venting tools. Agents have published papers on a variety of barotrauma related issues. Betty Staugler is the best contact person.

LDWF – Distributes a catch and release brochure and worked on building recompression tools. Jason Adriance is the best contact person.

AL Sea Grant – Gave away descending devices as a promotional item. Studies are being conducted and videos are being produced on the use of descending devices.

NOAA – Produced a video and brochure on catch and release practices and has funded research on decompression devices. Sean Meehan is the best contact person.

Lionfish

TPWD – The program is in its infancy and includes an agency wide campaign on invasives. They are working on a lionfish management plan and are in the process of setting up tournaments.

TX Seagrass – Hosts a lionfish symposium and conducts marine ecology outreach that highlights lionfish.

FWC – Has a very active lionfish education program which includes all printed media including webpage, brochures, and other informational materials. The agency hosts lionfish derbies and other outreach events throughout the state. There is a lionfish removal incentive program and reef rangers that remove lionfish. The state has also minimized license requirements to harvest lionfish with spearing devices and they're promoting the consumption of lionfish by coordinating the supply chain and hosting tasting events.

LDWF- Distributes brochures that aim to educate citizens and ask anglers to report sightings so the agency can monitor the prevalence of the issue.

NOAA – Collaborates with FWC to design a survey to provide context for the review of the multiple Exempted Fishing Permits. They're forming a group of scientists and fisheries that will review the use of traps to eradicate lionfish.

Anecdotal Data Collection

Staff introduced the idea of incorporating angler reported data into the science and management of our fisheries. Staff displayed the goliath grouper reporting tool and asked the Committee to provide feedback on the potential utility of the Council collecting data. The panel pointed out that fishermen are the eyes and ears on the water, but questioned how angler reported data would be validated and cautioned that data would have to be used to ensure that constituents felt their participation was useful. Staff mentioned that it would be important to work with end-users such as stock assessment scientists, to ensure that information would be useful. After discussing some of the other angler-reported data tools already available, the panel recommended the following:

- It is important to gather data, but data collection must be done carefully to reduce bias and ensure that the data is used.
- The Council should consider gathering qualitative information on a loosely formed database. The data collected should be summarized and reported out to the Scientific and Statistical Committee, much like the public comment summaries.

TPWD- Uses the tarpon observation network which is currently undergoing efforts to reinvigorate the program since it's fallen in popularity. They are considering developing a mobile app.

FWC – Uses an angler logbook, iAngler for snook, redfish, and seatrout. The information collected goes into stock assessments. There is a non-formal marine inbox where people make observations about what's happening and a fish kill hotline where anglers report fish related incidents. Outreach staff also shares their public interactions with the divisions that work on the issues related to the conversations being had. More formally, FWC has horseshoe crab and red tide related data collection citizen science programs. Tiffany Black would be the best contact.

NOAA – Anglers must report HMS species and those reports are fed into agency operations and used to look at allocations by ICCAT. They also use a marine mammal stranding hotline.

Best Practices

Staff asked the panel to evaluate the utility of creating a fisherman's best practices webpage. The Committee noted that there are numerous other materials made by other agencies and the popularity and value of those tools were questionable. The Committee recommended that the Council develop a best practices page with links to other resources. If a topic is missing, then the Council can consider producing unique materials.

Before concluding for the day, the Committee discussed the importance and challenge of having a presence at tradeshow across the coast.

Committee members also passed the following motion:

With unanimous support, the Committee recommends that O&E Technical Committee members should be allowed to participate via webinar if necessary.

The meeting adjourned at 3:15 p.m.