

## **Outreach and Education Technical Committee Report**

October 9, 2019

8:30 AM – 4:00 PM

Tradewinds Hotel

Saint Petersburg Beach, Florida

The meeting began with introductions and election of new officers. Dylan Hubbard was elected Chair and Eric Weather was elected Vice Chair.

The summary of the May 2018 meeting was approved as written.

Staff welcomed the Committee and explained the special purpose for the meeting. As part of the Release Mortality Symposium, the Outreach and Education Technical Committee was tasked with recommending communication strategies to reduce barotrauma in recreational fisheries across the Gulf. The goal of the Symposium was to promote the Council's Descending and Venting Policy, and to develop recommendations for the Natural Resources Damage Assessment (NRDA) Open Ocean Restoration Trustees Implementation Group on how to most effectively direct its Open Ocean Restoration Area Funding for Reducing Post-Release Mortality from Barotrauma in Gulf of Mexico Reef Fish Recreational Fisheries.

The Committee heard a presentation from Dr. Judd Curtis on recreational angler perceptions regarding the use of descending devices in the southeast reef fish fisheries and a presentation from Dr. Kai Lorenzen on barotrauma mitigation and the power of subjective norms in Florida's reef fish fisheries.

Staff then summarized the "best fishing practices" recommendations suggested for private angler, charter, and headboat fleets during the Science Workshop portion of the Release Mortality Symposium.

### Gulf-wide Outreach/Communications Strategies to Reduce Release Mortality in Recreational Fisheries

Initially, the primary objective of the Committee was to reduce barotrauma induced release mortality however, after reviewing the information provided during the science workshop, the Committee decided that the conversation would need to be expanded beyond barotrauma to encompass recommendations on fishing practices and handling behaviors to reduce release mortality as a whole. This decision was made because barotrauma affects a relatively small proportion of fish caught by recreational anglers as a whole, and there are numerous things that anglers can do beyond venting and descending to improve post-release survival.

The Committee highlighted the importance of achieving consistent messaging across the Gulf. It suggested that one central organization should be responsible for compiling a suite of research based best fishing practice recommendations and messaging for dissemination. This "central command" website repository would be tasked with soliciting, organizing and hosting pertinent

information on safe handling, barotrauma mitigation, and all other best practices for angling. Additionally, the information repository would house stock images and footage for use by other organizations to promote the Gulf-wide consistent messaging.

The Committee further suggested that the website repository and control of the project would most appropriately be housed by an agency to ensure that updates to research, recommendations, and messaging persist beyond single opportunity, project-based funding. The Committee agreed that the Gulf Council should remain the point agency for this initiative. The Gulf Council has already taken the lead though the development of the *Fishing for Our Future* web pages on its website, and is well positioned for effective communication with state and federal agencies across the region. The group also recommended that the website repository where information is housed and shared should be rebranded to maximize potential impact. It was explained that the Council may not have the public image and support necessary to effectively unify recreational anglers to promote best fishing practices. This rebranding strategy would require the development of a new organization, potentially named “Fishing for Our Future”, and that organization should have its own point person (who is potentially grant funded and housed in the Council offices) and be advised by a fisherman populated steering committee. It was explained that this model would follow the Marine Resource Education Program’s format, where an established organization (in their case, the Gulf of Maine Research Institute) handles logistics, oversight and promotion, while all actions are advised by a steering committee that is populated by fishermen, managers, and communicators from the region. This would allow the “Fishing for Our Future” effort to become a “for the fishermen, by the fishermen,” movement with agency support.

The Committee suggested that “Fishing for Our Future” do the following specific things to ensure that best fishing practices, including advice on the proper use of venting tools and descending devices, be communicated effectively across the Gulf:

- Curate an email list of its partners to create a feedback loop that keeps its partners and audience abreast of new information and promotes consistent messaging.
- Create narrative content from fishermen, to fishermen. This will ensure that messaging aims to create the subjective norms necessary to change angler behavior.
- Draft messaging tailored to various audiences including businesses, organizations, and individuals. Materials should be developed to support dissemination in multiple formats including: brochures for in-person distribution, videos and web resources for on-line distribution, and lesson plans and presentations for in-person events.

Next, the Committee collaboratively created a list of businesses, organizations, and individuals that influence the fishing public. Materials and messages created for “Fishing for Our Future” should be generated by and directed towards these influencers to help disseminate and magnify communication efforts.

#### Review of *Fishing for Our Future* Best Practices Webpage

At its last meeting, the Outreach and Education Technical Committee made the following motion: “The Gulf Council take responsibility as the coordinating body for reducing discard

mortality across the Gulf.” As a first step, staff developed the *Fishing for Our Future* webpages to display information on the magnitude of discard mortality, suggest best fishing practices to mitigate discard mortality, curate partner outreach materials, and house a comprehensive list of research relevant to discard mortality in the Gulf of Mexico.

The Committee reviewed the webpages and generally approved of the contents. It suggested potential future improvements, including the addition of fishermen narratives and a section that acts as a repository to house stock images and footage for use by other organizations to promote Gulf-wide, consistent messaging on best fishing practices.

The Committee then passed the following motion without opposition:

**Motion: To publish the Gulf Council’s “Fishing for our Future” website pages.**

Presentation on Gulf Council Communications Analytics

Staff provided an overview of the Gulf Council communications analytics, noting that overall communications are following a steady upward trend. However, staff noted the absence of a second quarter spike across all communications modalities that is usually associated with the announcement of red snapper season.

Other Business

A member of the Committee suggested that it could benefit from some direction on what to do in the future. The Committee then passed the following motion without opposition:

**Motion: The Council survey knowledgeable stakeholders to determine their recommendation for the next best project/goal for the Outreach and Education Technical Committee.**

The meeting adjourned at 4:00 PM.

**Technical Committee Members Present:**

Melissa Crouch  
Marcus Drymon  
Phil Dyskow, Council Member  
Julie Falgout  
Bob Gill  
Dylan Hubbard, Chair  
Shelly Krueger  
Laura Picariello  
David Rainer  
Charmaine Schmermund  
Zack Thomas  
Jeff Wealkey  
Eric Weather, Vice-Chair  
Tonya Wiley  
Danica Williams

**Presenters:**

Angela Collins (Facilitator)  
Judd Curtis  
Kai Lorenzen

**Members of the Public:**

Robert Crimian  
Kim Iverson  
Jessica Powell

**Staff Members:**

John Froeschke  
Beth Hager  
Emily Muehlstein  
Camilla Shireman  
Carrie Simmons