

**Outreach and Education Committee Report
October 22, 2019
Mr. Phil Dyskow – Chair**

The Committee adopted the agenda (**Tab O, No. 1**) as written and approved the minutes (**Tab O, No. 2**) of the January 2019 meeting as written.

Agenda Item IV: Presentation – Communications Analytics (Tab O, No. 4)

Staff presented the Council’s communications analytics including website traffic, social media engagement, and other efforts. The typical spike in second quarter analytics attributed to the recreational red snapper season announcement is absent this year because the States are communicating their own seasons. Despite this change, the Council’s constituent contacts continue to increase.

The transition away from the Council’s own fishing regulations app to Fish Rules has greatly increased the number of times users access the federal regulations. The Committee asked if it was possible for Fish Rules to enhance the way it communicates the state specific fall supplemental red snapper seasons. The Committee also suggested that the app would benefit from making the difference between state and federal fishing regulations more apparent. Staff committed to discussing both issues with the Fish Rules app developer.

Agenda Item V: Release Mortality Symposium Summary (Tab O, No. 5)

Staff provided an overview of the Release Mortality Symposium hosted by the Council to create an action plan for the recreational fishery to promote the use of barotrauma mitigation tools, enhance data collection efforts, and incorporate results into stock assessments and management.

During the Symposium, the discussion focused on the reduction of release mortality as a whole. Private, charter, and headboat groups uniformly recommended that anglers should retain flexibility to choose the best release mortality mitigation measures for their circumstances and asked for best practice recommendations to guide angler choice. It was recommended that current monitoring programs collecting data relevant to discards and discard mortality should ask for consistent information on discards including the number, species, mitigation technique used, condition upon release, and depth of capture. Additionally, current gaps in discard data were identified and prioritized. Finally, achieving consistent messaging to anglers was recommended. The Gulf Council should remain the point agency in control of release mortality communications to continue updating research, recommendations, and messaging. If possible, the “Fishing for Our Future” website should be branded as its own organization and enhanced with the addition of narrative content and other media that could be utilized by influencers.

The Committee noted that changing their data collection programs would be a process and would ultimately require NOAA approval. It was also noted that the list of influencers in the report should be expanded to include others that were not listed during the symposium.

The Committee recommends, and I so move: **To approve the Release Mortality Workshop Summary with Committee recommendations and distribute to NRDA.**

Motion carried with no opposition

Agenda Item VI: Review of “Fishing for Our Future” Webpage

Staff reviewed the draft “Fishing for Our Future” webpage. The webpage strives to display the magnitude of discard mortality in the Gulf. Currently, data for red snapper, gag, and greater amberjack are hosted and staff plans to add data for more species as it becomes available. The webpage makes some best fishing practice recommendations and curates discard mortality related outreach materials from agencies and organizations across the region. The webpage also houses all of the research that has been conducted on release mortality in the Gulf.

The Committee recommends, and I so move: **to publish the Gulf Council’s, “Fishing for Our Future” website pages.**

Motion carried with no opposition

Agenda Item VII: Remaining Items from the Outreach and Education Technical Committee (Tab O, No.6)

Finally, staff explained that the Outreach and Education Committee could benefit from some direction on what to do in the future. The Technical Committee made a motion directing the Council to survey knowledgeable stakeholders to determine their recommendation for the next best project or goal for the Outreach and Education Technical Committee.

Mr. Chair, this concludes my report.