

Meeting Minutes

February 24 and 25, 2015

J.N. "Ding" Darling National Wildlife Refuge, Sanibel, Florida

The Sport Fishing and Boating Partnership Council (Council) convened for a meeting on February 24 and 25, 2015, at the J.N. "Ding" Darling National Wildlife Refuge, Sanibel, Florida. In accordance with the provisions of Public Law 92-463, the meeting was open to the public throughout its duration.

SFBPC Members Participating:

Designated Federal Official (DFO) for the Council: Brian Bohnsack, PhD, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Other participants:

February 24, 2015:

Meeting was called to order by Council Chair Scott Kovarovics at approximately 8:30 am. Introductory remarks were made by Council members. Refuge manager Paul Tritaik welcomed the Council and attendees to the refuge.

The Council recognized the passing of former member Noreen Clough. A plaque was revealed to honor Ms. Clough's participation on the Council and with fishing and boating issues throughout her career.

Presentations

Council member John Sprague arranged a special session on the status of boating access infrastructure permitting processes and status report. A panel of government representatives and private boating industry representatives discussed the status of boating access permits requests, government permit processes and other associated issues. Panel participants included Tori White- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Victoria Foster- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Nicole Bonine- National Marine Fisheries Service, Tom Champeau- Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, Tim Rach- Florida Department of Environmental Protection, Todd Turell- private engineer, xx

Council members discussed the boating access panel presentations and the appropriateness of this issue being proposed for the Federal Interagency Council on Outdoor Recreation (FICOR). Action taken by the Council to write a letter detailing their findings based on the panel presentation and request FICOR take action with this topic.

Phil Seng (D.J. Case and Associates) and Ed Rudberg, PhD (D.J. Case and Associates) provided a detailed report on the results of the Council's assessment of the Recreational Boating and Fishing Foundation for the 2010-2012 time period. Mr. Seng and Rudberg were contracted to assist the Council and a Council

subcommittee with this assessment. Council members recommended editorial changes with some of the language in the draft final assessment report and recommended that the discussion be continued in the morning session of February 25. Additional actions taken by the Council include a tentative action plan for beginning the next assessment of the Recreational Boating and Fishing Foundation for fiscal years 2013-2015.

Frank Peterson (Recreational Boating and Fishing Foundation) presented an update on the status and activities of the Recreational Boating and Fishing Foundation. Ken Hammond (RBFF Chairman of the Board) participated in some of the update.

Council member Jim Zorn and Mic Isham (Great Lakes Indian Fish and Wildlife Commission) gave a presentation on the roles and responsibilities of Tribes with conservation and recreation efforts in the United States.

Richard Christian (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service) updated the Council on the status of the Department of Interior's efforts to update the Native American Policy.

Richard Christian (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service) answered Council questions regarding the status of the National Fisheries Friends Partnership.

The meeting adjourned for the day.

February 25, 2015

The meeting was called to order by Council Chair Scott Kovarovics.

Presentations:

The Council continued its discussions regarding their assessment of the Recreational Boating and Fishing Foundation and that organization's efforts with implementing the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's National Outreach and Communication Program. Action taken by the Council was to approve the assessment's findings and to forward the assessment on to the Secretary of Interior.

David Hoskins (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service) updated the Council on the status of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Fish and Aquatic Conservation (FAC) program. Mr. Hoskins provided updates on the status of the FAC program's budget, the AADAP, aquatic invasive species, the National Fish Habitat Action Plan, fish hatcheries, and the status of the FAC strategic plan. Action taken by the Council was to prepare a letter to the Director requesting a detailed update on the strategic plan upon its completion.

Council member Mike Nussman and Bob Wattendorf (Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission) gave an update on the status of aquatic education and marketing efforts by state agencies. Mr. Nussman discussed the potential for the Council to further assess issues associated with aquatic education programs, marketing and other efforts to increase participation in fishing and boating. Tentative plans are for this issue to be explored further by a Council subcommittee.

Brian Carlstrom (National Park Service) participated via a teleconference and updated the Council on the status of the Biscayne National Park, including the development of the park's General Management Plan.

Russell Dunn (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Fisheries Service) updated the Council on the status of NOAA's recreational fishing policy.

Christy Vigfusson (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service) updated the Council on the status of boating access obligations, expenditures and reversions from the Sport Fish Restoration Program. Ms. Vigfusson also updated the Council on the status of the Clean Vessel Act and Boating Infrastructure Grant program administered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Council member Chris Edmonston updated the Council on the current status of the Sport Fish Restoration and Boating Trust Fund reauthorization efforts being coordinated by the Angling and Boating Alliance.

Steve Suder (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service) updated the Council on the status of the Highway Bill as it relates to providing funding for federal properties. Mr. Suder provided a background on previous Highway Bills and their implications for providing funding for projects such as hatchery and refuge roads. He also updated the Council on the status of the GROW AMERICA bill for the current reauthorization of the highway programs.

U.S. Coast Guard representatives Lieutenant Commander Jason Brand and Lieutenant Commander Blair Sweigart updated the Council on poaching of red snapper and other marine species along the Texas/Mexico boundary by Mexican nationals. The Coast Guard's natural resource branch has extrapolated the impacts of this illegal harvest on the Gulf's red snapper fishery. The Council requested additional updates, as appropriate, from the Coast Guard on this issue.

Public Comments:

T.J. Marshall (Ocean Conservancy) discussed possible recommendations for the Department of Interior to consider with mitigations funds from the Gulf oil spill mitigation funds. Mr. Marshall discussed his desire to have some of these funds be used for release devices designed to assist fish experiencing barotrauma.

Future Business:

The Council discussed the location of its fall meeting. Action taken by the Council was to identify Bozeman, Montana, as the tentative meeting location in late September or early October.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned

List of recommendation letters approved by Council (unanimous unless otherwise noted) and action items.

- 1) Letter to Secretary of Interior and FICOR Chair regarding boating access permitting process.

- 2) Letter to the Secretary of Interior regarding the Council's review of the Recreational Boating and Fishing Foundation's implementation of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's National Outreach and Communication Program.
- 3) Letter to U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Director regarding detailed update on Fish and Aquatic Conservation strategic plan.
- 4) Explore development of a subcommittee to further evaluate issues with aquatic education and marketing programs.
- 5) Begin initial actions with assessment of Recreational Boating and Fishing Foundation for 2013-2015 time period.