

# March Public Comments

Updated 3/30/15

Submitted	County	Your Identity	Reef-related problems or concerns you would like to share	Suggestions to improve the Our Florida Reefs process	Best way to engage, inform, and work with your community	Additional comments/suggestions
03/27/15	n/a	Freelance Environmental Technician / Consultant	<p>Here is a compilation of net recoveries at great cost to the divers involved with no monetary or personal gain received. Why do we do it? We do it because it needs to be done with the hope it inspires others to do their part. We must address these issues in a meaningful way before the damage is irreversible. <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eTVGoM-4xTs">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eTVGoM-4xTs</a> Submerged Natural Resources: Vital to the Longevity of our Coastal Economy Our Florida Reefs Public Comment. We would like to see a Florida bill passed to require Salt Water Product License Numbers (SPL #) on Commercial Gill Cast Nets. We believe this would be the best solution for both sides for a multitude of reasons. Some examples: It's cost effective, requires no added enforcement on FWC's and DEP's end, enables lost gear to be recovered and returned (like lobster pots) saving money for the commercial fisherman, promotes accountability and the longevity of Corals protected under the Florida Coral Reef Protection Act. The addition of SPL's to the Cast Gill Nets will also galvanize, in the mind of the public, the Florida Commercial Fishing Industry's further commitment to a sustainable fishery and continued working relationship with State Agencies. We encourage you to support this movement to register commercial gill nets to hold those accountable.</p>	<p>Please show this video in order to clarify what damage is caused by commercial cast gill nets as I have been told there is some confusion as to what they are and how they damage our local reefs in Martin County. Use it as an educational/inspirational tool from my company and you can preface the viewing in such a way that relieves the DEP of supporting it for legal matters, etc.</p>	<p>Community working groups as you are doing currently</p>	<p>Perhaps a discussion on the upcoming harmful dredge and fill project in Martin County, FL at Bathtub Beach (one of the largest Sabellariid worm reefs found from Cape Canaveral to Brazil). Or maybe the second destructive aspect of this project where MC Coastal Engineering plans to dump extra spoils next to 3 holes reef (offshore temporary disposal has never been attempted by the county before, with no plan to monitor the reef yet) Quite disheartening really when I see the efforts on the lagoon, which is a far more complicated issue. They are interconnected both literally and by way of the very species they have reported on that need both habitats to survive. Protecting one and not the other is counter-intuitive. Of the many impacts, there are TWO painfully clear and local reasons why we are loosing our Coral Reefs. Two impacts that are Direct, waved on by our own county officials, and can be mitigated for with proven economic benefits both long and short term. One: Beach "re-nourishment" which is factually incorrect by the very name it's called. If it must continue, it would be wise to take all precautions that are written into law and SOPs, that are supposed to be followed, rather than Coastal Engineers ask for "permit variances" which allows for the known destruction of our dune and nearshore reef ecosystem. It can be done and will bring in more money rather than watch it wash away with the tides. Two: Commercial Cast Gill Nets are not only one of the largest and most destructive forces in our St. Lucie Inlet Preserve State Park, but it's recurring annually with no oversight or accountability. The annual reef clean-ups, which I have participated in, while the idea is great, merely glosses over this spiraling and looming enviro-economic disaster. More commercial nets (than recreational gear) are left than can be retrieved which compounds the problem yearly. The very men and women that rely on this reef for it's bounty are hastening the destruction. Keep in mind not ALL of them abandon their nets, but enough do causing this unfathomable damage. Does it not make sense to protect and respect what you rely on to survive and pay your bills? Furthermore, Martin county's economy relies on this reef to be healthy not just the commercial industry. The answer is not less regulation b/c they 3 are catching less fish and the answer does not necessarily have to be eliminating fishing around the reefs. It could simply be ensuring those that rely on our reefs for a paycheck, invest in their own future. As Lobster pots require SPL tags (Saltwater Product License numbers), so should commercial gill cast nets.</p>