





May Public Comments:

Updated 06/04/2015

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
4/14/2015	N/A	Diver	Just be more careful where anchors land on the reefs! Fishing lines are scattered on the reefs! I've seen fisherman throw small lines in the water! Just be more careful. Keep advertising to keep the reefs clean, starting with our future: school children. Posters, education lectures! Lionfish Derby.	N/A	N/A	N/A
4/30/2015	Palm Beach	Fisher, Diver, Boater, Snorkeler, etc.	Yes, recreational saltwater regulations are very complex in Florida. Fish Rules App is an innovative app that helps recreational anglers understand fishing regulations. Fish Rules App is a free app, so we're always looking for sponsors to help defray costs of maintaining the app.	I would like to meet with Our Florida Reefs to explore opportunities to collaborate between Fish Rules App and Our Florida Reefs.	N/A	N/A
5/1/2015	Palm Beach	Kayak Fishing Club of the Palm Beaches	The ""beach re-nourishment"" program needs some oversight. I have heard of and seen photos of endangered sea turtles killed by the current beach re-nourishment for the Town of Palm Beach. I am still upset that the Town of Palm Beach did another beach re-nourishment a few years ago (possibly 2010 or 2011) that extended the beach so far out it completely covered and killed the first reef that had been out in front of the beach for as long as I can remember. That project also caused a lot of silt to be inside the Lake Worth Lagoon and also sand from that project caused a beach to form inside the Boynton Inlet by the north jetty. The sand on the beach was very fine (we called it sugar sand at the time) and that is the same sand that appeared in the Boynton Inlet.	N/A	If anyone is interested I can give them more information and since my home phone number is public on our Kayak Fishing Club of the Palm Beaches web pages, you may call me at 561 area code 683-8933 any time.	photo01@bellsouth.net

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5/7/2015	Martin	Diver, Research Technician	<p>Good Afternoon, I am emailing you, out of grave concern, to follow up on my video (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eTVGoM-4xTs) that was heard/seen as public comment at the last (April) "Our Florida Reefs" Northern Working Group. It was presented by Todd Remel and was received by a large round of applause. After the video was shown, a man by the name of "Butch", who represents the Port Salerno fisherman (and I believe works with the Marine Industries Association (MIA) of Martin County along with April Price), has misguided this working group by misrepresenting data collected through your joint efforts in the "7th Annual Treasure Coast Waterway Cleanup & Peck's Lake Reef Dive Cleanup - July 26, 2014-- and the previous clean ups ". Firstly, I would like to bring this into context, the basis for our efforts to extract marine debris from this park. Simply stated, having dove this reef tract for many years extracting all sorts of trash both recreational and commercial alike, I decided to seek out others to foster a concentrated effort to remove these debris knowing that one day a year was simply not enough. It should be recognized that our intentions were to remove all debris we came across without prejudice. There was no focus on Commercial Cast Gill Nets (CCGN) at any point in time and we removed plenty of recreational gear such as anchors, small lures, bait bags, and monofilament. Through the years however it became painfully obvious by weight, volume, and frequency, that the most damaging and ever present type of debris were the CCGNs. It should also be noted that I, was a commercial fisherman out of Point Judith, RI, and understand intimately the good, the bad, and ugly when it comes to this industry. I was a Commercial Gill Netter, although different than CCGN, in practice, I know the industry and the difference in appearance between recreational cast nets and CCGNs is black and white. Upon arriving at this unfortunate epiphany, I consulted with a local FWC employee (knowing of their current research here on corals) to see if they came to a similar conclusion. I was told that while they witnessed a few CCGNs it was not to the degree I had. The obvious conclusion I drew was the fact that, as a research diver myself, I know they returned to the same study sites with specific tasks to accomplish not able to allow extra time to survey large areas outside of their transects. It would be impossible for them to arrive at the same conclusion logically. Next I contacted FWC in Tallahassee and spoke with a gentleman who knew of this issue. I was told, the idea of Salt Water Product Licenses for CCGNs was brought up about 10 years ago but never gained traction. The anecdotal reason was because of the net ban feud that dominated the discussion and had no direct ties to CCGNs at that time in the St. Lucie Inlet Preserve State Park so it fell by the way side. The legal proceedings of the net ban allowed for a loophole which created the current problem. This plight has been documented in the pages of Florida Sportsman as well. Please read these 2 short articles that illustrate my point further (pictures). http://www.floridasportsman.com/2011/05/16/confron_0504148/ That being said, after the video I was told Butch declared the data they had collected through the above clean ups did not agree with what we had observed in order to discredit our unbiased volunteer work. While the support and facilitation of these clean ups is admirable and much needed, it is soiled by using it as a tool to deflect responsibility. As any stakeholder is certainly allowed to be as biased and opinionated as they like, to obfuscate data which was generated by the hard work of my community is intolerable and perhaps should be called into question. To impede the efforts of this issue merely being brought to light, an issue that will require minimum effort to resolve in comparison to other factors impacting this reef tract, makes one wonder. By using deductive logic, one can easily see how he has erroneously arrived at this conclusion. There were several collection sites around Martin County:</p> <p><u>Jim Graham Boat Ramp, 8555 SE Gomez Ave., Hobe Sound, FL 33455</u> <u>Sandsprit Park Boat Ramp, 3443 SE St. Lucie Blvd., Stuart, FL 34997</u> <u>Stuart Causeway Boat Ramp, SE Ocean Blvd., Stuart, FL</u> <u>Leighton Park Boat Ramp, 2701 SW Cornell Ave., Palm City, FL 34990</u> <u>Jensen Beach Boat Ramp, Indian River Drive, Jensen Beach, FL 39457</u></p> <p>The only site for debris collected on the reef in Peck Lake aka St. Lucie Inlet Preserve Sate Park was Sandsprit Park Boat Ramp. But, this site was also used to collect debris from the adjacent shorelines, Manatee Pocket, and the numerous surrounding spoil islands. With this in mind, he could have simply weighed this dumpster against the total weight of the other four, even though it contained other debris not specific to the reef tract. Another possible way, although highly unlikely, was to sort the contents of the dumpster at Sandsprit Park Boat Ramp. Even if he had gone to this extent, the data gathered would be inconclusive as I not only witnessed men (clearly fishermen) salvaging the CCGNs from the dumpster, my team was asked by one of these men for our nets to salvage the lead weights. I also witnessed, of the boats unloading their haul here, the overwhelming majority were not divers. As for the logs written by participants, if Butch had copies of the debris questionnaire, and based his conclusion on this information, the comparisons could not produce a true comparison of recreational gear vs CCGNs. Lastly, the few divers that were removing debris, could not possibly remove all the CCGNs in one day because we have consistently found CCGNs on this reef every summer, diving 3-4 times a month, 2-3 dives per trip, with 2-3 divers in the water at a time, over the past four years and have not observed any decrease in abundance. Also noteworthy, was the fact that in the pre dive briefings, there was a sheet handed out with coordinates to locations where it was known to have commercial marine debris. I asked myself this question, if commercial debris were not an issue, as implied by Butch and the MIA, then how is it that every year, without fail, these locations produce commercial debris? The answer is simple. Every year in the fall, individuals within this industry abandon their gear here. And every year they host a single clean up. Few of the divers are fisherman but they witness the destruction caused by their gear or fellow fisherman's gear, yet do nothing quantifiable to minimize the causation. The industry here in Martin County knows the damage they cause and has had many years to rectify this on their own accord but refuse to do so. Instead, they choose to continue to degrade this submerged natural resource that supports Martin County's economy and ensures a profitable harvest for themselves which is counter productive for both.</p>	<p>What I have proposed, Salt Water Product Licenses for CCGNs, as used with the Commercial Lobster Industry, promotes responsibility, negligible cost to the industry(for the tag), without fines, no increased regulation, or an impediment to their livelihoods. SPL tags attached to each net registered, in such a way to disallow clandestine transfers, will simply institute a passive record of the number of CCGNs in use per year. With this unique identification tag (alpha-numeric) the information in return will account for, and supplement, the purchase/registration of additional CCGNs in our area that have been lost. This would enable data to be gathered to better understand the impact and hopefully the only step needed to minimize one of the many stressors inflicted on the Northern Reef Tract. This is a problem and there is a solution where both sides win. I would still consider it a great victory even if our efforts are only to produce a serious discussion within the community. A foundational conversation that will cut through the smoke of misrepresentation so that this working group may formulate crucial recommendations based on factual evidence rather than biased conjecture.</p>	   	N/A

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5/20/2015	N/A	Sierra Club	Concerned about storm water runoff and fertilizers. Seismic blasting from oil exploration and sea floor mapping. Plastic pollution in oceans from sites and basic litter. Cruise ship pollution over reefs.	N/A	N/A	N/A
5/20/2015	Broward	Cry of the Water	Joel Lopez studies sponges at NOVA. Big barrel sponge diseases; turns into "mush". Can take samples of sponge (just need healthy and unhealthy samples, GPS locate, pic of sponge, and freeze it in a bag where the water is removed, and send it). All you need is to have a saltwater fishing license to take samples. Count number of barrel sponges you see and count percentage that look sick. There needs to be some good baseline samples. Do not let graduate research students take core samples from huge coral colonies. He has seen pillar, montastrea, and staghorn corals.	N/A	N/A	N/A
5/20/2015	N/A	American Littoral Society	Part of a project called American Littoral Society. National Ocean Policy enacted Blue Vision Summit. Summit was to highlight what healthy oceans means to individuals. Great feedback from Blue Vision Summit. Broadcast podcast in July hopefully. Emailing people in June to make PSAs or selfies to incorporate in the video for the campaign.	N/A	N/A	N/A
5/27/2015	N/A	Sierra Club	Concerned about seismic testing offshore. Concerned about illegal fishing, particularly outside of U.S. Support legislation to support recent treaty. Support national ocean policy. Concerns about plastic pollution in oceans. Protect during sea turtle nesting season.	N/A	N/A	N/A
5/27/2015	N/A	Diver	The Scuba Diving Stakeholder group has come to me about there concern with taking of animals, corals, etc. from Phil Foster State Park/Blue Heron Bridge. It is illegal to collect commercially, but legal for recreational collection. My group is very upset and ask us to give input.	N/A	N/A	N/A