Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission

Blue Crab Advisory Board Meeting IV

January 6 & 7, 2004

Ocala, Florida

Meeting Summary Report

Background

The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) has invited 15 representatives of the hard crab fishery, peeler fishery, and wholesale dealers to serve as members of an ad hoc Blue Crab Advisory Board (BCAB). The advisory board is designed to bring together a group of industry representatives from around the state who represent a diversity of commercial blue crab stakeholders and who can provide constructive comments and guidance to FWC on the development of the blue crab management program. From September 2003 through January 2004, the advisory board met four times in one or two-day meetings to focus on reviewing and discussing blue crab fishery issues and the development of a state effort management program for the commercial blue crab fishery. FWC staff will prepare a workshop draft management plan for review by the Commission before conducting a series of regional input workshops during the spring. The advisory board will meet again following the input workshops to offer further guidance in response to the Commission and regional input.

During the initial meeting of the Blue Crab Advisory Board on September 23-24, 2003, members worked through a process to develop goal statements and then identify possible key objectives or operational issues to be addressed in each goal area. During the second and third meetings on October 30 and December 3-4, members reviewed, discussed and refined an initial set of draft objectives. The facilitators redrafted the objectives based on member comments and created worksheets to guide discussion during the fourth meeting on January 6-7, 2004. During the meeting members reviewed, discussed and refined the draft goals and objectives. (The letters and numbers assigned to the draft goals and objectives are not intended to indicate any prioritization and are used only to identify items for purposes of discussion.)

Welcome and Introductions

Bill Teehan, Fisheries Management Analyst, welcomed members to the fourth meeting of the BCAB and stressed the value of the members' ongoing participation and input into the development of a state management program responsive to the needs of the blue crab fishery. Facilitator Jeff Blair from the Florida Conflict Resolution Consortium reviewed the meeting objectives and agenda, the meeting guidelines, and the consensus-building guidelines (meeting agenda packet available through http://consensus.fsu.edu/ or upon request).

Agenda Review and Approval

The Board voted unanimously, 13 - 0 in favor, to approve the agenda as presented including the following objectives:

- *To approve regular procedural topics*
- *To hear Agency presentation on impacts of proposed management plan scenarios*
- *To refine, and seek agreement on outstanding management plan issues*
- *To hear information on State and Federal authority relative to manatee zone enforcement*
- *To hear a DACS presentation on marketing efforts*
- *To test for Board consensus on draft management plan recommendations*
- *To identify needed information, agenda items, and next steps for developing recommendations*

Approval of October 30, 2003 Facilitators' Summary Report
The Board voted unanimously, 13 - 0 in favor, to approve the December 3-4, 2003 Facilitator's Report as presented.

Review and Discussion of Draft Objectives
At the board members' request, the facilitators and staff used input offered by members during the December meeting to redraft an initial set of objectives and reorganized them into worksheets for Management Plan Issues and Non-Management Plan Issues. Members agreed that the focus of this meeting should remain on providing the agency with guidance in developing a management plan for the Blued Crab industry and to postpone the discussion and refinement of non-management plan issues until a future meeting after the development of the management plan was completed.

The facilitators utilized the worksheets to guide members through the meeting discussion. Members discussed each draft objective under the management plan issues and, when necessary, offered refinements to address any concerns and build consensus support. Facilitators initially used the following four-point scale to test member consensus on refinements to the objectives:

Initial Acceptability Scale	***4****=acceptable I agree*	***3****=acceptable, I agree with minor reservations*	***2****= not acceptable, I don't agree unless major reservations addressed*	***1****= not acceptable*

During the meeting, the facilitators also used a yes or no straw poll to test for member support of suggested refinements to the draft objectives. In addition, the review of some of the goals and draft objectives was deferred until the next meeting

The following are the redrafted objectives reviewed by the members. Each draft objective is followed by an acceptability ranking based on revisions (where applicable) and a list of comments and suggestions offered by members and discussed during an initial review on day one and a follow up review during the morning of day two. The ***italicized*** comments are the action taken and or the proposed revision that members indicated support for through the acceptability ranking. At the conclusion of day two, all of the objectives related to management plan issues had been considered and consensus ranked for acceptability.

I. MANAGEMENT PLAN ISSUES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Goal A: Regulation/ Management

Promote and support a healthy and profitable blue crab industry through management and regulation.

Effort Management:

1. **Develop a range of alternatives for limited entry/effort management to reduce effort in the fishery through multiple means and combinations.**

Acceptability Ranking:

	4=acceptable	*3= minor reservations*	*2=major reservations*	*1= not acceptable*
Dec. Meeting	**13**	**0**	**0**	**0**

Member Comments, Jan. 6-7:

- Still acceptable; no further action taken

2. **Develop criteria for qualifying to participate in the fishery that are appropriate for the industry and emphasis experience.**

Acceptability Ranking:

	4=acceptable	*3= minor reservations*	*2=major reservations*	*1= not acceptable*
December	**13**	**0**	**0**	**0**

Member Comments, Jan. 6-7:

- Still acceptable; no further action taken

3. **Extend the moratorium to establish a cap on participation in the fishery until a management plan is established.**

Acceptability Ranking:

	4=acceptable	*3= minor reservations*	*2=major reservations*	*1= not acceptable*
December	**13**	**0**	**0**	**0**

Member Comments, Jan. 6-7:

- Still acceptable; no further action taken

4. **Require recreational harvesters in the fishery to mark their bouys and traps with their name and address and allow a maximum of five traps per boat without charging a fee.**

Acceptability Ranking:

	4=acceptable	*3= minor reservations*	*2=major reservations*	*1= not acceptable*
December	**13**	**0**	**0**	**0**

Member Comments, Jan. 6-7:

- Per person or per boat?
- Propose five per boat with FL #
- Five per boat may be poking recreational fishers unnecessarily in the eye – if not a problem why do it?

- It makes the standard the same for them as us with derelict traps
- Recreational trap must have name and address under current rule, but none on the bouy.
- It is a problem in our area, steal from our traps – need fl# and per boat limit
- FL# may be enough to address the problem without a per boat limit
- State of Florida requires a limit on drum per person and per boat – let staff make the recommendation to the Commission
- Let law enforcement come up with something – stay away from sport fishermen
- Consider 4-A below only?
- Recommend we do not do anything at this point
- ***Remove from management plan and leave to staff to develop and recommend a regulation***

4-A. *(New Objective from December 2003 meeting)* ***Require FL # on buoys for recreational harvesters.**

Acceptability Ranking:

	4=acceptable	*3= minor reservations*	*2=major reservations*	*1= not acceptable*
December	**13**	**0**	**0**	**0**

Member Comments, Jan. 6-7:

- ***Unanimous to drop 4-A from management plan in recognition of action in #4***

5. **Evaluate and develop recommendations for eliminating the loopholes to circumvent the moratorium or management plan.**

Acceptability Ranking:

	4=acceptable	*3= minor reservations*	*2=major reservations*	*1= not acceptable*
December	**12**	**0**	**0**	**1**

Member Comments, Jan. 6-7:

Still acceptable; no further action taken

5-A. *(New Objective from December 2003 meeting)* **600(650 for cleaning purposes) hard crab traps per license/endorsement in inshore waters deployed at one time, must be based on at least 500 pounds landings during any one year of a three year period; license is transferable.**

Acceptability Ranking:

	4=acceptable	*3= minor reservations*	*2=major reservations*	*1= not acceptable*
December	**13**	**0**	**0**	**0**

Member Comments, Jan. 6-7:

- Suggest we combine with #1 on page 6. I am not objecting to this but suggesting we need to review them together. The combination may end up with endorsement transferable in the $30,000 range based on experience with related fisheries (lobster) where value of certificate is roughly equal to the production of the trap. Same with stone crab – based on trap generation. Using same measure of production then the endorsement is roughly $30,000 without considering costs. Makes it tough for new fishermen to get in. Commission may be reluctant, governor's office may be

reluctant to support too. At the workshops many may object that they are priced out of entry. Alternative may be a restricted endorsement or an apprenticeship avenue for entry.

- But blue crab price structure is different. Alternative picking house is no longer viable. I estimate that the trend is less price more abundance meaning the endorsement closer to $15,000.
- See page four of the graphs in staff presentation
- Graphs fail to account for seasonal nature – the amount of production at lower price and production at higher price
- Blue crab price fluctuates far more than others which are steadier. Market price impacts effort and production
- Stone crab certificates closer to $5, $10 with transfer – then can say $9,000 for endorsement under current suggestion
- Can buy a license but not the tags?
- If license is capped in blue crab then have to buy from someone already in the fishery
- Want to eliminate a certain number of traps? Do we need to eliminate the number offshore out in the ocean? The new guy can enter there
- For stone crab in the Big Bend area, many simply beat the program by putting out more V# traps
- There is a misconception among the board. Do we need to get rid of traps? Is the fishery exploited beyond a certain point? We are putting limits on a fishery where none currently exist.
- We do not have a good estimate of correlation between increase in traps and levels of production. Every other fishery is vulnerable to over capitalization. Blue Crab is vulnerable to the same over capitalization. Certainly too many traps in some areas (Halifax River near Daytona). We have an opportunity to be proactive before a general public reaction to too many traps in the water crowding the waters.
- Crowding is a problem of crab availability in an area at a particular time
- Does not make a difference how many traps limited too, we will still go to the area where crabs are resulting in a temporary overcrowding.
- Anyone can get a license but not anyone can get a certificate. That will have the same effect.
- Blue crab operation is more mobile compared to stone crab industry. Thus comparison is of limited use
- Blue crab fishery has lots of pressure from other states that may limit price versus stone crab
- Limit the inshore traps because of increasing number of recreational boaters
- Blue crab is very elastic in price depending on multiple reasons
- Responding to an angry public, the legislature can use safety issue to prohibit deployment in specified areas

<u>Member Discussion, Jan. 6-7, of Two Alternative Proposals</u>:

- No cap on license – trap tags will regulate the market and number of traps - wide open for V#. Doesn't restrict entry entirely, allows one to get in and build up
- Commission has resisted limited entry to licenses in the past.
- Second choice could be alternative limit tags
- Offer commission first alternative with license cap and second alternative without cap

- Apprentice – how does he get in? Even if $9-15,000, that limits them getting in
- Option to cap V# - the initial cost is part of doing business – work hard and save up to enter
- We need to develop an alternate if commission balks at the cap.
- Is the limit per person or per boat; assigned to V# or SPL?
- Multiple endorsements – first endorsement has to have 500 pounds, each subsequent endorsement requires 2500 pounds
- We should work out a possible alternative B now to present to the Commission and not wait until after the workshops
- ***Members unanimously accepted Alternative A above as their first option to present to the Commission (with Alternative B below as their second option).***

<u>Member Discussion, Jan. 6-7, of Possible Alternative B:</u>

- Anyone with RS (trap certificate) – no caps on endorsement, buy endorsement then purchase certificates (trap tags) with possible passive reduction.
- Is blue crab over capitalized? Evidence in other fisheries.
- But can blue crab be compared to other resources?
- Other fisheries are not over-fished, but there is evidence of more effort than necessary to reach the same level of production
- Leave traps as proposed. Still have to qualify with "x" amount of crabs. Don't cap V# and leave the trap numbers the same. Everyone gets same number of traps. Then you can sell the portion of traps you do not want to use with some reduction in the transfer of the certificates. Establishes a finite number of traps in the fishery. If you sell 200 traps, the buyer gives up a % of the traps (example: 200 – 10% = 180 traps transferred). Same percentage each time the traps are subsequently transferred. Include 10% as the reduction in each transfer.
- 650 for the first endorsement. Fewer traps in the second endorsement.
- Currently have two V#'s for seven boats. That means you would have to have multiple endorsements
- Are certificates tied to the endorsements?
- Start with finite number of 650 traps – if I sell 300, that 300 follows the second persons endorsement
- Lifts the moratorium and satisfies trap reduction with new access to the fishery
- Suggest an exception: if you transfer to an immediate family member then no reduction
- Can go up to 1000 traps by buying 385 (350 – 10%) to add to initial 650
- To get in to the industry you still have to serve an apprenticeship
- Purchased traps will be added to the 650. The additional traps then run with the endorsement.
- Will large producers then crowd out the small guy? Should we put a cap on the total an individual can hold?
- In stone crab no individual can hold more than 1% of the total traps in the industry
- As is now being discussed there would 290,000 total traps in the market under this proposal. With a future 10% reduction on transfers outside the family.
- A 1% cap, like stone crab, would mean a cap of 2925 total traps per endorsement
- That is too high. Consider a cap total at 1000 per endorsement or V#

- Goal to reduce to an optimal number – 10% reduction applies to transfers until the total in fisheries reaches a determined threshold
- ***Members unanimously accepted Alternative B as their second option to present to the Commission***

Outline of Alternative B:

- No cap on V#'s. 650 traps for the first endorsement.
- You sell/purchase additional traps with a 10% reduction (ex: purchase 200 traps – 10% = 180 traps). Purchased traps will be added to the 650. The additional traps then run with the endorsement.
- Cap total traps at 1000 per endorsement or V#
- If you transfer to an immediate family member then no 10% reduction
- 10% reduction applies to transfers until the total number of traps in the fishery reaches a certain threshold (to be determined by staff)
- To get in to the industry you still have to serve an apprenticeship

Member Discussion, Jan. 6-7, of Theft problem

- Set a minimum number of traps per endorsement?
- Enough enforcement now since they are inshore operations
- Occasional problem but not enough to establish a minimum
- Trap theft is an issue but not related or resolved by trap minimum

5-B. *(New Objective from December 2003 meeting)* **400 (450 for cleaning purposes) peeler crab traps license/endorsement in inshore waters deployed at one time, must be based on at least 250 peeler crabs during any one year of a three year period; license is transferable.**

Acceptability Ranking :

	4=acceptable	*3= minor reservations*	*2=major reservations*	*1= not acceptable*
December	**13**	**0**	**0**	**0**

Member Comments, Jan. 6-7:

- Can sell/transfer under the same rules as above in 5-A (either alternative)
- Two separate endorsements under same rules – only difference is the starting point
- To qualify for soft shell license, change the qualifying threshold to 1500 crabs. This eliminates questions about poundage and accounts for the difference in reporting of peelers
- In trip tickets some soft shells are put in with hard shell for weight as reported in trip tickets
- By catch addressed under Goal E on page 8 of the Worksheet under #2 (150 crab by-catch is allowed for non-peeler license holders).
- 1500 pieces for qualification purposes?
- Suggest changing requirement of 250 peelers to $3000 amount
- Can that be calculated? Dollar amount included in trip ticket system.
- More difficult to qualify for the peeler license
- Does by catch cover that situation for those who do not qualify for the separate license?

- Or do I have to go buy a license from someone who qualified?
- If I have the blue crab license do I then qualify for peeler license?
- Peeler is different from soft crabs – get more money for soft crabs than for peelers.
- Should change ”peeler to “soft shell”?
- Need some limit to qualify for license – some protection for those already in the peeler end of the business.
- With these thresholds some who may be entitled to a peeler license may be denied
- Make it either 1500 pieces or $3000 in value – (soft shells count in peeler limits)
- If you do not qualify for the license thresholds then you still have the opportunity through incident take or by catch exception
- Want to see it stay the same, with no difference between the licenses, peeler fishing during certain parts of the season.
- Propose that the licenses be the same. If you qualify for blue crab license then initially can purchase the peeler license too (no separate initial qualifying requirement). The limits on traps would apply.
- Can we compromise on the qualifying limit in the middle? Should have two licenses, change the limit.

Alternative 5-B Proposal: Two licenses with 750 crabs to qualify for initial peeler crab license

- What is the benefit to two separate licenses?
- To prevent some from jumping on runs of peelers
- Reluctant to reduce opportunity for crabbers to make extra money
- You have opportunity with by catch exception; if you want to take up peeler crabbing beyond by catch then buy a license

Straw Poll for Acceptability: 12 for Alternative 5-B; 1 against (do not like separate licenses)

Member Discussion, Jan. 6-7, of Trip tickets:

- Why convert to pounds and not the dozen?
- Raw info is kept as numbers and converted back to pounds for summary purposes
- No place on the trip ticket for peeler
- But there is a code number for peeler

5-C. (*New objective from December 2003 meeting)* **1000 traps allowed offshore statewide area only seaward of COLREGS (600 inshore, 400 offshore). Use different color tags to differentiate between inland and offshore use.** *[See page 1 and attachment 1 of the briefing paper for COLREGS line]*

	4=acceptable	*3= minor reservations*	*2=major reservations*	*1= not acceptable*
December	**13**	**0**	**0**	**0**

<u>Member Comments, Jan. 6-7:</u>

- Three mile line is better than the COLREGS
- In some areas the three mile line creates a hardship – COREGS would be better

- ***Members agreed unanimously to use COLREGS***

6. **Establish blue crab sanctuaries or no-harvest zones to protect blue crab spawning and nursery grounds.**
   Acceptability Ranking :

	4=acceptable	*3= minor reservations*	*2=major reservations*	*1= not acceptable*
December	**0**	**0**	**0**	**13**

Staff brought back maps and information to aid members in discussing the issue of sanctuaries further at the next meeting. Members agreed to re-evaluate objective #6 (sanctuaries) at the January 2004 meeting.
[See Page 1 and attachment 1 in the briefing paper]

Member Comments, Jan. 6-7:
- Can establish sanctuary by default at six mile line
- From nine miles out that is a sanctuary. This is a proactive stance on the issue
- ***In a straw poll, members unanimously supported establishing a blue crab sanctuary from nine miles out***

7. **No size limits on peelers.**
   Acceptability Ranking:

	4=acceptable	*3= minor reservations*	*2=major reservations*	*1= not acceptable*
December	**13**	**0**	**0**	**0**

Member Comments, Jan. 6-7:
- Members were unanimous; no action should be taken to put size limits on peelers

8. **Close harvesting season on a region by region basis for a one (1) week time period for the purpose of identifying and removing derelict traps from the water.**
   Acceptability Ranking:

	4=acceptable	*3= minor reservations*	*2=major reservations*	*1= not acceptable*
December	**13**	**0**	**0**	**0**

At the December advisory board meeting, each board member was tasked to poll local harvesters to determine the best times for each region to close for a one-week period. Members offered a proposed regional closing time period at the January 2004 meeting as follows:
Region 1 (NW): first week of February
Region 2: start the 3rd of September *(*See discussion under Goal E, Objective 2: needs further review)*
Region 3: second week in September
Region 4: first week August
Region 5: second week of December

9. *(New objective from December 2003 meeting)* **Make the two-week September blue crab closure apply to the entire gulf coast outside of three miles.**

Acceptability Ranking:

	4=acceptable	*3= minor reservations*	*2=major reservations*	*1= not acceptable*
December	**13**	**0**	**0**	**0**

Member Comments, Jan. 6-7:

- Still acceptable; no further action taken

Licenses

1. **A license or endorsement may be transferred to another vessel on a temporary basis for holders use or to cover sickness or breakdown, but not transferred to another boat to allow someone else to fish under the holder's license or endorsement.**

Acceptability Ranking:

	4=acceptable	*3= minor reservations*	*2=major reservations*	*1= not acceptable*
December	**13**	**0**	**0**	**0**

Member Comments, Jan. 6-7:

- Still acceptable; no further action taken

Traps:/Gear

1. **Allow degradable staples or hog rings for the degradable panel requirements for traps. This is in addition to other approved methods.**

Acceptability Ranking:

	4=acceptable	*3= minor reservations*	*2=major reservations*	*1= not acceptable*
December	**13**	**0**	**0**	**0**

Member Comments, Jan. 6-7:

- Still acceptable; no further action taken

2. **Allow bait to be placed in the peeler trap to feed the jimmie crab.**

Acceptability Ranking:

	4=acceptable	*3= minor reservations*	*2=major reservations*	*1= not acceptable*
December	**13**	**0**	**0**	**0**

Member Comments, Jan. 6-7:

- Still acceptable; no further action taken

3. *(New objective from December 2003 meeting)* **Reduce escape ring size requirements to a minimum of 2- 5/16 ". Allow only 1 escape ring, to be located on a vertical surface near the top of the trap.** (*Staff researched the size and number; see pages 1-4 of the briefing paper*)

Acceptability Ranking:

	4=acceptable	*3= minor reservations*	*2=major reservations*	*1= not acceptable*
December	**12**	**1**	**0**	**0**

Member Comments, Jan 6-7:

- Staff analysis suggested more than one escape ring
- Set two escape rings on the top
- Information for the staff analysis came from several states, including Louisiana which calls for two escape rings
- ***Member straw poll: unanimous to set a minimum of two rings***
- Look at size by region and inshore/offshore
- 2 3/16 size recommended by research
- Need more information specific to Florida and its different environments to set the size
- 2 1/4 offshore; 2 3/8 inshore?
- Creates enforcement confusion
- ***Go with 2 3/16 minimum across the board – subject to further research or study: unanimous support from board members in a straw poll***

3. **Allow vertical or horizontal degradable panels in traps.**

Acceptability Ranking:

	4=acceptable	*3= minor reservations*	*2=major reservations*	*1= not acceptable*
December	**13**	**0**	**0**	**0**

Member Comments, Jan. 6-7:

- Still acceptable; no further action taken

4. *(New objective from December 2003 meeting)* **Allow for use of alternate buoy types, size: minimum 5" diameter, minimum 5" length**.

Acceptability Ranking:

	4=acceptable	*3= minor reservations*	*2=major reservations*	*1= not acceptable*
December	**13**	**0**	**0**	**0**

Member Comments, Jan. 6-7:

- Still acceptable; no further action taken

5. **Allow degradable staples or hog rings for the degradable panel requirements for traps.**

Acceptability Ranking:

	4=acceptable	*3= minor reservations*	*2=major reservations*	*1= not acceptable*
December	**13**	**0**	**0**	**0**

Member Comments, Jan. 6-7:

- What is the difference between #4 and #6?
- One addresses staples and the other addresses orientation

- ***Same as #1 – scratch one or the other***

6. *(New objective from December 2003 meeting)* **Peeler crab trap specs – *1" x 1" mesh required.***

Acceptability Ranking:

	4=acceptable	*3= minor reservations*	*2=major reservations*	*1= not acceptable*
December	**13**	**0**	**0**	**0**

Member Comments, Jan. 6-7:

- Need a one year transition period to implement
- ***Make it a maximize of 1" x 1" size with one year to comply: unanimous support from the board in a straw poll***

Goal B: Licensing and Fees

Develop a licensing system that promotes a healthy and profitable BCI

License Fees and Variances

1. **Cap the number of licenses and allow access into the fishery when a license holder sells or gives up his/her license.**

	4=acceptable	*3= minor reservations*	*2=major reservations*	*1= not acceptable*
December	**13**	**0**	**0**	**0**

Staff brought back information on number of SPLs with greater than 500 pounds to determine universe and help members discuss the issue further at the next meeting. [See pages 4-5 of the briefing paper]

Member Comments, Jan. 6-7:

- ***This issue was discussed and addressed earlier in the discussion to develop options 1 and 2 for objective 5-A under Goal A***

2. **Establish an industry advisory board by agency rule, to develop recommendations on issues of interest and affecting the blue crab industry.**

	4=acceptable	*3= minor reservations*	*2=major reservations*	*1= not acceptable*
December	**13**	**0**	**0**	**0**

** [See Page 9 of the briefing paper – staff analysis of cost]*

Member Comments, Jan. 6-7:

- Keep the board the same size or make it smaller in number
- Stone crab is based on combination of area and large/small dealers – what would be comparable standard for blue Crab?

- ***Members agreed that no further action was necessary at this time; the board will discuss the future composition of the board at the next meeting.***

3. Support legislation to place/set a fee on V endorsements for the blue crab industry.

	4=acceptable	*3= minor reservations*	*2=major reservations*	*1= not acceptable*
December	**13**	**0**	**0**	**0**

Staff will look at some scenarios for fees and bring the information back to the next meeting for board review. [See pages 5-7 of the briefing paper]

Member Comments, Jan. 6-7:

- Page 6 of the briefing paper suggests for hard crabs $125 with $25 for trap retrieval – comparable to stone crab
- Soft shell license $250
- Do the fees cover the expected expenses of the program?
- Need a wholesalers license for buying seafood
- Will I be able to shed out peelers without a license? Covered if you have a wholesale license?
- You have to have a separate license to shed out soft shell?
- Suggest $250 for peelers and let wholesaler license cover the shedding operation
- Allow shedding operation to come under the $250 license. The license should cover the ability to shed crabs. The intent here is to stop a flood of producers
- There is not currently a separate peeler license. The proposal approved today would set up a separate license for hard crab and peelers.
- I do not want to impact those bringing crabs home to shed their by catch at home
- That should be part of the by catch exception
- The by catch limit should be a vessel limit – should not matter how many you have at home

Initial Straw Poll: 12 support; 1 opposed

- Need limits – if not in it now, where have they been? All the peelers should be sold
- We buy peelers for $1 during runs from those crossing our docks using two tanks. I put soft shells on the trip tickets
- Set an exception for three or fewer tanks, with a license required if more than three tanks

Alternative Proposal: $125 fee for hard shell; shedding operation of more than three tanks included in the $250 soft shell license; by catch exception for 150 crabs and three or fewer tanks

Straw Poll of Members on Alternative Proposal: 13 support; 0 against

4. (New objective from the December meeting) **Set tag fees at $.20 per tag.**

Staff evaluated funding and generated scenarios for Board review. [See pages 5-7 of the briefing paper.]

Member Comments, Jan. 6-7:

- Page 7 of the briefing paper: I am not sure what the cost of the respective tag will be? Maybe .20 each
- I can get it delivered for total of .14 and attach with hog ring
- Need to decide what type of tag they want to use. Can you remove the tag?
- Do you want program to generate funds to support the board, research or other uses?
- Can I replace the lost tag?
- Program can cover lost tags. Currently there is no cost or reduced cost in stone crabs
- Can use a transfer certificate for tags that are purchased for transfer
- Stainless steel, engraved, clip on tags – suggestion for type to use – easier to handle at sea – pay .20 for each
- Do I need to report the numbers lost to get them replaced? Will tag have to go on trap in specific spot or anywhere on trap? I repaint the traps; will that require me to unclip and reclip the tag?
- Decide what do you want to fund and then set the tag fee to help cover those costs
- Start with .30 for tag fee – can adjust next year
- Alternative to consider for the second day: charge $1 initial fee, with .30 for each subsequent year

Meeting and Member Discussion on Day Two (January 7):

- *Roy Williams offered an explanation of the transfer fee*
- Do lobster and stone crab have recreational traps?
- Transfer fee is $2.00 per trap, plus any surcharge
- Initial $1.00 tag fee; however, crabbers may not agree
- $1.00 initial fee will help fund the program. We want a profitable industry in the future. The rules can be different for the blue crab fishery. It is not the same as lobster and stone crab
- $1.00 tag fee is not necessary because of funding from other agencies like DACS
- The research funds for monitoring indicated in the staff analysis are inflated; they are rough calculations
- The generation of money is not in this industry. We must keep fees low to exist.
- We need to know the administrative costs for program and tag cost
- We need to have more information before fees can be set
- Transfer fee should be whatever administrative cost is
- Need to focus on the annual tag fee
- Need to prioritize industry needs before determining fee structure
- Determining the age of blue crabs should have priority
- **Proposal for Discussion:** ***Go to middle at $.40 tag fee, $1.00 transfer fee, 10-15% surcharge***
- Initially only have to pay license and tag fees
- $.40 tag, $.15 surcharge?
- The most the program will generate is $400,000; therefore, need to pick one item that is most important, e.g. age, marketing
- Need to think about advisory board costs first
- Blue crab license fee is new

- $.50 instead of $.40?
- $.45?
- We need to consider that a lot of people (not in this room) will not be able to afford to stay in the industry, therefore less traps, less funds generated
- Need answers regarding the health of the fishery
- Staff will try to narrow down the costs of the program
- There are far less than 600,000 traps in the water, that is an overestimate. There are not enough traps to generate program funds
- ***Amendment to the Proposal: $.50 tag fee– Straw poll indicated unanimous support of the board***
- Crabbers will not be able to afford this; can SPL and license fee be rolled in together?
- Where does the $125 endorsement fee go?
- $250 will cover shedding operation plus 400 pots
- The industry has asked for these programs, therefore it should at least try fee structure for one year to determine amount of revenue, then reassess after one year

Education Through License System

1. **Require an orientation course and/or apprenticeship program for new entries on the rules, regulations and best practices in the blue crab industry before obtaining a blue crab endorsement for both hard shell and peeler endorsements.**

	4=acceptable	*3= minor reservations*	*2=major reservations*	*1= not acceptable*
December	**13**	**0**	**0**	**0**

Member Comments, Jan. 6-7:

- Orientation programs provide regulation updates to harvesters
- Clam program works well
- ***Apprentice program should involve participation before one could buy traps; must crew for 2 weeks before transfer; should not cost anything to the industry; transfer tied to apprenticeship –Straw poll indicate unanimous of the board***
- What kind of paperwork will validate the apprentice?
- Transfer is tied to apprenticeship
- Stone crab industry is destroying itself because there is no apprenticeship program for new entrants

Evaluating Endorsements

1. **Evaluate whether endorsements should be for the vessel or the individual.**
   Members agreed to re-evaluate this objective at the January meeting pending staff research. [See page 10 of the briefing paper]

Member Comments, Jan. 6-7:

- *Discussed along with #2 below*

2. **Allow endorsements to be transferable, if moving in or out of the industry.**

	4=acceptable	*3= minor reservations*	*2=major reservations*	*1= not acceptable*
December	**13**	**0**	**0**	**0**

Member Comments, Jan. 6-7:

- Endorsement must also be individual in order to change boats
- Will have to pay for vessel endorsement and individual endorsement
- Individual endorsement will not cover others on boat
- Leave it as is; vessel and/or individual
- Staff prefers vessel only because of trip ticket reporting; e.g. splitting crew shares will result in multiple trip tickets thus inflating the data set for catches
- Should be able to go from boat to boat with individual endorsement; transfer V#
- Board is here to represent the crabber, therefore decision should be for the benefit of the crabber, leave individual endorsement
- Individual endorsement is what is used by many crabbers who work alone
- **Both: endorsements should be for the vessel or the individual – *Straw poll indicated unanimous support of the board (13-0)***

3. **Vessel requirements (***Discussed with enforcement representative at the beginning of day one, January 6th.)

Goal D: Environmental Impacts
Industry promotes practices that result in good stewardship.

Derelict Traps and Enforcement

1. **Require individuals who abandon twenty-five or more traps for more than thirty days to pay a penalty plus the cost of pulling the traps. Removal of the abandoned traps will be conducted only by commercial organizations with notice to the FFWC.**

	4=acceptable	*3= minor reservations*	*2=major reservations*	*1= not acceptable*
December	**13**	**0**	**0**	**0**

Member Comments, Jan. 6-7:

- How will traps be declared as abandoned?
- Abandoned traps will be dealt with during regional closed season
- Derelict trap fines should generate funds to cover trap retrieval
- Should allow variance for hardship
- Will fisher be assessed for traps that have been lost through cutoffs?
- FWC can fine now for abandoned traps
- FWC should be able to retrieve abandoned traps at any time
- 25 traps is a good number; make the fine $25 to generate funds
- Extensions exist in stone crab and lobster; need the same for blue crab

- Extension may be difficult when regional season closure is only 7 days
- What about stolen traps that are found in other areas, will owner be held responsible?
- Lose 3 weeks pay to have traps out for one week, one week to pull, one week out, one week to redeploy
- ***Require individuals who abandon 25 or more traps, during one week closure, will be fined, with variance for hardship – Straw poll of members unanimous 13-0***

Goal E: User Conflicts
Industry will lead efforts to resolve user conflict.

<u>Education within and outside industry to limit possible conflicts</u>

1. (*New objective from December 2003 meeting*) **Any crab under 5" leaving Florida must be in a soft shell state.**

	4=acceptable	*3= minor reservations*	*2=major reservations*	*1= not acceptable*
December	**13**	**0**	**0**	**0**

Define soft shell state – staff will bring back definition. [See page 8 of the briefing paper]

<u>Member Comments, Jan. 6-7:</u>
- **Soft-shell crab defined as freshly molted crab with new shell still tender and flexible. Add definition to objective - *Straw poll of members unanimous 13-0***

2. *(New objective from December 2003 meeting)* **Require a separate license for peeler crab operators, and establish criteria for Agency to use in order to evaluate that license holder is conducting a peeler operation from start to finish. Licensee must sell product to licensed dealers and must demonstrate competency. 150 crab by-catch is allowed for non-peeler license holders.**

	4=acceptable	*3= minor reservations*	*2=major reservations*	*1= not acceptable*
December	**13**	**0**	**0**	**0**

<u>Member Comments, Jan. 6-7:</u>
- 150 by catch in or on the water?
- Will one have to buy the $250 license for each boat? Or buy one time and get multiple 400 trap allotments?
- $250 (peeler) + $125 (hard crab) + $100 (vessel SPL) + tags could equal as much as $1,000. That will be unaffordable to many crabbers
- $1,000 is not unreasonable to be a shedder and hard crab harvesters. The free ride is over, industry needs to determine fees before it is taken out of the industry's hands
- Industry must come up with a plan to pay for itself
- Crabbers must be notified well in advance before new fees are imposed
- If average 200 fishing days then $5 per day will get to $1000
- Inactive license (e.g. illness) will still have to pay tags and license fee

- $250 should be for tank house operation, should be able to buy as many traps as you want
- Allow harvester to buy only the tags they need on a year to year basis, harvester sends in form each year before tags are ordered
- What about leasing?
- Your initial trap number take is what you will always have unless you buy more
- Region 2 needs to reevaluate the September week closure because of peeler runs; change to some undisclosed time
- ***The Board did not take any further action at this time***

II. ADDITIONAL ISSUES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Following review and refinement of the draft goals and objectives in the worksheet, facilitators offered members an opportunity to raise any additional issues or clarify any concerns for staff to considered in developing a management plan. Members raised and discussed the following additional issues or possible refinements.

<u>Member Comments, Jan. 6-7:</u>

Jimmie Crabs:
- We need to define the amount of the bait in peeler pots
- ***Must have jimmie crab in bait well(s), trap can be baited – Straw poll of members unanimous 14-0***

Shedding operations:
- ***The $250 shedder operation endorsement covers operation, allowed to get 400 traps per vessel that qualifies – Straw poll of members: 13 supported; 1 member abstained***

Hard Crab Qualification:
- For hard crabs the trap numbers should be tied to vessel landings qualification, many require issuing new separate V# to each boat
- Each boat is an entity

Trap Tags:
- ***No need to mark traps with two tags – Straw poll of members: 13 supported; 1 member abstained***

Funds Raised From Fees:
- We need to know where funds will go
- Crabbers need to determine where money will be spent

III. APPROVAL OF DRAFT GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The facilitators asked if any members of the public would like to offer comments. Ronnie Day offered the following:

- You should not have to pay to have endorsement put on every license
- Recommend portable vessel SPL
- Please notify all crabbers about the public input workshops this spring

The Board voted unanimously, 14 - 0 in favor, to approve the draft goals and objectives as refined during the January 6-7 meeting.

IV. NEXT STEPS

The staff explained the need for more time to adequately prepare the workshop draft of a management plan for review by the Commission and subsequently prepare for and plan the public input workshops. The members unanimously agreed to extend the original process schedule and hold the next advisory board meeting on May 18, 2004. Staff will send members information about the meeting location and a hotel as soon as it is available.

The facilitators reminded members that they were representing other stakeholders and urged members to continue talking about the meetings and the materials with their respective constituencies prior to the input workshops. The meeting was then adjourned.

MEETING EVALUATION FORM

Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission

Blue Crab Advisory Board

January 6 - 7, 2004
Ocala, Florida

	Agree		*CIRCLE ONE*		**Disagree**
WERE THE MEETING OBJECTIVES MET?					
♦ Agency presentation on impacts of proposed management plan scenarios	5 **9**	4 **3**	3 **0**	2 **0**	1 **0 = 4.75**
♦ Report on Agency and State Authority relative to manatee zone enforcement	5 **9**	4 **2**	3 **0**	2 **0**	1 **1 = 4.5**
♦ DACS presentation on marketing efforts	5 **11**	4 **1**	3 **0**	2 **0**	1 **0 = 4.9**
♦ Agreement on outstanding management plan issues	5 **7**	4 **3**	3 **0**	2 **0**	1 **0 = 4.7**
♦ Board consensus on draft management plan recommendations	5 **10**	4 **1**	3 **0**	2 **0**	1 **0 = 4.9**
♦ Agreement on next steps for developing recommendations for a management plan	5 **10**	4 **2**	3 **0**	2 **0**	1 **0 = 4.8**
MEETING ORGANIZATION					
♦ Background and agenda packet were helpful	5 **10**	4 **2**	3 **0**	2 **0**	1 **0 = 4.8**
♦ Presentations were effective and informative	5 **10**	4 **2**	3 **0**	2 **0**	1 **0 = 4.8**
♦ Group discussion format was effective	5 **10**	4 **1**	3 **1**	2 **0**	1 **0 = 4.75**

♦ Facilitators guided participant efforts effectively	5	4	3	2	1
	11	**0**	**1**	**0**	**0 = 4.8**
♦ Participation was balanced	5	4	3	2	1
	11	**0**	**0**	**0**	**1 = 4.7**

What Did You Like Best About the Meeting?

- Orderly & productive
- Jeff Blair [*facilitator*]
- Everyone's opinion is heard

What Could be Improved?

- *no comments offered*

Other Comments: ***(continue on back if needed)***

- Very good meeting- much was accomplished. There still remains concerns about getting exemptions in Fed waters (Peace River & St Johns) for the crabbers from manatee zones.
- Need actual cost from FWC for Trap Tag Surcharge/ Transfer