

**Public Hearing Summary**  
**Framework Action: Yellowtail Snapper Hook Requirements and**  
**Fishing Season**

**Key West, Florida**  
**March 1, 2016**

**Council/Staff**

John Sanchez  
Ryan Rindone  
Emily Muehlstein

**2 members of the public attended.**

**Bill Kelly-** Florida Keys Commercial Fishing Association

For Action 1, he supports Alternative 5. Bill knows J-hooks increase efficiency and productivity for the commercial yellowtail fishery. Release mortality is decreased with the use of J-hooks because the time fish are handled is decreased. Bill refers to a quick study done by his association that shows how much more successful J-hooks are with reducing discard mortality in this directed fishery. There are two on-the-water NOAA law enforcement officers and 55 FWC officers in the area. FWC should be included in any law enforcement discussions regarding yellowtail regulation changes to ensure the transition is efficient. Regarding Action 2, he questions how the fishing year is shifted without losing quota? He supports Alternative 2c because consistency with the South Atlantic is ideal.

**Manny Herrera-** Commercial fisherman

He took Martha Bademan, our Council representative from FWC, to experiment with a circle hook on the pluck rod they use to target yellowtail. The first fish on the circle hook was gut-hooked. The fishery off Key West is very different from the rest of the Gulf. It's a subtropical climate and the only area that does yellowtail fishing in the Gulf. The method of fishing is so different; they're fishing with tiny hooks and light of line so they don't have any issue with bycatch of other reef fish. Additionally, most of the Keys fishermen that target yellowtail in the Gulf jurisdiction don't have Gulf quota for the other reef fish so they're not even targeting the other species that could be a concern when it comes to the circle hook requirement. He supports Action 1, Alternative 5. This alternative is easiest for law enforcement because it's a small area and yellowtail fisherman don't fish more than about 20 miles north of the Tortugas. He spends more hours in the Tortugas than anyone. The area that is actually productive for commercial fishermen is very small in the Gulf. When the South Atlantic closure happened last year everyone with a Gulf permit shifted effort to fish in the Gulf near the Tortugas. The area can sustain the effort. He would like to know how many boats fishing yellowtail in the Keys have a Gulf Reef fish permit. For Action 2, the Council should keep the fishing the year the same as the South Atlantic (Alternative 2c).

**A meeting was also held in Sarasota, Florida on March 2, 2016 but, there were no attendees.**

## **2016 Yellowtail Snapper Framework Action**

### **Summary of Written Comments**

March 30, 2016

- The use of J-hooks should be allowed for yellowtail fishing but that allowance should be limited to single hook gear. It should not be allowed for longline or bandit gear for law enforcement purposes.