

Sturgeon Production Working Group Meeting – March 17, 2009

Notice of Meeting

The Florida Sturgeon Production Working Group announces a public meeting to which all persons are invited.

DATE AND TIME: Tuesday, March 17, 2009, 9:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.

PLACE: Division of Aquaculture, Fifth Floor, Conference Room, 1203 Governor's Square Boulevard, Tallahassee, FL 32301

GENERAL SUBJECT MATTER TO BE CONSIDERED: To address administrative issues and the status of commercial sturgeon production in Florida.

A copy of the agenda may be obtained by contacting: Mark Berrigan at (850)488-4033.

Meeting Agenda

FLORIDA STURGEON PRODUCTION WORKING GROUP MEETING AGENDA

FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND CONSUMER SERVICES

The Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services announces a meeting of the Florida Sturgeon Production Working Group to which all interested persons are invited. The Florida Sturgeon Production Working Group is responsible for coordinating the implementing Florida's sturgeon production management plan to promote the commercial production and stock enhancement of sturgeon

DATE AND TIME: March 17, 2009, 9:00 a.m.-11:00 p.m.

PLACE: Division of Aquaculture Conference Room
1203 Governor's Square Blvd., Fifth Floor
Tallahassee, Florida 32301

AGENDA:

1. Call to Order.
2. Introductions.
3. Administrative Actions
Approval of the Minutes
4. Sturgeon Issues:

Status reports from sturgeon production operations

Sturgeon Producers Association

Discussions regarding future actions
5. Other business
7. Adjourn

Meeting Minutes

FLORIDA STURGEON PRODUCTION WORKING GROUP
DRAFT
MEETING MINUTES
March 17, 2009

The Florida Sturgeon Production Working Group (SWPG) conducted a meeting to which all interested persons were invited on March 17, 2009, 9:05 AM to 10:05 AM. The meeting took place at the Division of Aquaculture, 1203 Governor's Square Blvd, Fifth Floor, Tallahassee, Florida. The SWPG was called to order by the acting chair, Paul Zajicek, at 9:05 AM.

Introductions

Working Group members in attendance:

Gene Evans (Evans Fish Farm)

Seth Blich (DEP)

Doug Colle (UF/IFAS)

Jim Michaels (Mote Marine Laboratory)

Marty Tanner (Aquatika Tropicals, Inc.)

Jeff Wilcox (FWCC)

Paul Zajicek (DACS) acting for the chair Mark Berrigan

Other attendees:

Neil Aymond (DACS)

Scot Eubanks (Florida Farm Bureau)

David Heil (DACS)

Kal Knickerbocker (DACS)

James Tiisler (BarronRiver Fish Farms)

Craig Watson (UF/IFAS)

Jerry Ziewitz (USFWS)

Administrative Actions

The chair communicated Mr. Berrigan's regrets for not being present because of an unavoidable conflict. Members and attendees introduced themselves. The minutes from the May 19, 2005 meeting were reviewed and approved with two minor spelling corrections.

Status reports from sturgeon production operations

Each members and attendees provided a brief overview of their sturgeon activities. Commercial members and attendee reported commercial viability with their operations with limited sale of caviar and meat products. State and federal members reported limited field work relative to the Gulf and shortnose sturgeons, potential joint restoration work between Florida, Georgia and the USFWS concerning Atlantic sturgeon in the Altamaha River, and an on-going five year review of the Gulf sturgeon recovery plan and listing by the USFWS.

Sturgeon Producers Association

The chair commented that sturgeon producers that associate for the purposes of discussing production issues (e.g., feed costs, equipment needs, disease issues) would not be in violation of Florida's Sunshine Law; however, the "bright line" occurs when producers that are members of the Working Group gather to discuss state policy, law, or regulation. The DACS did not wish to discourage producers from gathering to resolve day-to-day farm production or marketing topics. The members appreciated this clarification.

Future Actions

1. Achieving commercial shortnose production and marketing

Members and attendees discussed reviving the effort to be able to produce and market shortnose sturgeon products. The shortnose sturgeon is native to Florida and adapted to Florida conditions unlike several species cultured by the members that are not well-adapted to Florida's summertime temperatures and have require a long time to reach sexual maturity (i.e., caviar production). Shortnose sturgeon is listed as an endangered species under the Endangered Species Act as administered by the National Marine Fisheries Service. Members also discussed Canadian activities to produce and market Atlantic and shortnose products in Europe. Mr. Jeff Wilcox volunteered to work with Mr. Berrigan to become familiar with the prior effort to seek a commercial exemption from provisions of the Endangered Species Act for shortnose sturgeon and contact USFWS and NMFS representatives to determine a process to petition for an exemption.

2. Farm-to-farm Beluga fry transfer

Gene Evans reported that he is working with USFWS to be able to acquire Beluga fry from a farm in Germany. He is seeking clarification and a permit from USFWS to acquire those fry. He expects a letter from the USFWS in a few weeks and may seek SPWG assistance if the response is not favorable. Mr. Berrigan and Dr. Chapman had provided letters of support to USFWS. The chair agreed to circulate the USFWS response when received.

Next Meeting

Members suggested the next SPWG meeting occur in conjunction with the Florida Aquaculture Association annual meeting to be held at Mote Marine on May 14, 16 or 17. Meeting day and time will be confirmed by DACS after discussion with the Association.

There being no further business before the SPWG. The meeting was adjourned at 10:05 AM.