

Partnership for a Resilient Apalachicola Bay Meeting Notes
July 23, 2025

Present: David Barber, Jr, Shannon Hartsfield, Roger Mathis, Anita Grove, Grayson Shepard, Steve Rash, Ken Jones, Gayle Johnson, Ottice Amison, Cameron Baxley, Ricky Banks, Kim TNC,

The meeting was facilitated by Betty Webb. Advisory- Erica Burgess-FWC, Mitchell Mimms-FWC, Joel Trexler-FSU, Kim Miller-Anerr, Dr Andy Kane- UFL, Jeanna Harper – Anerr, Dr, Sandra Brooke- FSU, Carrie Jones-DACS, Erik Lovestrand -Franklin County Extension, Morgan Eason-FWC. Audience: Doug Brown, FSU students, Betsy Mansfield, Aden Barksdale, Morgan Krause.

Partnership business- Approve minutes, schedule fall-winter meetings.

Presentation by Morgan Krause- Futures in Apalachicola Bay: Researching the Socioeconomic impact of the collapse.

FSU economic applied master program- Evaluation of Oyster Restoration.

Erika Burgess, FWC Anaylis and Rulemaking sector leader- FWC Workshop Progress Bay Restoration. The majority of the time was spent on this FWC presentation (attached).

FWC Overarching Goals:

-Restore 2,000 acres (dependent on funding).

-Reestablish an oyster fishery with long term clutching program.

Short-term- Limited fishery opening in 2026.

Continue restoration

Keep areas closed that cannot be sustainably harvested.

Secure funding for restoration.

Rules need updating because old harvest rules do not match the current state of the resource.

-Create a new management framework for oyster harvest

-Establish an ecological threshold to open reefs sustainably.

-Provide commercial and recreational harvest opportunities on a limited basis.

-Resume clutching program. Reduce the loss of substrate from reef statewide.

Recommendation for Proposed Management Framework:

Establish a process for determining when to open a reef and setting reef-specific harvest limits.

Establish a procedure for distributing annual harvest limits (bag tags) to participants.

-Commercial and recreational

Harvest season will be: Oct. 1 through end of February (first season Oct. 1, 2026)

- Commercial: Monday – Friday
- Recreational: Saturday – Sunday

Establish Commercial Apalachicola Bay (AB) endorsement

- Option 1: Maximize individual opportunity (allows a few people to earn a living)
- Option 2: Maximize number of participants (allows many to harvest for a very short time).
- Qualifications: Individual or Crew SPL, Shellfish (BV) endorsement, Florida resident, have prior landings (year 1 only)
- Establish Apalachicola Bay Recreational Oyster (ABRO) permit
- Issued through lottery each year
- Mandatory reporting and landing locations
- Re-establish cultching program (dependent on funding)
- Update statewide culling requirements and undersized oyster tolerances
- Rule clean-up

I asked Erika about removing the City of Apalachicola from the licensing legislation f.s.379.361(5)(d) and f.s.379.361(5)(i) she said that FWC staff is not recommending to continue requiring the Apalachicola Bay Oyster Harvester license, and instead would require an FWC-issued endorsement. The license is in statute, not in rule, so FWC cannot remove it directly. However, with our constitutional authority, we can change licensing requirements through rule. If the FWC Commission moves forward with the endorsement, the City of Apalachicola will have no need to issue the license.

This will be presented at the Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission meeting August 13-14 in Havana. The meeting will also be discussing bear management and that session is expected to be very lengthy. MyFWC.com/about/commission/commission-meetings/

Committee updates. Communications, Technical, Education and Outreach, Finance.