

Goliath Grouper



Draft Rule
October 6, 2021



Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission

Version 2

This presentation provides a summary of proposed draft rules for a limited, highly regulated harvest of goliath grouper. This amendment to the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission's (FWC) goliath regulations [68B-14, Florida Administrative Code (F.A.C.)] would provide additional stakeholder access to this species while promoting continued rebuilding of the population.

*** UPDATED PRESENTATION: This presentation has been updated to address changes to the proposal made after September 10, 2021, that pertain to harvest limits, special use permits, and harvest areas. These changes have been incorporated through alterations to slides 7, 8, 9, 12, and 17. Also, some photos have been updated throughout the presentation

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Cover photo courtesy of Patrick Ford. Unless otherwise noted, images throughout the presentation are by FWC.

Overview

- Goliath abundance is increasing; positive trend expected to continue
- Goliath management requires a different approach because of biology and behavior
- Alternative goals and metrics adopted in 2018
- FWC goliath management philosophy
 - Recognize role in ecosystem
 - Manage for diversity of stakeholder values
 - Promote continued rebuilding



Today: Draft rule proposal for limited, highly regulated harvest



Goliath abundance is increasing in Florida, and this positive trend is expected to continue. However, the goliath fishery is different than other fisheries managed by FWC due to their life history characteristics and behaviors that make them more vulnerable to natural mortality events and overfishing. Thus, goliath require a unique management approach for conservation success.

Due, in part, to the fishery being closed since 1990, goliath are not suited to traditional fisheries stock assessments that rely on landings data to determine stock status. For this reason, in 2018 the Commission adopted alternative goals and metrics to better evaluate goliath's relative stock status. These goals and metrics will be further discussed later in the presentation.

FWC's management philosophy for goliath is multi-faceted. The agency recognizes goliath's role in the ecosystem as a large and important predator that helps maintain healthy, resilient natural reef ecosystems. FWC also understands that there are diverse stakeholder values for goliath and management should account for this by providing multiple means of access to this fishery while also promoting continued population rebuilding. Currently, access is provided to anglers through catch-and-release fishing and recreational divers through sightseeing opportunities.

Today, staff will present a draft rule proposal for a limited, highly regulated harvest of goliath that would provide an additional form of access to this fishery in accordance with FWC's goliath management philosophy.

Fishery Background

- Historical range: Florida to Brazil
 - Greatest U.S. abundance in south Florida
- Managed by FWC and federal councils
- Life history increases susceptibility to overfishing
- Severe decline 1950s – 1980s
 - Gather in large numbers
 - Popular fishing target
 - Declining juvenile habitats
- Harvest closed in 1990



Photos courtesy of Florida Keys Public Libraries

Historically, goliath ranged from Florida to Brazil, throughout the Gulf of Mexico and Caribbean, with seasonal movements northward along the U.S. Atlantic coast. Currently, goliath abundance in the U.S. is concentrated in south Florida.

FWC manages goliath grouper in Florida state waters. The Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council (Gulf Council) and the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council (South Atlantic Council) manage goliath in federal waters.

Numerous factors in goliath's life history make them more susceptible to overfishing, such as their large size and tendency to gather in high numbers at predictable locations, making them easy to target and catch. Prior to 1983, there were no regulatory measures specific to the harvest of goliath in state or federal waters. In the absence of regulations, the population began declining in the 1950s, and worsened in the 1980s as fishing pressure quickly expanded and juvenile habitats declined, particularly mangroves. In 1990, fishery managers responded to the decline in abundance by closing harvest of goliath in U.S. state and federal waters.

Population Rebuilding and Status

- Observations of increasing numbers of goliath
- Goliath not suited to traditional stock assessments
- Rebuilding progress has resulted in status changes
 - 2006: Removed from NOAA's Species of Special Concern list
 - Never listed under Endangered Species Act
 - 2018: IUCN status improved from "critically endangered" to "vulnerable"
- FWC developed alternative management goals and metrics to monitor goliath population in 2018
 - Indices of abundance increasing



Photo courtesy of Christopher Hill



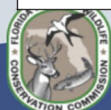
Fishery managers, researchers, and fishermen continue to observe increasing numbers of goliath in Florida. Scientists have attempted to quantify rebuilding progress for goliath since the closure in 1990 through the federal stock assessment process three times (2004, 2010, and 2016). However, goliath are not suited to traditional stock assessments and each assessment was rejected by independent expert reviewers. The federal fishery management councils' scientific advisors also rejected the assessments for use in federal management. Some of the reasons why the assessments were rejected include unknowns about life history (e.g., uncertainty about maximum age), the absence of long-term datasets (e.g., landings), uncertainty regarding historical landings, and lack of information about the stock outside the southeastern U.S.

Even though the population could not be assessed through a traditional stock assessment, the available information about stock rebuilding in the U.S. has informed how the goliath population is categorized. In 2006, NOAA Fisheries removed goliath from their Species of Special Concern list when a status report showed a significant increase in abundance in the U.S. population, with goliath re-establishing themselves in their historical range. Goliath has never been listed under the U.S. Endangered Species Act. In 2018, the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN), an independent organization, improved their listing of goliath from "critically endangered" to "vulnerable" on their Red List of Threatened Species.

Because goliath are not suited to traditional stock assessments, in 2018, FWC developed and adopted alternative management goals and metrics to monitor goliath population status. One of these metrics is indices of abundance, which is evaluated using multiple datasets and indicates Florida's population of goliath is increasing.

Measuring Stock Status: Summary of Metrics

Metric	Goal	Timeframe
Relative indices of abundance	Long-term stability or increase for juveniles and adults	Data available annually Will be reviewed at least every 3 years
Abundance on natural reefs	Increased adult density on natural reefs	RVC data collected every other year Will be reviewed at least every 5-7 years
Genetic diversity	Increased genetic diversity, low level of inbreeding	Genetic tagging data collected continuously
Population size	Increased genetic "effective population size" for Atlantic and Gulf stocks	Modeling based on genetic data possible after sampling targets met (~ 5 years)
Population age structure	Expanded presence of fish in older age classes	Age data collected continuously No substantial increase in older fish expected for at least 10 years



This table lists the five metrics FWC is using to monitor the population status.

When evaluating relative indices of abundance, FWC's goal is long-term stability in or increase of juvenile and adult abundance. Information to generate these indices are available annually and are reviewed at least every three years.

The second metric is abundance on natural reefs, with a goal of increasing adult density in this habitat. The Reef Visual Census (RVC) is conducted every other year and produces the data for this metric. This metric will be reviewed at least every five to seven years.

Genetic diversity is the third metric, with a management goal of increased genetic diversity with low levels of inbreeding. The fourth metric, population size, has a goal of an increased genetic "effective population size" (minimum population size from a genetic perspective) for Atlantic and Gulf stocks of goliath. Both the third and fourth metric require genetic tagging to conduct the evaluation, which should be complete to inform modeling efforts after five to seven years.

The final metric is population age structure. FWC's management goal for the population is the expanded presence of fish in older age classes. Since there are currently few older fish in the population (i.e., most fish at spawning aggregations are between four and 20 years old), no improvement toward this goal is expected for at least 10 years.

Stakeholder Perspectives

Opinions on goliath management are strongly held and highly variable

Why they DO support harvest

- Population rebuilt in Florida
- Overpopulated and harming ecosystem
- Seen as nuisance
- Want opportunity to harvest

Why they DO NOT support harvest

- Ecosystem importance
- Ecotourism value
- Potentially harmful mercury levels
- Rebuilding not complete throughout historic range
- Harvest should never be allowed



FWC has performed extensive stakeholder engagement to understand perspectives and desires for management of goliath. From 2017-2018, staff conducted 16 public workshops throughout the state and held a virtual workshop online, reaching over 1,600 stakeholders. This included a survey that over 800 people completed. Participants in the workshops and survey were diverse, and included recreational anglers, recreational spearfishers, for-hire captains, commercial fishermen, sightseeing divers (non-harvesters), and concerned citizens.

Staff have also received over 8,000 comments since 2017 on goliath management. Feedback revealed highly varied management philosophies for goliath among stakeholders. This feedback ranged from support for a limited harvest to support for maintaining status quo (catch-and-release only). There were several major themes including the value of catch-and-release, the desire to harvest, goliath being seen as a nuisance to anglers, importance of ecotourism as well as the role of goliath in the ecosystem, and that conservation should be a priority.

Several published studies also investigated these perspectives or looked at additional factors such as individual willingness to pay to dive with goliath or to harvest a goliath. Ultimately, opinions on goliath management are strongly held and highly variable. Those who support a harvest option typically do so because they see the population as being rebuilt in Florida, that goliath are overpopulated and harming the ecosystem, they see goliath as a nuisance when targeting other species, or they want the opportunity to harvest a goliath. Those who do not support a harvest typically point to goliath as being important to the ecosystem, their high value for ecotourism, potentially harmful mercury levels found in larger goliath, or that rebuilding is not complete throughout their historic range; or they may believe that harvest should never be allowed for this species.

Summary of Proposed Draft Rules

Proposal incorporates Commission direction, stakeholder input, goliath biology, and FWC management philosophy

- Allow recreational harvest of 200 fish per year
- 1 fish per person with permit and tag issued via lottery
- Open season: March 1 through May 31
- Hook-and-line only
- Slot limit: 20 to 36 inches total length
- Create open and closed areas for harvest
- Post-harvest requirements



Could be in place for a 2023 season

Photo courtesy of Mason Hallberg

In line with FWC's management philosophy for goliath, staff considered a variety of factors when developing these proposed draft rules. Goliath is a rebuilding stock that is becoming more abundant in many parts of Florida and is a species that serves an important role in the marine ecosystem. As abundance of goliath has increased, so have the frequency of interactions and conflicts with fishermen and divers. Requests to reopen harvest have increased in recent years. Allowing harvest would provide further access to goliath in addition to current catch-and-release fishing and diving ecotourism opportunities.

Taking into consideration FWC's management philosophy, scientific data, and stakeholder desires, staff propose the following draft rules for a limited, highly regulated harvest of goliath that would provide additional access to the fishery while allowing rebuilding to continue.

In summary, these proposed draft rules would establish recreational licensing requirements, a bag limit, an open harvest season, gear restrictions and requirements, a slot limit, open and closed areas, and post-harvest requirements for the recreational harvest of goliath in Florida state waters. The proposed draft rules would allow harvest of up to 200 goliath per year, with a limit of one fish per person per harvest season. A person would be required to obtain a recreational goliath grouper harvest permit and tag, issued via a random-draw lottery, to legally harvest a goliath. The harvest season would be open from March 1 through May 31 of each year with hook-and-line being the only allowable gear. Goliath harvested must be within a slot limit of 20 to 36 inches total length and harvest would be permitted in all state waters except those of Palm Beach County south through the Atlantic coast of the Keys and Dry Tortugas National Park. Harvesters would also be subject to post-harvest requirements.

If approved in early 2022, this opportunity could be in place for a 2023 season.

Harvest Limits

200 fish per year

- Limited number would not impact population or rebuilding
- No more than 50 fish harvested from within Everglades National Park (ENP)

Bag limit of 1 fish per person per open season

- Recreational harvest only
- Permit and tag required
 - No exemptions



Photo courtesy of Patrick Ford

Harvest of goliath must be limited to prevent overfishing and maintain progress towards management goals.

Staff recommends allowing harvest of up to 200 goliath per year, with a bag limit of one fish per person per open harvest season. The Fish and Wildlife Research Institute (FWRI) has advised that harvest of a limited number of fish as proposed is not expected to impact the population or rebuilding of the goliath stock. Rebuilding strategies for fisheries traditionally allow some level of harvest (e.g., red snapper, king mackerel). Staff coordinated with ENP to develop goliath management measures, and the Park was interested in measures that were consistent with the Park's purpose and fundamental values. This included limiting the number of goliath that could be taken from the Park. Of the 200 goliath available for harvest each year, no more than 50 goliath would be harvested from within Everglades National Park boundaries.

This opportunity would be limited to recreational harvest only. To harvest a goliath, anglers would be required to be in possession of both a recreational goliath grouper harvest permit and tag issued via a random-draw lottery. More information regarding the details of the lottery are discussed on the following slide. Additionally, individuals who are exempt from possessing a recreational fishing license would still be required to possess a permit and tag to participate in this limited harvest opportunity.

Permit Lottery

- Random-draw
 - Similar to existing alligator program
 - Two permit categories
 - Category I: including ENP
 - Category II: excluding ENP
- Limit 1 permit and tag per person, non-transferable
- Eligibility based on prior wildlife violation history
- \$10 application fee and \$500 special use permit fee
 - Intended to offset cost of program
- Each permit would include one physical tag for harvest

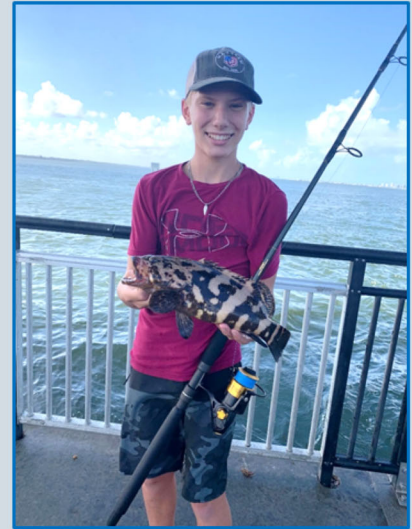


Photo courtesy of Calloway Carswell

Harvest of goliath must be limited access to prevent overfishing and maintain progress towards management goals. Opportunities to harvest goliath would be available through the issuance of special use permits, awarded through a random-draw lottery. A similar system already exists for the alligator harvest program. To participate in the lottery, anglers would be required to complete an application and pay a non-refundable application fee of \$10 during a 15-day application period that would occur between October 1 and November 30 each year; specific dates for the application period would be announced on FWC's website each year. Applicants who have been convicted of a violation related to aquatic plant control (chapter 369, Florida Statutes [F.S.]), fish and wildlife conservation (chapter 379, F.S.), animal cruelty (chapter 828, F.S.), violations of a Commission rule, or similar violations in other jurisdictions that relate to hunting and fishing, within the past five years would not be eligible to receive a permit and tag. These laws are consistent with laws listed in subsection 68-1.010(1), F.A.C., where violations may result in the denial of an application for a license, permit, or other authorization issued by the Commission.

Permits would be issued in two categories, a "Category I" permit allowing harvest in all open areas including inside ENP and "Category II" permit only allowing harvest in open areas outside ENP. Applicants could elect to apply for one or both permit categories, but could only receive one permit and tag per open harvest season. If selected in the lottery, anglers would be required to pay a \$500 special use permit fee. This proposed fee offsets the cost of materials and staff time needed to conduct this program. However, the Commission could choose to charge up to \$3,600 based on the proposed season length and the statutory limit of \$300 per week. After paying the permit fee, anglers would receive a recreational goliath grouper harvest permit that would include one physical tag for the harvest of a single goliath. The tag would only be valid for use within the specified open harvest season in the following calendar year. Permits and tags would be non-transferable.

Allowable Gear and Season

Hook-and-line only

- Use of non-stainless steel, circle hook required when fishing with natural baits
- Must possess and use a dehooking device

March through May open to harvest

- Would not overlap with spawning season (July through September)
- Less likely to overlap with red tide events



Photo courtesy of Gregg Lewis

Today's draft rule proposal would only allow the use of hook-and-line gear to harvest goliath. Goliath in the proposed size range for harvest are frequently found in areas where spearing is already not permitted (e.g., bridges and piers). Additionally, allowing spearing would present challenges for anglers to estimate length in the water to effectively comply with a slot limit. To mitigate post-release mortality of goliath that are caught and released, staff also recommend requiring the use of non-offset, non-stainless steel circle hooks when fishing for goliath using natural baits and possession and use of a dehooking device. This is similar to current requirements for other reef fish; however, these requirements for goliath will apply statewide, even where not required for other reef fish.

To avoid overlap with the spawning season of goliath, which occurs from July through September each year, staff recommends a harvest season of March 1 through May 31. A March through May season would also reduce additional pressure on goliath when they may be susceptible to impacts from red tide events, which primarily occur in the summer and late fall. Lastly, a short season that concentrates harvest effort, would aid enforcement of legal harvest, and streamline monitoring.

Establish Slot Limit

Slot limit of 20 to 36 inches total length

- Typically found in nearshore environment, prior to maturing and moving offshore
- Prevents harvest of reproductive adults
 - Supports population age structure metric
- Size range has shown the largest increases in abundance
- Minimal barotrauma concerns for released fish
- Allows harvest of a desirable fish with lower mercury level concerns



Photo courtesy of Wayne Dahlberg



Staff is recommending a harvest slot limit of 20 to 36 inches total length (TL). This would conserve reproductive adult goliath, minimize concerns associated with mercury levels, and provide an opportunity to harvest a desirable fish.

Goliath within the proposed slot limit are still in their juvenile life stage and typically weigh anywhere between 5 and 32 pounds. The proposed slot minimum of 20 inches TL coincides with the size at which goliath transition from their nursery habitat to a more estuarine environment. Most goliath within this size range are typically found in nearshore environments, prior to moving offshore and maturing into adults.

Long-term rebuilding of a stock requires the rebuilding of fish in older age classes. The proposed slot limit is consistent with FWC's alternative management goals to increase adult densities of goliath on natural reefs and expand the presence of goliath in older age classes. Individuals within the proposed slot limit have shown the largest increases in abundance in recent years. The slot minimum size limit protects the smallest individuals, which are the most susceptible to natural mortality. Conversely, the slot maximum size limit prevents removal of reproductive adults and conserves fish in older age classes.

Lastly, concerns for barotrauma of released fish and mercury levels of harvested fish are minimized with the proposed slot limit. Goliath in this size range are primarily located in shallow waters and, therefore, less likely to experience barotrauma impacts. Also, goliath within this size range generally have lower levels of mercury. Like many large-bodied fish in Florida, mercury levels in larger goliath are elevated. Regardless of the final selected slot limit, FWC would work with the Florida Department of Health (DOH) and Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) on potential consumption advisories if a harvest was approved by the Commission.

Harvest Area

Harvest allowed in state waters of Florida, except:

- Palm Beach County south through the Atlantic coast of the Keys
 - No harvest of goliath in areas of heavy dive ecotourism
 - Manages for a diversity of values
- Dry Tortugas National Park

Harvest would continue to be prohibited in federal waters



As previously mentioned, stakeholder values of goliath vary widely. FWC recognizes the importance of managing goliath dynamically by allowing continued catch-and-release opportunities, dive viewing opportunities, and ecotourism. To balance harvest opportunities with the existing ecotourism and dive viewing activity focused on goliath in southeast Florida, staff recommend allowing harvest in state waters of Florida except for Palm Beach County south through the Atlantic coast of the Florida Keys. At the request of the National Park Service, harvest would not be allowed in Dry Tortugas National Park.

Harvest of goliath would continue to be prohibited in federal waters, where FWC does not have management authority for goliath.

Post-Harvest Requirements

Immediately apply tag to goliath

- Provided in permit package

Reporting requirements could include:

- Date of harvest
- Length
- Catch location and water depth

Submit fin clip for genetics

- Equipment and instructions supplied in permit package
- Would provide needed biological information to inform management metrics



A person who harvests a goliath under the proposed recreational goliath harvest permit must comply with post-harvest requirements. These requirements include attaching a goliath tag to the harvested fish, submitting required reports, and, if requested, submitting a biological sample to FWC.

Immediately after a goliath is harvested, a permit holder must securely attach a valid goliath tag around the fish's lower jawbone. FWC would provide this tag in the permit package.

Permit holders would also be subject to post-harvest reporting requirements. Within 24 hours after harvesting a goliath, a permit holder would be required to report their harvest and information about their catch to the Commission via the Commission's online license system (GoOutdoorsFlorida.com) or via the Fish|Hunt FL mobile app. This may include information such as the date of harvest, total length, a general location and water depth where the goliath was caught, and possibly other information relevant to the harvested fish. A person who is issued a goliath harvest permit, but does not harvest a goliath, must report that they did not harvest a goliath within 24 hours following the end of the applicable harvest season.

A person who harvests a goliath may also be required to submit a biological sample, if requested by the Commission and required by the terms of the permit. This biological sample could include a fin clip from the harvested fish to be used for genetic analysis. Instructions and all equipment needed to take and submit these samples would be provided in each permit package. Information obtained from fin clips can be used to inform the Commission's goliath metrics and management goals related to genetic diversity and population size.

Additional Non-regulatory Actions

Continue ongoing efforts to:

- Recognize goliath's role in ecosystem and promote stock rebuilding
- Enhance and restore mangrove nursery habitats
- Allow catch-and-release opportunities
- Promote ecotourism and dive viewing opportunities
- Gather data for and support FWC goliath management goals



Photo courtesy of Patrick Ford

Staff will continue ongoing efforts in support of the Commission's management philosophy of recognizing goliath's role as a large and important predator that helps establish and maintain healthy, resilient natural reef ecosystems, and allowing users access to goliath while also promoting continued population rebuilding. Staff will also continue projects to enhance and restore mangrove habitats that serve as important goliath nursery grounds. Additionally, non-consumptive activities related to goliath will continue, including a popular catch-and-release fishery as well as popular ecotourism and dive viewing opportunities. Long-term data collection will also continue in support of monitoring the status of goliath and FWC's alternative metrics and management goals.

Harvest Proposal and Management Metrics

Metric	Goal	Limited Harvest
Relative indices of abundance	Long-term stability or increase for juveniles and adults	Minimal impact predicted on long-term stability or rebuilding
Abundance on natural reefs	Increased adult density on natural reefs	Maintains goal by conserving adults on natural reefs
Genetic diversity	Increased genetic diversity, low level of inbreeding	Supports data collection for metric
Population size	Increased genetic "effective population size" for Atlantic and Gulf stocks	Supports data collection for metric
Population age structure	Expanded presence of fish in older age classes	Maintains goal by conserving older age classes of fish



As highlighted earlier, the proposed limited harvest would provide some useful information for monitoring goliath stock status relative to FWC's alternative metrics and management goals.

As proposed, a limited harvest is expected to have minimal impact on the management goal of achieving long-term stability or increases in abundance of juvenile or adult goliath. The proposed harvest would target juvenile goliaths, and only a small number of juveniles would be allowed to be harvested each year. This level of harvest is expected to have a negligible impact on overall stock abundance, biomass, or age structure.

Because the proposed harvest would be limited to juvenile goliath, it is expected to maintain progress towards the management goal of achieving increased adult density on natural reefs, and to expand the presence of fish in older age classes.

Additional harvest data and biological samples received from harvesters would contribute data for evaluating the genetic diversity and genetic effective population size (the minimum population size from a genetic perspective) for the Florida population.

Considerations

- Would allow a unique recreational fishing opportunity and accommodate diverse stakeholder values
- Rebuilding progress increases goliath-stakeholder interactions
- Proposed harvest unlikely to alleviate interactions between fishermen and goliath that result in lost catch
- Current red tide in southwest Florida has resulted in mortality of goliath, but magnitude of impact unknown
- Limited harvest would add to scientific knowledge and aid FWC management goals, but would not result in accepted formal stock assessment



A limited, highly regulated harvest is possible while the goliath population continues to rebuild, and, as proposed, would provide a unique recreational fishing opportunity while accommodating a diverse range of stakeholder values.

As the goliath population continues to rebuild, interactions with goliath will continue to increase for both anglers and divers. Fishermen, particularly in south Florida, are likely to have more frequent interactions that result in the loss of catch of other species to goliath because they fish at many of the same locations where adult goliath occur and aggregate, like artificial reefs. Although some stakeholders cite these negative interactions when commenting in support of allowing some level of harvest, any level of sustainable harvest is unlikely to reduce these interactions.

The current red tide in southwest Florida has resulted in the mortality of goliath; however, the magnitude of any impact on the population from this event is currently unknown. Previous red tides have resulted in localized decreases in goliath abundance immediately after the event, followed by an increase in subsequent years.

Although data provided by a limited harvest would not result in a formal stock assessment, these data will add to existing scientific knowledge for goliath and aid in the monitoring of goliath stock status relative to FWC's alternative metrics and management goals.

Staff Recommendation

Approve proposed draft rules for a limited harvest of goliath grouper

- Allow recreational harvest of 200 fish per year
 - Max of 50 from ENP
- 1 fish per person with permit and tag issued via lottery
- Open season: March 1 through May 31
- Slot: 20 to 36 inches by hook-and-line only
- Harvest permitted in state waters except Palm Beach County – Atlantic coast of the Keys and Dry Tortugas National Park
- Post-harvest requirements



If approved, staff will gather feedback and return for a final public hearing in March 2022



Provide update in 3-5 years

Photo courtesy of Eszter Keresztes

Staff recommends approving the proposed draft rules to provide additional stakeholder access to goliath while promoting continued rebuilding of the population through a limited, highly regulated harvest. These draft rules would allow recreational harvest of up to 200 goliath per year with a maximum of 50 being harvested from within ENP. A person would be required to obtain a recreational goliath harvest permit and tag, issued via a random-draw lottery, to legally harvest a goliath. A limit of one fish per person per open season with permit and tag would be issued via a random-draw lottery. This season would be open from March 1 through May 31 of each year. Hook-and-line would be the only allowable gear. Goliath harvested must be within a slot limit of 20 to 36 inches total length and harvest would be permitted in all state waters except those of Palm Beach County south through the Atlantic coast of the Keys and within Dry Tortugas National Park. Harvesters would also be subject to post-harvest requirements.

If approved and directed, staff will gather public feedback on the draft rule and return for a final public hearing at the March 2022 Commission Meeting. Staff also recommends returning in three to five years after final approval with an update.