



WEST PALM BEACH FISHING CLUB

~ Established 1934 ~



January 2, 2017

Jessica McCawley, Director
Division of Marine Fisheries Management
Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission
2590 Executive Center Circle E, Suite 201
Tallahassee, FL 32301

Dear Jessica,

On behalf of the nearly 1,400 members of the West Palm Beach Fishing Club (WPBFC) I wanted to bring to the FWC's attention an issue that some of our members and local anglers have voiced concern over, and one that I believe has a very simple solution.

Speckled Crabs (*Arenaeus cribrarius*) are commonly caught in our region in the surf, especially around area fishing piers. The crabs appear to be quite abundant. People trap them and/or net them to eat. They are also used for bait. Anglers fishing for trophy permit are especially fond of these crabs in our region. Harvest is currently unregulated. I am not familiar with the life history or biology of this species of crab, but this time of year harvesters report a greater abundance of egg bearing crabs in the mix. The WPBFC believes that, like other species of crab and lobster, egg bearing Speckled Crabs should be protected. It is unlikely that any harvesters would have an issue with releasing egg bearing crabs since it would fall in line with similar regulations for blue crabs. The WPBFC encourages the FWC to review and consider a new regulation that requires the release of egg bearing Speckled Crabs. Perhaps there are other species of crabs like Calico and Shame-faced that are deserving of the same protection. This simple addition to saltwater fishing regulations would certainly be a pro-active conservation measure that will help keep Speckled Crab populations, and possibly others, abundant and healthy, along with the many animals that prey upon them. Such action would certainly conform to the ecosystem based management approach the WPBFC endorses.

Respectfully,

Tom Twyford, Jr.
President

Cc: Pete Schulz, WPBFC Chairman
John Jolley, WPBFC Scientific Advisor
Mason Smith, FWC Biological Scientist
David B. Snyder, Marine Scientist
Gary Croushore, Lake Worth Pier angler