



WEST PALM BEACH FISHING CLUB

~ Established 1934 ~



June 16, 2016

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

Jessica,

On behalf of the over 1,300 members of the West Palm Beach Fishing Club (WPBFC) I submit this letter of support of the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission's (FWC) proposal that would streamline and improve angler's ability to safely bring fish back from the Bahamas within the framework of state and federal fishing regulations. Many anglers have been frustrated and confused by the regulations related to this common practice in our region.

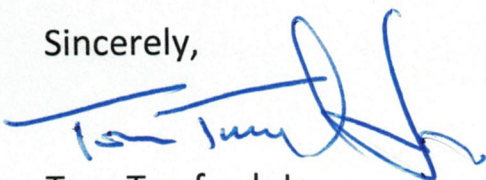
NOAA Fisheries Service has established regulations to exempt recreational harvesters from the requirement to keep recreationally caught dolphin and wahoo in whole condition when transiting federal waters while returning from the Bahamas. We support angler's ability to transit from the Bahamas with their their fileted Bahamian catch as long as they are in compliance with existing Bahamian and U.S. Federal regulations. Especially since similar exemptions already existed for reef fish. The WPBFC believes compatible regulations for Florida state waters are necessary to enable anglers to bring their Bahamian caught reef fish, dolphin, and wahoo fillets back to the U.S. legally.

The FWC's proposed rules would create much needed consistency between state waters and adjacent federal waters and make rule compliance simpler for recreational anglers to understand.

In our region, it is quite common for recreational anglers, especially during the summer months, to regularly travel from Florida to the Bahamas on small center console style boats to go fishing. These boats generally have limited cold-storage capacity, which makes storing large fish, like dolphin and wahoo, or large quantities of fish difficult. Allowing recreational anglers to fillet their fish before returning from the Bahamas is more practical and reduces food safety risks. Additionally, some anglers leave their boats in the Bahamas for extended periods of time. From a practical standpoint, storing fish as fillets over this long period would be preferred versus storing fish in a whole condition.

The WPBFC supports the FWC's recommended proposal to bring state regulations into unison with U.S. federal requirements to transit with filleted fish from the Bahamas. The opportunity to return to Florida by boat with filleted Bahamian-caught fish is very important to recreational anglers and to a great many fishing related businesses in our region. Thank you for proposing rule changes that would be consistent with federal regulations and make this common activity more practical.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Tom Twyford, Jr.", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Tom Twyford, Jr.
President

Cc: Pete Schulz, WPBFC Chairman
John Jolley, WPBFC Scientific Advisor
Chester Brewer, SAFMC & WPBFC board member