



REPORT OF THE FISHERIES FOR
FISHERS (F4F) ACTIVITIES
AT THE
70TH GULF AND CARIBBEAN
FISHERIES INSTITUTE (GCFI)
MERIDA, MEXICO
6-10 NOVEMBER 2017



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We wish to acknowledge the support received for the GCFI 2017 Fisheries for Fishers (F4F) activities from the organizations shown below, as well as assistance from many individuals. Special mention to Ruth Perry for financial support, and to Luis Rodriguez for the logistics of the fishers field trip to Progreso on the Yucatan coast. We were especially pleased to have with us a contingent of fisherwomen from Belize organised by Sandra Grant. Executive board representatives from the Caribbean Network of Fisherfolk Organisations (CNFO) attended.



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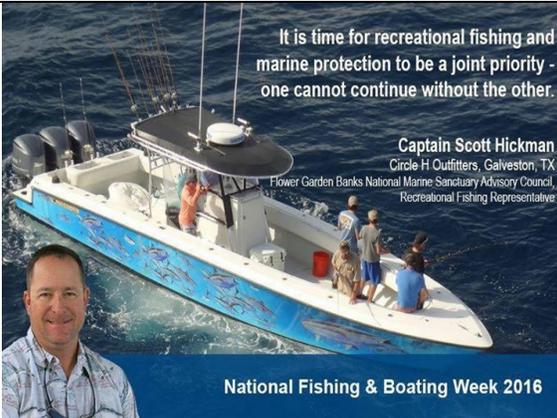
INTRODUCTION

The GCFI 2017 Fisheries for Fishers (F4F) activities at the Merida conference consisted of the Gladding Memorial Award (GMA), fishers field trip to Progreso and a planning meeting for the 2018 GCFI. In keeping with a previous decision, there was no theme-oriented panel of presentations by fishers. Instead we highlighted the oral presentations being made by fishers in the main conference — two were observed. Several other fishers listed in the program, including a past GMA winner, were unable to attend GCFI due to the hurricanes that devastated several countries. The F4F team joined others at GCFI to acknowledge the resilience of the region's fishers.

The next sections of this brief report summarise the highlights of the F4F activities with photos. Additional information on the F4F is available on the GCFI web site (visit www.gcfi.org).

GLADDING MEMORIAL AWARD

The aim of the GMA has been to recognize fishers from around the region who share enduring visions and demonstrate active support for the sustainable use of marine resources in their home countries and beyond. The presentation took place near the end of the opening day's program on Monday 6 November. The 2017 winner continued this proud tradition, and the recipient — Captain Scott Hickman — was presented with his award in the company of past GMA winners Don DeMaria (USA), Jaime Medina Flores (Mexico) and Casimiro Newball (Colombia). Will Heyman was the master of ceremonies, Vernel Nicholls of the Caribbean Network of Fisherfolk Organisations (CNFO) gave remarks and Patrick McConney offered closing words. Capt. Hickman's impressive contribution to sustainable fisheries is summarised and illustrated below followed by images from the award ceremony.

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|  <p>It is time for recreational fishing and marine protection to be a joint priority - one cannot continue without the other.</p> <p>Captain Scott Hickman Circle H Outfitters, Galveston, TX Flower Garden Banks National Marine Sanctuary Advisory Council, Recreational Fishing Representative</p> <p>National Fishing & Boating Week 2016</p> | <h3>Fishing Experience</h3> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Worked 33 years as charter boat mate and Captain.• Presently Captain (owner/operator) of his own vessel, F/V Catch Share, 37' Contender and owner of the business, Circle H Charters• For the past 5 years has been a participant in the U.S. Gulf of Mexico commercial reef fish and king mackerel fisheries• Primarily conducts a rod and reel fishery, nearly exclusively with circle hooks |
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Service Highlights

- Founding member Charter Fishermans Association which has the primary goal of promoting sustainable, science-based fishery management.
- Serves on Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council's (GMFMC) Reef Fish Advisory Panel.
- Vice chair, GMFMC's Red Snapper IFQ Advisory Panel.
- For the last 7 years, served on the Flower Garden Banks National Marine Sanctuary Advisory Council.
- Member of the Galveston County Marine Debris Task Force

National Marine Sanctuary Volunteer of the Year 2016



Influencing Fisheries Policies

- Testifying to the US Senate
- Regular visits to State and Federal law makers offices
- First permit for Catch Share Experience



Charter boat captain



Research Participation Highlights

- Spawning aggregation studies with LGL
- Artificial reef and offshore petroleum platform studies with LGL, Auburn, and U. Texas
- iSnapper: an ELB approach for the private sector with Harte Research Institute
- Developing Electronic Logbooks (ELB) for charter vessels with LGL
- Manages the Gulf Seafood Institute's ELB project in Texas, a program based on VMS systems.

Showing scientists how to catch fish





FISHERS FIELD TRIP

The fishers field trip on the morning of Tuesday 7 November accommodated around 40 participants, a third of whom earned their livelihoods directly from the fishing industry. The remainder were scientists, NGO staff, fisheries or marine protected area managers and students. Female and male fisherfolk participated. The field trip to Progreso was organised by Luis Rodriguez. By bus we visited the fish docks, the port and a fisheries cooperative processing plant. At the first stop participants observed catches from various demersal fisheries being offloaded and they discussed fishing gear with local fishers. At the latter stop (visited twice) participants saw how spiny lobster was handled, sorted and packaged for local marketing and consumption. The cooperative also provided participants with a highly appreciated lunch. Some images from the trip are shared below.





F4F PLANNING

Will Heyman, Ruth Perry and Patrick McConney held a small planning meeting on the morning of Wednesday 8 November to share ideas on innovative changes in format for the 2018 F4F events. Don DeMaria also contributed to the planning through discussion with Will, both before and after the 8 November meeting.

We discussed the desire for more vibrancy in presentations and ways in which fishers could interact with the GCFI community. The conversation included such issues as restructuring the GMA committee to include others such as young field scientists that are working with fishers, additional GMA winners, and representatives from other sub-regional fisheries-related organisations (e.g. OSPESCA, CONFAPESCA, CRFM).

We agreed that the Tuesday fishers field trip was generally working well and serving its intended aim of information sharing among fishers and non-fisher GCFI members in a practical setting while acknowledging and learning from fisherfolk in the host country. However, the organisation of fisherfolk presentations in the main conference on Monday, and the gathering of fisherfolk on Wednesday to plan for future F4F activities, require improvement.

As improvements we discussed the potential of including “roasts” or comical interpretations of scientists’ from the perspective of a fisher and vice versa in a

separate small side session if not in the main conference. This would have to be handled delicately but might bring some tension and humor into the room as the basis for discussions on fisher interactions with scientists and managers. It was noted that 'fisher', for GCFI, included the postharvest sector and women. A separate small fishers session with a flexible format could contribute to regional collaboration and replace the committee session as a general Wednesday morning activity. If agreed, the new F4F/GMA committee would then find another time slot for formally meeting.

If the Monday main conference presentation session is reinstated, F4F should allow fisherfolk speakers to talk on their preferred topics — their own fisheries experiences, challenges and initiatives — rather than within a restrictive theme. These talks would be best if accompanied by good visuals, especially video. This would allow fishers the position of authority on the subject matter, giving them more voice and confidence in this largely scientific arena. Collaboration of scientists or managers with fishers to prepare these talks should be encouraged, even if in the form of mentorship. To this end, we devised for consideration the following format and theme for the 2018 GCFI:

Non-theme: Fisher Perspectives *[to permit full flexibility on choice of topic]*

On Monday afternoon, before the GMA presentation, we will show how perspectives of fishers are key in the management of fisheries resources. Fishers are the foremost experts on their own fishing activity. In order to share their perspectives, we will offer space for three 10 minute plenary talks by role model fishers (preferably including at least two past GMA winners). It is intended that these talks will be selected long in advance and that these fishers will receive some support to develop appropriate visual aids. These talks will be driven by the fishers and might include perspectives organized as (past, present and future); perspectives on what's needed to better manager fisheries; perspectives on fisheries in an era of climate change; or other perspectives that are current issues of general interest.

On Tuesday, morning or afternoon, depending on the rhythm of fisheries in the host location we will have the fishers field trip limited to between 30-40 visiting participants.

On Wednesday morning, we will have a smaller informal session called 'Fisher Stories', in which 8 - 10 fishers will be asked to share information about their own fishing experiences. These talks will be more informal than those in plenary and might be enjoyed along with snacks shared by select non-fishers similar to the lively field trip interaction.

A draft of the entire program for F4F at GCFI in 2018 could be as follows:

Monday

Afternoon, Plenary Session (60 minutes)

- 4:30 Intro to perspectives session
- 4:35 Fisher Perspective Talk #1
- 4:45 Fisher Perspective Talk #2
- 4:55 Fisher Perspective Talk #3
- 5:05 Discussion (Speakers and GMA winners in attendance with audience)

5:15 GMA Winner Presentation

5:30 Close

Tuesday

Fisher Field Trip

Wednesday

Morning, Fisher Stories (in a side meeting room)

8:00 - 9:30 Fisher presentations about what they know best - Fisheries!

9:30 - 10:00 Discussions and plans for 2019

The F4F leaders will make every effort to implement these ideas for 2018 if there is wider agreement at GCFI board and executive levels along with support from fishers.

CONCLUSION

Although the numbers of fisherfolk at this Merida meeting were fewer than in some previous years there was very active engagement in all of the F4F activities and much local logistic support. As GCFI is evolving, so must the F4F. The reflection on needed improvements to the programme was useful and 2018 provides an opportunity to help renew critical engagement of fishers throughout the region. See you in San Andrés.