

## GCFI Special Session on the Nassau Grouper: Panel Discussion Summary

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The Nassau Grouper Panel was composed by the following presenters, in order of appearance: Y. Sadovy (The Nassau Grouper: Seeking solutions to declining landings and shrinking aggregations); V. Brown (The politics of Nassau Grouper Management); G. Garcia-Moliner (Management Experience in the Caribbean: the Nassau Grouper); C. McKinney (The history of Nassau grouper management and public outreach in The Bahamas); J. Gibson (Managing a Nassau grouper fishery – a case study from Belize); and B.X. Semmens (Charting a Course for Nassau Grouper Recovery, what we know and what we need to know) (all papers in this volume). The presenters were then joined in the panel by Mr. José Alberto Sánchez a commercial fisher from St. Croix. The rapporteurs were Yvonne Sadovy and Miguel Rolón. The discussion was moderated by Martin Russell.

The Panel was convened “to provide key background information on the fishery and management status, state of biological knowledge, current research initiatives, outreach activities, and political and fishing community challenges to achieving better protection of the Nassau grouper regionally (Sadovy this volume).” The presentations were then followed by discussion on the development of a plan of action to improve the status (endangered according to IUCN, <http://www.iucnredlist.org>) of the Nassau grouper.

The issues risen by the group included the effective management of the Nassau grouper through seasonal and area closures to protect spawning fish; outreach and education including campaigns to restaurants such that they don't buy and that people begin to expect that the Nassau grouper are on their honey moon and off the menu; the need to develop political will and public interest for the protection of fishery resource; need to regulate the recreational harvest and

The following is the statement by Mr. Sánchez regarding political will entitled: ‘La vida de la democracia humana.’ “Estamos viviendo en una sociedad regida por leyes que ayudan a vivir mas civilizadamente; hay leyes buenas y leyes malas pero estas leyes son establecidas por el ser humano o mejor dicho por nosotros. Elegimos un gobierno, un gobierno que trabaje para nosotros, que nos ayude a establecer leyes para proteger nuestro diario vivir. Tu voto te da el derecho a exigir. Nunca olvides que elegiste un gobierno que trabaja para ti. Exige tu derecho.” [The life of the human democracy: We are living in a society guided by laws that help us live with civility; there are good laws and bad laws, but these laws are established by human beings, or better said by us. We elect a government; a government to work for us that help to establish laws to protect our daily living. Your vote gives you the right to demand. Never forget that you elected a government that works for you. Demand your right.” (Literal translation by G. García-Moliner.)]

The main issues of discussion during the open session included the lack of enforcement and monitoring in areas where there is management for Nassau grouper in place. Poaching was identified as a serious problem undermining the recovery of the Nassau. A possible solution was offered: the establishment of a pan Caribbean seasonal closure – that is for the areas that still allow fishing for Nassau grouper. Other restrictions discussed were no filleting at sea, size limits (both allowing only adult harvest and banning adult harvest), area closures, and quotas. Commercial fishers and scientists need to educate each other and work together in monitoring the fish spawning aggregations to curtail poaching and help in changing the attitude of fishers toward sustainability.

It was concluded that Nassau need politics and money and that there is also a need to work with regional mechanisms to advance the conservation and protection of Nassau grouper. The next steps were identified as follows:

- i) Convene additional meetings and participate in regional meetings to discuss the pan-Caribbean management and protection of the Nassau grouper;
- ii) Awaken public interest (restaurants, tourists, hotels, general public) in the protection and conservation of the Nassau grouper through public outreach;
- iii) Awaken scientific interest in the environmental and ecological impacts on the Nassau grouper populations; and
- iv) Awaken fishers' interest in the protection of Nassau grouper such that it becomes a political issue and protection is rendered.