

FLORIDA KEYS NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARY ADVISORY COUNCIL

**Hyatt Place
Marathon, FL 33050**

October 20, 2015

FINAL MINUTES

The Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary Advisory Council met on Tuesday, October 20, 2015 in Marathon, Florida. Public Categories and government agencies were present as indicated:

Council Members

Conservation and Environment: Ken Nedimyer (Chair)
Conservation and Environment: Chris Bergh (Vice Chair)
Boating Industry: Bruce Popham
Citizen at Large – Lower Keys: Mimi Stafford
Citizen at Large – Middle Keys: David Vanden Bosch
Citizen at Large – Upper Keys: David Makepeace
Diving – Lower Keys: Don Kincaid
Diving – Upper Keys: Rob Mitchell (absent)
Education and Outreach: Martin Moe
Elected County Official: George R. Neugent
Fishing – Charter Fishing Flats Guide: Tad Burke (absent)
Fishing – Charter Sports Fishing: Steven Leopold (absent)
Fishing – Commercial – Marine/Tropical: Ben Daughtry
Fishing – Commercial – Shell/Scale: Jeff Cramer (absent)
Fishing – Recreational: Jack Curlett
Research and Monitoring: David Vaughan (absent)
South Florida Ecosystem Restoration: Pete Frezza
Submerged Cultural Resources: Corey Malcom
Tourism – Lower Keys: Clinton Barras
Tourism – Upper Keys: Andy Newman (absent)

Council alternates (present)

Citizen at Large – Upper Keys: Suzy Roebling
Conservation and Environment: Caroline McLaughlin
Diving – Lower Keys: Bob Smith
Diving – Upper Keys: Elena Rodriguez
Fishing – Charter Fishing Flats Guide: Will Benson
Fishing – Recreational: Bruce Frerer
Research and Monitoring: Shelly Krueger
Submerged Cultural Resources: Diane Silvia

Local Elected Officials

City of Key Colony Beach – Mayor Jerry Ellis
City of Key West – Mayor Craig Cates
City of Layton – Mayor Norman Anderson (absent)
City of Marathon – Mayor Chris Bull (absent)

Village of Islamorada – Mayor Mike Forster (absent)

Agency Representatives

Florida Department of Environmental Protection: Joanna Walczak

FWC Division of Law Enforcement: Captain Rob Beaton

FWC Fish and Wildlife Research Institute: John Hunt

NOAA National Marine Fisheries Service: Heather Blough

NOAA Office of General Counsel: Karen Raine (absent)

NOAA Office of Law Enforcement: Kenneth Blackburn

Dry Tortugas and Everglades National Park: Christopher Kavanagh

U.S. Coast Guard: Phil Goodman (Auxiliary)

U.S. EPA: (absent)

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, National Wildlife Refuges Florida Keys: (absent)

U.S. Navy: Ed Barham

I. CALL TO ORDER, ROLL CALL, AND MEETING MINUTES APPROVAL OF 8/18/15 DRAFT MEETING NOTES

Chairperson Nedimyer thanked *FloridaKeys.com* and Clinton Barras for making it possible to video-tape and live-stream the meeting.

MOTIONS (Passed)

Chairperson Nedimyer called the meeting to order. A motion was made by George Neugent and seconded by David Vanden Bosch to approve the minutes from the August 18 meeting. Minutes were approved without objection.

Mimi Stafford made a motion to accept the meeting agenda. Motion was seconded by Co-Chair Chris Bergh. A slight change was agreed to regarding the agenda. Billy Causey's agency report will be given in the morning and will be extended. The agenda was accepted without any objections.

Chairperson Nedimyer made the following announcements:

- The advisory council recently finished a period of recruitment for nine positions. The applications have been accepted and reviewed. The recommendations will be sent to headquarters and new representatives will be announced at the next council meeting.
- After public comment, a brief discussion may be held on the topic in order to provide feedback to the commenter and to hear from council members.
- Coral bleaching was significant this summer/fall. Many factors are contributing to this condition: climate change; El Niño, Florida Bay.

II. CORAL REEF ECOSYSTEM RESTORATION: CHEECA ROCKS

FKNMS Resource Manager Bill Goodwin gave a presentation about a recently completed coral restoration project. To view this presentation, *Crocker Reef Aid to Navigation Coral Reef Injury Restoration and Monitoring*, visit

<http://floridakeys.noaa.gov/sac/othermaterials/20151020coralrestoration.pdf>.

The sanctuary has completed a number of significant coral restoration projects over the years, including a major restoration at the *Wellwood* grounding site on Molasses Reef. The focus of this presentation was a project at Cheeca Rocks where corals were dislodged by a navigational aid that had become detached from the seafloor. The rubble left behind by the injury was cemented together and attached to the seafloor while being contained in a temporary plastic mold. Live rescued corals

were attached to the rubble, thereby creating a patch of natural looking coral reef. Funding from previous vessel grounding cases held in a general coral restoration account were used for this project. The restored reef will be monitored at various intervals for approximately 10 years.

Discussion

During the discussion, the following points were made:

- Preparation time for the project, which involved securing funds and developing a plan, was probably several hundred hours total and the field work took 60 man hours per day for 10 days.
- Two coral reef modules were produced using the loose rubble. Each module contained about 2 square meters of rubble.
- According to Bill's observations and studies at the sanctuary, corals that have been reattached and/or rescued seem to survive at about the same rate as natural corals in the surrounding areas. When all corals in one area have been seen to bleach, it usually includes those that had been rescued as well. Generally, the survival rate for rescued corals is about 75%.
- This summer, the corals that were part of this recent restoration bleached to various degrees as did the corals in the surrounding reef.
- The yellow buoy that floats on the surface at Cheeca Rocks is a CO2 monitoring buoy maintained by NOAA's Atlantic Oceanographic and Meteorological Laboratory (Virginia Key, Miami).

IV. 25th ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION FOR FKNMS

Superintendent Morton announced that the 25th celebration involves a celebration of the anniversary and other activities throughout the year. A dinner will be held at the Islander Resort, A Guy Harvey Outpost, on Saturday, November 7. NOAA Chief of Staff Renee Stone and others from the program and partner agencies will be in attendance. A family event/conservation village open to everyone will be held on Sunday, November 8 at the Islander. Guy Harvey Resorts has been a fantastic partner with the sanctuary on these events.

Deputy Superintendent for Education and Operations Mary Tagliareni gave an overview of the activities planned for the anniversary. Ms. Tagliareni pointed out that Key Largo National Marine Sanctuary will be having its 40th anniversary in December and Looe Key National Marine Sanctuary will be having its 35th anniversary in January. The FKNMS anniversary is November 16, 1990.

Note: These two sanctuaries were absorbed into the larger FKNMS as Existing Management Areas in 1990.

The conservation village events will be held from 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. at the Islander Resort on November 8. A free kids fishing clinic will be held from 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. The fishing clinic will have activity stations such as knot tying, ethical angler, "touch tank" and each young person participating will receive a free rod and reel donated by Islamorada Charter Boat Association Keys Kids Fishing Derby. Volunteers can participate in several ways, including helping with the fishing clinic, hosting a booth or assisting at a FKNMS booth. Please contact Ms. Tagliareni if you would like to volunteer. Superintendent Morton recognized Jack Curlett for helping to secure the fishing rods for the kids.

III. EVERGLADES NATIONAL PARK MANAGEMENT PLAN

Everglades National Park and Dry Tortugas Superintendent Pedro Ramos and Park Planner Fred Herling gave a presentation on the park's General Management Plan (GMP). To view this

presentation, visit <http://floridakeys.noaa.gov/sac/othermaterials/20151020enpplan.pdf>. A Record of Decision approving the GMP is expected to issue this month (October). Plan implementation is expected to begin in 2016.

Superintendent Ramos explained that he first came to South Florida 15 years ago and most recently was the superintendent at Big Cypress National Preserve. The 600 page park plan, which took nearly 13 years to develop, was released as a final draft last August. The plan was an incredible effort developed by staff with input from people in this room. Superintendent Ramos expressed appreciation for their assistance during the process. Some of the most important components of the plan involve the east Everglades and restoration of water flows into the park, including acquiring private lands for restoration. Another important component relates to Florida Bay. Currently, bay waters are exhibiting high salinities, high surface water temperatures and seagrass die-off. Restoration of sheet flows into the bay is extremely important to help mitigate for these impacts, including unexpected changes brought about by climate change. The final plan seeks to make Florida Bay more ecologically resilient.

Mr. Fred Herling has been involved in the GMP from the earliest stages. Two years ago, he and former Superintendent Dan Kimball presented a draft of GMP to the advisory council. At that meeting in 2013, the council passed a motion that made recommendations about boater access to the bay, adaptive management, boater education and the establishment of an ENP Advisory Committee. The final GMP reflects the added input sought and received from boaters and conservation groups in the bay.

Mr. Herling gave an overview of the highlights of the final plan. Many factors were considered in the analysis and subsequent zoning actions to protect resources in the bay while providing boater access. The zoned area covers approximately 144,000 acres and includes the following types of zones: poll/troll; pole/troll/idle, special protection and backcountry; idle- and slow-speed corridors. Maps showing the zones and the changes to the zones that took place between the draft and the final plan were presented and explained. An online boater education course will be required for boaters entering the bay and will be developed by the Eppley Institute (Indiana University). The park is also working with Bonefish Tarpon Trust and University of Alabama to develop a GIS navigation app that will be tied to boater education. The GMP allows for planning 20 to 30 years in advance and incorporates an adaptive management approach that involves monitoring and analyzing the results of management actions and consideration of sea level rise. Support for the final plan was expressed by eight international and national organizations, including International Game Fish Association, National Marine Manufacturers Association, Guy Harvey Ocean Foundation and others. Additional changes in the park include developing an Everglades Paddling Trail (western part) and opening Joe Bay as a paddle only zone with catch and release fishing.

Discussion

Superintendent Ramos made the following points in the discussion:

- Restoring Florida Bay is a priority. Land acquisition is underway in the eastern part of the park to acquire the lands needed to bring additional water into the park.
- Flamingo is a special place and is in need of new facilities and amenities that welcome people in a special way.
- The new park management does not have its own funding source. Actions associated with the plan will be funded through different mechanisms.

- The current conditions in the bay are cause for concern, but short term solutions won't solve the issues. Long-term actions are being planned to make the bay more resilient.
- The park is committed to building an advisory committee to provide advice on Florida Bay issues.
- The Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP) is well underway, but there are still many projects yet to be completed. The Tamiami Bridge has been built to allow more water flow to the south and another bridge is being planned with Florida Department of Transportation.
- Projects in the eastern park, when completed, will help keep water in the park and away from areas of human habitation in Miami-Dade County. Testing of the pumps that will bring more water south was delayed because of low rainfall, but is now underway.
- The levee north of the Tamiami trail needs to be degraded to increase flows to the south. This is not planned for another 15 years in the future.
- The Central Everglades Planning Project (CEPP) is not authorized yet.
- The perception that water is available for restoration but the park won't let it enter the park exists, but this perception is not correct. The fact is that there has not been one drop of water held north of the Tamiami because of water quality issues. The 10 ppb (phosphorus) rule is a court decree that the state must comply with. During the past few years, the trend is toward better water quality and the park expects this trend to continue. The fact that the projects are not fully implemented, especially in the eastern part of the park, is what is keeping water from entering the park and reaching the bay.

Regional Direction Billy Causey made the following points:

- Zoning is expected to help resolve user issues in the bay.
- The SAC was first formed in 1991 and was covered under the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA). In the reauthorization of the National Marine Sanctuary Act, advisory councils were made exempt from FACA, but still follow the basic procedures.
- The current conditions in Florida Bay are almost an exact repeat of conditions that were observed in 1987. The first advisory council was very concerned about Florida Bay and took actions to increase awareness of bay issues. During that same time period, bleaching of corals was also observed, along with seagrass die-off in the bay. Both are linked to high sea surface temperatures, which are also currently being observed.

Other points of discussion include:

- Support from the council was expressed for the boater education course, delivered through an online mechanism. The park received a grant for developing this course from Florida Bay Stewardship Committee. The course will be web-based and will be widely available, but will not be a substitute for learning in the field. Kiosks at Flamingo will also have the online course.
- The core content of the course has been developed, in part, using input from some people at this meeting. In the future, interested parties will be needed to test out the course.
- The course will be mandatory for boaters in the bay, but will be available free of charge.
- A permit will be required to boat in the bay. Permit fees will be used for law enforcement, channel marking and to manage poll and troll zones. The yearly fee will probably be in the \$50 to \$70 range and may be waived for the first six months of the new permit system. Reduced fees will be available for shorter visits.
- Advisory council support for the park's GMP was expressed. The attitude today on the part of the fishermen is much more positive and cohesive today than in the past. This change in

attitude over time is thought to be because the park took the time needed to work with the community on the issues and to come to resolutions collectively. This new approach working with the fishermen on issues and engaging them in the process took much more time and cost more, but resulted in a plan that is fairly well supported. The plan can be modified as needed, too.

- Scientific studies that described the natural resource condition and increasing trend in use helped inform management decisions, along with stakeholder involvement.
- The GIS navigation product will be developed, field tested and then made available to the commercial providers of navigation software so that it will be readily available for boaters. This product will help identify the different zones and channels for people and will be a tool that supplements their experience.
- A suggestion was made to eliminate the fee for young resident boaters in the bay to help foster stewardship of the bay resources by making the area accessible without fees. Otherwise, having to pay a fee might keep them out of the bay, preventing them from developing an appreciation of the area.
- Congratulations were expressed for garnering support from so many groups/associations.
- Support was expressed for having the council draft a resolution that supports moving forward with Everglades restoration projects. This could be an agenda item at the next council meeting. Conditions associated with Florida Bay have impacts on both sides of the island chain.

Break

IV. PUBLIC COMMENT FOR ITEMS NOT ON THE AGENDA

Julie Dick, Everglades Law Center for the Florida Keys Environmental Fund and Last Stand

- Ms. Dick congratulated Everglades National Park for the protections in their management plan. It is a great example for the sanctuary and what can be done in terms of shallow water protection and in terms of concepts as well. Poll and troll/idle zones will result in tremendous seagrass protection and significant contributions to fish and wildlife protection. These are great examples of what can go into the sanctuary's management plan and she hopes the sanctuary staff can look to that as they go through plan development.
- It was also very interesting to see how the public view of the plan changed over time. The Florida Keys is going through a similar process in relation to what needs to be in the sanctuary management plan to protect the resources here. The park's plan provides a great opportunity for ways that the sanctuary can protect resources down here.
- In terms of Florida Bay issues, she supports what Caroline McLaughlin said regarding supporting a resolution from this body asking for movement forward on restoration projects. It is devastating what is going on in the bay at this time. This body has a lot of influence.
- Ms. Dick has been involved in workshops taking place in South Miami-Dade through the South Florida Water Management District. These meetings have been discussing operational issues through the C-111 spreader canal. Agricultural is disproportionately represented at these meetings. It's unfortunate that decisions that can be made to benefit Florida Bay or to provide more flood control for agriculture. It is true that the canal water levels need to be kept higher to provide water for Florida Bay. Folks on the SAC would be welcome voices at those workshops in South Miami-Dade. Please contact her if you want to participate or find out more about the process. People involved in the process are engaged in discussions on

how water will be better managed, how it will be distributed to the bay and issues of flood control. More voices from the people in the Bay need to be heard at these workshops.

Note: For more information on South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) workshops/meetings, visit <http://my.sfwmd.gov/portal/page/portal/xweb%20about%20us/miami%20dade%20service%20center> SFWMD also holds regular meetings of the Water Resource Advisory Commission (WRAC).

Discussion (on public comment)

Chairperson Nedimyer opened the floor to comments from council members regarding issues brought up at public comment. The following comments were made:

- Support was again expressed for a resolution supporting Everglades National Park’s General Management Plan to be addressed at the next SAC meeting. The discussion will help make people aware that Florida Bay and the entire sanctuary are downstream from restoration activities.
- Any resolutions from the council are directed to Superintendent Morton. For Florida Bay related resolutions, Superintendent Morton would route the resolution up the chain through NOAA to be presented at the South Florida Ecosystem Restoration Task Force, which has a NOAA Department of Commerce representative. Past resolutions that addressed similar issues could also be included. On the state side, the resolution could also go through the Florida Department of Environmental Protection.
- This resolution is an opportunity to show solidarity throughout the community with regards to water quality issues.
- The idea of obtaining support on such resolutions from local government was suggested and received well. Such resolutions could also be voted on by local municipal councils and then sent to elected officials at the state level. This gives that cause a “voice” and shows that there is grassroots support for the idea. Any resolution passed as the council can be mirrored and provided to any body for consideration.
- In the past, certain resolutions passed by the SAC were also supported by Monroe County. Having all of the municipalities on board is something that reinforces local support for that particular issue. The resolution, once done, can be presented at local meetings to ask for local support.
- The suggestion was made to provide information about participating in the meetings held in South Miami-Dade in the minutes.
- The biggest complaint heard from people involves water quality and how this issue has to be fixed first before anything else. Now, there are tangible issues with water quality in the bay. Participating in these workshops/meetings is a way that the fishing community can get involved and show its support for improving water quality in Florida Bay.

Note: To find out more about the South Dade Investigation meetings, visit <http://my.sfwmd.gov/portal/page/portal/xweb%20about%20us/miami%20dade%20service%20center>

South Atlantic, Gulf of Mexico and Caribbean Agency Report

Regional Director Billy Causey gave his agency report. To view the presentation that accompanied this report, visit <http://floridakeys.noaa.gov/sac/othermaterials/20151020seregion.pdf>.

During the presentation the following points were made:

- Site expansion is being considered at various levels at the different sanctuaries in the southeast region including Flower Garden Banks, FKNMS and Gray's Reef.
- Some areas in Florida have expressed interest in becoming a national marine sanctuary, including Southeast Florida and Charlotte Harbor. Charlotte Harbor is holding a fund-raiser in February. In addition, Puerto Rico is interested in having more marine sanctuaries. The nomination submitted for Northeast Florida has since been withdrawn.
- NOAA has been working with the Cuba and Mexico on Caribbean issues. Both countries have protected marine zones and are considering expanding their protections. A proposal has been made to have a sister sanctuary in Cuba and a sister sanctuary network in Mexico. A draft MOU that creates a sister sanctuary system and facilitates sharing resources is expected to be signed soon. Natural resources are connected within the region naturally and invasive lionfish are a shared problem.
- Another U.S. delegation, which also included national park officials, met with Cuban officials in Cuba in July 2015. The sister sanctuary proposal with Cuba is expected to include Biscayne and Dry Tortugas National Parks. Secretary John Kerry announced this past October at the Our Ocean's Conference in Chile that NOAA was moving toward two sister sanctuary systems. Support for this action was expressed in the form of a resolution read by the Cuban delegation.

Staff Recognition

Regional Director Billy Causey and Superintendent Morton recognized Lauri MacLaughlin for her 15 years of federal service at FKNMS. Lauri was presented with a 15 year certificate and pin. Lauri recently joined the Southeast regional team.

Lunch

V. MARINE ZONING DECISION SUPPORT FRAMEWORK

Superintendent Morton explained that at this juncture in the marine zone and regulatory review process, the sanctuary is evaluating the different management options suggested by the working groups and through public input. He introduced NOAA Biogeography Marine Conservation Planner Mr. Dan Dorfman, who gave a presentation about the GIS decision support system (Marxan) developed for the sanctuary's zone review. To view this presentation, visit <http://floridakeys.noaa.gov/sac/othermaterials/20151020marxan.pdf>.

Mr. Dorfman explained that the process of supporting decision-making for the sanctuary's marine zone and regulatory review began with a biogeographic assessment of sanctuary resources. This process involved compiling existing datasets on corals, fish, benthic habitats, and other natural resources. Data from the assessment were represented spatially and provided to the three advisory council working groups charged with developing recommendations as part of the marine zoning and regulatory review. The final three sets of recommendations to be evaluated as alternatives were developed based on the overall input from stakeholders, local knowledge and spatial data on resources and resource use. The outcomes from each working group were summarized in the presentation and were based the overall goals developed by the advisory council for the marine zone and regulatory review and. To view these goals, visit <http://floridakeys.noaa.gov/review/goals.html>,

To further evaluate the working group recommendations, NOAA's biogeographic team has applied a decision-support system to evaluate the merits of proposed alternatives. The Marxan application is a

widely used decision support tool that is used to identify ecologically important areas when designing networks of managed areas. Using a set of criteria, the tool finds the most efficient spatial solution/smallest area that meets those criteria and presents that information in map form. Ecological criteria were incorporated into Marxan, which does not incorporate local knowledge or use patterns. The maps produced showed a set of areas that met the goals in the most efficient (smallest area covered) way and ranked identified key ecological areas. Other near optimal spatial results exist and other factors in decision-making should and will be considered.

Discussion

- The representation presented identified key areas that would help meet resource objectives, but did not describe or take into consideration the zone types or management actions that could be applied to any particular area.
- The tool uses hexagonal areas as measurement units across the sanctuary and that can create a slight overestimation when measuring some areas as the hexagon extends outside the existing sanctuary boundary in some locations.
- In the present scheme about 10% of the sanctuary's area is part of a zone and the Marxan model shows that 13% coverage would in theory meet the goals identified in the current marine zone and regulatory review. This is not to say that 13% of the sanctuary has to be zoned as a "no-take".
- Socioeconomic aspects will be considered in the analyses of alternatives.
- Connectivity can be incorporated into this tool system. First, the connectivity criteria have to be established and then built into the system. The tool can approach incorporating connectivity in different ways. Decisions as to which approach to use would need to be made.
- Data used in the tool were derived from many sources and different resource management and fisheries agencies. A few areas are not represented in the benthic habitat map and therefore are not part of the analysis.
- Some data are representative of larger areas and the suggestion was made to consider extrapolating these data to other areas to improve prediction ability. This is a valid methodology that could be applied.

Superintendent Morton explained that the Marxan tool modeled the data used by the working groups in making its recommendations on marine zones and regulations. This approach allows the proposed alternatives to be compared with the model results and provides a scientific way of evaluating how well the different alternatives meet the overall goals identified by the council for this process. The Florida Keys ecosystem is well studied and relatively large amounts of data were available for the analysis. It was important for the working groups to go through the process that they did to incorporate local knowledge. The Marxan tool is only one of the ways that natural resource options are being evaluated. Next steps include organizing and combining ideas and information and coordinating amongst agencies. More information will be provided to the council as this process unfolds.

Marine Zoning Website Update

Beth Dieveney gave an update on the marine zoning and regulatory review portion of the sanctuary's website. The pages for the working groups were maintained in their current condition because they were used often by people. To view the newly designed marine zone and regulatory review home page, visit <http://floridakeys.noaa.gov/review/welcome.html>. All documents will be found and compiled in this section of the sanctuary's website.

VI. PUBLIC COMMENT FOR ITEMS NOT ON THE AGENDA

No comments were offered.

VII. SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT, REGIONAL DIRECTOR'S REPORT AND AGENCY REPORT HIGHLIGHTS: DEP, FWC, NOAA NMFS Southeast Region, NOAA OGCES, NOAA OLE, NPS, USCG, USEPA, USFWS, and U.S. Navy

NOAA Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary Report, Sean Morton

- Superintendent Morton gave a presentation to FWC's Boating Advisory Council in October. At that meeting, FWC also addressed the boat congregation issue from the public safety standpoint and in terms of resource impacts. FWC would like to work with local law enforcement on these issues and stand ready to help the local enforcement. For more information on the FWC boating advisory council visit <http://myfwc.com/boating/advisory-council/meetings/>.
- The FWC also addressed the derelict vessel issue. A meeting was held in Key Largo to examine solutions and at risk vessels. The FWC Division of Law Enforcement has worked on this issue at the state level and is seeking input from the public. The highest turn-out for the public meetings held on this issue around the state was in the Keys.

FWC Fish and Wildlife Research Institute (FWRI)

- Superintendent Morton gave the report for Mr. Hunt. FWC is taking up mutton snapper management at the meeting in November. This will begin the initial discussion of trip and bag limits during spawning season. If the commissioners approve having staff develop options for consideration, a series of public workshops will be held in 2016. To find out more, visit MyFWC.com.

Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) Report, Joanna Walczak

- Ms. Walczak reported that an unprecedented outbreak of coral disease and bleaching was observed in Miami-Dade and Broward waters this summer. She is happy to report that the disease reports have declined. The outbreak seems to be over, but they are still tracking conditions. This was a large outbreak with multiple species being affected. Florida Reef Resilience survey data will be available soon and other data to provide an idea of the extent of the area affected.
- John Pennekamp Coral Reef State Park has initiated a new outreach section in the local press called Nature's corner. Volunteers and staff will provide information on nature topics.
- Bids are being taken for restoration projects at Key Largo Hammocks (Dagny Johnson Key Largo Hammocks State Park).
- Ms. Walczak introduced Karen Bohnsack. Karen is transitioning from the coral program to serve as liaison with FKNMS and will be managing the two aquatic preserves, Coupon Bight and Lignumvitae Key.

FWC Law Enforcement, Captain Rob Beaton

- Captain Beaton will now be representing FWC at council meetings. In a recent reorganization, the sanctuary squad and other elements of the FWC operation, including investigations, came under his command.

- Captain Beaton grew up on the water in south Biscayne Bay and has been in the Keys a while. He graduated from FSU. Over the past 26 years, he has worked for FWC in various capacities around the state, including on fisheries issues.
- He read the public comments on the congregation issue given at the last council meeting. Resource enforcement is always a challenge because personnel are spread across a large area addressing different issues such as trap robbing and congregations. Private monies were used to hire officers on their off hours to address the congregation issue at White Marlin Beach.
- DUI enforcement has been stepped up and numbers of arrests have doubled statewide since last year.

NOAA Fisheries Service Report, Heather Blough

- The Gulf Council has taken the following actions:
 - Approved action to increase recreational minimum size limits for gag and black grouper to be consistent with those in South Atlantic.
 - Changed the recreational fishing season start date to June 1 and eliminated fixed December season closure.
 - Begun work on new action to increase commercial minimum size limit for gag to be consistent with proposed recreational minimum size limit.
- The South Atlantic Council has taken the following actions:
 - Identified five preferred spawning area closures, including Warsaw Hole off Keys.
 - Set a control date of Jun 30, 2015, for commercial dolphin fishery
 - Began work on new action to increase commercial minimum size limit for gag to be consistent with proposed recreational minimum size limit.
 - Continues to evaluate rebuilding plan alternatives for the Florida Keys hogfish stock, including alternatives to increase size limit, reduce bag limit, establish commercial trip limit, and set a fixed 2-month recreational fishing season.
- The Council's Scientific and Statistical Committee is meeting this week to provide input on the hogfish and spawning area closure amendments; that meeting is open to the public via webinar.
- Gulf and South Atlantic Councils agreed to move the yellowtail snapper actions from the South Florida Amendment to a new stand-alone amendment to try and get some more traction on those. The commercial fishery is approaching its catch limit and expected to close early this year.
- South Atlantic Council will hold public hearing webinars on their dolphin and yellowtail actions next month and could approve those and the spawning area closure action during their December meeting in Atlantic Beach.
- Both Councils also agreed to split the joint amendment addressing electronic reporting requirements for the for-hire sector into two separate amendments; Gulf Council may approve their amendment as early as their January meeting in Orange Beach.
- A few weeks ago, NOAA Fisheries notified the Councils that spiny lobster landings exceeded the catch target for this year fishing season so they'll be required to convene a review panel to determine whether corrective action is needed. The Gulf Council has proposed that the two Council Advisory Panels suggest changes before the review panel addresses this topic. The South Atlantic Council will weigh in on that approach when it meets in December.

- Last week, NOAA Fisheries Service approved the South Atlantic Council's proposal to shift 2.5% of the dolphin allocation to the commercial sector, which will increase the commercial catch limit by about 35%.
- The following items are open for comment:
 - NOAA Fisheries is taking comments on a proposed rule to increase the Gulf king mackerel gillnet commercial trip limit, modify electronic reporting requirements, and implement a use or lose permit provision in that fishery through November 6 .
 - NOAA Fisheries is taking comments on a proposed rule that would allow recreational fishermen to bring dolphin and wahoo back from the Bahamas through November 16.
 - Saltonstall-Kennedy funds are available to support grants or cooperative agreements for fishery research and development projects through November 2. The application process is online at Grants.Gov.

Discussion

A question was asked about the status of the South Florida Joint Amendment. Ms. Blough explained that alternatives are being examined now that include making the rules more consistent but the delegation option is not being considered. To find out more about this amendment, visit <http://safmc.net/JointSouthFloridaAmendment>.

NOAA OLE (Office of Law Enforcement) Report, Kenny Blackburn

- An arrest warrant was executed this morning in Texas for Ammon Covino, the former director of Idaho Aquarium. Covino was prosecuted for taking marine life from the sanctuary and selling them in violation of the Lacey Act. He received a sentence of a year and a day and was not permitted to engage in the aquarium business. The Department of Justice, NOAA and Fish and Wildlife were involved in arresting Covino for not following the conditions of his probation.

Everglades and Dry Tortugas National Park Service, Chris Kavanaugh

- Mr. Kavanaugh is a marine ecologist at the Florida Bay Interagency Science Center in Key Largo.
- Several thousand acres of seagrass in north central and western Florida Bay are dead or dying. This information is provided by several agencies.
- A combination of factors appears to be responsible for this die-off, including lack of fresh water, delayed seasonal rainfall, high sulfide conditions and extreme low dissolved oxygen. The yellow haze was transitory and generally appeared during the most extreme high sulfide conditions in the sediments. This dying seagrass is releasing a large amount of biomass into the water column, which can lead to blooms. The park and other agencies are continuing to monitor conditions.

U.S. Navy, Ed Barnham

- The Navy is partnering with Fish and Wildlife Service, National Geographic and PBS to produce a film on endangered species, including the lower Keys marsh rabbit. Filming will take place on the base in January.
- A large pod of manatees in the residential area of the base. Unfortunately, a dead manatee washed into the marina recently.

- The Navy has been conducting worst case scenario oil spill drills. They first conducted a table top drill and then a field drill, which went well. Typically, five million gallons of jet fuel are stored on the base.

City of Key West, Mayor Craig Cates

- Mayor Cates thanked the council for giving him and the other mayors the opportunity to participate in the sanctuary process and to represent their communities. The meeting has been very valuable and he looks forward to working together to protect the environment.

Monroe County, Commissioner George Neugent

- Commissioner Neugent expressed his support for having the local municipalities participate in the advisory council process, which will promote a better understanding of the work done by the council. He has served on the sanctuary council for 18 years and lived in the Keys for 30. He has followed many issues, including water quality and increasing use of the resources.
- Impacts to residential communities have created concerns. The county commission set aside \$100,000 from the budget for an additional deputy to address on the water issues, especially derelict vessels. Derelict vessels cost the county about \$250,000 per year. More strict regulations/rules may be needed.

VIII. UPCOMING MEETING AND CLOSING REMARKS

Chairperson Nedimyer reminded everyone that the next meeting will be held at the Hyatt Place in Marathon in December.