

FLORIDA KEYS NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARY ADVISORY COUNCIL

Hyatt Place
1996 Overseas Highway
Marathon, FL 33050
Tuesday, June 16, 2015

MEETING SUMMARY

The following serves as a summary of the June 16, 2015 FKNMS Advisory Council Meeting. This summary does not constitute official minutes of the meeting. Draft meeting minutes will be distributed in advance of the June 16 Advisory Council Meeting for approval by the council.

City of Key West Seat on Advisory Council

The Honorable Craig Cates addressed the advisory council regarding his request for a City of Key West seat on the council. The advisory council passed a motion to address this issue to consider the request again at the August 18, 2015 meeting.

Marine Events and Concentrated Uses: Challenges and Issues

The advisory council heard from Nancy Finley, Florida Keys National Wildlife Refuge Complex; Captain David Dipre, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation; and Lieutenant Commander Andrew Bender, U.S. Coast Guard on issues and challenges related to marine events and concentrated uses in the Sanctuary. Topics discussed include: the definition of and what triggers a marine event; how marine events are permitted and what conditions can be addressed through the permitting process; existing management and enforcement challenges; and potential management or regulatory actions that would help address the identified challenges related to high concentration of use activities. No action taken.

Florida Keys Monitoring Program and Research Project Updates

The advisory council received updates on three targeted reef fish and coral reef monitoring programs and results from a long-term coral thermal stress research project.

Jeremiah Blondeau of the NOAA Southeast Fishery Science Center presented on the Reef Fish Visual Survey Monitoring Program. He provided background on the monitoring design, how data can be used, and general findings. He noted that data from this monitoring program can be analyzed in many different ways including inside or outside protected areas, by fish size or life stage, by habitat type, and by the following metrics of occurrence, density, and abundance, among others. This monitoring program has been underway since 1979 with refinements to the program made in 2001.

Rob Ruzicka of the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission's Fish and Wildlife Research Institute presented results from the Coral Reef Evaluation and Monitoring Program. This long-term monitoring program (1996-2015) is partially funded by the Environmental Protection Agency as part of the FKNMS Water Quality Protection Program. Rob provided background on the monitoring program design, long-term trends for benthic cover in the Florida

Keys, and provided historical context for stressors that effect benthic cover. He also highlighted additional work underway to assess coral recruitment and juvenile survivorship in the Florida Keys.

Chris Bergh of The Nature Conservancy presented on the Florida Reef Resilience Coral Bleaching Monitoring Program, a multi-partner effort that started in 2004. He provided background on the Florida Reef Resilience Program, particularly the disturbance monitoring response monitoring that surveys coral condition during and after potential impact. He highlighted data from the 2010 cold water event, the 2014 bleaching event and post bleaching assessment, and provided the current outlook for the 2015 bleaching season.

Bill Fitt of the University of Georgia presented results from his research project on coral reef genetics and thermal stress response.

Public Comment

Public comment was heard from nine individuals:

- Dottie Moses, Island of Key Large Federation of Homeowners
- Deb Curlee, Last Stand
- Richard Gomez, Key West Charter Boat Association
- Julie Dick, Everglades Law Center
- Paul Nunez, Everglades Law Center
- David Sakowski, Citizen
- Deb Gillis, Citizen
- Mike Forster, Village of Islamorada
- Steven Leopold, Citizen