

**A RESOLUTION FROM THE FLORIDA KEYS NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARY ADVISORY COUNCIL (SAC) ADDRESSING CHALLENGES AND ISSUES OF ‘CONCENTRATED USES’ AND ‘MARINE EVENTS’ FOR ANALYSIS IN THE DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT ON SANCTUARY AND BACKCOUNTRY MANAGEMENT PLAN REGULATIONS**

*Motion passed August 18, 2015 (16 in favor, 0 against)*

**WHEREAS**, the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary (FKNMS) and Florida Keys National Wildlife Refuges (FKNWRs) protect the unique marine waters and other natural resources of the Florida Keys which are a national treasure of international significance, and

**WHEREAS**, the combination of a rapidly growing population in southern Florida, increased boating activity, increased recreational activity, habitat alterations, and changes in water quality are placing continued stress on the marine resources of the Keys ecosystems, and

**WHEREAS**, the FKNMS and FKNWRs are undertaking a multi-year comprehensive review of sanctuary and refuge marine zones and other regulations, and

**WHEREAS**, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service’s FKNWRs, which co-manages 20 of the FKNMS’s 27 Wildlife Management Areas, is playing a key role in the review while simultaneously updating its own Backcountry Management Plan, and

**WHEREAS**, the 2011 FKNMS Condition Report shows that human actions, such as increasing boat groundings, coastal pollution and marine debris continue to negatively affect and degrade the habitat and living resources of the sanctuary, but may be improved with long-term management efforts, regulatory compliance, and community involvement, and

**WHEREAS**, the science indicates that improvements need to be made in understanding marine ecosystems and that different zones or regulations may be needed to best conserve Florida Keys marine resources, and

**WHEREAS**, a primary goal of the SAC during the marine zoning and regulatory review is to improve the diversity of natural biological communities to protect and where appropriate restore and enhance natural habitats, populations and ecological processes in order to: 1) reduce stresses from human activities by establishing areas that restrict access to sensitive wildlife populations and habitats, and 2) protect, improve, and maintain the condition of the many biologically structured habitats, and 3) minimize conflicts among uses compatible with the sanctuary, and 4) prevent heavy concentration of uses that degrade sanctuary resources, and

**WHEREAS**, the SAC’s Shallow Water Wildlife and Habitat Protection Working Group (SWWG) developed recommendations toward the use of vessel restrictions on access, anchoring, speed, and channel marking in order to protect critical habitats, and to address concentrated uses that diminish and destroy these habitats, and identified where high impact activities known to occur should be allowed or encouraged for public and private uses, and

**WHEREAS**, concentrated uses and marine events within the FKNMS are expected to increase along with greater visitation and use of the natural resources of the sanctuary,

**NOW THEREFORE, THE FKNMS SAC RESOLVES AND RECOMMENDS, to the FKNMS superintendent and the NWR manager that nuisance and law enforcement issues associated with *Concentrated Uses* and *Marine Events* be elevated to the appropriate agencies including FWC, Monroe County Sheriff's Office, and with NOAA and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.**

*The council is an advisory body to the sanctuary superintendent. The opinions and finding of this publication do not necessarily reflect the position of the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the Florida Department of Environmental Protection, or the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission.*