

## ***FLORIDA KEYS NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARY ADVISORY COUNCIL***

***Hyatt Place***  
**1996 Overseas Highway**  
**Marathon, FL 33050**  
**Tuesday, August 18, 2015**

### **MEETING SUMMARY**

The following serves as a summary of the August 18, 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 October 20 Advisory Council Meeting for approval by the council.

#### **Florida Keys Ecosystem Characterization**

The advisory council received updates on two long-term research efforts to characterize ecosystems of the Florida Keys.

Alejandro Acosta of Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission's Fish and Wildlife Research Institute presented on the long-term research efforts conducted in the Tortugas region including the Tortugas Ecological Reserve. He highlighted two main research efforts including data from the Reef Fish Visual Survey Monitoring Program and data from the Fish Spawning Aggregation work. Alejandro shared results showing changes in abundance, size structure, and mean density of select fish species over time from 1999 to 2014 both inside and outside the ecological reserve. He then discussed the research project to examine fish spawning aggregations and regional connectivity of fish within the Tortugas region. Through fish tagging and acoustic listening, data and imagery show how fish utilize the various habitats in the Tortugas including Riley's Hump and Dry Tortugas and their movement between these habitats in what could be considered a spawning corridor.

Shirley Pomponi with Florida Atlantic University Harbor Branch and NOAA's Cooperative Institute for Ocean Exploration presented on a multi-partner project to characterize the area of Pulley Ridge and determine potential ecological connectivity with the Florida Keys. Pulley Ridge is approximately 33 miles northwest of FKNMS and as the deepest known photosynthetic coral reef off the continental U.S. a portion of the ridge is currently a Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council Habitat Area of Particular Concern. This is year four of a five year research effort which includes habitat and species characterization, current profiling both at depth and the surface, and collection and genetic sampling of fish and invertebrate to assess connectivity between Pulley Ridge and the Dry Tortugas. Data and information from this research project are being shared with the Gulf of Fishery Management Council and FKNMS to inform management of this area. Pulley Ridge is included in the Study Area for the Marine Zoning and Regulatory Review process for potential boundary expansion options. The Advisory Council decision on this item was made at the December 11, 2012 meeting: <http://floridakeys.noaa.gov/sac/othermaterials/20121211boundarymotion.pdf>

To follow along with the cruise go

to: <http://oceanexplorer.noaa.gov/explorations/15pulleyridge/welcome.html>

See [Coral Ecosystem Connectivity 2014](#) and [Coral Ecosystem Connectivity 2013](#) to read about the project's second and third field seasons.

### **Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary Socioeconomic Monitoring**

Bob Leeworthy of the NOAA Office of National Marine Sanctuaries presented the suite of socioeconomic studies that have been conducted in the Florida Keys starting in 1995. These studies include recreation and tourism; commercial fisheries; marine zoning and marine reserves; knowledge, attitudes and perceptions; and climate change. Bob also highlighted his work to support the current Marine Zoning and Regulatory review process to provide the necessary socioeconomic analysis for the Draft Environmental Impact Statement. This includes an assessment of the current socioeconomic status of the Florida Keys and analysis of any potential change or impact due to potential modifications to marine zones and regulations. The full peer reviewed studies and summary fact sheets can be found

here: <http://sanctuaries.noaa.gov/science/socioeconomic/floridakeys/>

### **Biscayne National Park Management Plan**

Brian Carlstrom, Biscayne National Park Manager, presented on the Final General Management Plan updating the management plan and regulations of the Park. He presented highlights of some of the changes outlined in the Final General Management Plan including new slow speed zones in near shore areas, increased area designated as idle speed no wake, and new no motor zones. These changes are intended to protect natural resources, increase safety and create consistency with Florida State boat zoning regime. He also noted the closure of certain areas to protect sensitive resources including waterbird colonies and coral reef ecosystems.

### **Artificial Habitat Workshop Outcomes**

Joe Weatherby, Advisory Council Lower Keys Tourism Alternate and Artificial Habitat Working Group Chair presented outcomes from the two-day Artificial Habitat working group workshop. He provided background on previous action the advisory council has taken related to artificial habitats and provided highlights from the workshop. He presented and led a discussion on the action item before the advisory council requesting the development of an artificial habitat action plan to be included in the updated FKNMS management plan. Following discussion and public comment from one individual, the advisory council voted and the motion passed unanimously (17 in favor, 0 against).

### **Marine Events and Concentrated Uses**

The advisory council discussed the topic of marine events and concentrated uses at length at their June 16, 2015 meeting (minutes of that meeting can be found

here: <http://floridakeys.noaa.gov/sac/minutes/20150616sacfinalminutes.pdf>), however they

requested a follow-up discussion and potential action at the August 18 meeting. Pete Frezza, Advisory Council South Florida Ecosystem Restoration Member presented a draft motion for consideration. Due to previous action and recommendation by the Shallow Water Wildlife and Habitat Protection working group and consideration of the specific resource protection needs identified, the draft motion was modified to focus on nuisance and law enforcement issues and to engage the appropriate agency with authority to respond. Following Advisory Council

discussion and public comment from 16 individuals the advisory council voted and the motion passed unanimously (16 in favor, 0 against).

For more information on the Shallow Water Wildlife and Habitat Protection working group recommendations related to specific shallow water sandbar areas of interest please go to the following document: <http://floridakeys.noaa.gov/Recommendations-for-SAC.pdf> (in particular, pages 33, 35, and 95).

### **City of Key West Request for Advisory Council Seat**

The advisory council discussed the Honorable Mayor Craig Cates request for a seat on the Advisory Council at their April 21, 2015 meeting. At that time a decision was made to not add additional seats to the council. At the June 16, 2015 meeting Mayor Cates requested that decision be reconsidered by the Council. Discussion at the August 18 meeting resulted in two decision items which both passed unanimously (16 in favor, 0 against). The decision items include requesting the Superintendent offer a non-voting seat to each of the mayors of the incorporated municipalities within Monroe County (City of Key West, Layton City of Marathon, City of Key Colony Beach, and the Villages of Islamorada) and at in one year revisit this decision and consider offering a voting seat to these municipalities. Prior to the advisory council vote and decision, public comment was heard from two individuals. The Superintendent will reach out to each of the mayors to discuss their participation.

### **Public Comment**

General public comment was heard from four individuals:

- Michelle Robinson, Last Stand
- Bill Kelly, Florida Keys Commercial Fisherman's Association
- David Sakowski, Bridge of the Keys
- Dottie Moses, Florida Keys Scenic Corridor Alliance

Public comment specific to the issue of Artificial Habitats was heard from one individual:

- Bill Wickers Jr., Key West Charter Boat Association

Public comment specific to the issue of Marine Events and Concentrated Uses was heard from 16 individuals:

- Archer Miller, Kayaker
- Donna Signs, Duck Key Resident
- Deb Curlee, resident
- Bill Wickers, Key West Charter Boat Association
- Ricky Arnold Jr., Arnold's Towing
- David Petkovich, resident
- David M. Cottar, resident
- Rick Gage, resident
- Jimmy Greene, Jaily Greene and Jordan Greene, residents
- Tony Nall, resident/business owner
- Miguel Gonzalez, resident
- Cole Harrison, resident

- David Paul Horan Jr., resident
- Craig Cates, City of Key West Mayor
- Tony Yaniz, City of Key West Commissioner
- Sherry Popham, Chair Duck Key Security Advisory Board

Public comment specific to the issue of an Advisory Council seat for the City of Key West was heard from two individuals:

- Craig Cates, City of Key West Mayor
- Bill Wickers, Key West Charter Boat Association

Written public comment was also received in advance of and at the meeting. All written public comments will be available on the Sanctuary Advisory Council August 18, 2015 meeting page at [floridakeys.noaa.gov](http://floridakeys.noaa.gov).

*The council is an advisory body to the sanctuary superintendent. The opinions and findings 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.*