

Resolution of the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary Advisory Council to Create a Working Group to Develop a Voluntary Education and Recognition Program for Charter Fishing Operators

Adopted: August 16, 2016 by unanimous vote

Whereas, the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary (FKNMS) helps protect the unique marine waters of the Florida Keys that are a national treasure and of international significance, and

Whereas, over 500 species of fish have been identified in the Florida Keys reef tract, including pelagic and reef associated species, and

Whereas, a healthy and diverse fish community supports commercial, recreational, and charter fisheries, and

Whereas, total annual visitation to the Florida Keys is, on average, 2.9 million visitors, and

Whereas, 20% of all person-days spent recreating in the FKNMS are spent on recreational and charter fishing trips,

Whereas, up to 93% of these charter fishing trips are taken by visitors,

Whereas, the Blue Star program is a proven educational partnership which promotes responsible recreation and tourism and recognizes charter dive and snorkel operators in the Florida Keys,

Therefore, the Sanctuary Advisory Council of the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary resolves to create a Recreational – Charter Fishing Working Group to cultivate a voluntary recognition program for charter fishing operators which aims to:

- Recognize charter fishing operators who meet set criteria to educate their customers to conserve the special ecosystem of the Florida Keys,
- Increase the awareness and stewardship of the FKNMS within the resident and visiting angling community,
- Increase communication and partnership between FKNMS and the recreational and charter fishing community, and
- Promote FKNMS as a multiple use recreational area.

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.