

Recreational - Charter Fishing Working Group Recommendations to the Sanctuary Advisory Council



Capt. Will Benson, Sanctuary Advisory Council, Charter Flats Fishing,
Working Group Chair
Nicole Uibel, FKNMS Program Coordinator

April 18, 2017

Working Group Membership

Working Group Chair - Will Benson, SAC Charter Flats Fishing

Advisory Council Representatives:

Suzy Roebling – SAC Citizen at Large, Upper Keys

Martin Moe – SAC Education and Outreach

Joe Weatherby – SAC Tourism, Lower Keys

Shelly Krueger – SAC Research and Monitoring

Community Experts:

Brice Barr – Key West Charter Boat Association

Steve Freidman – Florida Keys Fishing Guides Association

Brooke Black – Bonefish Tarpon Trust

Trip Aukeman – Coastal Conservation Association

Gary Jennings – Keep Florida Fishing

Mike Weinhofer – Compass Rose Charters

Recreational - Charter Fishing Working Group Meetings

Workshops:

Wednesday January 25th 9:30am-3:30pm
City of Marathon Council Chambers
9805 Overseas Highway
Marathon, FL 33050

Wednesday February 22nd 9:30am-3:30pm
City of Marathon Council Chambers
9805 Overseas Highway
Marathon, FL 33050

Public Engagement Meetings:

Wednesday February 1st 6:00pm-8:00pm
City of Marathon Council Chambers
9805 Overseas Highway
Marathon, FL 33050

Wednesday February 8th 6:00pm-8:00pm
Monroe County Public Library – Islamorada
81830 Overseas Highway
Islamorada, FL 33036

Wednesday February 15th 6:00pm-8:00pm
Florida Keys Eco-Discovery Center
35 E. Quay Road
Key West, FL 33040

Working Group Objectives

Cultivate a voluntary recognition program which will:

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

Mission and Goal of Blue Star - Fishing Guides

Mission

The mission of Blue Star Fishing Guides is to promote responsible angling in South Florida through education, communication, and partnership.

Goal

The goal of the program is to develop a voluntary education, recognition, and endorsement program for charter fishing operators to expand on their awareness and knowledge, and ultimately that of their clients, about responsible angling practices, the South Florida ecosystem, and the FKNMS.

Working Group Discussion Topics

- Best Practices
- Process for Participation
 - Eligibility to Participate
 - Required Initial Training
 - Periodic Evaluation
 - Annual Refresher Training
 - Continuing Education
 - Conservation Activity
- Incentives for Participation

Best Practices for Blue Star Fishing Guides

- Serve as ambassadors for understanding and protecting the environment
- Comply with legal standards, exceed ethical standards
- Create a positive atmosphere through educational briefing
- Treat other anglers, boaters, and property owners with respect
- Choose appropriate tackle and bait for best handling practices
- Report illegal actions (including hazards), set an example
- Limit and dispose of waste properly
- Practice ethical fish harvesting - take only what you need
- Ensure guest safety

Process for Program Participation: Eligibility & Initial Training

- Eligibility to Participate:
 - Open to charter captains regardless of their license type or experience level to ensure broad participation, as long as they agree to the mission statement.
- Required Initial Training:
 - Training should be rigorous and include aspects of inshore, offshore, and flats fishing, the best practices, and information about different habitats and wildlife. Training could be done in person or online.

Process for Program Participation: Evaluation & Refresher Training

- Periodic Evaluation:
 - Meet and greet at the docks as the charter returns, captains could opt-in to a ride along, online survey for clients, checks into TripAdvisor comments.
- Annual Refresher Training:
 - On-line and take less time than initial trainings. However should keep the program and participants up to date and maintain the level of excellence expected of participating captains.
 - Quarterly newsletters could help maintain education throughout the year and provide an avenue to highlight participating guides.

Process for Program Participation: Continuing Education & Conservation

- Continuing Education:
 - Community lectures, council meetings, trainings, etc.
 - Annual dialogue meeting to discuss the program and interact with sanctuary management.
- Conservation Activity:
 - Multiple activities could fulfill this requirement
 - Encourage creativity (i.e. beach cleanup, outreach event, etc)

Incentives to Participate



- Promotion of participating guides by NOAA
- Receiving educational materials for clients
- Networking with other guides, agencies, advisory council
- Marketing opportunities through articles, radio shows, outreach, website promotion, etc

BLUESTAR DIVE BRIEFING

You are in a very special place - welcome to Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary.



What is FKNMS?

- Part of a national program to protect unique marine resources
- All waters surrounding the Keys, from Miami through the Tortugas
- Created by Congress to protect North America's only living barrier coral reef

The Coral Reef Ecosystem: It may look like rock, but coral is alive and delicate.

- Made up of living organisms; colonies of tiny animals which create hard exoskeletons to protect soft, anemone-like bodies
- Home to 25 percent of all marine fish species
- Fragile and slow-growing, taking hundreds and even thousands of years to build

Sanctuary Zones: What type of zone are you in? What are its rules and regulations?

- FKNMS is divided into types of "zones" that determine what activities are, or are not, allowed
- Some zones separate different user activities, such as fishing and diving
- Other zones are for research only, or preserve large spawning and nursery areas

Planning to Dive or Snorkel the Florida Keys?
Look before you book!

Ask if your operator is
BLUE STAR recognized



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Namaste Eco-Excursions of Key West earns sanctuary Blue Star certification

October 18, 2016

NOAA Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary announced yesterday that Ecovest of Key West, Florida is the newest participant in the Sanctuary's Blue Star Operator certification program. Ecovest's customers have been certified Blue Star operators since its inception in 2005. Ecovest has shown that dedication and passion for the protection of the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary and its resources.

The Blue Star program, which recognizes operators that commit to providing responsible and ethical dive experiences, the highest standards for customer service and safety, and that have a strong environmental ethic, is the result of a lengthy selection process that includes an application, an interview, and a final diving certification. Ecovest is the only operator in the Key West area to receive this certification.

Blue Star Operator Certification: Ecovest's customers have been certified Blue Star operators since its inception in 2005. Ecovest has shown that dedication and passion for the protection of the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary and its resources.

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NOAA Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary
October 18, 2016

Congratulations to Rainbow Reef Dive Center on becoming our newest Blue Star operator. If you are diving in the Florida Keys remember to book a Blue Star operator - <http://floridakeys.noaa.gov/onthewater/bluestar.html>



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floridakeysnoaa.gov

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Taylor Hunt, Lars Viben and 67 others

Recreational Charter Fishing Working Group Recommendations Summary

1. We acknowledge the commitment and contribution of Advisory Council and community members who served on the Recreational – Charter Fishing Working Group.
2. We request that the Recreational – Charter Fishing Working Group Recommendations be forwarded to the Sanctuary Superintendent for development of a Blue Star Fishing Guide program.

Working Group Resources

Website: <http://floridakeys.noaa.gov/sac/blueAngler/blueAngler.html>



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Recreational & Charter Fishing Working Group



The Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary is working with charter fishing operators to develop a voluntary education and recognition program. This Blue Angler program may be modeled after the current [Blue Star](#) program for charter dive and snorkel operators.

The Sanctuary Advisory Council created a [community working group](#) to help develop this program. Following a series of meetings, this working group will provide recommendations to the Advisory Council in April of 2017. Upon consideration of these recommendations, the Advisory Council may direct FKNMS to move forward in developing Blue Angler for 2018.

Advisory Council Lead - [Will Benson](#)

Objectives

Members

Schedule

Notes

Meeting Notes

Meeting Agendas and Meeting Summaries will be posted as available.

January 25th Initial Workshop

- [Agenda for Initial Workshop \(190 kb\)](#)
- [Meeting Summary of Initial Workshop \(125 kb\)](#)

Other Materials

- Home
- About Your Sanctuary
- Visit the Sanctuary
- Explore the Sanctuary
- Get Involved
- Management
- Water Quality
- Advisory Council
- Marine Zones
- Sanctuary Science
- Maritime Heritage
- What's New

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Blue Star Fishing Guides

