

FLORIDA KEYS NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARY ADVISORY COUNCIL

**Hyatt Place
1996 Overseas Highway
Marathon, FL 33050
Tuesday, August 15, 2017**

FINAL NOTES

SANCTUARY ADVISORY COUNCIL MISSION STATEMENT
(adopted unanimously, December 6, 2005)

Council Members

Boating Industry: Bruce Popham (Chair)
Tourism – Lower Keys: Clinton Barras (Co-Chair)
Citizen at Large – Lower Keys: Mimi Stafford
Citizen at Large – Middle Keys: George Garrett
Citizen at Large – Upper Keys: David Makepeace
Conservation and Environment: Ken Nedimyer
Conservation and Environment: Chris Bergh
Diving – Lower Keys: Don Kincaid
Diving – Upper Keys: Elena Rodriguez
Education and Outreach: Martin Moe
Elected County Official: George R. Neugent
Fishing – Charter Fishing Flats Guide: Tad Burke (absent)
Fishing – Charter Sports Fishing: Steven Leopold
Fishing – Commercial – Marine/Tropical: Ben Daughtry
Fishing – Commercial – Shell/Scale: Justin Bruland (absent)
Fishing – Recreational: Ken Reda
Research and Monitoring: David Vaughan
South Florida Ecosystem Restoration: Pete Frezza
Submerged Cultural Resources: Corey Malcom
Tourism – Upper Keys: Andy Newman (absent)

Council alternates (present)

Boating Industry: Karen Thurman
Citizen at Large – Upper Keys: Suzy Roebling
Conservation and Environment: Caroline McLaughlin
Diving – Lower Keys: Bob Smith
Diving – Upper Keys: Michael Yasky
Fishing – Charter Sports Fishing: Richard Gomez
Fishing – Charter Fishing Flats Guide: Will Benson
Tourism – Lower Keys: Joe Weatherby
Tourism – Upper Keys: Lisa Mongelia
South Florida Ecosystem Restoration: Jerry Lorenz

Local Elected Officials (present)

Key Colony Beach: Hon. John DeNeale
City of Marathon: Michelle Coldiron

Agency Representatives (present)

Florida Department of Environmental Protection: Joanna Walczak
FWC Division of Law Enforcement: Capt. Dave Dipre
FWC Fish and Wildlife Research Institute: John Hunt
NOAA Office of Law Enforcement: Kenneth Blackburn
National Park Service, Everglades and Dry Tortugas National Park: Chris Kavanagh
U.S. Coast Guard (USCG): LT. Quentin Long and CDR Blanca Rosas
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), National Wildlife Refuges Florida Keys: Daniel Clark
U.S. Navy: Edward Barham
Dry Tortugas National Park: Glenn Simpson, Meaghan Johnson

**I. CALL TO ORDER, ROLL CALL, AND MEETING MINUTES APPROVAL OF 04/18/17
DRAFT MEETING NOTES**

Pledge of Allegiance

Roll Call

MOTION (passed)

A motion to approve the minutes was made by George Garrett and seconded by Ken Nedimyer. The minutes were approved. A motion to adopt the agenda was made by Ken Nedimyer and seconded by Mimi Stafford. The agenda was adopted without change.

Opening Remarks

Chairperson Popham welcomed everyone and thanked Clinton Barras and FloridaKeys.com for the video streaming and the work of the FKNMS staff in preparing for and executing the meeting. He reminded council members that several council seats will be open for recruitment in the near future. Recruitment is open to everyone. Current members are welcome to reapply.

Office of National Marine Sanctuaries Director, John Armor

ONMS Director Armor stated that he has enjoyed his visits to the Florida Keys and getting to know members of the advisory council. He made two national level announcements:

- Executive Order 13972, which was issued in April, directed the Secretary of the Interior to conduct a review of national monuments, including the five national marine monuments managed by NOAA (Papahānaumokuākea, Pacific Remote Islands, Marianas Trench, Rose Atoll and Northeast Seamount). The Secretary of Interior was expected to consider seven criteria when examining these monuments. NOAA was asked to lead the review of the marine monuments. The public comment period garnered more than a million comments focused mainly on the terrestrial monuments. The Secretary's recommendation for the monuments should be released in a few weeks.
- Executive Order 3350, America First Offshore Energy Strategy, also affects marine sanctuaries and monuments. This order requires that in the future, all proposed or expanded areas undergo a

review by Department of Interior to determine the potential energy and mineral resources that would be affected by the newly proposed or expanded area. A retrospective element of this order directed the Secretary of Commerce to examine the designations and expansions of sanctuaries and monuments designated in the past 10 years. Evaluation criteria include whether the size of the area is right, whether the all of the consultations and interagency deliberations were conducted and what opportunity costs were incurred regarding energy resources that are no longer available because of that designation. The public comment period for this item closes today (August 15); to date we have received 86,000 comments, which is an amazing response. This order would only affect FKNMS if a boundary expansion were proposed. If expansion is proposed, the sanctuary is already required to consult with Department of Interior, Bureau of Ocean Energy Management. This EO should not impact FKNMS.

- The budget for the Office of National Marine Sanctuaries has been relatively stable over the past decade at 50 million dollars. The President's budget request for FY18 is 48.9 million. The house request is 52 million and the Senate request is 51 million.

Introductions—Superintendent and Deputy Superintendent, John Armor

Director Armor introduced Lisa Symons as the new Deputy Superintendent for FKNMS. She has been serving in this role as Acting for the last 13 months. Over the years, Lisa has served in a number of different roles in both the sanctuary system and within NOAA. She has worked on sanctuary designations and as enforcement and response coordinator across the system for ONMS.

Deputy Symons explained that last week she celebrated 26 years with NOAA. She noted how important it is to have good support for field staff and to provide resources to the field. She has an operations and policy background and sees FKNMS as part of the larger system of marine sanctuaries. She and Sarah will be reaching out to the community to leverage partnerships and to the council for expertise and advice. She is looking forward to working with everyone.

Director Armor introduced the new FKNMS Superintendent, Sarah Fangman. Superintendent Fangman most recently served as Superintendent for Grays Reef National Marine Sanctuary. In the short time she was there (2014 to present), she made Gray's Reef NMS something special in the community. She has a steady hand and will be focused in her role as the leader of the largest and most complex sanctuary in the system.

Superintendent Fangman thanked the council for their commitment, passion, and energy. While she has spent time underwater here, she has not had that much experience in the community and looks forward to learning from council members and working toward the future. Superintendent Fangman has been briefed by staff about the regulatory review process and is aware of the hard work that has been put into this process by council members. She is happy to join in and help move things forward.

Comments/Questions

Martin Moe asked about the executive order to review sanctuaries for energy development. He noted that this topic has been in the news and NOAA will be accepting public comments through August 15. Mr. Armor clarified that FKNMS is not specifically subject to the reviews.

Caroline McLaughlin asked about the review of sanctuaries and monuments, and expressed support for the system as a whole. She suggested that the council consider drafting a letter of support while

noting that the comment deadline is today. She noted that it is good to show support for the system of protected areas in general, even when FKNMS is not going to be affected. Chairperson Popham was not able to fulfill Ms. McLaughlin's request to have this as an agenda item. He suggested at this point that individual public comment would be the best avenue to express support for those monuments.

Richie Gomez noted that a meeting about water quality in South Florida was recently held in Tallahassee and inquired as to why FKNMS was not in attendance. Commissioner Neugent, who attended the meeting, clarified that the meeting was held to discuss Senate Bill 10, which deals with water flows south of Lake Okeechobee. He noted that he represented sanctuary interests at this meeting.

Chris Bergh pointed out that Sarah would be working with state partners and asked about her experience in that area. Sarah acknowledged how different the Gray's Reef NMS site is compared to FKNMS. In her capacity there, she worked extensively with state partners in Georgia to manage the resources and looks forward to doing the same in Florida.

II. SANCTUARY ADVISORY COUNCIL MEMBER AND ALTERNATE INTRODUCTIONS & CONSTITUENT PRIORITIES

Chairperson Popham asked for member and alternate introductions and for them to share the perspective of the constituency they represent including their interests, any issues of note, and opportunities to better engage with that constituency.

- Boating Industry – Bruce Popham and Karen Thurman (alt.)
 - Bruce stated that the only obstacle to the activity of boating is financial. People can write a check to purchase a boat and yet have no boating education. For many reasons, reaching boaters can be difficult. A grant proposal for an on-line boater education course (for 100k) has been submitted to the Water Quality Protection Program special projects grant program, administered by EPA. He would like to explore opportunities to partner with this program to ensure its success and will look into funding opportunities. The grant does not say anything about the cost to take the course. There may be additional need and opportunity to support this grant proposal. Everglades National Park is in the process of implementing boater education.
- Citizen at Large (Upper, Middle, and Lower Florida Keys)
 - Upper Keys – David Makepeace and Suzy Robeling (alt.)

David explained that the majority of our constituents gain economic value from our resource; however, they also have a strong concern for the ecological value. Most people understand this connection between the environment and economy, but some do not. There are also regional interests between the upper, middle, and lower keys. Upper Keys citizens are concerned about day trip visitors while Key West citizens are worried about cruise ship passengers. While different, these are similar issues. The Upper Keys has a strong presence in the dive community and the sports fishing communities (although this presence is common throughout the Keys). Everyone wants to protect the resource; they just see the fix differently. He and Suzy field many calls from people asking them to not take away their fishing spots by creating new marine zones. They also receive calls from people advocating more protection and zones. The role of this body is to listen to both

- and to find the common ground.
 - Middle Keys – George Garrett
 - George has a long time history in marine management in the Keys. He was involved in the creation of the sanctuary. Of note is the effort and progress made to address wastewater treatment and water quality in general. Canal restoration is also being addressed. Climate change is an issue that needs to be dealt with seriously in this country. He has a huge respect for what the council and sanctuary stand for and are trying to accomplish.
 - Lower Keys – Mimi Stafford and David Hawtof (alt.)
 - Mimi has a background in marine biology and has lived in the Keys for many years. The biggest concern she hears is the degradation of the environment, specifically the water quality. This is an issue throughout the Keys, but Key West experiences poor water often from outside sources. It is concerning, and it is not just a local issue. Poor water quality from sedimentation, algal blooms, etc. have caused a great loss of sponges, invertebrates, and seagrass in recent times. In places like Western Sambo, the fish can be plentiful, but are not viewable because of the poor visibility. She feels we need to encourage people to be proactive and to be a part of the solution.
- Conservation and Environment
 - Ken Nedimyer and Jessica Dockery (alt.) – Ken previously represented the Marine Life seat on the council when he was a tropical fish collector. In 1998, after seeing the back-to-back bleaching, he saw the changes in the reef. This was a turning point for him and he began to focus on conservation. He runs the non-profit Coral Restoration Foundation based in the Upper Keys. His alternate is Jessica Dockery who is the director at MarineLab, which is the “Seacamp” of the Upper Keys. Her constituency is people who participate in outdoor marine education. Coral Restoration Foundation also conducts marine education programs and has the coral reefs as its main constituency. The coral reefs are an ecosystem that has fish, conch and other marine life. The reefs are experiencing a downward spiral and he is working to change that situation. He spends his time working on coral restoration to help bring the reefs back.
 - Chris Bergh and Caroline McLaughlin (alt.) – Caroline McLaughlin is employed by the National Parks Conservation Association, a non—partisan, non-profit organization dedicated to protecting the interests of the national parks. The NPCA has 3 million supporters in the county. The importance of understanding the connectivity in the region has been mentioned and is an important consideration for the sanctuary. Chris is the director of The Nature Conservancy’s Conservation of South Florida. As a longtime resident of the Keys, he has experience diving, fishing and engaging in water related activities and employment. He understands the importance of the industries to the Keys economy. The primary interest of this seat is in conserving the environment; however, they are also interested in the sustainability of the commercial and recreational industries. This seat is focused on protection and conservation of native species. The natural resources have intrinsic value and need protection. It is about a finding the balance. He thinks that is what Congress intended when it created the sanctuary—to find that balance.

Today, things are somewhat different than they were in 1997, which is one reason for the marine zone and regulatory review is needed. The natural resources are in decline for the most part, which is evident in the 2011 FKNMS Condition Report. The Florida Keys have been studied more than most places, which provides a wealth of scientific data and information. However, we still see the decline of coral cover, which continues because of bleaching and disease. Science is never good enough itself, but does tell us what can be seen and that is the coral cover has dwindled in the past 30 years. Coral is not just beautiful, it protects us from storms and provides habitat. Seagrass scarring has doubled in the past 20 years. The Water Quality Protection Program has worked to identify sources of pollution and implement corrective actions as it was meant to do, but water quality is not quite there. There are some local issues and some water quality issues that originate from elsewhere in the Caribbean and Gulf. There are many bright spots; several species are making comebacks and some actions can be done to better address the ecosystem changes. The issues in the Everglades affect the sanctuary and we need to stay involved in restoration efforts, including the South Florida Ecosystem Restoration Task Force. Sources of pollution or stress that are outside the sanctuary need to be addressed. Funding for monitoring and science is generally down and it takes funding to improve things. Mandatory boater education could help aid in resource protection. The sanctuary should invest more effort in active habitat restoration. Marine zoning could be more effective with larger zones protected for longer time. The pace of change requires the sanctuary to take action, including the frequency of the regulatory review should increase. We need to be better equipped to adaptively manage and not wait 20 years between regulatory reviews. Chris explained that several conservation groups came together to create the Marine zoning works for me campaign, which supports learning about how marine zones work (marinezoningworksforme.com).

- Diving
 - Upper Keys – Elena Rodriguez and Michael Yasky (alt.)
 - Elena noted that the Florida Keys is where more discover SCUBA and open water classes are given than anywhere else in the states. Just as the other businesses, they depend on the tourism in the Keys, which is a double-edged sword. We cannot keep up with the demand, yet we need the tourism to sustain our businesses. Second tier businesses provide services to those tourists. The Upper Keys dive centers have independently come together to do more marine debris clean-ups. They also appreciate the sanctuary’s Get Into Your Sanctuary event. The Blue Star program has been good for businesses that are more conscious. They look forward to getting more shops involved in Blue Star and the launching of the Blue Star fishing as well. Many good regulations are on the books, but more funding and effort needs to be devoted to enforcement.
 - Lower Keys – Don Kinkaid and Bob Smith (alt.)
 - Don stated that there are essentially two groups of divers in Lower Keys: visitors and experts. Visitors are on charter boats: roughly 1.5 million snorkelers, 600 thousand divers. Most of these people have not heard of the sanctuary. The Blue Star program encourages this knowledge; however, not all dive briefings include sanctuary information (turnover in dive industry accounts for some of this).

Lobster mini season visitor count varies from 30,000 to 40,000, but we have to spend months returning coral heads after this season. In the future, additional closure zones may be necessary. The number of boats and people accessing the water is steady and high throughout the Florida Keys. This country is one of the few places where lobstering and spearfishing is allowed using SCUBA. In other places, these activities are conducted by snorkelers only. In terms of outreach, the challenge is to make contact with visitors before they arrive to provide awareness and education (sending flyers, getting on dive shows, etc.). Licensing is needed for all boat operators. While on the water, he has almost been hit on a number of occasions by poor boaters. Professionals introduce people to the underwater world and should include more than safety information. Dive mates are mostly entry level. The company needs to have a conservation policy in place. Bob Smith has extensive national SCUBA experience and has been in the Keys for over 40 years. Diving business is now offered at the college (Florida Keys College). Conservation has become more important in recent years in the diving community, even though it is an abstract concept for many people. The dive charter and training professionals could be a valuable tool because of their role in having access to the target audience. We need to instill the value of conservation. Once they have that value, then you can teach them.

- Education and Outreach – Martin Moe and Kasey Fey (alt)
 - Martin stated that education and outreach is the glue that holds it all together. Education is how things are known, understood, and recognized. The Keys has about 68,000 residents and hosts about 2 million visitors per year. This is the equivalent of 18,550 people per mile per year, which makes the goal of outreach and education a challenging one. This is not an easy task in a culture that is about environmental exploitation. Often rules and regulations that benefit and protect the environment are not embraced by those who utilize the resources. The history of the FKNMS is a testament as to how a free society can come together and recognize the need for protection of the resources. Protection and restoration become more imperative as visitation increases. Advisory council should continue to focus on education and enforcement, which has always been strong, and is even more important now. Visitors need to know about and recognize environmental protections and FKNMS zones and regulations. It is critically important that the public be aware of the fragile nature of ecosystem. This is the daunting task that the sanctuary and its staff face in terms of education and outreach. He recommends the formation of a working group to identify the ways to reach people and involve the council. As volunteers, advisory council members can engage through meetings, sanctuary staff, etc.

- Fishing
 - Recreational – Ken Reda and Bruce Frerer (alt.)
 - Ken is in the marine service industry and his family has been in the Upper Keys for several generations. Recreational fishing, also called sport fishing, is fishing for fun. This is in different from commercial or substance fishing. The hook and line method they use dates back to 4th century BC. Current saltwater recreational

fishing industry attracts 11 million anglers annually. Florida recreational saltwater fishing provides \$3.3 million annual and 29,000 jobs. Fishing supported the need for development in the Keys. Arguably, recreational fishing is the main driving force behind real estate values and sales. According to the Marine Manufacturer's Association, 70 percent of boating activities involve recreational fishing. This activity is at the heart of a good "I remember when story"...and part of our lives in many ways. Fishing drives many local industries. Locally recreational fishing has a large constituency. Almost everyone has recreationally fished in many different places and using many different methods. While diverse in the targeted species, the anglers agree that the best days are behind them. In the past, recreational anglers were concerned with where to fish, how to reach them and what sort of bait to use, etc. Today, they worry about detailed regulations including how many and what size fish can be kept. However, it was this free-for-all approach that has impacted the resource so drastically. Most agree that some regulations are necessary; however, they are mixed as to whether there should be more restrictions. They all agree that the government should be fair. They often feel that some of the actions of the other users and/or commercial activities are the reason their enjoyment is being restricted, limited or denied. The recreational fishing community supports protection, education, and longevity as long as it is fairly approached. Bruce Frerer is the alternate and he was not able to attend today.

- o Charter Flats Fishing – Tad Burke (absent) and Will Benson (alt)
 - Will provided an overview of flats and sports fishing in the Florida Keys. He would like to take issue with the statement that separates the fishing from the tourism industry. He feels there is little separation between charter fishing and tourism. The flats fishing constituency is a sustainable fishing venture – catch and release. Flats fishing generates \$473 million in annual revenue to the Florida Keys. There is a difference between the upper, middle, and lower Keys. In the Lower Keys, the flats fishing community had a 'protect the sanctuary' campaign in light of the potential to dredge the Key West channel for larger cruise ships. This campaign caused some discord with the Key West Chamber of Commerce, which supported dredging. Businesses and the Lower Keys community do support the sanctuary. Flats fishermen have three main areas of concern: (1) water quality and everglades restoration, which is the single biggest thing facing us right now; (2) groundings, poor boater etiquette, and the need for boater education. (He is on the water more than 270 days a year and sees these impacts regularly. It is heartbreaking and something should be done about it.); and (3) sustainability of the resource. Are we at capacity for what the resources can handle? We need to decide how to manage sustainably before the ecosystem collapses. He cannot emphasize enough how important it is to stand up for the environment and to have a sanctuary superintendent who will do the same. It is great to see recreational fisherman recognized through the Blue Star fishing guides program – we care and have experience, and we want to offer that testimony. Finally, the condition report did not discuss tarpon, bonefish, and

permit – those fisheries are collapsing yet are not mentioned in the report card.

- o Charter Sports Fishing – Steve Leopold and Richie Gomez (alt)
 - Steve has been a charter captain for the past 30 years and has represented the charter fishing community in many ways over the years, including as a member of the council for the last seven years. The SAC process gained support from the fishing community in the Upper Keys when the sanctuary allowed baitfishing in the SPAs based on user conflicts and fishing concerns. The process worked for us then. He has great respect for the SAC members and he is a big fan of the sanctuary and its staff. He feels it is very important to make decisions based on current science and professional user experiences. Decisions based on perceptions only prevent a fair understanding and successful outcome. He did not agree with a fishing presentation given at a recent SAC meeting. He feels that when fishing presentations are given, SAC members should be given equal time to respond and an open discussion should be held so that both sides of the issue can be heard. Fishing guides have been on the water every day for years and can provide priceless information. My professional constituents feel strongly there should be no additional closures. He and his constituents feel that fisheries are and should be managed by the fishery agencies. The greatest impact to the reef and seagrass areas is not fishing pressure. Please consider implementing an open discussion format when releasing the DEIS. The Lower Keys are very different from the Upper Keys regarding fishing pressures. He is most familiar with Upper Keys issues and feels that the formation of a Lower Keys seat should be considered.
 - Richie agrees that the Lower Keys should have a seat rather than an alternate seat because there are differences between the two. He has extensive experience in the charter business in Key West and now owns his own business. Spending 300 days on the water makes one an expert on local fishing and diving. Besides protecting the environment and sustaining the fisheries, his main mission in joining the sanctuary council is to bridge the gap between fisherman, divers, environmentalist, scientists, and resource managers. There has been a huge gap and disrespect there, and that needs to be remedied. He would like to see the serious fisherman united with the sanctuary. Allies should not allow themselves to be adversaries. He believes that we all need to keep an open mind to listen to science as well as to the expert witnesses who rely on the sea. When this happens, fishermen can finally feel that they are not the chosen scapegoat, but they are the chosen stewards. Fisherman are stewards. Fishing is a huge tourism industry here –and in the Lower Keys if they feel they are being singled out, and the Chamber and Lodging Association will come to their aid. This is the basis of this misunderstanding and he is here to change those attitudes.
- o Commercial – Marine/Tropical – Ben Daughtry and Linda Kruska (alt.)
 - Marine life collectors catch tropical fish for public aquarium, etc. This industry is different from other commercial endeavors. We are a small low impact, low biomass fishery from a commercial standpoint. We are also the most restricted

fishery within the sanctuary. It is prohibited to collect tropical in the marine sanctuary, except where the state has allowed collection. This creates some uneasiness among marine life collectors. This group is proactive at that state and federal level. It is important to understand that SPAs have decreased user conflicts, but they have not acted to restore the reef. The science shows that the resources are not protected in a SPA, but are protected in ecological reserves. He feels that protecting the resource is what is most important and why he is engaged. We need to focus on protecting the resource, which is not what SPAs are doing; ecological reserves are designed for that. He has participated in working groups and observed that some people were looking out for themselves, but not for the resources, which is where the focus should be. Moving forward, we need to be science based in our decisions. We need to preserve our environment, but also preserve our livelihoods, which are dependent upon the environment.

- Commercial – Shell/Scale Justin Bruland (absent) and Jeff Cramer (alt.) (absent)
- Research and Monitoring – Dave Vaughn and Shelly Krueger (alt.)
 - Dave serves as director of Mote Marine Lab in the Florida Keys. He feels it is important to realize the complex connections between Everglades and the Keys and the ecological differences between the backcountry, the inshore reefs, the offshore reefs, and other ecosystems, which are so diverse. The Keys are certainly not simple in an ecological sense. Several monitoring programs are in place in the Keys, including water quality and coral monitoring. Mote monitoring programs include the red tide, a citizen science program C-Ocean, BleachWatch, etc. which are funded through NOAA and the Protect Our Reef license plates. The coral reefs have been impacted by bleaching events in the '70s and '80s, and several more hot years over the last 12 years have caused stress on the corals. While there are many impacts on coral reefs, climate change is the top impact, which is not necessarily locally fixed. The sanctuary's condition report gave the state of the resources and was a wake-up call for everyone. This was the purpose behind the three working groups that were formed as part of the marine zone review. The groups did a great job and the sanctuary did a wonderful job vetting things with the public. He chaired the coral restoration working group and is encouraged by the new technologies being applied. He hopes restoration will be a part of the updated management plan focus and will go beyond corals. Opportunity for engagement exists with the few hundred researchers here in the Keys from all the different agencies and colleges. These scientists are a great resource for the sanctuary. Dave recognized Ed Lindelof for his contributions as interim superintendent.
- South Florida Ecosystem Restoration – Pete Frezza and Jerry Lorenz
 - Jerry described the history of this council seat. A few years ago, a meeting was held in Key West focused on ecosystem connectivity. The need for this seat was recognized because of the connectivity that exists in the region and the seat was created. Under the direction of this seat, a working group was formed. This group held workshops and provided presentations about influences at the regional level, outside of the sanctuary's

boundaries. Topics included Everglades restoration, Florida Bay and sea level rise. The purpose was to bring this information to sanctuary constituents. When the ecosystem management plan review began, the ecosystem protection working group was dissolved. This seemed to be the right choice at the time. However, now we do not have as strong a connection to the external science and connections with the Florida Keys. He would like to see the focus back on the external influences because they are so strong. Pete stated that marine zoning is a form of restoration, and his constituents feel we need to improve upon and expand our marine zoning scheme in order to have ecological benefits. He emphasized that they would also like to see the connection between Florida Bay and the Florida Keys acknowledged again. The lack of flow into Florida Bay has set off cascading ecological effects such as hypersalinity, algal blooms, seagrass dieoff, etc. Opportunities to engage include attending meetings, research, monitoring, restoration and they will continue to act as liaisons between the constituents and the council. The ecosystem protection working group was a great way to engage with the constituents.

- Submerged Cultural Resources – Corey Malcom and Diane Silvia (alt.)
 - Corey is director of archaeology for the Mel Fisher Maritime Museum, a non-profit organization with the focus of exploration research and education. Corey noted that the geography of the Keys is unique. Dr. Diane Silvia is the alternate and is an expert in archaeology. She could not be here today. The Southern end of Florida serves as a gateway to Gulf of Mexico. The Florida Keys has maritime heritage sites that are significant at national, international levels, sites that are old and new – many thousand submerged culture resources exist here in the Florida Keys. Cultural resources are a significant part of the sanctuary. At the time the sanctuary was designated, cultural resources was the most contentious subject with treasure hunters. Now, it is less contentious. He has worked on many projects with the sanctuary throughout the Keys. He and Diane agree that education and outreach is one of the most important issues in the Keys. They need to understand the rules and why the rules exist. Lots of research happening here now. More and more research is being done in the Keys, and that information leaves the Keys. This information should be pulled together for people to access it from one place. There is a great opportunity to promote all of the maritime heritage resources – the shipwrecks, galleon trail, shipwreck trail, etc. Diving on these sites could take pressure off the reefs if people dove on shipwrecks. The state of submerged cultural resource is good, but the sanctuary should promote a better understanding and knowledge of these resources.

- Tourism (Upper and Lower Florida Keys)
 - Upper – Andy Newman (absent) Lisa Mongelia (alt)

Lisa mentioned that under Andy’s direction, the Tourist Development Council produces ads that are eco-friendly. (Andy could not attend today.) Lisa is the director of the History of Diving Museum. This seat’s constituents, one of which is the Islamorada Chamber of Commerce, are concerned about water temperature, the amount of litter in environment, lionfish and pollution. The chamber would like to be more proactive with improving awareness regarding these issues. They are concerned about the new Everglades use with business and

private entities. The Key Largo Chamber likes the FKNMS sign on the road leading into the Keys. Since they are the first stop on the way into the Keys, they have a goal to develop an educational outreach display to promote Blue Star and Blue Star fishing and reef safe sunscreen. The Key Largo Chamber would like to work with the marine sanctuary and NOAA to create the best branding beginning in Key Largo and continuing to Key West. Creating a virtual dive is also included in their budget plan. Messages should also be geared toward people who are involved in cultural activities. Lisa has been diving since the mid-1970s and feels most people are here to keep those resources healthy. It is important to develop ways to talk with people who do not get in the water and keep the message open and broad to keep tourists well educated and happy. They are also supportive of law enforcement and FWC activities.

- o Lower – Clinton Barras and Joe Weatherby (alt.)
 - There is a lot of ignorance about the sanctuary and what the council does. Many people think the sanctuary manages the fisheries. The Key West Chamber of Commerce supports the environment, but feels the sanctuary hurts tourism (the only body that expressed that). They do not want to see any more closures on fishing and would like all fisheries councils to have the same regulations. The other chambers (Marathon, Lower Keys, Islamorada, Key Largo) expressed support for the sanctuary. The Lower Keys Chamber wants the visitors and others to be able to report any issues they see to be more proactive in protecting resources. The Lodging Association indicated that the sanctuary supports tourism and want to see protections on what people come here to enjoy, but they do not want to see more fishing regulations and closed zones. The Marathon Chamber thinks the sanctuary works, but methodology is flawed and the sanctuary really needs to support the commercial industries. When ride share was being proposed in Key West, the only people who were vocal were the negative comments. We have plenty of support here at the sanctuary, but if you look at public comment the majority of them are negative. He wants to move forward on better educating the community on what the sanctuary does and the economic importance that the sanctuary has on our tourism driven industry. He understands the pressures that come with increasing tourism. People need to know that after an area has been closed to fishing for about five years, many better fishing occurs in nearby waters. It is important to work toward balancing tourism and environmental protection.
 - Joe has been a charter boat captain for 32 years and is on the water all the time. He has heard many dive briefings and thinks that tourists enjoy knowing they are in the sanctuary and learning about the environment. They want to feel like they can help. In general, he thinks we have been losing the battle on messaging, especially during the regulatory review meetings, which brought together people with opposing views on marine zones and closures. He has discussed the importance of messaging with other council members and sanctuary staff. One of the challenges is the geography of the area; getting to a meeting is not the easiest thing for people. He acknowledged Sarah for making Gray's Reef NMS important and known in the community and feels that we need to make our

sanctuary known and popular, which will be difficult because of the pressures on the resources. Messaging is important and right now the messages are not clear. There are some positive stories that could be told. People want clean water, law enforcement, and messaging. They want people to know they are in a sanctuary.

- Local/County Government Representative Commissioner George Neugent: Commissioner Neugent read from a column written by Carl Hiassan about the dieoff of turtle grass in Florida Bay and what this ecological degradation could mean to the economy. This column was written in 1992 and now the same thing is occurring again. This subject is close to all of us, and we are involved in the recovery. This is a problem that has occurred over many years through inaction of our elected officials. It is time to determine who is going to move this forward through the state and through the capital. He was at the Tallahassee meeting referred to earlier in this meeting, and worked hard to get Senate Bill 10 passed. (It was a marginalized version of the original bill.) Florida Bay suffers from pollution, high salinities; floods take place north of here in the Kissimmee watershed. Everglades restoration plans (CERP and CEPP) have been halted for a number of reasons, and need to get back on track. He has worked on the council for many years and knows the expertise of the council members. He has been working on behalf of the sanctuary and environment to mandate wastewater infrastructure improvements to the Keys. The total cost to implement wastewater upgrades was one billion dollars from a county of 76,000 people. On August 24, they will be celebrating the completion of the improvements. Some funding help was obtained from the federal and state governments, but most of the funding came from the residents of the county. He works with the different agencies on different issues. The state of Florida has recognized the Florida Keys as a site of critical concern, which helps this county resonate with our elected officials. He is on the executive committee of the Gulf of Mexico Consortium, which was able to provide funding from the state and federal levels for water quality issues. The Tourist Development Council (TDC) funds have budgeted money to help with the National Wildlife Refuge's new visitor center. The TDC has agreed to keep certain funds for brick and mortar projects and not advertising, which came about because of relationships at this table.

Superintendent Fangman: Superintendent Fangman expressed her gratefulness to the council members for sharing their stories and perspectives. She noted that she heard passion, commitment and that means a lot to her. It touches and inspires her. In order to absorb this information, she took notes and plans to watch the video. The council has given her a gift and she is here to learn and listen and will keep doing so. She knows she has an army of people to help her and many lifetimes of knowledge and experience to depend on. She is touched, honored and extends her thanks to everyone.

III. DRAFT ADVISORY COUNCIL 2017-2018 WORK PLAN

Clinton Barras, FKNMS Advisory Council Co-Chair and Tourism – Lower Keys Member and Beth Dieveney, Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary, gave a presentation that can be viewed here: <https://nmsfloridakeys.blob.core.windows.net/floridakeys-prod/media/docs/20170815sacworkplan.pdf>.

Co-Chair Barras explained that the upcoming year will be focused on lead up to and release of the draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS). Meeting agendas will focus on certain topics that are being analyzed in the DEIS. A core subcommittee will be flushing out the process in more detail.

Ms. Beth Dieveney gave an overview of the work plan framework and meeting agenda proposal. Upcoming meeting dates and proposed meeting topics were reviewed. She noted that an advisory council meeting will be held immediately following the release of the DEIS for a briefing and Q&A. This would be followed by public meetings throughout the Florida Keys, Miami and Fort Myers. The public comment period would be long and would span at least two advisory council meetings to allow the advisory council meetings to hear from the public before providing the sanctuary with input and recommendations. The release date of the DEIS is still to be determined.

IV. PUBLIC COMMENT

Barry Wray, Florida Keys Environmental Coalition

Mr. Wray represents the Florida Keys Environmental Coalition, which was formed after the Deep Horizon oil spill. The purpose of the group was to get 400 people or so trained in Hazwoper as a responsive network to be able to protect the environment. The coalition's mission is to protect the ecosystem and to support initiatives that protect the ecosystem. He liked what Chris Bergh said earlier and supports all of the ideas that Chris put on the table for consideration. He is working in that same direction. One of the initiatives that he has been recently working on with the Upper Keys and Middle Keys Action Networks is to help reduce single stream plastics here, get rid of straws unless they are truly biodegradable. The idea is that when these things get lost they do not represent a hazard to the animals. Another thing they are doing along the same lines is trying to improve periodic cleanup processes here in the Keys. There are a few great initiatives. To add to that frequency and engage the community in a structured effort is tough. Many people have come before and tried to do this, but it is one of the things the coalition thinks it can help amplify. The coalition's goal is to get behind these groups, add value to them, and proceed forward. The reef is experiencing death by a thousand cuts. Everyone knows this. He always asks, "When does this become an emergency?" Ninety-five percent of the coral out there has been lost for whatever reason, whether it be nearshore water quality or because we have pollutants from the center of the state. People are burying their heads in the sand and acting like it is nothing. Some of our scientific resources should be employed to trace the sources of those pollutants. There are markers for all of the nutrients that come down the pipe. This is our responsibility. This is a sanctuary, a refuge; it should be protected. Those assaults should be addressed legally. Pollutant sources should be identified and the responsible people should have to pay. They are destroying things. He thinks it is a great idea to require recreational boaters to have an educational course. He did not have one, but he educated himself using Coast Guard auxiliary materials. Seagrass scarring has doubled over the time and this is a shame. David Makepeace's class conducted seagrass restoration using bird stakes. He thanked David. There are many outstanding people in this room--Martin Moe, Ken Nedimyer and so many others. We need to act and consider this as an emergency. Drastic things have to happen and things have to change. That does not mean ignoring the people who are commercial fishers. There has to be a transition. When commercial fishermen are asked to go along with closing and protecting an area, this ensures that fish grow larger and there are more of them to fish for. When we protect and restore corals and the ecosystem, we also restore tourism. He encourages everyone here to

take action and to take things very seriously and do important things. He thanked everyone.

Douglas Hattendorf, Mama Ocean

Mr. Hattendorf represents Mama Ocean, which was started a few years ago because as Barry said this place is covered in garbage. Styrene, trap rope, plastics and other trash affects marine life such as whales, turtles and dolphins. Shorebirds and seabirds eat trash. Frigate birds bellies are full of bottle caps and you don't see them offshore any more. He worked on the water for twenty something years, diving, fishing. Mama Ocean is trying to stop the garbage and are doing this on their own. They need more people involved. This stuff is killing animals all day long. He has been at some festivals to educate people about the plight of birds and other animals. Trash also breeds mosquitoes. King high tide will be here in October and the sunbaked plastic, styrene, rope is going to be carried out to sea. Therefore, it is important to do all that can be done to remove trash at this time. Crews are needed every day in the upper, middle and lower Keys. He thanked everyone.

Alison Johnson, Oceana

Ms. Johnson is the Southeast Campaign manager for Oceana. She knows many people in the audience. She worked for FWC as a marine biologist for eight years. Oceana is the largest international advocacy company in the world with offices in 10 countries. They are based in DC and she works out of Key West. She really wants everyone to know that Oceana has a number of campaigns that may be of interest. One campaign defends national monuments. Other campaigns involve climate change, stopping seismic and drilling defending the Magnuson-Stevens Act, the Marine Mammal Conservation Act and the Endangered Species Act. They have been very successful with coalition letters and have counterparts in DC that follow Congressional sessions. She welcomes people who are interested in any of these campaigns.

Monica and Frank Woll, Florida Bay Outfitters

Ms. Woll stated that she and her husband Frank wanted to come today to meet everyone and lend a voice to the discussion. They own Florida Bay Outfitters, which they started 26 years ago. She has not heard paddling mentioned so far at the meeting, but wants everyone to know that this is an eco-friendly business. They are doing cleanups all the time. She gave a shout-out to Suzy Roebing who is one of their part time guides. She met her in a master naturalist class offered in the Keys. They are all about protecting the sanctuary, which surrounds all of us. They try to attend Florida Bay, which is in her backyard. There are so many meetings and work, too.

Comments (Advisory Council)

- Ken Nedimyer announced that corals spawned last year and he has been observing this event over the years. An entire coalition of people from all over come down to help with collecting the fertilized eggs and taking them back to the nursery. His group is also breeding corals that have certain traits that help them survive in the environment. They have had great success collecting fertilized eggs and larvae. Other agencies/institutions working on this include FWC, MOTE. He is very proud of their work. Co-Chair Barras added that the Tourist Development Council has awarded tourist tax money totaling over 750,000 dollars to Mote and Coral Restoration Foundation for replanting coral.

V. AGENCY REPORTS: SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT, REGIONAL DIRECTOR'S REPORT AND AGENCY REPORT HIGHLIGHTS: DEP, FWC-FWRI, FWC-LE, NOAA NMFS Southeast Region, NOAA OGCES, NOAA OLE, EPA, NPS, USCG, USEPA, USFWS, and U.S. Navy

Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, Captain Dave Dipre

The following actions were taken during the two-day Sport or "mini" lobster season:

- FWC issued 170 marine resource related citations, 166 boating citations and 430 warnings. About 20 physical arrests for a variety of resource violations were made. Monroe County Sheriff's office also made some cases.
- An additional 50 officers came down to patrol and three offshore patrol vessels were on the water from the Content Keys to Key West. Nearshore vessels could focus on nearshore issues. An additional 10 officers were dispatched on land throughout the Keys.
- Officers covered the week before, during, and following the Sport Season and into the first week of regular season.
- While numbers of people participating in lobstering may seem to be less, the numbers of citations and arrests were not less.
- Captain Dipre is grateful for the hard work of his fellow FWC officers, the US Coast Guard, Florida Highway Patrol, and Monroe County Sheriff's office. It was a very concentrated effort and people did a phenomenal job. FWC spent about 60 to 70k for additional assets. Three FWC officers were placed at each Coast Guard Station and road along with the Coast Guard. This season law enforcement had the Keys saturated. FWC officers staffed the ramps and other locations where boaters were coming to land.

Dry Tortugas National Park, Glenn Simpson

Park Manager Simpson thanked the council for allowing him to participate today. This is his first advisory council meeting.

- The park recently completed a foundation document, which is a planning tool and is not decisional document. This document restates the values and objectives of the park and available publicly.
- Two different lighthouse projects are underway. One is a three-year project to stabilize harbor light and the other involves transferring the Loggerhead Key light station from the USCG to the park.
- The park is beginning to see more lionfish and will be focusing on them.
- An increase in sea turtle nesting numbers was observed.
- The park is adding law enforcement positions in October (increasing from 2 to 4) and are about to be fully staffed in law enforcement.
- The USCG boundary buoys are being phased out and the park will need to obtain class 3 foam buoys to replace them.

In regards to a question about removing lionfish from the park using a spear, Manager Simpson replied that since spearing is off limits, removal using spears is not sanctioned. Lisa Symons suggested the park consider the Lionfish derby approach that is used elsewhere in no spearing areas.

US Coast Guard, LT. Quentin Long, Sector Key West

- LT. Long introduced Commander Rosa, who is the department head and his direct boss.
- He is the small boat station manager for the Pollution Response Crew for the USCG. He encouraged people to report issues on the water when they see them. Contact USCG or FWC.
- They respond to pollution incident reports from the public through the National Response Center. Some reports are federalized and the USCG opens the Pollution Trust Fund in order fund the removal of the pollution.
- For FW17, they have had a 118 reports and 14 of those have been federalized (need cleanup by USCG). Last year, there were 23 federalized cases.
- LT. Long's captain has a philosophy that emphasizes mission execution, partnerships and teamwork. The sanctuary is the priority for the USCG. They support the sanctuary and the community and are focused on sanctuary regulations, threats to the sanctuary, preventing pollution and expediting cleanups of pollutants in the water.

US Fish and Wildlife Service, Florida Keys National Wildlife Refuge Complex, Dan Clark

- Refuge Manger Clark reminded everyone that there are four national wildlife refuges in the Florida Keys, which includes about 417,000 acres with 2% of that being terrestrial land. Their primary partners are State of Florida and NOAA FKNMS. For all refuges combined, there are two maintenance staff, two federal wildlife officers, two biologists, one refuge specialist (Crocodile Lake NWR), and two management staff. No administrative support at this time and Kate Watts is departing for Oregon.
- FWS is formal cooperating agency of the DEIS draft and will be continuing to work with NOAA and partners on that document.
- The refuge friends group is becoming more active in the community and become involved in the nature center that will be opening on US 1 in Big Pine Key. They are continuing to formalize the infrastructure there and building their identity in the Keys.
- Key deer screwworm incident created a tremendous amount of expectation on the refuge system concerning how they respond to calls about sick deer. They have limited capacity, which limits their ability to do things.
- The focus of the refuges have primarily been on habitat management for 22 federally endangered species and other federal resources. The pine rockland is a habitat of focus and they continue to prescribe burns to improve that habitat for the species it supports.

FWC, Florida Fish and Wildlife Research Center (FWRI), John Hunt

- FWC held a recent public workshop on the status related to goliath grouper.
- The Commissioners have directed FWC in February to take a whole discussion regarding the possibility of allowing limited fishing statewide. They are looking for public comment. He participated in a suite of workshops from Palm Beach to Key West where they collected public comments. One thing that was done differently at these workshops was to have people complete this survey with about 30 questions. He encourages people to go online and complete the survey. People can also submit their comments in a more traditional way on this topic. To obtain information, visit the February commission meeting tab on the website to

view a scientific presentation on goliath grouper given by Gil McRae. Mr. Hunt is happy to discuss this topic with anyone.

- The commission will take up the goliath grouper topic at their December 2017 meeting. Comments may be submitted to myFWC.com/saltwatercomments or send an email to marinemycfwc.com.

NOAA National Marine Fisheries Service, Heather Blough

(Beth Dieveney gave the report for Ms. Blough.)

- Since the SAC last met, NOAA Fisheries published final rules implementing the five new spawning special management zones (including Warsaw hole) the South Atlantic Council approved for snapper-grouper species, and the Council's rebuilding plan for the East Florida/Florida Keys hogfish stock. The five new spawning area closures took effect July 31. The hogfish rebuilding plan takes effect August 24. Preliminary landings data suggest both the commercial and recreational hogfish fisheries will close on or shortly after the rebuilding plan takes effect.
- The South Atlantic Council scheduled a special session the first day of its September meeting in Charleston to consider requesting an emergency rule that would authorize a limited red snapper fishing season in 2017; they're also scheduled to review and approve at that time a new red snapper catch limit that would allow for a limited fishery to occur in 2018.
- Earlier this year, the South Atlantic Council tabled discussion of new yellowtail snapper allocation options until pending recreational survey data improvements are fully implemented. But, after the commercial fishery closed on June 3, the South Atlantic Council asked the Gulf Council to consider a joint amendment that would combine catch limits for that species in the South Atlantic and Gulf to prevent future commercial closures because the South Atlantic recreational catch limit and Gulf of Mexico catch limit are not fully harvested each year. The Gulf Council will discuss that issue at its October meeting in Biloxi.
- Call or email Heather with any questions.

Florida Department of Environmental Protection, Joanna Walczak

- Florida Legislative Updates:
 - The Legislative session wrapped up on June 30. A proposal to create a new “coral management area” along the northern portion of the Florida Reef Tract (off mainland southeast Florida) was passed in the House but did not go before the Senate. This bill will be reintroduced next year.
 - Florida DEP received a \$1 million appropriation for water quality monitoring in southeast Florida and coral disease response activities across the entire Florida Reef Tract. This is a major accomplishment by numerous partners who helped communicate the severity of these coral issues to elected officials. While this is only a one-year appropriation, there may be an effort during the next legislative session to secure additional/recurring funding.
- U.S. Coral Reef Task Force (USCRTF):
 - Joanna Walczak is the Florida Point of Contact (POC) to the USCRTF.
 - Florida hosted the 38th meeting of the USCRTF the week of August 7 in Ft. Lauderdale. The theme of this meeting was “Healthy Reefs for a Healthy Economy”

- in which the many benefits provided by corals reefs – both ecological and economic – were highlighted.
- Three workshops were held: Marine Debris and Florida’s Coral Reefs, Coral Reef Ecosystem Restoration, and Sediment and Turbidity.
 - The culmination of the USCRTF was the Business Meeting on August 11. Presentations at this meeting included:
 - *The Ecological and Economic Values of Florida’s Coral Reefs*, which highlighted topics such as flood protection and tourism, including an example of Key West flood areas and protection received from offshore reefs.
 - *Status and Lessons Learned from a Large-Scale Coral Disease Outbreak*, which included an introduction to coral diseases, updates on the outbreak in Florida, an overview of response efforts, and recommendations for moving forward.
 - *Balancing Values of Ecosystem Services and Project Economics*, which discussed the need to more appropriately weigh coastal construction projects against the loss of resources.
 - *Stakeholder and Community Engagement in the Management of Florida’s Coral Reefs*, which included information about Our Florida Reefs in southeast Florida, the Biscayne National Park general management plan process, and information about FKNMS, the Sanctuary Advisory Committee and the Marine Zoning and Regulatory Review. While the goal is to engage the community in coral reef management daily, these hyper-focused processes are important for moving management forward.
 - Big recommendations that were emphasized during this meeting included:
 - The importance of upgrading wastewater infrastructure in communities along the Florida Reef Tract. The upgrades in Monroe County were highlighted, but there is still a need to conduct similar projects in southeast Florida; the water there does impact FKNMS.
 - Considering the current state of our coral reefs, there is a need to consider new and innovative management interventions. The status quo may no longer be enough to conserve our reefs; these resources are declining faster than we can respond. Thus, it may be necessary to switch from reactive to more proactive management. We are still figuring out what this will look like, but we are starting the conversation to discuss how we might adapt our thinking and management approaches in the future.
 - There were also several big announcements at the USCRTF meeting:
 - Announcement of the \$1 million appropriation from the Florida Legislature for coral disease and water quality monitoring.
 - The Tourism Development Councils (TDCs) in the five counties along the Florida Reef Tract announced the initiation of a Reef Ambassador Program, which is a more formalized commitment to ensure that reef information gets to tourists. This will expand the reach of our education and outreach efforts.

- The Port of Miami Commercial Vessel Anchorage has officially been shifted to reduce over 600 acres of direct impacts to coral reefs. This is the result of ten years of studying reef impacts in the Port of Miami Anchorage and working with stakeholders, USCG, DEP, NOAA and many other partners to redesign the configuration.
 - EPA announced that they will also be providing grant funding to support coral disease response in Florida. They have rescoped internal award money to allow an additional \$800k for coral disease investigation and response over the next two years.
 - There were two site visits in the Keys: a reef dive and a trip to Windley Key Fossil Reef Geological State Park.
 - All information and presentations from the USCRTF meeting will be available online at www.coralreef.gov.
- EPA South Florida Initiative Funding:
 - The WQPP is the recipient of funding from an EPA program called the South Florida Geographic Initiative. This is the funding (~\$1.5 million annually) the supports all of the seagrass, coral and water quality monitoring in FKNMS, as well as the WQPP's special studies. The new proposed budget for this program has been zeroed out for Fiscal Year 2018. Meanwhile the proposed budget provides \$397 million for the Great Lakes, Chesapeake Bay and Puget Sound. While this is only a proposed budget and not final, considering the continued concerns about water quality in FKNMS, it is important to be vocal about the importance of this funding for our monitoring programs; if this funding goes away we may never get it back.
- Other announcements:
 - The South Florida Water Management District has a new Executive Director: Ernie Marks. Ernie previously worked for DEP on Everglades Restoration and is a key person to have in this position. He is also familiar with coral issues and the Florida Reef Tract.

Comments: Chris Bergh stated that the EPA funding has supported long-term monitoring of seagrass, coral reefs and water quality in FKNMS. Other areas (Puget Sound, Chesapeake, Great Lakes) were able stay in the budget, which totals about 300 million dollars. The funding for programs in the Keys is about 1.2 million, only a fraction of the total EPA funding. This money is needed to manage the resources. Everyone is now aware of this and needs to communicate to the Congress people how important this funding is for the only continental coral reef in the US.

Joe Weatherby inquired about the possible shift toward proactive management. Joanna explained that the status quo measures will no longer work is based on some international work done in Australia. The idea is that a concerted change in management approach may be needed to protect what is remaining of coral reefs across the world.

NOAA Office of Law Enforcement (OLE), Kenny Blackburn

- Investigator Blackburn explained that General Counsel now wants him to review and evaluate for supplemental investigation all civil cases. Two grounding cases are being

forwarded to General Counsel. One case involved the HM1, a 50-foot vessel that damaged coral, seagrass and hardbottom in Key Largo Dry Rocks SPA. Another case involved a pathfinder and took place in Western Sambo Ecological Reserve. Two operators were involved and one owner, which was a corporation, AmeriKids, Inc. The company has a vessel donation program and they lease these vessels out.

- In response to the new case protocol that has been implemented, he is working on getting this protocol streamlined so that it is more efficient.
- Investigator Blackburn will continue field training the new NOAA law enforcement officer Mitchell Robb for another two weeks.
- A new enforcement officer from Miami will be training down here soon, too. New NOAA officers are trained in the Keys because this is a hotspot.
- Investigator Blackburn is the DOC/NOAA representative on an IUU (illegal unreported and unregulated fishing) working group that formed to address illegal fishing in developing countries. He will be participating in that working group in the near future.

US Navy, Ed Barham

- NASKW is the southernmost military installation in the continental United States; we are Navy's premier East Coast pilot training facility for tactical aviation squadrons.
- We have a workforce of approx. 3000 personnel.
- We own more than 12 distinct properties in the Lower Florida Keys, occupying 5,800 acres, with over 20 miles of shoreline.
- Home to 21 federally listed species including 12 animals and 9 plants.
- Activities to report since the last meeting:
 - Completed the treatment/control of approximately 10.5 acres of invasive, exotic vegetation from our Fleming Key property.
 - Least tern nesting season has ended, we documented successful nesting on gravel roofs and on our new nesting platform on Big Coppitt. No Roseate tern nests this year.
 - On July 18 we held a public meeting (Restoration Advisory Board) to discuss the station's environmental programs with emphasis on the status of restoration and munitions response program sites. Documents on our environmental program are available at <http://go.usa.gov/KSDJ>.
 - NAS Key West's efforts in protecting the endangered Lower Keys Marsh Rabbit were featured in the first episode of the series RARE: Creatures of the Photo Ark" a new series on PBS following National Geographic photographer Joel Sartore as he travels the world on a quest to create a photo archive of global biodiversity. Link to the episode: <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/rare/episode/episode-1>.

National Park Service, Dry Tortugas and Everglades National Park, Chris Kavanagh

- Everglades and Dry Tortugas National Parks are sister parks with a single superintendent. Mr. Cavanagh is based at the Florida Bay Interagency Science Center in Key Largo.
- The park is monitoring water quality in Florida Bay and the Ten Thousand Islands on the Gulf coast, and protecting and restoring seagrass/mangrove ecosystems within the Bay.
- Mr. Cavanagh is the site manager for the Interagency Science Center, which supports dozens of agencies that have scientists conducting research, including science teams from NOAA

studying coral spawning.

- The park's General Management Plan was signed two years ago and is now being implemented. In accordance with the GMP, Joe Bay will open after 30 years of being closed. Pole and Troll zones are being implemented throughout Florida Bay.
- The will be implementing a boater education program for all operators within park boundaries. The course is still in the development phase.
- A seagrass die-off occurred in the bay in 2015, which affected about 40,000 acres in the central basins. It is a serious injury to the ecosystem. They have seen some regrowth of turtle grass. In September 2016, a cyanobacterial bloom appeared in the central bay; it dissipated in February. The park is initiating an extension of water quality monitoring. They are adding 24 more stations and nutrient analysis. During the bloom, bay waters exhibited extremely high chlorophyll-a values.
- Serious injuries occurred to seagrass in the bay from two boat groundings. Boater education is a pressing need for all users in the backcountry.
- The park's lionfish survey (which was partial) only turned up one lionfish. They do receive one or two reports of lionfish a year.

Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary, Ed Lindelof

- NOAA has moved forward with placing Lisa Symons and Sarah Fangman in their new positions with FKNMS.
- In the Upper Keys, a new staff member will be assuming the Team Ocean position, Marlies Tumolo. She will begin on September 11. Marlies is the senior education staff from headquarters and has experience as a dive instructor in the Keys. She will be bringing the Ocean Guardian program with her to the Keys.
- Matt Lawrence is a trained archaeologist who will be joining the FKNMS staff. He has been working at Stellwagon Banks NMS and will be working closely with Brenda Altmeier on projects. This aspect of the program is growing. He will begin in October at the Key Largo office.
- FKNMS will be advertising for the Research Coordinator position, a federal position based in Key West. FKNMS is also committed to having a volunteer coordinator position and are moving forward with that position with the National Marine Sanctuary Foundation.

Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary, Mike Buchman

Mike Buchman, science lead, gave a presentation about research conducted aboard the *R/V Nancy Foster*. Fifteen scientists from five different agencies worked cooperatively to conduct field research in FKNMS and the Tortugas. As the ship traveled south from Charleston, they were able to map habitats along the sanctuary's 19-meter contour on the oceanside. Some of these areas had not been surveyed since the 1890s. Different technologies were used to map habitats. Scientists were able to verify a lot of seafloor features and work in areas that are of interest to the council.

Scientists also performed maintenance on the array of acoustic listening stations that are used to study fish movements in the vicinity of the Tortugas Ecological Reserve. They deployed an ROV from University of North Carolina Wilmington. This device, which had high definition stereo and video camera, was able to characterize deeper habitats. Large lionfish were common. *Montastrea* colonies were generally in good condition. Water temperatures were around 85 degrees F even at 100 feet depth. Lobster pots, lines and nets were observed in Tortugas areas where fishing is not

allowed.

VI. UPCOMING MEETING AND CLOSING REMARKS

Superintendent Fangman stated that she has heard from everyone that there are many issues to deal with, but that there is still hope. She is ready to begin with no time to waste.

Chairperson Popham thanked everyone for participating and adjourned the meeting.

Meeting Adjourned.