

**A Resolution from the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary Advisory  
Council on the Ecological Conditions and Restoration Needs of Everglades  
National Park and Florida Bay**

*Adopted October 16, 2018*

**WHEREAS**, the waters of the Florida Keys are connected to and dependent on the Everglades landscape as the primary source of fresh water that serves as the foundation of the nearshore estuarine environment; and

**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**, the FKNMS has the authority to coordinate the conservation and management of these marine areas and activities affecting them and to ensure cooperation between Sanctuary managers and other Federal, State, and local authorities with jurisdiction within or adjacent to the Sanctuary; and

**WHEREAS**, the ecological health of the FKNMS is inextricably linked to that of Florida Bay, Everglades National Park, and the greater Everglades ecosystem; and

**WHEREAS**, Florida Bay is a vitally important ecosystem located between the mainland and the Florida Keys, with approximately 20% of Florida Bay within the boundaries of the FKNMS and approximately 80% of Florida Bay within the boundaries of Everglades National Park; and

**WHEREAS**, the health of Florida Bay is vital to the multi-billion dollar fishing and tourism industry of the Florida Keys and South Florida, including commercial and recreational fishing, snorkeling, diving, boat and equipment rentals, other tourism related businesses, and taxable property values in Monroe County; and

**WHEREAS**, the FKNMS Advisory Council (SAC) recognizes that the restoration of America's Everglades is critical to the long-term sustainability of South Florida's economy, quality of life, public health, and environment; and

**WHEREAS**, chronic lack of freshwater flow, coupled with increasingly high temperatures and salinity in Florida Bay, has contributed to mass seagrass die-offs, depleted fish populations, and widespread coral bleaching in the Middle and Lower Keys; and

**WHEREAS**, the dire situation in Florida Bay is a symptom of a larger water crisis plaguing Florida whereby northern coastal estuaries are being inundated by polluted Lake Okeechobee discharges while Everglades National Park and Florida Bay are starved for freshwater due to lack of infrastructure for treatment and storage of water and restoration of flow; and

**WHEREAS**, Americans have invested nearly \$1 billion of taxpayer dollars into the construction of Southern Everglades restoration projects to deliver more clean, fresh water to Everglades

National Park and Florida Bay, including the Modified Water Deliveries Project, C-111 Spreader Canal, C-111 South Dade Project, Tamiami Trail bridging, and other water control infrastructure; and

**WHEREAS**, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and South Florida Water Management District are currently developing the Combined Operational Plan (COP) for the Southern Everglades projects, which will dictate the use of restoration infrastructure that was funded and constructed to restore the Everglades; and

**WHEREAS**, these state and federal agencies will host a workshop to discuss operational alternatives at the Islamorada Village Center on December 12, 2018 beginning at 9:00am; and

**THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED** that the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary Advisory Council, through the Superintendent and South Florida Ecosystem Restoration Task Force, urges state and federal agency partners to develop an operational plan for restoration infrastructure that maximizes ecosystem benefits for Everglades National Park and Florida Bay. The final array of alternatives presented at the upcoming public meeting in Islamorada must include project alternatives that prioritize the needs of the Florida Keys community by sending high volumes of clean, freshwater flow to Florida Bay.