

FLORIDA KEYS NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARY ADVISORY COUNCIL

**Hyatt Place
1996 Overseas Highway
Marathon, FL 33050
Tuesday December 4th, 2018**

FINAL MINUTES

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

Council Members

Boating Industry: Bruce Popham (Co-Chair)
Tourism – Lower Keys: Clint Barras (Co-Chair) (absent)
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 (absent)
Diving – Lower Keys: Joe Weatherby (absent)
Diving – Upper Keys: Elena Rodriguez (absent)
Education and Outreach: Jessica Dockery (absent)
Elected County Official: Michelle Coldiron
Fishing – Charter Fishing Flats Guide: Will Benson (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: Jerry Lorenz
Submerged Cultural Resources: Corey Malcom
Tourism – Upper Keys: Andy Newman (absent)

Council alternates (present)

Citizen at Large – Lower Keys: Stephen Patten
Citizen at Large – Upper Keys: Suzy Roebling
Conservation and Environment: Caroline McLaughlin
Education and Outreach: Christopher Bensen
Fishing – Charter Fishing Flats Guide: Dale Bishop
Fishing – Charter Sports Fishing: Richie Gomez
Research and Monitoring: Shelly Krueger
South Florida Ecosystem Restoration: Elizabeth Jolin
Submerged Cultural Resources: Diane Silva

Tourism – Upper Keys: Lisa Mongelia

Agency Representatives (present)

Florida Department of Environmental Protection: Joanna Walczak

FWC Division of Law Enforcement: Andy Cox

National Park Service, Everglades National Park: Chris Kavanagh

U.S. Coast Guard (USCG): Marcus Pezzuti

U.S. Navy Naval Air Station Key West: Ed Barham

I. CALL TO ORDER, ROLL CALL, AND MEETING MINUTES APPROVAL OF OCTOBER DRAFT MEETING NOTES

MOTION (passed)

A motion to approve the October 2018 minutes was made by Ken Nedimyer and seconded by Mimi Stafford. The minutes were approved. A motion to adopt the agenda was made by Ken Nedimyer and seconded by Ken Reda. The agenda was adopted without change.

Chairperson's Comments

Chairperson Popham recognized Dr. David Vaughn, who has held the Research and Monitoring seat, on his retirement from Mote Marine Laboratory. Dr. Vaughn is planning to start his own business to continue his coral restoration work in the Florida Keys and worldwide.

Chairperson Popham reminded council members that the Reef Futures 2018 Conference at Ocean Reef will take place December 10-14th. If anyone is interested in attending, they are welcome to register. The Florida Keys reef tract will be a highlight of this meeting, and Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary Superintendent Sarah Fangman will be giving a keynote address.

South Florida Water Management District is holding a meeting on December 12th in Islamorada focusing on Everglades restoration and the Combined Operational Plan. Chairperson Popham reminded the council of the motion passed during the last meeting, which will be submitted as public comment for that meeting.

One public comment period will be held today during this abbreviated agenda, and a signup sheet is available.

Welcome New and Renewing Sanctuary Advisory Council Members

Chairperson Popham welcomed the returning advisory council members, who are remaining in their seats for a new three-year term, and introduced the new council members:

- Christopher Bensen, Education and Outreach alternate
- Dale Bishop, Fishing - Charter Fishing Flats Guide alternate
- Elizabeth Jolin, South Florida Ecosystem Restoration alternate
- Michelle Coldiron, Monroe County Commissioner for District Two

II. SANCTUARY ADVISORY COUNCIL CONSTITUENT OUTREACH PLANNING

Beth Dieveney, Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary

The advisory council core group convened over the summer to discuss the release of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS), and the role of the advisory council in liaising with the community prior to the release. Sanctuary staff compiled this information and have created an outreach manual.

The outreach manual contains a table of contents, a summary of audiences recognized by this council, as well as liaisons identified between various audiences and the advisory council. This manual also includes outreach tools, key messages, and opportunities for the public to become engaged with the DEIS, which will become known as a Restoration Blueprint.

Beth Dieveney, Policy Analyst for Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary, demonstrated the various outreach tools available to council members including the website: floridakeys.noaa.gov. This site contains information about the DEIS process including meeting notes, work plans, and opportunities to become involved in the process. Sanctuary staff have created a draft infographic, which will be finalized shortly and provided to council members. There is also a video which was created in partnership with the Office of National Marine Sanctuaries and will be finalized shortly. A PowerPoint presentation, a frequently asked questions sheet, and other tools will also be available for use by council members.

Discussion

- A council member noted that having more specific information is crucial to these audiences, including the timing of release. Superintendent Sarah Fangman recognized that this process has been a long one, but that is it also a complex process. The sanctuary is not looking for people to have one specific opinion but rather for people to become involved in the process to help the sanctuary move in the right direction.
- Chairperson Popham noted that this process in the Florida Keys will be used as a model for future regulatory reviews in other sanctuaries, and is important to set a standard and get it right.

III. PUBLIC COMMENT

Blair Witherington, Sea Turtle Biologist, Inwater Research Group

Mr. Witherington is a sea turtle biologist that works in Florida Bay, Marquesas (Quicksands) and Key West National Wildlife Refuge. He represents Inwater Research Group, a non-profit that has data on sea turtle abundance, distribution and life history in the Florida Keys. Mr. Witherington would like everyone to know that the scientists at Inwater are happy to share information on sea turtle biology and are here as a resource to the council. He may be giving a presentation at the next council meeting. Inwater scientists would be happy to take any questions about sea turtles in the sanctuary.

Jim Ritterhoff, Force Blue Executive Director and Co-Founder

Mr. Ritterhoff explained that Force Blue is a nonprofit organization that retrains, retools and redeploys former special operations veterans who are all military trained combat divers (Navy Seals, Recon Marines, Air Force Pararescue men, Army Special Operations) to do conservation missions. Last October they came down to the Keys after Hurricane Irma to help NOAA with restoration efforts throughout the Keys. They went to Puerto Rico to do the same thing for two months. They

returned to Florida this past summer for their second training deployment and trained the second group of guys. At that point after understanding what was happening in South Florida, they announced that they were moving their operations to Florida to help the state with its efforts to restore and preserve the coral reef. The initiative, called Project Protect, is a three-year commitment to help people in Florida. They are in a unique position because they not only bring an incredibly skilled work force, they garner the spotlight due to the nature of who they are. This program is helping the environment as well as helping veterans to assimilate back into civilian life. They have a big microphone. In this hyper partisan time, people may not be so receptive to hearing about the environment from a scientist, but might listen to Navy seals because they are heroes. Force Blue doesn't care if people come from the left or the right. They take a trans partisan approach to problem solving. He is happy to announce that starting tomorrow, in conjunction with Florida DEP, FKNMS and Nova University, Dr. Karen Neely will train the first group to get involved in the intervention of the coral disease. He will be picking up guys in Miami to bring them down for the training. Mr. Ritterhoff showed a brief introductory video about Force Blue's work in Florida.

IV. SETTING COMMUNICATION GOALS AND OUTCOMES

Matt Stout, Office of National Marine Sanctuaries

Matt Stout, Office of NMS, provided a presentation on setting goals and outcomes for the upcoming DEIS process and engaged council members in communication exercises to help them become comfortable in sharing information about the DEIS public input process. The DEIS for the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary, which contains economic and environmental analyses for a suite of management alternatives and regulations, is expected to be released in 2019. Advisory Council members are being asked to reach out to their constituents to let them know that the sanctuary will be seeking public comment for this *Blueprint for Restoration*.

In the presentation, Matt introduced opportunities, tools and mechanisms to inform and engage the public. To be an effective communicator, the "why" should be the focus regarding what is needed to restore the coral reef ecosystem of the Keys. Once the "why" is understood, people can begin to engage and discuss what is needed and how it can be achieved. Council members will be provided with additional supporting facts and figures about the various benefits the resources provide; information on the economic value of resources and activities; achievements and successful management actions and bright spots regarding resilience. Council members participated in exercises designed to help them formulate and explain key messages to their constituents. Some tools to avoid conflicts and transitional phrases were introduced.

Council members should reach out to the sanctuary to help meet their communication needs. It is important for the sanctuary to receive feedback from members regarding what questions and concerns the public has so that the sanctuary can provide more targeted information. People will naturally be concerned about how these possible management/rule changes may affect them.

Comments/Discussion

- Some advisory council members expressed that at this point in the process they felt they didn't have enough details about the different management alternatives to really share with constituents. Matt explained that this is the initial step in letting people know that the blueprint will be released and that is when people will have the opportunity to comment.
- In response to this concern, FKNMS Policy Advisor Beth Dieveney stated that the DEIS will

contain tables and information presented in a variety of formats so that information can be accessed easily by the reader. A web-based mapping tool will be available that allows people to see what is being proposed in the different regions of the sanctuary.

- Superintendent Fangman added that the sanctuary is dedicated to getting feedback in order to move forward with this process, which involves communicating complex issues.
- Council members expressed the importance of knowing the dates for public comment in advance. Sanctuary management explained that they should be able to provide ample notice as the process moves forward; the process is being overseen by the highest levels of NOAA leadership.
- It was noted that the DEIS/management plan process has been a lengthy one and perhaps a three-month comment period may not be enough time to seek input, especially if the period falls during the busy fishing season. ONMS Policy Advisor Ed Lindelof explained that the program has been responsive to needs such as time in the past and that after the DEIS process, there are additional public comment opportunities for the notice of rule-making, which follows the release of the DEIS.
- It was pointed out that the environment has changed dramatically since this process first began in 2011 and this is why something flexible like *adaptive management* is so important and needed by sanctuary management. This is an opportunity to keep those changes in mind when providing input on management issues.
- A council member pointed out that the main message about the sanctuary's *Blueprint for Restoration* video shown at the meeting is that the process is not a top down one and that the opinions of people matter.
- The observation that some people will just now be joining the process and providing input was shared. Superintendent Fangman explained that input from everyone is sought; new people should be encouraged to participate and share their ideas, which will be considered as the process unfolds. People are free to comment on the whole suite of options or any individual alternatives.
- The Honorable Michelle Coldiron, Monroe County Commissioner, commended the process that the sanctuary has in place. She added that the county has recently engaged the public in identifying priorities to be considered in the land/community planning. The citizens of the county identified community, environment and economy as the top three priorities. She noted that it will take everyone to achieve these goals and she looks forward to working with the sanctuary.
- A council member noted that every effort to reach out to the charter fishermen should be made to engage them. Charter captains should participate in the process so that they can have a voice in the outcome.
- When communicating with others about the DEIS, it is important to acknowledge what people are saying. This shows respect.
- Being involved in this process is a chance to improve things and restoration can be achieved. Other difficult environmental problems have been solved in the past, even challenging ones.
- The helpfulness of the booklet with the facts and figures as a tool was recognized.

V. CLOSING REMARKS

Chairperson Popham thanked sanctuary staff for hosting this meeting and for live streaming on YouTube. He reminded council members to submit their hours for volunteer accounting.

VI. AGENCY REPORTS

Agency reports were not given at the meeting, rather provided in writing for distribution following the meeting.

Florida DEP, Joanna Walczak

- Florida Coastal Office
 - FORCE BLUE (<https://forceblueteam.org>) is the only nonprofit organization in the world that provides “mission therapy” for former combat divers — individuals in whom governments around the world have invested millions to create the best possible underwater and maritime operators — by retraining, retooling and deploying them on missions of conservation, preservation and restoration. By uniting the community of Special Operations veterans with the world of marine science and conservation in one, mission-focused program, FORCE BLUE has created a model of caring, cooperation and positive change with the power to restore lives and restore the planet. This August, FORCE BLUE announced their Florida “Project Protect”: <https://vimeo.com/289387017> including plans to move all operations to South Florida for the next three years to assist the state and NOAA in the ongoing battle to rescue, preserve and restore the immensely important, critically-threatened Florida Reef Tract. FORCE BLUE divers formerly assisted NOAA with critical coral triage efforts following Hurricane Irma, and as of November 1st, are partnering with DEP and Nova Southeastern University to combat the ongoing coral disease outbreak by forming “Intervention Strike Teams”. FORCE BLUE and Nova Southeastern divers will be focused on treating high-value diseased coral colonies at priority sites (e.g., Sanctuary Preservation Areas, etc.) across the Upper and Middle Keys in an effort to stabilize individual colonies and preserve the vital ecosystem function of our reefs. FORCE BLUE will also be giving presentations throughout the Florida Keys community to spread information about the disease event and what they, and the public, can do to help. To request a presentation, please contact Jim at Jim@forceblueteam.org.
 - In October, the Florida Coastal Office Clean Boating Program welcomed a new dedicated Clean Boating Coordinator to the Florida Keys. Laura Thornton is based in Marathon and will be working to assist marinas, boatyards, and the broader boating community throughout the Keys in protecting our waters by implementing best management practices and offering pump-out facilities. For more information, contact Laura Thornton at 305-289-083 or Laura.Thornton@FloridaDEP.gov.
 - In November, Florida Coastal Office and State Parks staff joined forces to complete a damage assessment at the Cannon Patch vessel grounding site in John Pennekamp Coral Reef State Park. Next the DEP South Regulatory District will pursue an enforcement case, and the Resource Trustees are working to put together a plan to stabilize the site from further damage associated with the dislodged organisms and substrate.

- Florida Parks Service
 - The John Pennekamp Coral Reef State Park revised Unit Management Plan will go before the State's Acquisition and Restoration Council (ARC) in February for approval. ARC is a 10-member group composed of appointed and agency representatives who, among other responsibilities, review management plans for the use of all state-owned conservation lands.

Naval Air Station Key West, Edward Barham

- Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission Upland Plant Management Program awarded a contract to treat invasive, exotic vegetation from NAS Key West properties on Geiger and Big Coppitt Keys. Work is scheduled for December 2019. NASKW is a member of the Florida Keys Exotic Invasive Task Force.

NOAA National Marine Fisheries Service, Heather Blough

- During its October 2018 meeting, the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council asked NOAA Fisheries to reduce Gulf red grouper catch limits through a temporary rulemaking while the Council develops long-term measures to address new information indicating stock status may be declining. When it meets in January 2019, the Gulf Council will finalize a proposal to convert historical for-hire captain endorsements to standard federal for-hire permits, and consider how best to respond to a recent stock assessment indicating the gray snapper stock is experiencing overfishing and may be overfished. Additional information on these and other fishery management measures under development is available on the Gulf Council's website at <http://www.gulfcouncil.org/>.
- In November 2018, NOAA Fisheries issued the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission a 3-year Exempted Fishing Permit (EFP) authorizing the testing of alternative lionfish trap designs within 100-300 ft. depth in areas between Alligator Reef and Looe Key Reef where commercial spiny lobster fishing is permitted. This study also must be permitted by the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary before work can begin.
- During its December 2018 meeting, the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council plans to approve for NOAA Fisheries' review and implementation proposals to:
 - Revise recreational snapper-grouper management measures to change the composition of snapper-grouper aggregates; adjust aggregate bag limits; establish a recreational season for deepwater species; eliminate the minimum size limits for silk snapper, queen snapper and blackfin snapper; and reduce the federal minimum size limit for gray triggerfish to 12 inches fork length to be consistent with state regulations; and
 - Modify the way yellowtail snapper catch limits are managed to minimize the occurrence of commercial in-season closures (the data workshop for the next yellowtail snapper stock assessment is scheduled for February 25-27, 2018, in St. Petersburg, Florida).
- The South Atlantic Council also discussed potential adjustments to the South Atlantic red grouper rebuilding plan, including commercial trip limits and seasonal closure modifications, and initiated work on a comprehensive System Management Plan (SMP) to help monitor and document the effects of closed areas under its jurisdiction. A new SMP workgroup

established to support that effort will focus its first report on existing Spawning Special Management Zones. Information on workgroup meetings and other actions under development is available on the South Atlantic Council's website at <http://safmc.net/>.

Please contact Heather Blough at 727-551-5795 with any questions.