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FLORIDA KEYS NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARY ADVISORY MEETING

**Tuesday, December 10, 2019
3:00 p.m. to 7:40 p.m.**

**Islander Resort
82100 Overseas Highway
Islamorada, Florida 33036**

**STENOGRAPHICALLY REPORTED BY:
WANDA JACKSON**

**CERTIFIED
TRANSCRIPT**

1 BILL KELLEY

2 My name is Bill Kelley. I represent
3 The Florida Keys Commercial Fisherman's Association.
4 As we have heard repeatedly throughout the public
5 comment sessions in the Keys, the three biggest
6 issues are water quality, education and law
7 enforcement. The 585 pages does nothing to
8 address these issues. Millions of gallons of
9 untreated sewage are discharged annually in the
10 Biscayne Bay. Billions of gallons of untreated fresh
11 water are dump into the Sanctuary through the seawall
12 canal. We have no requirements for Sanctuary rules
13 or regulations to be on board a vessel whether it is
14 commercial or recreational. And the three law
15 enforcement officers for the Sanctuary and FWC
16 supplemental funding has been cut in half in the past
17 three years. The consensus of the opinion is the
18 Sanctuary is suffering from failed management
19 practices. The Sanctuary was in better shape when it
20 was created than it is now.

21 In 2015 and 2016 the top three Sanctuary
22 managers were replaced for reasons we will never
23 know, but they were under investigation for fraud,
24 misuse of funds, abuse of power and a hostile work
25 environment. In 2015 the chair of the working group

1 was relieved of his post for inappropriate actions.
2 These actions delayed nearly seven years of work
3 formulating a general management plan. In the past
4 four and a half years the Sanctuary has not completed
5 one single meeting with any of the working groups or
6 user groups to formulate a new general management
7 plan or restoration plan as it is now called. The
8 decisions were made by a select group of insiders.

9 Financial and science supporting the
10 plan are outdated. Data from 2008 through 2013 is
11 being used to define the value of the commercial
12 fishing industry instead of current available
13 statistics. The commercial fishing industry is the
14 second largest economic engine valued at more than
15 \$900 million dollars. The commercial fishing
16 industry is the second largest employer of Monroe
17 County with 4,500 plus jobs directly related to the
18 commercial fishing vessels.

19 The Sanctuary condition report to
20 support the restoration plan is from 2011. That is
21 ancient history. The Sanctuary is relying on
22 outdated assessments and not on stock assessments
23 with the exception of spiny lobster and goliath
24 grouper. All of the key indicator species of snapper
25 and grouper and other species have been recently

1 assessed within the past five years and considered to
2 be in good to excellent condition. Language
3 throughout that report is negative and speculative
4 with regard to impacts from fishing.

5 Invasive species, lionfish. The
6 Sanctuary has done nothing with the exception of the
7 past few months to formulate a plan to address
8 lionfish. The Sanctuary repeatedly blocked efforts
9 by the commercial fishing industry to obtain what is
10 called an exempted fishing permit to target lionfish.
11 The permit would have allowed the placement of traps,
12 100 of them, throughout the year targeting areas
13 where there are known populations of lionfish. This
14 is in an area where there are 350,000 lobster traps
15 and 300,000 stone crab traps deployed annually.
16 Nobody has a better knowledge of the geographical
17 distribution and population densities of lionfish
18 than the commercial fishing industry. Nearly 50 tons
19 of lionfish were harvested as bycatch in 2016. And
20 one fisherman in one season in 2018 harvested nearly
21 30,000 pounds of lionfish near Pulley Ridge all as
22 bycatch. Pulley Ridge is pristine. Billy Causey has
23 testified to that on numerous occasions even though
24 commercial fishermen have fished that area for
25 decades targeting primarily red grouper.

1 Our recommendations make Alternative 1 the no
2 action preferred alternative. Reconvene the working
3 groups to address and update the restoration plan.
4 Update financial and science information that support
5 all actions and use of 60 coral protective sites
6 developed to format any new closed areas. Thank you
7 very much.

8
9 STEVEN LEONARD

10 Thank you for giving me this opportunity
11 to be heard. First, let me say my passion has always
12 been the ocean. From the time I was a little boy and
13 started watching Jacques Cousteau, I was hooked. In
14 junior high I took a year of marine biology and then
15 again an additional year of marine biology in high
16 school. I became a certified diver in 1977 at the
17 age of 16. I have been an avid fisherman from the
18 time I could hold a fishing pole in my hands. I have
19 lived in South Florida since 1965 and moved to Key
20 Largo as a full time resident in 2010. I have
21 fished, dove and snorkeled these waters for over 50
22 years.

23 Last year I sat for my Captain's license
24 and passed. I understand the desire to protect the
25 coral reefs and seagrass. However, I don't believe

1 your proposal for the Upper Keys to create 132 square
2 miles of no anchor zone is the option, nor do I feel
3 it is fair to all of the residents who enjoy the
4 shallow water reefs for fishing and snorkeling.
5 Since I moved to Key Largo in 2010, I have been out
6 on my boat in your proposed area nearly every week
7 enjoying the shallow water reefs for both fishing and
8 snorkeling.

9 Here are some of my observations of the
10 area, the fish population has been steadily
11 increasing in both quantity and size especially
12 hogfish. More lionfish are taking refuge on the
13 reefs. Many of the reefs have rope from lobster and
14 stone crab traps. Other than stony coral tissue
15 disease, I have seen very little damage. Reefs seems
16 to be healthy and main tropical fish are inhabiting
17 the reefs. These reefs have very few boaters on them
18 even during the weekends.

19 How will your proposed no anchor zone
20 affect the Key Largo residents and businesses? It
21 will put a huge strain on the bait and tackle shops
22 because no one can fish in the area. It will hurt
23 the dive shops and operators that offer snorkel
24 trips. It will hurt boat Captains that rely on the
25 area for live bait or fishing trips. It will hurt

1 boat sales both new and used. It will reduce
2 tourism. Why come to Key Largo when you can't
3 snorkel or fish there? You better go further south
4 or somewhere else completely. And it will force
5 everyone who wants to fish or snorkel to go to
6 Tavernier causing that area to become overfished and
7 at risk of anchor damage.

8 Lastly, it will seriously reduce the
9 value of everyone's home in Key Largo. Is there
10 another option? I think I might have an idea that
11 would allow people to enjoy themselves while reducing
12 the anticipated damage done to the area. First, make
13 the area off limits during mini season just as John
14 Pennekamp Coral Reef State Park. Do not allow
15 lobster or stone crab traps in the area. Anyone who
16 anchors in the area must pass a class, and this could
17 be done online, that teaches them how to anchor
18 properly, and collect a small fee and use the money
19 for more anchor buoys.

20 In closing, I do not believe your 132
21 square mile no anchor zone is fair to the residents.
22 My preference is to leave things alone as I know the
23 Sanctuary doesn't have budgeting funds to install
24 thousands of anchor buoys. The FWC has publicly
25 stated that they don't agree with your proposal and

1 have already said they can't enforce it without huge
2 increases in manpower and equipment. Acts of God
3 such as global warming, hurricanes and stony coral
4 tissue loss disease will continue to cause damage to
5 the reef regardless of the proposed closure of the
6 area. Thank you.

7

8 GLENN PATTON

9 Good evening. My background in -- I have been
10 living in Key Largo for the last 45 years, and my
11 background is I grew up in Miami, and I have been
12 diving in the Florida Keys since the '60's. I moved
13 here full time like I said 45 years ago. I was the
14 County Commissioner, Commissioner on the Key Largo
15 Wastewater Board, and I was also director of
16 Sanctuary of Friends which has since changed their
17 name, and I worked with George Nugent and the
18 Sanctuary Board for years. But I feel that the
19 Restoration Blueprint is not -- doesn't have its
20 priorities correct.

21 I think the priorities should all be
22 about water quality, water quality and water quality
23 starting with Lake Okeechobee and the outfalls from
24 Monroe and Dade County and Broward. It is about
25 water quality. That is what will change and improve

1 the Sanctuary. The Sanctuary since I have been alive
2 and been in the water and before it was the Sanctuary
3 has steadily been going downhill ever since. And
4 nothing that the Sanctuary has done has turned that
5 around, that trend around. And this Restoration
6 Blueprint I don't think will do it either. I think
7 you need to change your priorities.

8 I think Bill Kelley had it right with
9 water quality and education. I think education will
10 go a long ways preventing boat damage by the users
11 and boaters in the Florida Keys. I put a letter to
12 the editor and proposed that we use a practical
13 solution for that which would be SPA buoys to
14 identify reefs that are no anchor zones. They do it
15 now all of the time. You put SPA buoys out there
16 that say no lobster gear. Well, just expand that and
17 change the name, the placards and things like that
18 and put no anchoring. Nobody wants to anchor on a
19 good reef that holds lobster anyway. You want to
20 anchor in the sand. Also, put buoys, color coded
21 potentially buoys where you can't anchor in a sand
22 patch. That letter to the editor is posted on the
23 Key West Citizen for the last -- they liked it
24 apparently and posted it up there and they haven't
25 taken it down.

1 So put SPA buoys out there. They are
2 all over the place. Make sure that they are on the
3 chart. People will respect that. People will go
4 there, and you are helping the boaters do less
5 damages. They don't want to do any damage, you know.
6 But the no anchor zone and the Restoration Blueprint
7 to me is all -- the emphasis is on denying access.
8 Just denying access is not going to heal and make the
9 Sanctuary healthy. It is not going to do it. It
10 will continue to steadily go downhill.

11 And when I talk about water quality, one
12 of the things that was really important to me being
13 on the Wastewater Board, it was something that was
14 important to me and since then I have noticed that
15 the pumpout boat has been denied by Monroe County to
16 pump out boats behind houses. Who cares? They have
17 poop in it. Pump it out. Do not put it in the
18 Sanctuary. But because they are short of funds or
19 whatever -- there are 400 to 600 boats a month that
20 are not getting pumped out. Alternative 1, no to
21 status quo. Thank you.

22

23 DOUG GREGORY

24 Good afternoon. My name is Doug
25 Gregory. I want to address a couple of issues with

1 the Western Sambo proposals, none of which involve
2 lobster. First off, in the document I am perplexed
3 and confused by the proposals, and this is an area I
4 am familiar with. In one place it says, all the
5 Western Sambo Ecological Reserve is categorized as an
6 ecological reserve. No one is including this zone
7 type category as a SPA because regulations are
8 similar. Well, they might be similar but not the
9 same.

10 And then later in the executive summary
11 it says, relative to Alternative 3 this continues to
12 allow the current level of access to this area.
13 Well, that is just not true because currently we can
14 anchor within the Western Sambo Ecological Reserve.
15 The only place we can't anchor is up on the reef
16 top. Now, where that demarcation zone is, I don't
17 know.

18 But in the inshore area there is a
19 string of patch reefs that kids go to or people go to
20 that can't handle the waves on the outer reef.
21 People go there all of the time. So currently you
22 can anchor in the Western Sambo Ecological Reserve,
23 but the proposal in Alternative 3 says no anchoring.
24 It just doesn't make sense.

25 The other thing I want to mention is the

1 inshore area that is idle speed zone. That idle
2 speed zone goes about a half a mile out from shore.
3 And at first I said, well, this encompasses these
4 patch reefs and they don't want people running over
5 them, but when you look at the chart, it stops before
6 you get there. So what it will do is encourage
7 people to go fast over the patch reefs to avoid an
8 idle speed zone inshore. Now, this idle speed zone
9 proposal that goes half a mile out encompasses one
10 and a half square miles of the shallow part of the
11 ecological reserve. It is a transit zone when it is
12 windy, and you need to get from one end to the other
13 and this protects you from the wind and the waves.

14 And then Alternative 4 which has the
15 entire reserve as idle speed and the inshore area as
16 no entry makes no sense whatsoever. So in regard to
17 Western Sambo I won't say Alternative 1, but how
18 about Alternative 1 with his offshore lobsters, you
19 know, expand it out? I am not happy with that
20 because that is a beautiful dive spot that I have
21 been to, but as a compromise, you know, extend it out
22 to the outer bar, but don't do the no anchoring or
23 idle speed stuff. And there is no rationale in the
24 document as to why these things are proposed. Why do
25 you need an idle speed zone that goes a half a mile

1 offshore? It just doesn't make sense to me. Thank
2 you very much.

3

4 TOM INGRAM

5 I am Tom Ingram. I am the President and CEO of
6 the Diving Equipment and Marketing Association, DEMA.
7 We represent more than 1,400 businesses and more than
8 10,000 professionals in the recreational driving and
9 snorkeling industries. Our goals include protecting
10 the underwater environment while maintaining diver
11 and snorkeler access to healthy dive sites. DEMA and
12 the diving industry have always been supportive of
13 National Marine Sanctuaries including no wake zones
14 and other efforts when there is good science
15 indicating the need for the restrictions, and when
16 non extracted activities such as scuba diving are not
17 unnecessarily restricted.

18 We do have some concerns about the
19 blueprint, and we have submitted written comments and
20 data on these. I will just outline a couple of them.
21 One is restricting shark and fish feeding. Peer
22 review and research does not support the need to
23 prohibit small amounts of natural food to attract
24 sharks so they can be observed and photographed.
25 Data shows these activities are not detrimental to

1 the shark, and sharks do not associate these
2 provisioning ecotourism activities with swimmers,
3 kayakers and others not directly involved in the
4 shark feeding activity.

5 Importantly this restriction would also
6 prevent thousands of divers seeing these animals
7 firsthand and becoming strong shark advocates.
8 Sharks could be fed to attract and kill them, but
9 using the exact same feeding activity to observe and
10 photograph them would not be permitted.

11 We are also concerned about the
12 restriction of the Sanctuary preservation area as to
13 Blue Star Dive operators. We are very familiar with
14 the Blue Star program and support it, but this really
15 doesn't make the mark. The reefs inside the
16 Sanctuary are subjected to extensive fishing, urban
17 runoff and marine debris from Miami. These are the
18 same water quality issues that everybody has been
19 talking about.

20 And if restricting SPA's to Blue Star
21 operators is the answer to these issues, it only
22 makes sense to restrict SPA's to Blue Star Fishing
23 and Blue Star diving operators. But in our comments
24 we have proposed an outline of what we think is a
25 better way and that is to require the use of an

1 online consumer education program for fishing and
2 diving in the SPA's combined with a tag system
3 similar to those you find in a preserve area.
4 Consumers learn about the need for the protection,
5 perhaps pay a small user fee and obtain a
6 verification tag allowing them to use the SPA's.

7 It is a market driven solution. The
8 education requirement and user fee would
9 automatically reduce the number of fishers and
10 divers using the SPA's in help in the restoration
11 effort without excluding those willing to pay user
12 fees and spend time learning how to protect the reefs
13 including private boat operators who are currently
14 excluded now in this proposal. So thank you for the
15 opportunity to submit written comments and to speak
16 today.

17
18 JESSICA LEVY

19 Good afternoon. My name is Jessica
20 Levy. I have been a resident of the Keys for about 8
21 years now. I am the restoration manager for the
22 Coral Restoration Foundation. Also, looking at this
23 list I think I am the only female elected to speak.
24 I am not sure what that really says about me. Thank
25 you for this opportunity.

1 Okay. I have been watching the
2 discussions and participating in all of this
3 regarding the Restoration Blueprint since it was
4 released in August. And as I am watching this
5 discussion unfold in my opinion, not acting is not an
6 option. Some of the major concerns that have been
7 voiced is external pressures like water quality and
8 climate change. These are all valid concerns and big
9 challenges. What I want to encourage everybody to
10 remember is that good, strong management actually
11 helps build resistance to these big external
12 pressures. And we can protect these local very
13 direct impacts, and it actually helps our environment
14 to be more resilient to these bigger challenges that
15 are difficult to address.

16 Another comment that seems to stem from
17 these negative voices is what has the Sanctuary done
18 for us in the past 30 years. They have implemented
19 the Blue Star Program, and it has been seen that they
20 have a more positive impact than not of Blue Star
21 operators. They have supported the sinking of
22 artificial reefs as fish attraction devices. They
23 have created the Sanctuary preservation areas which
24 not only promote protection of key sites, it also
25 helps with increasing size and abundance of fish

1 populations also helping commercial and recreational
2 fishing industries.

3 They have overseen a large amount of
4 science and research that helps us understand more
5 about our natural world. And they have been able to
6 help make informed recommendations such as the need
7 for our wastewater treatment system. They also
8 support restoration efforts. Essentially, over the
9 last 30 years the Sanctuary has kept us from
10 completely overusing and abusing our natural system
11 to the point of no return. And if we allow them to
12 do their job, it will help us protect what is left
13 for another 30 years.

14 So to get to the point, what I am in
15 support of is the recommendations for Alternatives 3
16 and 4, those that are designed to create new and
17 expand existing SPA's, particularly those that added
18 protection for coral nurseries and restoration sites.
19 I am in favor of the alternatives that talk about no
20 anchoring in Key Largo. This will help us remove a
21 direct and preventative type of damage to our coral
22 reefs. I am in favor of limiting direct access to
23 Blue Star operators. In doing this we will ensure
24 that divers are better educated to limit their user
25 impact to dive sites as well as encourage other

1 operators to be role models and go on to ocean
2 stewards. Thank you.

3

4 JUSTIN HOPPER

5 I am Captain Justin Hopper. I own a
6 company called Fantastic Charters in Key Largo. I
7 have been down here about four years. I have been
8 charter fishing almost 30 years now. I have watched
9 a lot of changes in the years. Over the last 30
10 years everything from the water quality and reef
11 damage, with the sun and all of the other things
12 happening with the temperatures coming up. The other
13 thing that is tough is we have an overpopulation of
14 boats. The Key Largo Sanctuary has gotten so busy
15 these days, and that is a big thing. I think we are
16 fighting with the no anchoring and all of the other
17 things, but the problem is the access to the
18 Sanctuary.

19 I know in law enforcement -- I know a
20 lot of the guys there, and they are so overwhelmed
21 with the amount boats on the weekends. We have
22 anywhere from about 3,000 to 4,000 boats a day on
23 that Sanctuary up and down the reef line. People are
24 going down about the anchoring. It is a big deal.
25 It is a big issue. We need enforcement. We need

1 education. We need a lot of stuff for the water
2 quality. We are in there all trying to make a
3 living. The charter boats and fishing boats are one
4 side of it. The dive boats is another industry, and
5 the recreational is a whole other entity involved.
6 It is huge money for the Keys. If you shut all of
7 this down, where does the revenue -- where does the
8 entity turn to, you know, what direction does it go?
9 And I know y'all are dealing with a lot of feedback.
10 I think it is huge and what you guys had to do and
11 solve and -- a lot of us are nervous how it will
12 affect our livelihood and what direction it is going.
13 You have a lot of decisions to make, you know. And I
14 hope a big part of this comes down to education on
15 the reefs.

16 The guys are involved with no anchor
17 zones in the reefs and trying to keep the divers and
18 fishermen -- we have done a very good job about the
19 no fishing zones with the divers, and I think that is
20 an important thing. We need to try and keep things
21 separated and try to keep different entities. I just
22 hope everything keeps moving forward and keeps making
23 a living. And I hope also, too, if they ever ask for
24 our input, we are not affiliated but we are there.
25 Input is something we can offer down the road and

1 stuff and enforcement and education stuff. Thank you
2 very much.

3

4 BRANDON JIMINEZ

5 My name is Brandon Jiminez. I have been in
6 the Keys for 25 years. I am an avid free diver. I
7 own a charter boat named Sea Spirit. I have had it
8 for the last five years. I am in the beginning of my
9 career. I have all of my eggs in one basket. I have
10 seen a lot of changes in the water quality down here.
11 I have fished in the backcountry. I have fished all
12 over the Keys. I can see a change. And we don't
13 think that closing everything off -- closing that big
14 area in Key Largo is the answer. We would like to
15 see more law enforcement. I am out on the water
16 almost daily and rarely see these guys. I mean, I
17 can count on my hand how many times I have been
18 pulled over in the last ten years, you know. So we
19 want to see something change.

20 Perhaps expand some of the dive areas
21 and protect a little bit of expansion. Water quality
22 is a real big deal to us. I mean, there are reefs I
23 have been diving for 20 years that we have seen
24 change. We have seen algae bloom over them and stuff
25 like that. We have seen it with my own eyes. We

1 would like to see water quality. We have a lot of
2 things that are above us that we can't control going
3 in the water, like sewage from Lake Okeechobee and
4 all of that.

5 So for me it is very concerning. I have
6 my whole life ahead of me with my business. A lot of
7 the things you guys are talking about doing would
8 almost put me out of business in some ways. Some of
9 my customers will not want to come back. So there
10 has to be some sort of happy medium for us. We want
11 to see a good solution and that is it. That is all I
12 have to say. Thank you.

13
14

15 **BLAIR WITHERINGTON**

16 Thanks for letting me speak. I am Blair
17 Witherington, research scientist with the Inwater
18 Research Group. We have presented in the past to the
19 council about some of the sea turtle surveys that we
20 have conducted in the Keys. We have extensive sea
21 turtle data from what is called the turtle zone. I
22 just want to make some comments on that because we
23 feel Alternative 4 is appropriate for that zone.

24 One thing you should know is maybe not
25 very many of you have been out there and if you have,

1 you consider it as a not very remarkable place, and
2 you wouldn't considerate remarkable until you see the
3 turtle heads popping up. There are quite a lot of
4 turtles out there. In fact, that box in the
5 Blueprint is circumscribed by the transits that we
6 conduct to count turtles there. It is one of the
7 ways to count turtles, and that is where we get the
8 data that shows there are lots of turtles there, and,
9 in fact, more -- it is the greater density of green
10 turtles than anyplace in the U.S. That is not just
11 the Keys, not just Florida, not just the continental
12 U.S, but the entire U.S., Puerto Rico and Hawaii.
13 There are a lot of green turtles out there.

14 I know it is a topic of discussion
15 amongst the council, and there are some legitimate
16 questions that arise. One being, don't we have
17 enough turtles, and the answer is no. Now, of course
18 from an ecological perspective, we do not have nearly
19 the density of green turtles that we once had. From
20 a population biology perspective, no, we don't have
21 enough green turtles. Green turtles are recovering.
22 You have all seen more green turtles swimming around,
23 but are not recovered. And the consensus amongst the
24 federal agencies are it is not time to let up
25 conserving sea turtles and reducing threats. And I

1 bring that up because there are some key threats that
2 can be directly addressed by that Alternative 4 in
3 this zone.

4 Key threats to sea turtles involve boat
5 strikes. That is the most common recognizable cause
6 of death of sea turtles in the Keys and in Florida.
7 So slowing boats down in that zone could certainly
8 help a great deal.

9 Second is entanglement in trap lines.
10 I wrote a book on sea turtles that depicted an image
11 of a green turtle that was held under water by a trap
12 that we recovered right inside that box that is in
13 the Blueprint. It is not common out there, but it
14 does happen. So I just wanted to weigh in on the
15 appropriate nature of Alternative 4 for that
16 particular zone. Thank you.

17

18 CHARLES CAUSEY

19 My name is Charles Causey. I live in
20 Islamorada, and I am on the Sanctuary Board of Water
21 Quality Steering Committee. I was a member of the
22 South Florida Water Management District Board for a
23 while, And my comment or comments start with people
24 generally don't like to change. People push their
25 arms against change, and that is what we have got

1 here. We have got a Sanctuary that is deteriorating.
2 We have twice as many fishermen. We have four times
3 as many boaters than we had 30 years ago. So there
4 is this huge amount of pressure on the resources.

5 And in order to have some sort of future
6 for those resources, we have got to do more to
7 protect them because it has not worked so far. Plus,
8 my background is in economics, as you may have
9 guessed by now, not in environmental issues. So I
10 look down the road 20 years from now, and I look at
11 economic-wise how viable the Keys will be as a choice
12 for people who want to dive or fish or whatever. If
13 there is no resource here to warrant them coming
14 here, they will not come. They will go somewhere
15 else.

16 So there is a very big economic
17 question, too. One of the areas that when I look at
18 this, and I have been through the Blueprint like
19 everyone else has probably, too, I see one common
20 thing. We have a lot of users. They all want to
21 keep things the way they were, but we can't do that,
22 and all of us users have got to give something up.
23 To make this work, it has to hurt that we can't spend
24 as much money in our favorite spot. Perhaps we have
25 to give up an economic piece of the puzzle, too, a

1 slight bit, but I believe that we can work those
2 things out.

3 And we can take a look at something that is very,
4 very vital to a group. As an example, out of speed
5 areas for some of the guide fishermen or anchoring
6 for charter boat Captains. Perhaps there are ways
7 they can give something to the pot, and we give
8 something back. I think that is what we all have to
9 do in looking at this whether we are recreational
10 fishermen or divers, whatever. And they say, we want
11 something badly. Well, then are you willing to give
12 up a little to get it? And the thing that you want
13 to get, is that going to be something that is so bad
14 for the resources that you are going to be -- we need
15 to all look at that.

16 A couple of things here that has been
17 brought up by certain people, we do need marine
18 reserves. No question about it. We need big ones,
19 not a lot, but a couple. And if you read the work
20 done by Jerry Ault, one of the chief scientists, and
21 Jim Bohnsack, if you read the work done by them, you
22 will see the Dry Tortugas and some of the areas up in
23 central Florida on the water has had tremendous
24 success, so we need those.

25 And we also need to protect the

1 shorelines by having Alternative 4 -- having the 300
2 foot designation off all areas, islands and
3 shorelines. That is very, very important and will
4 help a deal to protect fisheries. Thank you.

5

6 SPENCER SLATE

7 I am Spencer Slate. I sat out here in
8 this group of fine people for six years on the First
9 National Marine Sanctuary Plan and Council, and I did
10 it just like you are and just like I have heard all
11 of you say to make a difference, to make a change to
12 save our reefs. I have seen little happen, and I
13 will tell you exactly why. It has been alluded to in
14 a lot of your speeches, some directly and some
15 indirectly, and that is water quality.

16 I want everybody to write down two
17 words, Water's Journey. That is a PBS series that I
18 did with my deceased best buddy Wes Skiles 20 years
19 ago. There is a whole series of them that aired, and
20 they still air. What we did, we started up in the
21 springs in High Springs and Cave Country or whatever
22 you call it, where all the beautiful springs are,
23 dropping dye. We followed the dye through the lake,
24 out both sides of the state all of the way through --
25 I mean, this was almost a year and a half of work

1 following the dyes with kayaks through the Everglades
2 right out here in front. And if you do not think you
3 are standing on a sponge, you are smoking something.

4 The state of Florida is lime rock. It
5 is a sponge, and the water from there comes here. No
6 matter what we do out here, it will never make a
7 difference. Like I said, I started on the Sanctuary
8 council in the '90s, and I go out there and was
9 diving five times a week, and I don't see a lot of
10 better. We have got to continue to do what we are
11 doing. We have to put more mooring balls. That is
12 great. We don't want to tear up the reefs and
13 anchors. We have to have better channel markers.

14 But, of course, anyone diving out there
15 has seen what that hurricane a couple of years ago
16 did to our reef. It destroyed it. We have to have
17 better enforcement. And these guys will do that but
18 guess what, they have no money. They need three
19 times the amount of money they have right now, so we
20 have to get them more money. And we have to get
21 proactive with the government. I always hear from
22 everyone, and I heard it when I was on the Sanctuary
23 council, well, we don't have any authority up in
24 Tallahassee. Well, everyone in this room needs to
25 write 50 letters this week to every one of our

1 legislators and bitch about the water quality coming
2 out of Lake Okeechobee. You can't ever argue with
3 anybody that the red tide was not in effect -- the
4 water quality from Big Sugar, you can't tell me when
5 I was on the Sanctuary council and flew over the bay
6 and saw pee green water literally killing millions of
7 our pink shrimp and wiped out the fishery in the bay
8 for about three years.

9 Shark River was literal 72 percent of
10 parts per million salt water. Shark River, 32
11 percent is ocean water, so that is a fact. All we
12 want to do out here -- all we want to try out here
13 will come to nothing if we do not proactively fight
14 water quality all of the way to Tallahassee guys, and
15 I want to keep doing this stuff. Thank you.

16
17 THOMAS FAYE

18 I am Thomas Faye, and I have owned a
19 home in Leighton for 39 years. I was rather
20 surprised to see the restrictive area that is
21 proposed in the Long Key Tennessee Reef SPA area in
22 Alternatives 3 and 4. It seems extremely
23 restrictive, and it is not equal anywhere else in
24 your proposals all up and down the Keys. It comes
25 from right on the shoreline of Long Key and it goes

1 all of the way out to Tennessee Reef Lighthouse. It
2 really is disruptive to the local area of Long Key
3 itself. It affects the businesses there. It will
4 affect the fishermen there. It will effect the
5 people coming down here to do fishing. People will
6 probably avoid coming into Long Key and that area
7 because of a restricted area that is so large right
8 outside of Long Key where they normally would come
9 and go fishing. And I find it rather unfair and
10 discriminatory against Long Key.

11 I just wanted to come here and voice my
12 opinion. I do appreciate all of the work that this
13 committee does. And if the SPA area was cut down and
14 put further out toward the reef, it would probably be
15 effective, and it would not be so restrictive and
16 detrimental to the community of Long Key. Thank you
17 very much.

18

19 **NATE WEINBAUM**

20 I am Nate Weinbaum. I have been up
21 since 4:30, so I may not be as eloquent or as
22 composed. I would like to echo some of the things
23 already said and well said. I am in a place where I
24 teach people about our resources and take people
25 fishing. Today I had a 92 year old guy and his wife

1 was 87 and their son was in his '50s. I am 40. And
2 I have worked a different life, and my background is
3 I am now doing what I love, but I talk to people
4 daily and I try to educate them about issues. And
5 the three main points I would leave behind is water
6 quality and -- I mean, it has been going on for so
7 long, and it is not discussed by the public
8 campaigns. I mean, it might be getting some better
9 but I see -- I mean, each day I go out and basically
10 -- like, we pick up the trash. I do my best to teach
11 people why we do not damage the bottom. That is
12 where things grow and where everything starts. I do
13 my best to pass on what I know about our resources.

14 And then also it is deteriorating, and I
15 may have to pick up a new career. We are all
16 slightly greedy in that we all want to continue to do
17 what we do. I do it for a love. I do it for --
18 because it is what I love and what I have loved since
19 I was a kid. And I differentiate taking people out
20 and showing them national parks and reefs from
21 commercial fishing. I have friends in this room that
22 do commercial fishing. I think they are two
23 different things that should be treated differently.
24 I think they have different impacts.

25 I am a member of the Upper Keys Guide

1 Association and ultimately I echo their sentiment and
2 I am on board with them as well as the Lower Keys.
3 Thank you for your time.

4 STEVE FRIEDMAN

5 First of all, I just want to thank you
6 all for your hard work and what you are doing on our
7 behalf. My name is Steve Friedman. I have been a
8 resident and fishing guide for 20 years. I come to
9 you today from an unique perspective. I was an
10 alternate member of the Sanctuary Advisory Council,
11 so I know how passionate you all are and how hard you
12 try to make everyone happy. I am also a former
13 candidate for state representative for this district,
14 and I decided to run because of the state's lack of
15 priority to water quality and the urgency to right
16 that wrong.

17 I am currently the Commander of the
18 Florida Keys Fishing Guides Association. It is one
19 of the oldest conservation organizations in the state
20 of Florida. The Guides Association was one of the
21 architects of the Everglades Management Plan and has
22 been there since the beginning of the Florida Keys
23 National Marine Sanctuary, by and large one of the
24 first groups to recognize and fight for the
25 importance of water quality as alluded to by Will

1 Benson earlier. As much as our organization would
2 like to chisel this Restoration Blueprint to benefit
3 our own specific interests, we know that might be
4 unreasonable. Compromise pains us as much as it
5 pains every other stakeholder. But as professionals
6 who work on the water each day, you may not receive
7 more informed and unique feedback than from fishing
8 guides.

9 We are committed to analyzing and
10 weighing in on the management of our local resources
11 with objectivity and professionalism. There is no
12 alternative that we see as being the preferred
13 alternative as it is written today on the blueprint.
14 We will be providing in detail another alternative
15 that is a combination of suggestions from most if not
16 all of the four alternatives offered. And I urge the
17 Sanctuary to read those comments with the
18 understanding of the experience we bring to the
19 table.

20 A sample of some of those comments would
21 be that we support many of the preferred alternative
22 proposals regarding the Upper Keys like the expansion
23 of the wildlife management areas as long as they
24 allow for flats fishing. We support all no motor
25 zones proposed in the preferred alternative with the

1 understanding that they allow for idle speed and
2 electronic trolling motors. This will help prevent
3 and protect shallow water habitats.

4 We support Sanctuary wide prohibitions
5 to discharge any material or matter from cruise
6 ships. Why is this not already in place? We do not
7 support the Long Key and Tennessee Sanctuary
8 Preservation areas, understanding the Sanctuary's
9 goal to protect massive and varied habitats. Flats
10 fishing does not damage any of these habitats or put
11 undue stress on the fisheries, but a massive closure
12 would add additional pressure on nearby fishing areas
13 and would severely impact the economic potential of
14 the flats fishing industry. We will encourage the
15 Sanctuary to increase the enforcement of rules
16 already in existence and the ones created after the
17 Restoration Blueprint becomes final.

18 The flats fishing industry is already
19 aligned with most of the Sanctuary's management
20 practices regarding marine use. Our boats have
21 little if no impact on the habitats. Catch and
22 release practices are almost standard practice, and
23 flats fishing is rooted in quiet movement with very
24 little disturbance both audibly and environmentally.

25 We recognize that the movement and

1 conservation and restoration has shifted to a habitat
2 focus priority. With thousands of years of compiled
3 experience on the water, we have an unique insight
4 with regards to habitat, and we stand ready to work
5 with the Sanctuary, but we can't be excluded for
6 unnecessary reasons. Thank you.

7

8 DALE PEREZ

9 My name is Captain Dale Perez. I have
10 been a fishing guide in the Florida Keys for the last
11 51 years, most of my adult life. I am here to tell
12 you that we really have to do something about water
13 quality. It is very discouraging to go out and see
14 the color of the water. It makes you sick. You see
15 the dead sponges floating around and see the dead
16 fish. The seagrass is dead. In certain places --
17 First National Bank, there is no seagrass. There is
18 no more grass there. It is all mud bottom. Palm
19 Lake, the same way. I haven't seen the bottom in
20 there in three years.

21 But I also want to get up here because I
22 spend a lot of time guiding at Long Key. I have
23 fished there for over 50 years. They even have a
24 bump named after me called Dale's Bump. We don't do
25 any damage there. We pole a boat. We pole in from

1 offshore. When we leave, we pole out to deep water.
2 I think if you close that area, it is going to put a
3 lot of pressure like Steve said on other places and
4 on the fishery. Please reconsider. Please don't
5 close Long Key. Thank you.

6

7 JOHN TIMURA

8 Ladies and gentlemen, my name is John
9 Timura, and I wasn't born here in the Keys, but I got
10 here as soon as I could, and that was 25 years ago.
11 Also, I am a member and Chairman of the Near Shore
12 Water Regulation Committee as of recently. And one
13 of the things that struck me today just by watching
14 the conversation going around the table is that by
15 coming up -- and I realize this is government and you
16 have to do things the way government says you have
17 to, but coming up with four alternatives and only
18 four alternatives only disenfranchised a lot of
19 people, and that is why you are having a problem
20 getting public comments from people because they feel
21 it is a multiple choice question such as, would you
22 like a punch in the nose, a knee to the stomach, a
23 kick in the groin or none of the above. And, you
24 know, we have a lot of people here to voice their
25 comments tonight. But the alternatives all focus on

1 geography.

2 If we were talking about air pollution,
3 would we be looking up or would we be looking down at
4 the ground that the air is flowing over? The iconic
5 reefs sound like a really good idea, but it sounds
6 like it is also a plea to tourists that, yeah, we
7 screwed up and we are sorry, but now we are making a
8 comeback album and please come down and spend your
9 money with us. If you have an aquarium where, you
10 know, everything dies, you don't try to solve that
11 problem by putting more fish in it. Now we are going
12 to plant coral fragments in the same water that
13 killed the previous corals and hope for the best? It
14 doesn't make sense. It doesn't add up. There is
15 even a story in the news right now about playing
16 music to corals, you know, under the water to make
17 them grow faster which is hilarious.

18 They are good stories for people who
19 want to come down here for a week, but we are the
20 ones who are stuck with the aftermath. We are the
21 residents that moved down here on purpose, and we
22 care about the environment. We have got some very
23 big and obvious reasons for the water problems that
24 we have and, you know, like fertilizer runoff,
25 phosphate mining, Roundup to control aquatic plants

1 in our fresh water lakes, over marketing of tourism
2 and definitely overdeveloping. And if you look at
3 the Board of Directors, most of them have a
4 connection to one of these industries. We have our
5 own swamp to drain right here in our state of
6 Florida.

7 Education is important. Limiting access
8 is, but based on previous efforts of enforcement, you
9 can't look somebody -- it is hard to look somebody
10 straight in the eye and say that we are going to
11 double the rules and double the closed areas, but we
12 are not going to do anything to enforce those rules.
13 I mean, there has been a huge gap, and that has been
14 brought up many times. I think what Spencer said was
15 brilliant about the water and some people have said
16 -- we have an under enforcement problem here.

17 People should respect the water that we
18 have down here to the point where they are almost
19 afraid to get into it because they don't want to mess
20 something up. Instead we have reckless and all kinds
21 of crazy things and -- I am out of time, but thank
22 you for all you are doing and thanks for being here
23 everybody.

24
25 GARY SANDS

1 My name is Gary Sands. I am a lobster
2 fisherman in Key Largo. I started fishing with my
3 father when I got out of school in 1960 in Key Largo.
4 I am still fishing there now. I have been here in
5 front of this panel before many times. Key Largo is
6 the dive capital of the world, and we fish in it and
7 lobster fish in it. We have been here before and
8 explained to them in Key Largo we can't go behind us
9 because we have Everglades National Park. The only
10 place we can fish is out there in the Sanctuary,
11 northeast and southwest. That is the only way we can
12 go or out to deeper water.

13 And now the Sanctuary comes along and
14 they want a no anchoring zone from Molasses Reef all
15 of the way to the Whistling Buoy with no anchoring
16 from 90 foot to 300. That is our fishing area. We
17 have no place to go. We are asking please do not do
18 it. There are more fishermen here besides me. We
19 disapprove of any changes, and I will tell you why,
20 what is going to happen next and mark my words, that
21 Biscayne National Park will take over. Whenever this
22 thing goes down, they will say no lobster fishing
23 there, too. We have lobster fished away from all of
24 the coral areas there is in Key Largo, so now you
25 have no place to go but out, and that is where we are

1 at, so we say no.

2 We fish at John Pennekamp Coral Reef
3 State Park. We fought for that in 1970. They wanted
4 to take John Pennekamp State Park away from us. We
5 could not lobster fish, and we fought that. There
6 were 23 of us that went to Tallahassee. What we do
7 now in your place and at John Pennekamp State Park is
8 we border run everything. That is what we do with
9 you all. So we are asking you all please don't take
10 no more from us, just leave us alone. The diving
11 industry can do what they want. Everybody can do
12 what they want, but just leave the lobster fishermen
13 alone.

14 I don't know if anyone has ever done a
15 study, but has anyone done a study on a reef itself
16 after Irma hit it? The reef is -- all it is is a
17 rubble pile. The whole 20 or 30 foot reef track, I
18 fish around it and by it, and it is rubble and
19 someone needs to take a look. Thank you. And one
20 more thing, my friend is not here and he is from the
21 Florida Keys Commercial Fishermen Association. I was
22 hoping you all would have a map here with all of the
23 places we can fish, lobster fish. And then with the
24 expanded areas you want, see what we have left and
25 there is nothing. That is why we oppose everything.

1 Thank you.

2

3 DAN YEIDER

4 Good afternoon everyone. We recognize
5 that the Florida Keys run by the Gulf of Mexico to
6 the north and the south Atlantic to the south. We
7 also recognize the Keys are made up of the Upper,
8 Middle, Lower Keys and Key West and are different
9 from each other in certain ways and therefore should
10 be managed as such. We also realize, too, that
11 management decisions should be based on valid peer
12 reviewed science which is readily available.

13 In addition, the same decision should be
14 based on the good assessments of water quality and
15 the amount of water coming to us from south Florida.
16 Also in this equation we must pay attention to the
17 water usage of the municipalities, agriculture and
18 the fertilizer industry to the north of us. There
19 needs to be a mindset change from the management
20 making process to an impact based decision making
21 process. We the people of the Keys are the ones
22 directly affected by the rules and regulations, not
23 our visitors. We don't need any more regulatory
24 takings because in 2014 the South Atlantic Fisheries
25 Council and the Gulf of Mexico Fisheries Council in

1 partnership with local fishermen created 60 areas on
2 the coral reefs which prohibit commercial fishing.
3 At this time we need no more new regulations.

4 In addition, the extension of the
5 southern boundaries is of an extremely important
6 consideration. On paper and in the Blueprint there
7 are no specifics as to the extent of the boundaries.
8 We believe that they are quite possibly many miles
9 offshore than they are today -- in the status quo
10 today.

11 And in closing, there must be a
12 decision-making mindset in the realm of science
13 based, water quality based and economic impact based
14 information and data which has not been the case in
15 the past many years or now for that matter. Vote
16 Alternative 1, status quo. Thank you.

17
18 ALEX NEUFELD

19 I would just like to say thank you to
20 the Sanctuary Advisory Council to let us speak today.
21 This is my first time at any one of these meetings,
22 and outside of my coworker Jess who spoke earlier, I
23 am the youngest person to come up here in about 20 or
24 25 years so I think that is interesting as well. I
25 am up here representing the Coral Restoration

1 Foundation, which I think a lot of people in this
2 room at least have heard of if not know very well.
3 And we have heard a lot from the fishermen in this
4 community and for good reason because they are
5 experts in what they do down here. But I want to
6 speak a little bit about what we do at CRF, and what
7 we are experts in which is coral growth and coral
8 restoration in the Florida Keys.

9 And of the things that I know, and a lot of
10 us are very well aware of because it has been brought
11 up in just about every speech, and that is water
12 quality. And certainly there is a lot that needs to
13 be done with water quality in the Keys, and there is
14 no denying that. But one of the things that we see
15 in our work that we have become experts in is that
16 you don't need to solve every single problem that the
17 Keys may face in order to make them better.

18 So when we go out and plant coral on any
19 of the reefs down here in the Keys, especially in the
20 Upper Keys, what we see is that we don't need perfect
21 water quality. Yes, it helps a great deal, but we
22 need to alleviate some of the stressors that these
23 corals go through each day. They are under
24 increasing pressures from any number of things. But
25 if you get rid of one or two of them, doesn't have to

1 be the biggest ones, we don't have to solve water
2 quality tomorrow. But if you give them a chance,
3 they are incredible resilient animals. That is why I
4 love working with them so much. The four years that
5 I have worked with them has been the most fulfilling
6 and rewarding work that I have ever done before.

7 And the reason for that is because we
8 see it working. There are reefs we go to now that
9 would not have coral on them if not for the work that
10 we did, and I don't say that to brag. I say that
11 with a lot of sadness in my heart because I wish that
12 that was not the case. I wish that there were
13 natural coral still here on those reefs. But what we
14 have done in our organization is given hope for the
15 future. We have created some of these things that
16 were alluded to earlier. And we have been given a
17 chance for at some point down the road when we fix
18 these monumental challenges to have something there
19 that can start to grow naturally on its own.

20 And for that reason, I would like to
21 push back a little bit on some of the ideas that have
22 been shared here today about how nothing is going to
23 change if we don't fix water quality or address some
24 of these bigger issues. I see each day that things
25 are changing for the better. Even though we still

1 have a long road ahead, I think that a lot of the
2 alternatives proposed by the Sanctuary especially in
3 options 3 and 4 are things that would go a long way
4 towards helping our natural environment. Thank you.

5

6 ELIZABETH EWALD

7 I am Elizabeth Ewald, resident and
8 homeowner in the Long Key area since 1994. I
9 sincerely care about the area where I have learned to
10 fish and snorkel these waters. I really do want to
11 protect our marine environment, but I do not believe
12 your preferred proposal is the way to do that. The
13 Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary was
14 established in 1990. The Sanctuary established then
15 has been in a decline for the past three decades.

16 If the Sanctuary had provided outcomes
17 today, I would consider the proposal that you prefer.
18 Management by the Marine Sanctuary has produced no
19 positive change, very little protection, enforcement
20 or education. I believe education is key. A
21 mandatory educational program created by the Marine
22 Sanctuary would better serve this purpose. This
23 would help people understand how they are impacting
24 the waters and educate them in a more meaningful way.

25 I believe learning to really manage the

1 Sanctuary that is already in place would be a better
2 use of the money, resources and skills. I am opposed
3 to Alternatives 3 and 4, especially Key Long
4 Tennessee SPA.

5

6 WALTER RENTZ

7 I am Walter Rentz. I have a lot of
8 hours on the ocean, and it is green soup. It is
9 terrible. It is out on the reef and behind the reef.
10 Sometimes in it is in the middle of the reef. It is
11 terrible. It is killing everything. Well, we need
12 to put dye in there and find out where that water is
13 going. We were told sewers would be put in. What
14 happens when the pressure rises up? Is this pushing
15 this crap up? We need to check that really strong
16 because we have not seen the bottom of Key Largo in a
17 long time, a long time.

18 And I have a suggestion about the Coral
19 Foundation thing, and I think they have a good idea.
20 Why don't you take the spawns you already have and
21 plant these trees on it, not away from it where they
22 have got it harvested, and bring it up into the air,
23 transport it into a different water temperature, and
24 then glue it to the bottom. Glue it there right on
25 top of the spots. Close them if you have to. Don't

1 let anybody in there but the coral people and let
2 them grow it and boom. It is just a suggestion.

3 Like the water quality, just do it, and
4 the Dry Rocks, I need that little way in there. I
5 want that spot there and that spot there, and so does
6 Gary and him and my son. We keep putting these spots
7 in there. Let's do something with the ones we
8 already have. Let them put the trees on them and see
9 what happens. They are a disaster anyway. Thank you
10 for listening.

11

12 DIANE HARBAUGH

13 My name is Diane Harbaugh. I have lived
14 here for 35 years. I work in the fishing industry,
15 and I am a member of many organization out there
16 because I care a lot about what we have going on out
17 here. I wanted to speak to a couple of interesting
18 facts that I have learned since this process started.
19 One of them is about the Sanctuary's ability to shut
20 down any or a portion or all of the Sanctuary if they
21 deem necessary. Right now they have a 30 day and up
22 to 180, and if I am not mistaken, you can renew that
23 one more time. And the new plan shuts that down from
24 60 to 360 days, and if I am not mistaken, you can
25 renew that one more. And that is if there is an area

1 where they feel it just has to be closed, but there
2 is nothing to say what that area is or why.

3 I would like to speak a little bit about
4 mooring buoys. And it seems that because you can't
5 maintain what you have, you are going to make areas
6 bigger, and then you are going put more buoys in.
7 But I heard it in Key Largo that we don't want to put
8 too many in because it draws people, so we can't
9 maintain what we have. So it concerns me we are
10 going to make these huge areas and not be able to
11 maintain what we have now, let alone put more in to
12 help people who want to go snorkeling and diving and
13 enjoy our Keys.

14 But my main focus is, I want to talk
15 about the choices. We are giving 2, 3 and 4
16 Alternatives. I want to tell you that the Key Largo
17 2, 3, and 4 are the same. Extending the boundaries
18 of the Sanctuary, 2, 3 and 4 are the same. Turtle
19 Rock, 2, 3 and 4 are the same. Crocodile Lake, 2, 3
20 and 4 are the same. Carysfort 2 and 3 are similar
21 and 4 is different. Wow! A choice. Lake Surprise,
22 2, 3 and 4 the same. Grecian Rocks, 2, 3, and 4 the
23 same. Pigeon Key, 2, 3 and 4 the same. Davis Reef,
24 all the same. That is not a choice. Snake Creek, 2
25 and 3 the same and 4 is different. Cotton Key, 2, 3

1 and 4 the same. Alligator Reef, 2, 3 and 4, the
2 same. Alligator Wildlife Management, 2, 3 and 4, the
3 same. Tennessee Reef, we have choices.

4 A lot of these people that are in this
5 room accept 2, but they can't accept 2 because you
6 have to pick, 1, 2, 3 or 4. So go on, Delta Shoal,
7 Cheeca Rocks, Horseshoe Key, Gulfside Bend, 2, 3 and
8 4 are the same. Coffin's Patch, Marathon Key and
9 Moser Channel, 80 percent of the time we have not
10 alternatives. And I feel sorry for you, ma'am,
11 because you were thrown into this, and I didn't know
12 you didn't have the time and we are kind of given
13 this project. You have got to give us choices. I
14 believe with Charlie Causey, we all have to give a
15 little bit, but give me a choice. 80 percent of the
16 time no choice. So I have no choice but to note for
17 Alternative 1.

18

19 **ROB BLESER**

20 Good afternoon. My name is Rob Bleser. I was
21 born and raised in Miami. I have owned Quiescence
22 Diving Services for over 42 years now, and I am a
23 former Sanctuary Advisory Council member. I think I
24 took Spencer's spot. Any additional rules, laws and
25 restrictions to a difficult and currently under

1 enforced arena accomplishes little without an
2 aggressive expansion and expense relative law
3 enforcement. It is obviously expensive and difficult
4 to fund. However, education and outreach in
5 conjunction with law enforcement works.

6 As an example, back in the day even
7 when there was only one in the Upper Keys, a
8 Sanctuary patrol officer by the name of Scottie
9 Larusso was able to make a significant impact by
10 spending long days on the water, talking to boaters
11 in an informative way and writing citations only when
12 necessary. Most of us on charter boats have a cell
13 phone and work together in an effort to help protect
14 the resource. Scottie along with the volunteers of
15 Team Ocean made a huge difference by reaching out and
16 educating the boating public physically out there on
17 the water handing out pamphlets.

18 I came to realize it was working when a
19 private boater yelled over to me while I was
20 preparing to drop the anchor from one of our dive
21 charter boats informing me of the correct method.
22 Today we are lucky to get any significant timely
23 response by anyone when we see a violation. Current
24 coral declines appear to be happening worldwide
25 including locations where man rarely goes. Certainly

1 most almost everyone feels a sense of urgency and a
2 need to do something about it.

3 However, since decline issues appear to
4 be everywhere, the residents and visitors of the
5 Florida Keys should not be considered the direct
6 enemy. We all have the right to use and enjoy our
7 local waters. A common sense approach to improving
8 the focus of awareness, outreach and education is the
9 most cost effective way to bring uneducated users
10 into the fold. A few of the Blueprint proposals seem
11 senseless. Additional overreach of these proposals
12 relative to many parts of the Blueprint alternatives
13 will have a difficult chance of success when history
14 has shown that many of the current Sanctuary programs
15 and responsibilities remain incomplete and
16 underfunded. It is my hope that if nothing else
17 comes out of this, there will at least be an
18 increased focus on funding the management efforts
19 that already exist.

20 And as a quick note on water quality,
21 there was an issue when I was on the Sanctuary
22 Advisory Council, there was a buoy that was set off
23 at the Mississippi River, and it was only moved by
24 the current, no wind effect whatsoever, and it
25 traveled all of the way down either through Channel 2

1 or Channel 5, turned and went up the coast and danced
2 around a little bit, went right by Key Largo and
3 right past Miami. So stuff from Ohio gets to us,
4 too. Thank you.

5

6 TIM KLEIN

7 My name is Tim Klein. I have grown up
8 here my entire life, growing up with my father, dive
9 shop, dive boat owner, did that most of my life
10 growing up. Then I became a fishing man in the
11 offshore boats, and then backcounty near Shore Waters
12 for the past 30 plus years, and the big deal is the
13 water quality and all of these rules that we have
14 where we are going to put our anchors and poles and
15 whatnot. We do live on a block of sponge or swiss
16 cheese or whatever, but it is the water flow that I
17 have been talking about for many years at many
18 meetings and watching our shorelines where I grew up
19 and where I still live, these basins or shorelines
20 where I fish in shallow water, it is disgusting. It
21 is brown water now which is different with a peculiar
22 moss on it that is brown and green.

23 When I go throw the cast net in some of
24 these spots, it is loaded with this green moss. Once
25 you make a throw with your net, you are done, and the

1 jelly fish that are engulfing our basins and our
2 shorelines. And these shrimp that you have in your
3 tank with one jelly fish, your shrimp are all dead.
4 But it is just putting an anchor here, and I am sure
5 we need more buoys. Education is the biggest thing.
6 And we have a horrible marker system that we have put
7 up over the years.

8 But what it comes down to with me is
9 water quality. And to what John said earlier, you
10 are making more or making reefs and growing coral,
11 but you are putting it back into stuff that is
12 killing it already. So we have got to really work
13 through Florida about our water. I just think the
14 biggest deal out of all this is cleaner water. Thank
15 you.

16

17 DOUG GASTON

18 Good afternoon. My name is Doug Gaston.
19 I am with Audubon Florida. We will be submitting
20 more specific comments in writing that addressed some
21 of the issues raised here today. One of this things
22 we will be supporting is the Pulley Ridge Coral Reef
23 protection and the no wake zone. But since I am with
24 Audubon and you think about us as the bird people, we
25 will be submitting some comments and supporting the

1 wildlife management areas where you have important
2 habitat for waiting and nesting birds. So we will be
3 supporting that and some of the other proposals, too.
4 We will cherry pick from the different alternatives
5 and base it on some of the science that we have
6 through our Keys Science Center.

7 But at heart I am a fisherman. I came
8 down here 20 years ago and started fishing, diving
9 and snorkeling and bringing the family for vacations
10 and all of that and helping to fuel the tourism
11 economy that is so important. I understand that part
12 of it. But I grew up fishing on the Delaware Bay up
13 in the northeast and we saw what happened to those
14 areas, the ecosystem decline for some of the same
15 reasons you are seeing here. And it would really be
16 a shame to see those things continue and happen here.
17 It is like déjà vu all over for me again.

18 So I can tell you that I wish there had
19 been a process to protect the Delaware Bay like there
20 is here. The flounder are gone and the stripers are
21 gone. We used to catch sea trout in 20 feet of water
22 with a buck tail and bring it across the top and have
23 a great time. That fishery is gone, and it will not
24 come back. This is paradise, and I love it here. I
25 see the passion in the room. I hear the passion

1 of people commenting on their lives and enjoying the
2 resources, but it will not get better unless you
3 protect it. So Alternative 1 will probably not work.
4 Some combination of factors may work, but everyone
5 will have to give up something, and it will be a
6 shared sacrifice for that to happen.

7 And I want to leave you with an
8 editorial. There has been some comments about water
9 quality. My main responsibility is Lake Okeechobee
10 and the area north of the lake. That is where the
11 water quality issue really starts. We are looking
12 for allies to try to help advocate the policies that
13 will clean up the lake and promote Everglades
14 restoration. And I would be more than happy to talk
15 to anyone. Thank you.

16

17 FRANK RILEY

18 Good afternoon. Thank you for this
19 opportunity to talk. I am Frank Riley. I am going
20 to shoot from the hip today. I would like to share
21 something with you, and pass it down. This is a
22 photo of a 13 year old boy, and here is in his boat
23 right off of Long Key which was later to become the
24 city of Leighton. I am proud to say I am a citizen
25 of Leighton. This month I will reach 70 years old

1 and have been doing this a while and very familiar
2 with it. In fact, I don't think there is a single
3 person alive that knows more about the surrounding
4 waters of Leighton.

5 To give you a little history of the
6 city of Leighton, Dale Leighton was flying his
7 airplane along with his wife Mary to Cuba. She
8 looked down and saw that little point there and said,
9 some day I want to have a home there. It is a very
10 special place. That is where Zane Grey decided to
11 have the Long Key Fishing Club, which I was a member
12 of for a long time. It is the oldest fishing club in
13 the entire United States. And if you read the
14 bylaws, it promotes conservation. I am a
15 conservationist. I always have been. In fact, I am
16 very proud to say I live in Leighton because we have
17 probably done more than any municipality to protect
18 that area.

19 A quick little story, my uncle was the
20 first park ranger at John Pennekamp. He got together
21 with John Pennekamp and a few politicians and he got
22 to get Long Key State Park. This was a matter of
23 urgency to Dale Leighton, and my dad was one of the
24 founding fathers of the state of Leighton because
25 Bernie Pappas (phonetic), a major developer, was

1 planning on building a row of hotels which is now Key
2 Long State Park. My father and his associates along
3 with Dale were directly responsible for that becoming
4 a park. My uncle became the first park ranger there.

5 If you look out on the end of that
6 point, there is a big bucket for a drag mine, and it
7 is still there for when Bernie was going to develop
8 that and was trying to get permission to build a
9 bridge to the Channel 5 bridge, which would have cut
10 off a lot. Our little community is small. It
11 intentionally has shallow water that was never
12 addressed. We have small boats. If we go forward
13 with this Long Key proposal, I can take half of my
14 fishing spot numbers and throw them in the trash. I
15 won't be able to fish there again, and I think that
16 is wrong.

17 Again, about Long Key and water quality,
18 I agree, and we have been doing it lot longer than
19 anyone. My father gave a piece of land to build a
20 marine out there. It is still there. It is still
21 active. They started water monitoring our city, that
22 was the first thing they did, long before the rest of
23 the Keys got involved. We built the first sewer
24 system. We got it done on time and on budget. We
25 managed to get the land fill on Long Key closed.

1 They no longer dump there. They just transfer stuff.
2 It is now a transfer station because we are concerned
3 about the water. I can't support Alternatives 3 and
4 4. We have done everything possible to make that
5 place wonderful and preserve nature.

6 My dad owns the largest piece of
7 property on Long Key. Bernie also pulled building
8 permits to build a condominium there with the county.
9 Some of y'all have been around to know about that.
10 Well, they took their own money, bought the land and
11 just recently before he passed away gave it to the
12 city. It a conservation area, but options 3 and 4
13 are wrong.

14

15 CYNTHIA LEWIS

16 Thank you everybody for letting me come
17 today and speak. I am a coral biologist. I have
18 been doing that here in the Keys for nearly 20 years.
19 I am too a resident of Leighton/Long Key. I would
20 like to support kind of across the board the
21 expansions of your SPA's into deeper waters because I
22 understand as a coral biologist how important this
23 particular habitat, which is not well protected at
24 this point, how important this is to the remaining
25 reef building coral that still live there and this

1 would protect them and their environment.

2 These corals because they are still
3 there are potentially resistant and resilient to many
4 of these stressors that we have all been talking
5 about that are outside of our range of control. And
6 by their survival and their ability to reproduce,
7 they could potentially be a source and a seed for the
8 other degraded reefs, actual coral recruitment.

9 And just kind of some interested points,
10 when this Sanctuary was first put in 25 years ago,
11 resource managers were recommending that 20 percent
12 of the Sanctuary be set aside as a no-take area
13 specifically to preserve the resources. And in
14 actuality, we have got 18 special preservation areas
15 and we have got four additional, and in those areas,
16 they are all accessible, but no-take areas.

17 And then we have specially used areas
18 that are restricted to no-take and no-entry. So
19 combining those 22 areas, it constitutes less than
20 half of one percent of the entire Florida Keys
21 National Marine Sanctuary. If at this point we were
22 to say, okay, let's take Alternative 4 across the
23 board and accept everything that is proposed for
24 Alternative 4, the additional closures to that which
25 is basically expanding some of those SPA's and

1 creating three new ones, that would actually bring us
2 all of the way up to a whopping 3 percent of the
3 Sanctuary that is protected as a no-take area. These
4 are all really important considerations we need to
5 take into account.

6 And Sarah is absolutely on point when
7 she says this is America's reefs. They are not our
8 reefs. We are just the stewards here. We happen to
9 live here and enjoy these reefs. But these are
10 America's reefs, and it is our responsibility and,
11 yes, all of us need to make concessions. And we need
12 to -- we are all going to hurt. We will not all like
13 what we end up with, but hopefully we can live with
14 it. Thank you very much.

15

16

16 EVENING SESSION

17

18 GREG ECKLUND

19

20

21

22

23

24

25

My name is Greg Ecklund. I am the
President of the Islamorada Charter Boat Association.
I have been the President for the last three or four
years. We have been working with this process. This
is one of the reasons that I guess they voted me in
is because I like to come to these meetings and
listen to what is going on.

1 So if you roll back three years, we are
2 having the same discussions today that he had three
3 years ago. I recognize a lot of faces here. We
4 talked about closures, drew large lines on maps and
5 everyone freaked out, and it really boils down to
6 water quality, education and enforcement. And I saw
7 on the news last night that we got 100 million
8 dollars for a coral restoration program here in the
9 Florida Keys. So they say on TV you got 100 million
10 dollars, so you must get 100 million dollars, right?

11 Who knows where the money comes from. This 100
12 million dollars is pretty amazing because we have had
13 a water quality issue, an enforcement issue and an
14 education issue in the Florida Keys for years, and we
15 haven't gotten 100 million dollars for any of that,
16 and those are the three most important issues and
17 everyone on this panel says it.

18 So it is time that we start listening to
19 all of us, not just one user group, one special
20 interest group, whatever it is. It is time that we
21 all work together and find a good conservation
22 solution so that this place is taking care of for the
23 generations to come. We all make our living here.
24 We live here. It is our backyard. It is not some
25 map we draw lines on. It is things that all of us

1 know something about.

2 So I feel you should let us come to the
3 user groups and sit down at the table and work on
4 good proposals for areas we know something about. We
5 spend 365 days a year on the water. We know what is
6 going on in the Key Largo management issue, and right
7 now none of my members in all of the meetings we had
8 can support anything but Alternative 1 because you
9 haven't given us any options. It has not been
10 transparent. The council says they want this to be
11 transparent. We made our comments. You closed your
12 doors and you came back with exactly the same stuff
13 you started with three years ago. It doesn't work.
14 It doesn't work for the general public. It doesn't
15 work for the special users. It doesn't work for the
16 user groups. This has to be done in a way that is
17 transparent, that everyone has input on and you will
18 get something that works. That is it. Thank you.

19

20 ERIC HERSTEDT

21 My name is Eric Herstedt, Florida Keys
22 Guides Association. I have served on the board of
23 The Florida Keys Guides Association, and I have been
24 guiding 21 years. Please hear out all fishermen,
25 inshore and offshore. I am just going to go over

1 some particular areas here.

2 Long Key has approximately 17 spots for
3 guides from April through June, sunrise to sunset,
4 and it also has good bone fishing year round. We are
5 against the closure of Long Key fishing. Many guides
6 use this season for a large portion of their income.
7 There are so many boats these day with limited
8 fishing spots. Losing this ocean shoreline fishing
9 area at Long Key would put a large amount of pressure
10 on other places. A possible compromise could be to
11 allow catch and release inshore at Long Key. All of
12 the tarpon and bone fish we catch there are released
13 anyway.

14 Next, the Indian Key and Tea Table Key
15 area. This is a huge area of plats and channels that
16 have been skipped on the Sanctuary map possibly
17 because it is run by the Lignumvitae State Park.
18 Please look at this area. We would like it to be
19 marked as a no motor zone on all of the flats as it
20 already is, but almost all of the buoys and signs are
21 gone. This area is almost never enforced and is
22 being destroyed by boaters. We need these valuable
23 flats to be protected.

24 Next point is buoys and sign placement.
25 Please have fishing guides to be there of placement

1 of these devices. The Everglades National Park did
2 not have us help them with their general management
3 plan signs and they have had to redo and replace some
4 signs that were put in the wrong areas. Right now
5 some of the signs in the Sanctuary are placed
6 directly on the migration lane. This attracts boats
7 to run right over the migration lane and chases them
8 offshore. We can easily work together and place
9 these idle zone buoys and signs properly.

10 The Florida Guide Association will be
11 meeting with the Sanctuary in the next few weeks with
12 detailed suggestions, and a lot of things we do
13 support, and we have years of experience behind our
14 ideas. Thank you.

15
16 TRACY FROITZHEIM

17 My name is Tracy Froitzheim. I am a
18 resident of Long Key, and I am here on behalf of
19 myself and the community of Leighton and Long Key,
20 Oceanside Isle Condominiums and the management of
21 Outdoor Resorts representing over 400 owners to
22 strongly oppose the Long Key Tennessee Reef SPA,
23 specifically Alternatives 3 and 4.

24 First of all, I want to thank the entire
25 council that have done so much work on this. It is

1 overwhelming in scope and information which has made
2 it so hard to comprehend and absorb. I can't imagine
3 that you anticipated a pushback on every level from
4 the Key West Chamber of Commerce to fishermen and
5 divers all over the Keys. So I will not add any
6 negativity but simply state our opinions as to shed a
7 light on how much this will affect our community.

8 I sent the council a list of questions
9 as you advised in advance with the hope that they
10 would be answered, but not prior to my six minute
11 speech because of the magnitude of everything we want
12 to comment on. I watched your Seven Iconic Reef
13 Restoration project yesterday and wondered if this
14 will be conducted in conjunction with the Restoration
15 Blueprint or is it on a separate mission?

16 My husband and I are professional Coast
17 Guard Captains for over 35 years and lived in Long
18 Key for 20 of those years. My husband has fished
19 here since 1974. We are stewards of the sea and take
20 great pride of being protectors of our fragile marine
21 environment. Our community is approximately 180
22 strong, and most of them are recreational fishermen
23 and divers that bought their homes in order to enjoy
24 this beautiful location.

25 We have a shallow draft entry to our

1 canals which only allows smaller vessels with low
2 drafts entry to our canal -- okay -- low drafts which
3 is why we strongly oppose Alternatives 3 and 4
4 because it would restrict most of the vessels to fish
5 and dive, which you know requires anchoring to close
6 proximity to our homes. That is a privilege we
7 treasure and will protect because it is essentially
8 our backyard.

9 It is our belief that we are not the
10 cause of the loss of slow growing corals or stony
11 coral tissue loss or sponges or damaged seabeds. It
12 is most likely global warming and most definitely
13 lobster mini season. That single handily destroys
14 and devastates the seabeds, corals and reefs all over
15 the Keys. We have personally witnessed the
16 destruction firsthand, and we are up in arms that the
17 mini season is still being allowed to devastate our
18 fragile ecosystem which causes more damage than our
19 entire community could possibly in a decade. So if
20 it weren't that the Keys' tourism makes so much
21 money, it could be said that the Advisory Council
22 ignores these facts completely. You could supplement
23 the funds to the communities that would lose tourism
24 dollars and with one stroke of a pen single handedly
25 save our precious environment by stopping the mini

1 season.

2 If you don't have complete control of
3 stopping this, you would most definitely have a huge
4 influence to whoever is in control. We know that
5 doing nothing as in Alternative 1 is not an option to
6 make sure our Keys environment is preserved for
7 future generations. So with that said, we would
8 support and uphold Alternative 2 of the proposal with
9 the hope it would actually help in our generation.
10 We would also consider making the SPA smaller in
11 size, but since the inception of the National Marine
12 Sanctuary in 1990, we have all seen a decline in our
13 water quality and fish stocks which has to be
14 attributed to the environmental changes. So as
15 citizens and stewards of our sea, we believe that you
16 will actually apply the 30 years of previous science
17 and research that you have accumulated and make an
18 impact needed for the continuance of our marine
19 habitat here in the Keys in our generation.

20 We do not believe that our small
21 community is exploiting or causing decline of the
22 habitats or loss of water quality around Long Key or
23 the existing 2,800 square miles of the Sanctuary. It
24 is our belief that because of this specific SPA being
25 directly over Long Key, it would not be affected by

1 pollution from watershed or runoff or pesticide
2 stress. This could be measured by other areas much
3 more populated.

4 Leighton was the first municipality to
5 install wastewater treatment systems to replace the
6 old septic tanks polluting our waters and canals.
7 Our canals are constantly being monitored for water
8 quality. So we have already made a positive impact
9 as a community for years. As many of the fishermen
10 have already said here today, Long Key is
11 historically an abundant fishery and is known to many
12 as Fisherman's Paradise.

13 We want to help in your efforts of
14 preservations, but not with the widespread closures
15 that you are proposing. We are also thinking of our
16 property values as it relates to not being able to
17 enjoy our ecosystem within close proximity to our
18 homes. It would make an enormous impact on the
19 value. We also pay an annual fee to have the
20 privilege of fishing and diving for lobsters in the
21 Keys, and those monies should also go to your effort.
22 But if we are unable to utilize that privilege, so
23 many people will continue to purchase these licenses.
24 We hope that you will consider our concerns and apply
25 them fairly to the entire Keys so that we may find a

1 better solution to save our waters in the next draft
2 that you propose. I look forward to hearing and
3 being a part of the solution of this monumental
4 challenge. Thank you for listening.

5

6 MICHAEL GOLDBERG

7 My name is Mike Goldberg. I own Key
8 Dives here in Islamorada. Let me go off script a
9 little bit and talk about water quality. I challenge
10 everyone that is really concerned about water quality
11 to get on the South Florida Water Quality Management
12 Board's website. They have 28 projects all south of
13 Lake Okeechobee that are currently funded and are in
14 process. And if you read up on it, it will explain
15 to you where they are in each of these programs and
16 what is happening and the completion date that is
17 anticipated. I get tired of hearing about all of the
18 water quality, but it is actually getting addressed.
19 We need conservation.

20 I changed how we do our business here
21 about two years ago. I was a long time diver for 30
22 years and watching and seeing what is happening to
23 our reefs, I decided that conservation needs to be a
24 significant portion of our business. And if it is
25 not, I don't believe I will have a business ten years

1 from now. And if you are a fisherman here, if you
2 are a diver here, if you don't embrace conservation,
3 I believe you will also find yourself ten years from
4 now wondering what to do next because you will not
5 have a business.

6 Let's talk about access. People talk
7 about limiting access to certain areas. A good
8 example is Cheeca Rocks. We were out in the Cheeca
9 Rocks SPA recently, and you can see the loss of
10 coral. It is pretty significant. I kid you not, 200
11 feet south of the southern most SPA buoy, the reef is
12 beautiful. Why is that? No one goes there. No one
13 for the most part knows that it is there. But inside
14 the SPA, there is complete degradation and that is
15 because of human impact. We spend a lot of time
16 taking tourists there, and you can see why we need to
17 limit access.

18 Let me leave you guys with this thought
19 then, throughout history people have always been
20 resistant to change. We all know that. And we also
21 know we are resistant to change even in the face of
22 overwhelming evidence, and we are staring at
23 overwhelming evidence. We can decide to choose one
24 and give up what we believe is our way of life or we
25 can move forward and have a shared sacrifice and hope

1 for a better future. Thank you.

2

3 COURTNEY BENSON

4 My name is Courtney Benson. I am the
5 Marine Conservation Coordinator at Key Dives. I work
6 with Mike. I had no idea what I was going to say to
7 you guys today. I thought about it all day and wrote
8 a few notes down and totally ditched them when I
9 listened to a few of your comments.

10 And, Deb, you made a really great point,
11 no comment for a lot of us is a comment. For me and
12 for a lot of people who think like I do, it is the
13 obvious choice, we have to have more protection. Why
14 do I need to go there and tell them that when they
15 are doing the right thing? So I have been trying to
16 encourage a lot of my peers who are into conservation
17 to come here and talk to you guys and make comments,
18 but please understand they think you are doing the
19 right thing and they can't see anything else
20 happening.

21 So a question for you guys, and I know
22 that the answer from the Sanctuary Advisory Council
23 is that they are all here as volunteers, of you in
24 the audience how many of you are being paid to be
25 here today? That tells you something. That tells

1 you that all of you and me and all of them care about
2 the exact same thing. So, Richard, I have to
3 disagree with you. I don't think we are enemies. I
4 think we are allies. Are there any lobster fishermen
5 here? What is your name? Okay. Dillion, I am a
6 scuba diver, and I am vegan and my favorite animal to
7 see on the reef is a lobster, but you and I are
8 allies because we care about the same thing. So if
9 we sit here and do nothing, you don't win and I don't
10 win even though we don't see eye to eye.

11 And Sarah pointed that out on day one of
12 the rollout in Marathon, we are all on the same team.
13 We have to remember that. We are not going to see
14 eye to eye on every single thing, but if we remember
15 that we are all on the same team, we will get to the
16 same outcome, and that is best for all of us. So to
17 the advisory council who are working hard to make the
18 Sanctuary a more protected place for the future,
19 thank you. If we do nothing, that is the most
20 selfish thing we can do.

21 And in this community I don't think that
22 any of you are selfish. I think that you care about
23 your children and your grandchildren and this
24 ecosystem, and I know you care about that reef out
25 there. Otherwise, you wouldn't be here because

1 nobody is paying you to be here. So let's not be
2 selfish. Let's put our heads together and come up
3 with something that works for all of us. And let's
4 take the advice of these people who have worked so
5 hard to come up with a blueprint. Thank you.

6

7 JOHN HOWE

8 I am John Howe. I am a year round
9 resident of Tavernier. I have been following the
10 Sanctuary's zoning and regulation review since soon
11 after the condition report came out in 2011. I
12 assume most folks here -- let me put on my glasses --
13 most folks here tonight have seen the report, the
14 condition report, and glanced at the really shocking
15 graphics showing that any way you look at it, the
16 Sanctuary is in poor to fair shape.

17 Since 2011 I have listened in on
18 several of the Sanctuary Advisory Council meetings,
19 and I have read most of the Restoration Blueprint.
20 So I can sure appreciate the many, many hours of hard
21 work that went into it by Sanctuary staff as well as
22 members of this Advisory Council. So I just want to
23 say a big thank you for all for that. I really
24 appreciate it.

25 I made comments online, so I won't

1 repeat them here. I will only mention the main point
2 I tried to make about the Sanctuary's legal mandate
3 according to my understanding, and I am not a lawyer.
4 That is a disclaimer. According to section 301(b) of
5 the National Marine Sanctuary's Act, the law
6 governing all 15 Sanctuaries in the United States,
7 one of the Sanctuary's main purposes is to maintain
8 the natural and biological communities and to protect
9 and where appropriate restore and enhance natural
10 habitats, populations and ecological processes.

11 Another Sanctuary purpose stated in the
12 law is to facilitate to the extent compatible with a
13 primary objective of resource protection, and I tried
14 to add emphasis on that with my voice, all public and
15 private uses of the resources. In other words, the
16 primary legal mandate is to protect the Sanctuary's
17 resources while enabling public use as a secondary
18 though still very important responsibility.

19 My basic point is that the Marine
20 Sanctuary Act doesn't talk about balancing resource
21 protection with human use of the Sanctuary, as I have
22 often heard folks describe the situation here in the
23 Keys. It is talking about first and foremost
24 protecting the Sanctuary's resources, ecological,
25 historical, etc. For the long term, and we the people

1 using and enjoying them with that very wise
2 perspective in mind. What that means is that
3 unfortunately the Marine Sanctuary Act does not
4 primarily protect the short term financial and
5 lifestyle interest of some businesses and
6 recreational users at the expense of the long term
7 health of the Sanctuary's ecosystems and the Keys'
8 economy. That would be short term thinking and short
9 term economics.

10 So we need to focus less on consuming,
11 taking from the Sanctuary, extracting goods and
12 services from it, and we need to pay more attention
13 to taking care of it, giving back to it any way we
14 can. We will be rewarded for doing that and so will
15 our children and grandchildren. Thank you for the
16 opportunity to comment and for welcoming so much
17 public input throughout this process.

18
19 DAVID DENKERT

20 My name is David Denkert. I have been a
21 backcounty guide since 1994 fishing at Biscayne Bay
22 and the Keys. And I can't comment on anything
23 offshore, but on the inshore side, I believe we
24 should have a 500 yard buffer zone from Key Largo to
25 Key West on both the Atlantic and Gulf side for all

1 of our kingfish and sport fish that migrate up and
2 down that and also of the bait that travels up and
3 down that shoreline and that bait will go offshore at
4 times. So it will be a win-win for everyone. But we
5 need an area where those fish are not harassed, and
6 we can just paddle in, pull in or electric troll in
7 those areas.

8 Secondly, I would like to see Snake
9 Creek and Indian Key an idle zone all of the way out
10 to the last marker. Those adjacent flats can't
11 handle the amount of wakes that the larger craft make
12 going through those channels. They are absolutely
13 destroying the edges of those channels which in turn
14 hurts the flats. If you look at Tavernier and look
15 at Whale Harbor, we can fish good bone fishing in
16 those areas, and for selfish reasons I wanted to say
17 that. I can't help you guys out on the offshore.
18 Thank you.

19
20 RICHARD BLACK

21 My name is Richard Black. I have been a
22 fishing guide for 12 years both inshore and offshore,
23 and I grew up here in Islamorada. I just have a few
24 things to say tonight. As far as closures, I think
25 closures are the wrong answer. I have a strong note

1 towards the Long Key closure. I think all that will
2 do is add a tremendous amount of pressures to other
3 areas surrounding that. And I believe Eric had said
4 earlier tonight Long Key near shore could easily be a
5 catch and release fishery, not considering the
6 offshore, but to allow some of the smaller fish, the
7 juvenile fish that grow up on the shorelines there,
8 to then move out. But catch and release is a good
9 answer for the near shore area on Long Key.

10 I also disagree with no anchoring. I
11 think having a large no anchoring zone in Key Largo
12 and other areas down below is just going to again add
13 an extreme amount of pressure in the surrounding area
14 around that. As far as anchoring goes, the majority
15 of the anchors that hit the bottom on a day to day
16 basis are probably charter Captains, dive boat
17 operators and local fishermen. So the damage that
18 occurs that I assume is trying to be protected by
19 having a no anchor zone is perhaps by people that are
20 not educated. So I think more education needs to be
21 brought forth. Also perhaps more research as far as
22 into anchoring. Doing something saying like this
23 anchor is more of a proper anchor to use in certain
24 areas versus others. So education is probably a
25 better source for that.

1 And I think it was also brought up by
2 several people here, we need to look at the wide
3 spread of artificial reefs. They do work. It is a
4 good answer to spread fishing out. If you look on
5 any given day offshore of Key Largo and Islamorada
6 and you look where the majority of dive boats and
7 fishermen are, they are around artificial reefs
8 throughout the day, not so much on the natural reefs.
9 So if we had more areas of artificial reefs, it would
10 spread people out to those areas. I know they are
11 expensive. If you look, Lee County has set aside
12 special funding, and they have actually hired
13 employees where their sole job is to look into and
14 deploy artificial reefs. So in that case our county
15 can maybe look into positions or separate funding to
16 try to afford this. It is not a cheap cost, but a
17 viable answer.

18 The ocean side shoreline protection of
19 migratory fish is very important. I think that needs
20 to be looked at and be one of the main focuses for
21 the inshore side. Thank you.

22

23 TONY YOUNG

24

25

 My name is Tony Young. I own Forever
 Young Charter Company out of Islamorada. I just want

1 to say that we owe it all to ourselves to work
2 together on this, owe it to our community, to our
3 ecosystem and to all of our clients and guests that
4 visit us from around the world.

5 With that being said, I want to start
6 with a story. A friend of mine told me that this
7 couple went out on a rental boat, and they had the
8 boat for a couple of hours. They came back to the
9 dock early asking for more anchors. And the guy
10 said, what do you need more anchors for? And they
11 said, well, we ran out. They didn't realize they
12 were supposed to actually tie the anchor off. They
13 were just throwing them over into the water. So I
14 think education is a huge problem, and we need to
15 address that as best we can.

16 A lot of the time we go out to Alligator
17 Reef and we spend a lot of time diving there. It is
18 a beautiful sight minus the coral currently and
19 anchoring the SPA's. I see a lot of people anchoring
20 the SPA's even though there is a mooring ball right
21 next to it available. I think that education and law
22 enforcement is a big issue even on areas that we can
23 see. With that being said, anchoring is a problem.
24 I see it each day diving. And although the no
25 anchoring zones are an option for the Restoration

1 Blueprint, I do not think it is the best option in my
2 opinion, not because it is a no anchoring zone, but
3 rather because of the areas that are proposed and the
4 people it prevents from anchoring.

5 There are many areas where anchoring is
6 a problem, and I can tell you where because I dive
7 these areas often. I believe that these areas should
8 be closed to anchoring. However, charter fishermen,
9 commercial fishermen and commercial dive operators
10 and educated recreational boaters deserve to have the
11 ability to anchor in these areas. Permits could be
12 made. That would allow charter fishermen to catch
13 bait. It would allow commercial fishermen to still
14 supply the Florida Keys with local catch which is
15 usually yellow tail and snapper. It would also allow
16 operators to take guests to a secret spot or a
17 special place that is not on a map and get them
18 there. But I also believe that it would allow or
19 prevent people who have not gone through the process
20 or the education to prevent them from coming back to
21 the dock asking for more anchors.

22 With that being said, I do think that if
23 there are places blocked off to anchoring, one way or
24 another whether we come together or not, I think we
25 still need some sort of system for people to still

1 enjoy the areas, and people can still fish and dive.
2 That is all I have got. Thank you.

3

4 **ERNIE PITON**

5 My name is Ernie Piton. I am a
6 commercial fisherman out of Key Largo. I am
7 President of the Florida Keys Commercial Fisherman's
8 Association, and I served on your zoning working
9 group, and I served on the Biscayne National Park. I
10 started out -- when I got on that working group, I
11 started education of water quality and law
12 enforcement. I think that is a big part of it.

13 I mean, last week I seen a guy fishing
14 right out in front of the lighthouse. A couple of
15 weeks ago I got pictures on my phone of divers
16 passing spear guns. So you heard David say earlier,
17 those guys need help. They need more law
18 enforcement. They need to be paid more so they can
19 live down here. And if you can't get that under
20 control and get the law enforcement and education
21 with the anchoring, if you can't get the people
22 educated and all of the boats they are selling today
23 and the people out on the water, we are going to be
24 right back here in the same place in 20 something
25 years like we were 20 years ago.

1 So with that being said, I drew this map
2 up of all of the closed areas we have in Key Largo if
3 you want to see it. I mean, we are over -- I mean,
4 we have a lot of zones. I mean, this is all
5 Everglades National Park (indicating). The blue is
6 all of the coral protection areas we have there. Of
7 the 60 coral protection areas that the Florida Keys
8 Commercial Fisherman's Association helped designate
9 and the yellow are yours. We have to work around
10 this each day. Our working group had a hard time
11 trying to figure out where to put a zone up at Key
12 Largo.

13 Now, I see on the computer they are
14 going to take it further south and leave it the same.
15 Now, they are going to put another closed area at the
16 Key Largo Dry Rocks which will push more people out
17 of the Dry Rocks area. Also, with all of this going
18 on, we have Biscayne to our north. We have a bunch
19 of stuff going on with that where there might be more
20 people pushing south from Miami as in recreational
21 people and commercial guys. So it is a big deal in
22 the Upper Keys what we are up against.

23 So with that being said, I do not think
24 we need any more closures in Key Largo. The no
25 anchor zone in Key Largo, I don't even know what to

1 say about that. For the residents and for the guys
2 who sport fish up there and for the recreational
3 people, they have to be able to anchor to fish and
4 catch bait. That is just ludicrous to close that
5 whole place down. If someone wants to go out and
6 have a beer in the afternoon and sit on the flat or
7 something, they won't be able to do it. So I am for
8 Alternative 1, no action, and that is it.

9 And, you know, I think you guys should
10 have a chart like this with an initial chart with
11 everything that is proposed. That way the public can
12 see what you already have. These charts that you
13 have right now, I mean, there should be a chart of
14 all of your closed areas and all of the coral
15 protection areas and everything y'all want to propose
16 because looking at this -- your zones look small, but
17 they are not. I will be glad to pass this around if
18 it is okay.

19

20 GARY SANDS

21 I am Gary Sands, and this was the map I
22 was trying to tell you about a little bit ago, but
23 one gentleman said in the other meeting that there is
24 a give and take situation here. If you take a look
25 at that, who gave and what do we get back? We have

1 been giving and taking it. Everything that you put
2 out there, we take. We have to stop it. Take care
3 of what you have now and then come back later. The
4 Sanctuary didn't come here and say, okay boys, let me
5 tell you what we did for the last 20 years. They did
6 not say nothing like that. All they did was come in
7 here and say, we want to take this, we want to take
8 that and this. Now, like I said before, there are
9 some young gentlemen here in the room here -- wait a
10 minute. I am getting nervous.

11 There are some young gentlemen here that
12 are fishermen in Key Largo, and this is important to
13 me because I have been fishing there all of my life,
14 and these gentlemen here, this is their livelihood.
15 When I go on, this is theirs. And if you keep doing
16 what you are doing, you are taking theirs, so where
17 is the give and take? Tell us what the Sanctuary
18 gave us, the commercial fishermen, zero. What did we
19 give the Sanctuary, John Pennekamp State Park. And
20 next like Ernie was talking to the gentleman over
21 here, the Biscayne National Monument is coming out to
22 his territory where he fishes. So sooner or later we
23 have to stop and look and see what is going on with
24 the commercial fishing in Key Largo. I heard someone
25 say that the Sanctuary needs 20 percent. The 20

1 percent, they are trying to take it all of the way to
2 Key Largo.

3 When I was growing up, it was the sport
4 fishing capital of the world, and now it is gone.
5 Now, it is the dive capital of the world, Key Largo,
6 Florida Keys. You invited the people here, and if
7 something happens, don't blame us. That is what I
8 was telling you before, you need to take the impact
9 study of the reefs. See what hurricane Irma did.

10 She destroyed that area out there. I have been
11 fishing there for 50 something years. I see what
12 happens each day I go out there. She rearranged that
13 whole thing. You would not believe it. Inside the
14 bank where we fish in the grass, that is gone. It is
15 just mud. Why? And the water is just as green as
16 that lady's shirt there (indicating).

17 Sometimes when we are fishing out there
18 in 10 feet of water, we can't even see our trap on
19 the bottom because it is so green. The water quality
20 is important and is the most important thing. And
21 let me tell you what, you ain't got to worry about no
22 reefs. It is going to be gone, and everything you
23 are trying to protect will be gone. The coral
24 restoration will be gone. It is going to kill it.
25 Thank you.

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SOPHIA FIGUEREDO

My name is Sophia Figueredo, and I am 10 years old. I am really concerned about this issue. I think that these rules or some of these rules you are making are really important because I am hearing some people say you should not do anything to restrict the use of popular fishing sites and reefs, but I really think you should. I really think that you should make and enforce these rules very quickly because if you do not -- like, me and my friends when we grow up, we will not have anything to come back to. Thank you for my opportunity to speak. I hope you enforce these rules.

XAVIER FIGUEREDO

My name is Xavier Figueredo, and I am a backcountry and reef fishing guide. I have been fishing for about 18 years. I am a member of the Florida Keys Fishing Guides Association, and I would like to just encourage you to consider very strongly the recommendations that Eric had mentioned earlier. We will be providing you those recommendations in one or two weeks. We represent over 200 guides in the Florida Keys and their families. All of these

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recommendations are to improve our fisheries and make them better for the long term. Thank you.

(Meeting concluded at 7:40 p.m.)

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CERTIFICATE OF REPORTER

I, Wanda Jackson, Court Reporter, do hereby certify that I was authorized to and did report the foregoing proceedings, and that the transcript, pages 1 through 86, is a true and correct record of my stenographic notes.

Dated this December 23, 2019, at Monroe County, Florida.

Wanda Jackson

Wanda Jackson
Court Reporter

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