

**Resolution of the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary Advisory Council in Support of Swift Progress on Florida Mainland Wastewater Treatment System Upgrades Affecting Waters of the State of Florida Including the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary**

*June 21, 2022*

1. WHEREAS, the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary harbors a unique and valuable tropical marine ecosystem, including the only barrier coral reef in the continental United States, and
2. WHEREAS, in 1990 the United States Congress established the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary and Protection Act to protect the resources of the area, to educate and interpret for the public regarding the Florida Keys marine environment, and to manage human uses of the Sanctuary consistent with the Act, and
3. WHEREAS, the “Condition Report 2011 for the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary,” the most recent document of its kind, classified Sanctuary water quality as “fair” or “fair/poor” and not improving, biologically structured habitats (e.g., coral reefs and seagrass beds) as “fair/poor” and declining, biodiversity as “fair/poor” and declining, and key species (e.g., corals) as “poor” and not improving, and this was before onset of the devastating Stony Coral Tissue Loss Disease, and
4. WHEREAS, the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary and Protection Act also established the Sanctuary’s Water Quality Protection Program to identify and implement priority corrective actions within a compliance schedule to address point and nonpoint sources of pollution to maintain the chemical, physical, and biological integrity of the Sanctuary, and
5. WHEREAS, the Water Quality Protection Program has identified inadequate wastewater treatment as a critical threat to the Sanctuary due to excessive nutrients which can drive and exacerbate algae blooms known to adversely impact benthic environments like seagrass meadows and coral reefs, harmful bacteria and other pathogens, and Emerging Contaminants of Concern, and
6. WHEREAS, Monroe County Wastewater Legislation, Florida Statute Chapter 99-395 required Florida Keys municipalities and wastewater utilities to provide Advanced Wastewater Treatment or Best Available Treatment (AWT / BAT) by 2015 and, to date more than 25,000 septic tanks and cesspits have been eliminated and residents have AWT / BAT wastewater treatment available after a significant investment of nearly \$1 billion to improve water quality in the Florida Keys, and
7. WHEREAS, the South Florida region’s estuarine and marine waters, including the Florida Keys, Florida Bay, the Southwest Florida shelf, and coastal waters off the Southeast Florida mainland, are connected by water currents as clearly evidenced by the spread of Stony Coral Tissue Loss Disease from its origin in Miami in 2014 through the entirety of Florida’s Coral Reef, and
8. WHEREAS, the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary and Protection Act also established the Sanctuary Advisory Council comprised of sanctuary managers, members of government agencies with overlapping management responsibilities for the Florida Keys environment, and

representatives of local industries, commercial users, conservation groups, the marine scientific and educational community, recreational user groups, or the general public to assist in the development and implementation of the comprehensive management plan for the Sanctuary, and

9. WHEREAS, the Sanctuary Advisory Council and the Water Quality Protection Program Steering Committee established the Florida Keys and South Florida Ecosystem Connectivity Team for the purpose of facilitating multi-agency and stakeholder collaboration related to Everglades restoration and other regional issues of importance to water quality, habitats, and living marine resources of the Sanctuary including sources of wastewater from the Florida mainland, and
10. WHEREAS, local governments across the state, including City of Arcadia, City of Everglades, City of Fort Myers, City of Cape Coral, City of Naples, Lee County, and Sarasota County have already designed or are currently designing and implementing upgrades to their wastewater treatment systems, and
11. WHEREAS, Florida's Ocean Outfall Legislation, Florida Statutes Chapter 2008-232 and 2013-31, requires Miami-Dade County and Broward County to eliminate wastewater discharges through ocean outfalls, convert wastewater treatment plants to Advanced Wastewater Treatment technology, and reuse wastewater by 2025, but the counties are not on track to meet these requirements, and
12. WHEREAS, the USEPA provides low-cost loans administered by the State to municipalities and wastewater utilities to improve wastewater infrastructure through the State Revolving Fund, now

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary Advisory Council:

1. Expresses the strongest possible support for Florida municipalities, counties, and wastewater utilities completing upgrades of wastewater treatment systems that employ Advanced Wastewater Treatment and Best Available Technology for disposal of resulting wastewater including monitoring of the impacts of reused water on the environment, and ultimately reducing flows of nutrients, harmful bacteria and other pathogens, and Emerging Contaminants of Concern through the South Florida ecosystem and into the receiving waters of the Sanctuary.
2. Urges Florida Municipalities, counties, and wastewater utilities to consider the State Revolving Fund and other sources of financial support for these purposes.
3. Requests that the Sanctuary Advisory Council Chair forward this resolution along with the Council's appreciation for past efforts and a sense of urgency for completion of pending efforts to the co-chairs of the Water Quality Protection Program (FDEP and USEPA), City of Arcadia, City of Everglades, City of Fort Myers, City of Cape Coral, City of Naples, Lee County, Sarasota County, Miami-Dade County, and Broward County.

*The Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary Advisory Council is an interactive liaison between the residents and visitors of the Florida Keys and the staff and management of the FKNMS. The opinions and findings of this publication do not necessarily reflect the position of the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the Florida Department of Environmental Protection, or the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission.*