

FLORIDA KEYS NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARY ADVISORY COUNCIL

**Hyatt Place
1996 Overseas Highway
Marathon, FL 33050
Tuesday, June 20, 2017**

DRAFT NOTES

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

Council Members

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

Council alternates (present)

Boating Industry: Karen Thurman
Citizen at Large – Upper Keys: Suzy Roebling
Conservation and Environment: Caroline McLaughlin
Conservation and Environment: Jessica Dockery
Fishing – Charter Fishing Flats Guide: Will Benson
Tourism – Lower Keys: Joe Weatherby
Fishing -- Recreational – Bruce Frerer
Research and Monitoring: Shelly Krueger

Local Elected Officials (present)

Key Colony Beach --Hon. John DeNeale
Key West – Hon. Craig Cates

Agency Representatives (present)

Florida Department of Environmental Protection: Kevin Claridge, Joanna Walczak
FWC Division of Law Enforcement: Capt. Dave Dipre and Major Escaino
FWC Fish and Wildlife Research Institute: John Hunt
NOAA National Marine Fisheries Service: Heather Blough
NOAA Office of Law Enforcement: Kenneth Blackburn
NOAA Great Lakes and Northeast Regional Director: Reed Bohne
Everglades and Dry Tortugas National Park: Chris Kavanagh
U.S. Coast Guard (USCG): LT. Quentin Long
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), National Wildlife Refuges Florida Keys: Daniel Clark

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

**Pledge of Allegiance
Roll Call**

MOTION (passed)

A motion to approve the minutes was made by Chris Bergh and seconded by Mimi Stafford. The minutes were approved. A motion to adopt the agenda was made by Chris Bergh and seconded by David Makepeace. The agenda was adopted without change.

Opening Remarks

Chairperson Popham welcomed everyone and thanked Ken Nedimyer and Chris Bergh for serving on the advisory council as the previous chair and vice chair. Some advisory council seats will become available in August due to term limits. He also thanked the sanctuary staff for meeting support and for their contributions in their jobs.

Acting Superintendent Ed Lindelof introduced Gena Parsons, the sanctuary's new communications and outreach specialist and Regional Director of Great Lakes and Northeast Region Reed Bohne. He explained that the North Atlantic and Gulf, Caribbean and Southeast regions are being consolidated into one region and Reed is now acting director for the newly combined region.

II. SANCTUARY ADVISORY COUNCIL INTRODUCTIONS

Council members introduced themselves and described how long they have served on the advisory council and how they became interested in joining the council.

**III. SANCTUARY ADVISORY COUNCIL COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP, ENGAGEMENT,
MEETING STRATEGY**

Chairperson Popham led a roundtable discussion focused on advisory council engagement with the public and with FKNMS staff. The following questions were posed:

- How can the advisory council be better representatives of the community, and how can we

- better engage with the community?
- How can the advisory council better communicate with sanctuary staff?

Main items of Discussion:

1. Ensure communication between primary and alternate SAC members
2. Identify communication themes with the public
3. Communicating with Chamber of Commerce
 - a. Utilize SAC meeting summaries as communication tool
4. Continued engagement with media and radio
 - a. Increase marketing of sanctuary utilizing existing infrastructure i.e. road signs, electronic billboards, radio station to share information
 - b. Utilize social media to reach a wide variety of audiences
5. Value of working groups – effective means to engage with other members of the public
6. Value in engaging with our children, especially local, to understand the resource
7. Ensure public knows their SAC representative
 - a. Members could personally reach out to different user groups, attend meetings of those constituents
 - b. Utilizing associations that members are already involved in – update them on SAC meetings, information, decisions
8. Engage with local organizations/nonprofits to understand their mission and find a way to support that mission as the SAC
 - a. Create a list of partner groups who can be reached via staff or SAC members
 - b. SAC members can speak at community meetings, boat clubs, etc.
9. Local elected officials can update their commissions
10. Ensure public understanding of what the sanctuary does, and what the SAC represents
11. Host SAC meetings in different areas of the Keys – Key West, Marathon, Key Largo
12. Promote the Eco Discovery Center and various events
13. Increase outreach events throughout the Keys
14. Create a “Sanctuary 101” presentation which can be made available to SAC members and partners
15. Increase video outreach (i.e. Earth is Blue social media pieces)
16. Maintain broad range of topics for SAC meetings, helps to engage the public

Following this discussion, Chairperson Popham asked for volunteers to create a small group which will examine and update the council charter to be voted on in October. Volunteers for this sub-committee include: Clinton Barras, Shelly Kruger, Pete Frezza, and Joe Weatherby.

In addition, Chairperson Popham requested the core group reconvene and be tasked with assisting with strategic communications, actions, and SAC agendas in advance of DEIS release. Previous members and new volunteers for the core group sub-committee include: Bruce Popham, Clinton Barras, Ken Nedimyer, Chris Bergh, George Neugent, Ben Daughtry, Will Benson, Don Kincaid, David Makepeace, and John Hunt

Discussion—Fishing Guide Licenses (advisory council)

Chairperson Popham initiated a discussion based on an email he received from County Commissioner Heather Carruthers about for hire fishing guides operating in the Keys without the

proper licenses from the county (and/or state). Charter Fishing Flats Guide SAC Representative Will Benson explained there are concerns that some guides may not have gone through the licensing and obtained the permits required to guide in the Florida Keys. Many requirements must be met in order to operate in the Keys in a fully compliant way, including having the correct insurance coverage. Guides must also have a license issued by FWC each year. Captain Benson pointed out that he recognizes that not all out-of-town guides are operating without a license.

To address this unlicensed issue, Captain Benson explained that guides are looking into collaborating with the county and others to investigate whether it is possible for properly licensed guides to obtain a decal for their boat and truck. This discussion is just beginning with the city and council now and could go hand in hand with the Blue star fishing guide program, which will recognize qualified guides as ambassadors for the sanctuary.

Captain Dipre is generally supportive of guides working together on something like this. He pointed out that decals with dates require monitoring to make sure decals are up to date. If the plan includes enforcement by FWC, then a monitoring program would likely be needed. Right now, there is no state statute that requires such a sticker. Captain Benson explained that they are only in initial discussions at this point, and it might be a county or city code issue at the local level rather than an FWC enforcement issue. Pete Frezza pointed out that this issue concerns the Upper Keys Guides Association and he has concerns about pressures on the resources. Upper Keys Guides would be willing to work with Captain Benson and others on this issue. Chairperson Popham stated that he sees value in this kind of approach.

Captain Benson stated that the Blue star fishing guide program is progressing nicely. An update is scheduled for the October or December council meeting. They expect to roll out the final program in 2018.

Andy Newman, Upper Keys Tourism member, requested to make a comment in advance of open public comment. Mr. Newman explained that the past few months have been very challenging for those on the council and those at NOAA. He believes in the value of his service on this council and plans to continue. However, he expects transparency from management when questions are posted to them. He has had discussions with ONMS leadership and is satisfied with the resolution of the situation.

Chairperson Popham stated that the public comment period is 3 minutes for individuals and 5 minutes for groups. He sees public comment as a time to receive information, but not to discuss the topic at that time.

Chairperson Popham explained that if an advisory council member wants to bring up a topic for discussion by the council, the member should let him know in advance and he will work it into the meeting.

IV. PUBLIC COMMENT

Ross Boucek, Bonefish Tarpon Trust (BTT)

Mr. Boucek introduced himself as the new manager for the Bonefish Tarpon Trust Florida Keys Initiative. He offered assistance from BTT to support the mission of the advisory council. Some

of the council's ideas sound great. He especially liked the idea of stickers on guide boats and will probably get involved to helping with that effort.

Lunch

V. FLORIDA KEYS NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARY – MARINE ZONING AND REGULATORY REVIEW PROCESS OVERVIEW AND STATUS UPDATE

FKNMS Science and Policy Analyst Beth Dieveney gave a presentation on the marine zoning and regulatory review process currently in development. This presentation can be viewed by visiting <http://floridakeys.noaa.gov/sac/othermaterials/20170620regreviewupdate.pdf>

Ms. Dieveney began with a review of the partnership between the State of Florida and NOAA, and a brief timeline of sanctuary management strategies. In 1990, Congress passed the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary Protection Act. In 1997, the FKNMS Management Plan, including boundaries and regulations, was implemented. Ms. Dieveney noted that some of these regulations apply sanctuary wide, and others are zone specific. In 2001 the Tortugas Ecological Reserve was added, and in 2010 all waters of FKNMS were designated as a no discharge zone.

There are six types of zones within the sanctuary: 18 Sanctuary Preservation Areas (SPA), two Ecological Reserves (ER), 27 Wildlife Management Areas (WMA), special use areas (i.e. research only), Existing Management Areas and the Area to be Avoided (ATBA). In addition to the regulations and marine zones, the sanctuary has different programs and operations to assist with management of the sanctuary, including science and research, permitting, facilities and vessels, marker and mooring buoys, enforcement, and education/outreach.

In 2011, The Florida Keys Condition Report was published. There are sections on water quality, habitats, living resources, and cultural resources. After the release of the condition report, the regulatory review process started. This review period serves as a periodic evaluation of regulations, which can improve sanctuary management.

The SAC led the planning effort of the regulatory review beginning in 2012. First, a suite of goals and principles were established to guide this process, including improving the diversity of natural biological communities, protect large contiguous habitats, and achieve a vibrant ecologically sustained ecosystem. Nine priority issues were developed based on these goals, and three working groups were created from those priorities: Shallow Water Wildlife and Habitat Protection, Coral Reef Ecosystem Restoration, and Ecosystem Protection: Ecological Reserves/Preservation Areas and Wildlife Protection. An additional workshop discussed Artificial Habitats, and the remaining priorities were given to staff to analyze.

The Shallow Water Wildlife and Habitat Protection working group was tasked with analyzing the marine zones including the WMAs. This included consideration of removing existing zones, modifying existing zones, and/or proposing new zones. The Coral Reef Ecosystem Restoration working group was tasked with considering a new type of marine zone designed to promote active coral reef restoration. This included prioritizing sites on the reef tract to be identified and potentially zoned for active coral reef ecosystem restoration. The Ecosystem Protection working group was tasked with analyzing the marine zones including SPAs and ERs. This included consideration of

modifying zone boundaries, proposing new zones, removing exceptions in certain zones, and solidifying regulations.

The next steps in this process are to develop a range of regulatory and zoning alternatives to be released as a draft environmental impact statement (DEIS) which will be open to public comment. After review of those comments, the final environmental impact statement (EIS) and draft regulations will be released for public comment.

Over the last two years, staff has been developing this range of alternatives, coordinating amongst agencies, and analyzing the environmental and economic benefits for each alternative. This process is driven by the National Environmental Policy Act. This act mandates that federal agencies consider all environmental effects of proposed actions, involve interested parties, conduct environmental reviews, and coordinate with various federal acts.

The published DEIS will contain an executive summary, background, purpose of and need for action, description of alternatives, analysis of affected environment, and the environmental consequences, cumulative impacts, and comparison of alternatives.

The alternatives included in the DEIS include a no action alternative and three reasonable alternatives. The components of these reasonable alternatives include boundary expansions, sanctuary wide regulations, and proposed marine zone modifications, new marine zones and zone specific regulations. The DEIS will not have proposed regulations. Draft regulations will be developed and available for public comment after public review of the DEIS.

Ms. Dieveney closed by reviewing the website for the regulatory review, which contains all of the resources and information about this process.

Discussion:

- A question was raised about the definition of cumulative impacts. Ms. Dieveney clarified it to mean the past, present, and reasonable future activities.
- A member asked about the general time frame for these processes. The condition report was published after 2-3 years of compiling research. The regulatory review follows based on that condition report, and the process should restart every five years. FKNMS Acting Superintendent Ed Lindelof assured the council that the new leadership team would not modify the timeline of this process. This review is one of the highest priorities in the ONMS strategic plan.
- Moving forward, the plan is to release the DEIS by early winter, immediately followed by a SAC meeting, followed by targeted public informational meetings, open public comment, and an additional SAC meeting before public comment ends. The public comment period will likely be 90 days or longer.

VI. STATUS OF THE ECOSYSTEMS OF THE EVERGLADES AND FLORIDA BAY

Dr. Stephen Davis, ecologist with Everglades Foundation, gave a presentation on the status of the ecosystems of the Everglades and Florida Bay. This presentation can be viewed by visiting <http://floridakeys.noaa.gov/sac/othermaterials/20170620everglades.pdf>

Dr. Davis stated that he began studying Florida Bay around the time of the first seagrass die-off, which took place in the late 1980s. The diverse habitats of the Florida Everglades together supports a robust economy (especially coastal areas) and plays an important role in water supply and quality for South Floridians. Several vital signs point to declining health of the system over time. These include declines in small (prey) fish, loss of tree islands, loss of peat soil, cattail expansion related to phosphorus pollution and poor wading bird nesting success.

In the natural system, before the canal drainage system was built, fresh water spilled over from the Lake Okeechobee and flowed south into Everglades National Park and Florida Bay. Due to water management practices, most of the water that once flowed south now toward Florida Bay flows into the Caloosahatchee River on Florida's west coast and the St. Lucie River on the east coast. Problems seen in these areas are directly a result of the discharges from Lake Okeechobee to these rivers and eventually the coasts. In addition, water in these rivers is polluted by inputs from the Everglades Agricultural Area (EAA) and Lake Okeechobee. Runoff from the EAA needs to be treated to meet the phosphorus standard that was set.

In 2016, conditions were very wet, which led to 10 months of discharges from Lake Okeechobee to the rivers where it reached Florida's east and west coasts and caused algae blooms and other disruptions. These significant discharges occurred just after the seagrass began to die-off in Florida Bay in 2014. Salinities in the bay were up near 70 ppt. and coincided with hot, clear, waters. These conditions fueled a massive die-off of seagrass in the bay, which continued into 2016. This die-off exhibited a similar pattern to what was observed in the late 1980s die-off in the bay. Some seagrass recovery has been observed recently. However, toward the end of 2016, an algal bloom began in the bay in the epicenter of the die-off. The bloom was visible through satellite imagery and continued through 2016; bloom waters were observed to flow through the 7-mile bridge.

Bay salinities remained high until a few weeks ago when the rains came and drove the salinities down to more normal conditions. Until then, the bay was on the verge of another crisis, which is why it is so important to expedite the restoration to get the water flowing south again. A good picture emerged of what happened in the die-off in the 1980s. The causes of die-off are scientifically based and agreed on by scientists from various agencies, etc.

Recovery of the grass will take time. In the earlier die-off, it took 20 years. Once grasses begin to grow back, they take the nutrients out of the water column and stabilize the seafloor, which then allows the communities to recover. CERP (Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan) is largely about water storage, which is needed to correct for the loss of water created by the current water management system. Storage north of Lake Okeechobee will provide benefits because it will reduce flows into the lake. The Everglades Foundation is also supportive of storage south of the lake. Senate Bill 10 will help address southern storage. When water is high in the lake, it can be stored instead of being discharged to the rivers/coasts. Water will be cleaned using Stormwater Treatment Area systems and then sent south to benefit Florida Bay. This will reduce the discharges to the two coastal estuaries and benefit the bay. The Everglades Foundation has used the same modeling tools as the SFWMD, and they have shown that southern storage will bring substantial benefits to the bay and the coasts.

Many others are supportive of southern storage, and articles have appeared in the press to that effect.

Recently, Governor Scott approved water storage in the south. Getting the elements of CEPP Central Everglades Plan (CEPP) under construction is a priority. CEPP combines a number of projects and provides conveyance for more water flow to the south. The Now or Never Everglades campaign was leading the charge (#NowOrNevereverglades) on southern storage and is related to Senator Negron's plan to acquire land, which was recently approved as part of Senate Bill 10.

Discussion

- A question was asked as to how the Everglades Foundation's plans compare to the SFWMD plans. Dr. Davis explained that they use the same modeling tools as SFWMD, but details may vary on assumptions made and prerequisites for restoration projects. Southern storage has been a challenging issue to deal with because it involves piecing together available land to meet the storage needs, yet will provide great benefits. Storage south of the lake was given high priority with the approval of CERP in 2000. This component is now a water quality feature because the water needs to be treated (by federal decree) before entering the natural system. Thus, new options are being considered to build that storage. Water will always have to meet the phosphorus standard before flowing into the Everglades.
- Concerns were expressed about declines in water quality and fish mortality on Florida's west coast and whether there is enough clean water to supply Florida Bay. Dr. Davis explained that now water treatment exists north of the Everglades protection area and has high quality when entering the Everglades (to meet the federal consent decree). This was not always the case in the past when nutrient rich waters flowed into the Everglades. The treatment is good, but not quite enough. If additional water is planned for the south, additional treatment is needed. Levels of phosphorus will be barely detectable when water that receives treatment reaches the bay.
- In response to a question about the original CERP and its components, Dr. Davis stated that southern storage was Component G in the original CERP. The CEPP was not contained in CERP. Instead, CEPP involved packaging projects from CERP together to deliver better benefits across the system. Everglades Foundation hopes to see that the Southern Storage component begin in earnest in response to the passing of Senate Bill 10. The timing of the release of water is critical, and these projects utilize hydrological targets in the system to meet the needs of organisms.
- A question was asked about the viability of replanting seagrass where it was lost in Florida Bay. Dr. Davis explained that the area of loss was quite large and in many places, the rhizomes remained alive and are expected to generate new growth. An inquiry was made about using bird stakes to restore lost grass. Dr. Davis noted that the bird stake technique works well on a smaller scale, but would not be practical in a large area such as Florida Bay. Florida Bay is more about stabilizing the sediments, not adding nutrients.
- In response to a question about the role of the seagrass that died off as a carbon sink, Dr. Davis explained that estimates for the amount of carbon lost because peat is disappearing in the Everglades are significant.
- In response to a question about the thickness of an expanse of manatee grass west of Marathon, John Hunt explained that there is a huge circular dense grassbed of *Syringodium filiformes* (manatee grass) in that area of the bay. This productive grassbed has existed for years and is visible from satellite imagery. Part of the plant's life history is shedding leaves, which are often carried around in the currents.

- On behalf of the City of Marathon, George Garrett thanked the Everglades Foundation for helping to move Senate Bill 10 forward. Dr. Davis noted that it was a community effort and there is much work yet to be done. Senate Bill 10 gives the energy and motivation to see this project built.

VII. PUBLIC COMMENT FOR ITEMS NOT ON THE AGENDA

No public comment was offered at this time.

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

Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary, Ed Lindelof

- The annual Nancy Foster Mission will be conducted at the end of July-early August. Mapping and habitat characterization will be done in conjunction with FWC partners and others.
- June is Maritime Heritage Month for National Marine Sanctuaries. Several activities are being offered in celebration of maritime resources. Cory Malcolm has been working with Brenda Altmeier on various projects.
- A new maritime heritage professional from Stellwagon Banks NMS, Matthew Lawrence, will be joining the FKNMS staff this summer.
- Team OCEAN is active during the summer throughout the Keys.
- August 12 is Get Into Your Sanctuary Day. It is a national effort by the program to recognize the sanctuaries and encourage people to enjoy them.

NOAA Office of Law Enforcement (OLE), Kenny Blackburn

- In 2008, OLE was directed to change its staffing to be more similar to other environmental agencies. To this end, the number of agents has been reduced.
- Investigator Blackburn gave a presentation on the Lacey Act at the Caribbean Regional Fishery Mechanism meeting, which takes place at the UN facility in Barbados. The presentation highlighted an enforcement work done in the Keys. Smaller countries look to the US and the sanctuaries for guidance on how to improve laws and better enforce them. Some countries have not updated their laws in many years.
- Investigator Blackburn generated a 7-page report on the Big Cat grounding event that happened off Key West. This is his first grounding case; the report has been sent on to the next step.
- Investigator Blackburn introduced the new Florida Keys NOAA OLE Enforcement Officer Mitchell Robb.

National Marine Sanctuary Great Lakes and Northeast Regional Director, Reed Bohne

- Director Bohne indicated that it had been a pleasure to attend the meeting and to hear the valuable discussions. The council and sanctuary have made a great deal of progress in the zone and regulatory review.
- The budget for the sanctuary system looks good through the end of this fiscal year. Next

year's budget looks good, too, as it is level funding. They are optimistic at this time.

- The program is looking at the Keys regarding managing resources, planning, and zoning. He offered his support for the balance of the year as things move forward and thanked everyone.

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

- The refuge is entering fire season for the pine rockland habitat. Fire restrictions are quite strict for safety reasons. Fire professionals were not able to conduct prescribed fires last season, but will work toward that end again this year. An interagency team of fire professionals oversees the prescribed burns.
- The nature center is not complete at this time. The refuge hopes to open to the public this time next year. A few more things are needed, and external funding is being received to complete the project.
- Internally, USFWS has discussed making a small portion (trail) open at Crocodile Lake National Wildlife Refuge in Key Largo. This would require NEPA (National Environmental Policy Act) since the refuge is currently closed to the public. There is interest in seeing public visitation at Crocodile Lake.
- FDEP is part of the USFWS backcountry management agreement and will be included in the Draft Impact Statement with NOAA FKNMS (as part of the Marine Zoning and Regulatory review). Part of the work that is being targeted by USFWS concerns submerged state lands and these elements will be extracted and updated as part of the process in conjunction with the state as well as the marine sanctuary.

Florida Department of Environmental Protection, Joanna Walczak

- DEP has a new Secretary, Noah Valenstein. Staff will be working to get him up-to-speed on issues within the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary (FKNMS).
- DEP is hosting the 38th Meeting of the United States Coral Reef Task Force (USCRTF) at the Fort Lauderdale Marriot Harbor Beach Hotel from August 7-11, 2017. This event includes a week long set of working meetings, workshops, and site visits that culminate with one large business meeting.
 - The theme of the meeting is “Healthy Reefs for a Healthy Economy.” This theme will be incorporated into all presentations, workshops and site visits.
 - There will be 3 workshops:
 - Sediment and Turbidity: This workshop will focus on studies that identify relevant and new studies that pertain to better understanding and minimizing the effects of sedimentation and turbidity on corals and coral reefs.
 - Marine debris: This workshop will feature presentations on the major threats to Florida's reefs from marine debris, and highlight policies and programs currently in place to address those threats. Among the highlighted topics will be fish trap debris in Biscayne National Park (BNP).
 - Coral Reef Ecosystem Restoration: This workshop will focus on research and restoration efforts related to both corals and sponges.
 - There will be 4 main topics presented at the final business meeting to high-level agency leadership and managers of other US coral reef jurisdictions:
 - The economic and ecological values of coral reef ecosystems
 - Florida Reef Tract coral disease outbreak
 - Balancing the value of ecosystem services and project economics: This will

focus on the challenge of having a highly urbanized area adjacent to coral reef resources, with a focus on mainland Southeast Florida (Miami-Dade, Broward, Palm Beach, and Martin counties).

- Community engagement in coral reef resource management: This will highlight work done by the SAC through the FKNMS Marine Zoning and Regulatory Review, the BNP General Management Plan, and Our Florida Reefs process in southeast Florida.
- For site visits, there is a tentative plan for an FNMS trip on Saturday after the main business meeting.
- While most of the meetings are closed-sessions, the main business meeting is open to the public; all information and registration information will be sent to the SAC once it is live.

NOAA National Marine Fisheries Service, Heather Blough

- Final rules implementing several Council actions mentioned during recent meetings are still pending publication. That includes the South Atlantic Council's rebuilding plan for the South Florida hogfish stock. She noted that the new catch limits authorized by that amendment are very low relative to current limits. She encouraged fishermen to continue to monitor the landings data on their website to see where they fall relative to those new levels.
- Both the Gulf and South Atlantic Councils met earlier this month. The South Atlantic Council decided to develop an amendment to limit access to the federal for-hire snapper grouper fishery through a permit moratorium. The Gulf Council decided to move forward in developing a mandatory catch share-type program for federally-permitted charter vessels targeting red snapper, greater amberjack, and gray triggerfish in Gulf waters. They will discuss draft referenda requirements for that program at their August meeting. In addition, both Councils approved for Secretarial review and implementation a joint amendment to increase spiny lobster catch limits to reflect catches over a longer time series than had previously been used. The National Marine Fisheries Service will be requesting public input on this in the coming months.
- The National Marine Fisheries has received several requests for exempted fishing permits to test the effectiveness of new trap designs for lionfish removal in the Gulf and South Atlantic. They recently renewed an authorization for work being conducted by the National Ocean Service to test the effectiveness of a FAD-based non-containment curtain trap. They have also issued and renewed an exempted fishing permit for work being conducted by other researchers off North Carolina to test the effectiveness of Maine lobster traps. Because there are commonalities in both the objectives and activities proposed in the additional applications they have in hand, they are looking at ways to help organize the work under a programmatic-type permit so the various applicants could conduct their work to support a broad scientific survey that would address key conservation criteria related to bycatch, habitat impacts and protected species interactions. Any exempted fishing permit they issued would not apply to sanctuary waters but she wanted everyone to be aware this is ongoing, and she will continue to communicate with you and sanctuary staff about their progress.
- Finally, NOAA's new Assistant Administrator for Fisheries was appointed today. His name is Chris Oliver. He has worked for the North Pacific Fishery Management Council for close to 30 years, most recently, as Executive Director. They are appreciative this critical leadership position has been filled.

US Coast Guard, LT. Quentin Long

- USCG has responded to 88 NRC reports year to date in comparison to 101 last year.
- Since the last SAC meeting, USCG responded to 26 pollution related cases within the Sanctuary. Of those 27, four were federalized under the Oil Spill Liability Trust Fund (allocating approx. \$14,500 in funds).
- USCG issued four Letters of Warning to responsible parties of pollution incidents.
- The Incident Management Division of Sector Key West will be participating in the Key West Pipeline tabletop pollution response exercise next week.
- USCG has a new Living Marine Resources (LMR) Enforcement Officer, ENS Karrie Jeffries (786-243-4800), who will be spearheading all LMR law enforcement activities throughout the FL Keys.

US Navy, Ed Barham

NAS Key West was unable to attend the June advisory council meeting as the installation is undergoing an Integrated External Environmental Management System Audit from June 19-23.

- The following was submitted in writing and describes activities since the last meeting:
 - Least tern nesting has been documented on several buildings with gravel top roofs and on a nesting platform installed on Big Coppitt to enhance shore bird nesting.
 - Sea turtle nesting activity has been busy with several potential nests observed on Boca Chica and Truman Annex.
 - NAS Key West grant proposal to removal/control of invasive, exotic vegetation from natural areas on Boca Chica was accepted by FWC Invasive Plant Management Program.

IX. UPCOMING MEETING AND CLOSING REMARKS

Chairperson Popham thanked everyone for participating in this productive meeting.

Meeting Adjourned.