

**Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary
Marine Zoning & Regulatory Review
Shallow Water Wildlife and Habitat Protection
February 20, 2013**

Working Group Meeting Summary

Meeting Agenda

1. FKNMS Wildlife Management Areas: Existing areas, Regulations, and Environmental Condition Including Changes over time (Stephen Werndli)
2. U. S. FWS National Wildlife Refuges (Kristie Killam and Tom Wilmers)
3. Discussion: Geographies, Habitats, Target Resources, and activities/impacts/uses

New materials were distributed to working group members: Maps, Science Summaries and an updated work group participant contact list.

1. FKNMS Wildlife Management Areas: Existing areas, Regulations, and Environmental Condition Including Changes over time (Stephen Werndli).

Stephen Werndli, FKNMS Emergency Response Coordinator and Working Group staff lead gave a presentation about the existing Wildlife Management Areas (WMA) and the current regulations. The presentation can be found at:
<http://floridakeys.noaa.gov/review/shallowwater>

Working Group Discussion

- Identified importance of adequately protecting each habitat type throughout the Florida Keys geographic zones.
 - Identified need for a better definition of No Motor Zone
 - Ability to identify new types of zones, working group discussion is not limited to considering only the existing 5 types of management zones.
 - Consider hard bottom communities and level of protection needed; request for data on these communities, specifically related to vessel grounding damage
 - Consider areas outside Crocodile Lake NWR where crocodiles are that are not getting enough protection?
2. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, National Wildlife Refuge System: Existing activities, challenges, needs and opportunities (Kristie Killam and Tom Wilmers)

Kristie Killam, Park Ranger/Visitor Services of the Florida Keys National Wildlife Refuge Complex, provided background on the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service refuges in the Florida Keys and the Backcountry Management Plan.

Tom Wilmers, a biologist with the Florida Keys National Wildlife Refuge Complex, gave a presentation on the different types of birds found in the Key West and Great White Heron Refuges, as well as the types of uses, impacts and threats the refuges are experiencing.

Working Group Discussion

- How to identify and protect ephemeral/emerging habitat (i.e. Wilma Key).
- How best to manage party areas and their impact on wildlife.
 - Identify recreational areas for boating, kayaking etc that will not impact important bird habitat.
- Applying adaptive management to the concept of new/emerging habitats.

Request made to describe the differences between a National Wildlife Refuge, a National Park and a National Marine Sanctuary. (Michael Lusk, US Fish and Wildlife Service and Ted Beuttler, NOAA General Counsel).

- National Forests (US Department of Agriculture) were created for multiple uses. National Parks are managed under the U.S. Department of the Interior (DOI) and were created to protect scenic beauty. National Parks generally do not allow hunting or fishing, but are designed for the explicit use of the public. National Wildlife Refuges, also DOI, are designated for the conservation and management of fish and wildlife and their habitats, public and visitor access is secondary. There are six priority public uses that are acceptable if deemed compatible with the purpose of a specific refuge, these include; hunting, fishing, photography, wildlife and wildlands observation, interpretation, and environmental education.
 - The U.S. Department of the Interior owns the lands it manages.
- National Marine Sanctuaries Act primary objective is resource protection. The National Marine Sanctuary consists of marine waters and submerged lands and the shoreward boundary goes up to the mean high water mark. The National Marine Sanctuary does not “own” the land or water.
- The National Marine Sanctuary is co-managed with the State of Florida and therefore, any changes in or new regulations have to be approved by the State (Governor and Cabinet).

Working Group Discussion

- Identified the importance of educating the public about birds and bird habitats in the National Wildlife Refuges.
- Consider if increased/better signage is an option to identify and protect sensitive bird areas.

3. Discussion: Geographies, Habitats, Target Resources, and impacts/uses (Jack Curlett with support from Beth Dieveney and Stephen Werndli).

Working Group Discussion and exercise to identify Resources of concern:

- Specific species of concern in all categories were identified: Marine Mammals, Reptiles, Birds, Fishes and Threatened and Endangered as well as Exotic Species.
- Request for Marine Mammal sighting data as well as dolphin watch tour information.
- Request for a map showing known fish spawning aggregations and bird nesting and roosting areas.

Working Group Discussion and exercise to identify Activities and Uses of concern:

- Categories of Activities and Uses: Existing, Emerging/New, Concentrated, High Impact and Other.
- Various types of boating, fishing, research, recreational, marine salvage and other water dependent activities were identified and discussed.
- Water quality data, both current and historical, needed.

4. Public Comment

Two individuals provided public comment at this meeting:

- Ben Daughtry, Dynasty Marine Associates, Inc. and Sanctuary Advisory Council representative. Encouraged everyone to attend the Coral Reef Ecosystem Restoration working group meeting tomorrow. Recognized the value of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service presentation and the important role this working group has to address concerns related to impacts to birds.
- Charlie Causey, head of the Florida Keys Environmental Fund, discussed the Walkers Island project. The project will dredge an old canal that has since filled and now provides benthic habitat. Monroe County Board of County Commissioners will have to change the County's comprehensive plan to allow for this dredging activity. If the comprehensive plan is changed, that could allow other home-owners to apply for similar dredging permits.

Follow-Up Actions for Working Group Members

1. Review previous meeting notes and resources of concern and activities and use information.

Decision Items of Note

No decision items were before the working group at this meeting.