

**Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary  
Marine Zoning & Regulatory Review  
Shallow Water Wildlife and Habitat Protection  
March 12, 2013**

**Working Group Meeting Summary**

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**Meeting Agenda**

1. Update on progress of the Coral Reef Ecosystem Restoration working group
2. Review classification table of resources and activities/uses of concern
3. Discussion: Identify criteria the working group should consider when developing options and recommendations
4. Exercise: Prioritize impacts/uses in each region using maps

Introduction of the new Florida Keys National Wildlife Refuges Complex Manager, Nancy Finley

1. Update on progress of the Coral Reef Ecosystem Restoration and the Ecosystem Protection: Ecological Reserves / Preservation Areas and Wildlife Protection working groups
  - Coral Reef Ecosystem Restoration Working Group:
    - Developed a common understanding of key terms: coral reef ecosystem, active restoration, and adaptive management.
    - Identified species of concern for active coral reef ecosystem restoration.
    - Identified activities potentially incompatible with active restoration and discussed potential management solutions for these activities.
    - Discussed challenges and opportunities for regulating and permitting restoration.
    - Identified potential criteria to use when selecting optional sites for active coral reef ecosystem restoration.
  - Ecosystem Protection: Ecological Reserves / Preservation Areas and Wildlife Protection Working Group:
    - Begins meeting on Thursday, March 14.
2. Review classification table of resources and activities/uses of concern (Chris Anderson, Stephen Werndli and Beth Dieveney)
  - Spatial data for the resources and activities identified in the table were displayed to the group.
  - Presentation given by working group member and Bonefish Tarpon and Trust biologist, Aaron Adams, on the areas in the Florida Keys where flats fishing is occurring. Maps were displayed showing weighted data sets with darker colors representing the areas where a higher percentage of fishing is taking place.

Working Group Discussion:

- Consider use of temporal zoning as a management tool and addressing user conflicts by establishing idle zones.
- Request for seagrass habitat data layers (possibly grouped in 5-10 year increments) to identify trends and areas in need of additional zoning to restore habitat to historical levels.
- Use manatee sighting data to identify areas where access restrictions may be necessary to protect manatees.

3. Discussion: Identify criteria the working group should consider when developing options and recommendations (Jack Curlett, Stephen Werndli and Beth Dieveney)

- Biological and ecological factors were identified such as: connectivity, habitats of significant importance, temporal activities (i.e. spawning, migration), natural disturbances/events, invasive species, habitat history and species life stages.
- Social and economic factors were identified such as: Party/ boat congregation sites, commercial trap fishing/debris issues, regulatory compliance issues.
- Management tools for the above criteria were identified such as: Managing areas for user conflicts, ability to use U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary as an educational tool.

**Public Comment**

Public comment was provided by two individuals:

- Chris Bergh, The Nature Conservancy and Sanctuary Advisory Council representative. Urged the working group to consider the difference between natural resource dependent activities such as flats fishing and bird watching and non-resource dependent activities such as boat riding.
- Ben Daughtry, Dynasty Marine Associates, Inc. and Sanctuary Advisory Council representative. Cautioned the working group to not overcomplicate areas by having too many and/or overlapping zones.

4. Exercise: Prioritize impacts/uses in each region. Working group was divided into four groups and was given 30 minutes at each of the four region stations to identify impacts and activities/uses on paper charts. One spokesperson from each group summarized what was discussed for each region.

- Upper Keys: Party zones, live aboards, rental boat issues, tarpon fishing areas and nesting/wading bird areas identified.
- Middle Keys: User conflict issues and areas that would benefit from better marking.
- Lower Keys: Manatees in Cow Key Channel, user groups such as Jet Skis, Parasailing, kayak tours, party zones, increasing commercial use of back-country.
- Dry Tortugas and Marquesas: Recreational user impacts, shark viewing tours, important bird roosting areas.

## **Public Comment**

Public comment was provided by two individuals:

- Chris Bergh, The Nature Conservancy and Sanctuary Advisory Council representative. Informed group about Monroe County live-aboard areas in Boca Chica Channel and Sunset Harbor in the Upper Keys.
- Ben Daughtry, Dynasty Marine Associates, Inc. and Sanctuary Advisory Council representative. Suggested making decisions on protecting areas that may be remote now, like the Marquesas, but in the future could become more easily accessed with the development of better technology (i.e. higher powered boats).

## **Follow-Up Actions for Working Group Members**

1. Continue to identify resource and use patterns; reaching out to key partners and constituents as needed.
2. Begin to identify potential areas for consideration to further protect seagrass and critical shallow water habitats in FKNMS.

## **Decision Items of Note**

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