

**Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary
Marine Zoning and Regulatory Review
Ecosystem Protection Working Group Regional Meeting
Key Colony Beach – Middle Keys
September 23, 2013**

Comments Compiled in Round-Table Discussion

Working Group Representation

- Balance among user groups on ecosystem working group
- Ensure representation on working group (recreational fishing) conservation
- Under representation on working group (recreational fishermen)
- Lack of recreational fishing participants in study groups
- Disproportional representation
- SAC has NO Representation of the Recreational Fishing community – needed

Communication/Public Information

- Meetings were not advertised enough.
- Correct the misinformation.
- How do you get more people involved in the process?
- Notify the fishing/boating clubs in the Keys about meetings and the process.
- How much does management listen to the Sanctuary Advisory council?
- Input from public needed
- Poor communication
- Information availability
- Timing of public meetings – winter residents not here
- Defer recommendations to April 2014
- Lack of public scheduling (post office, etc.)
- Maps got released, out to public we want to know what you want to do, definite gap of information
- Reporters to be fed the information on proposed closures, so everyone can see what you are doing
- do not post on a website, no one wants to read 10 pages to get to the information, the reef is still declining, despite all the FKNMS management in place
- Meeting notifications need to be better
- Meetings should be in winter season to reach more people
- Maps need to be put out there for the Public – Absolute need for information to get out
- Get info out through newspapers: Keynoter, Key West Citizen, Miami Herald
- Get info out through Fishing Publications (recreational audience)
- I'm just here to listen and learn about what you are trying to do.
- Notification needs to be routed to individual clubs: like Key Colony Beach Fishing and Boating Club – 240 members and a waiting list
- How to route info [prompted How?]: Newspaper articles

- Here to Understand what is going on with the FL Keys National Marine Sanctuary – growth, expansion of the Sanctuary
- There is room for discussion, but how?
- Nothing here to review, take home
- Concern about existing maps and how those are being used (fear that they are being hidden)

Impacts to User Group

- If the area is so important to be protected it should be “No Nothing” not just “No Take”- everybody should be “out” including divers.
- What other restrictions are being considered in this process- specifically boats?
- Why was I written a citation for \$175 for running aground when people at the sand bar are not written?
- Balance of user groups – commercial vs. recreational
- Any additional closed areas should be presented as closed to all user groups
- A study of effects on all user groups should be made in existing SPA’s before any further closures are considered
- Areas proposed for closure should be presented on the basis of good science, hands-on experience, and not a tool to gauge reaction of any user group
- Each user group should be asked if they feel they have been properly represented, and all their questions answered, concerns discussed before the working group completes their recommendations
- Diver impacts
- Recommend that zones are created without focus on specific users
- Concerns over displacing commercial and recreational fishermen by closing certain areas
- Address concentrated uses that impact habitat
- Zones should apply to all users. Do not allow some users and not others
- Analyze impacts of displacement when considering new or modified zones
- Management of reef sites are related to competitive uses issues

Environmental/Scientific

- What is the scientific criteria for the zones that were proposed in the Middle Keys that are next to each other.
- What is the status of the ecological condition of the Keys- specifically the Middle Keys?
- Are lionfish addressed in the Condition Report and are they being addressed in this process?
- Justification; science (for zones)
- Monitor zone performance to inform if changes are needed
- Sanctuary staff should make science available as questions arise i.e.: is there science that shows any negative impact in the SPA’s from bait fishing
- Freeze was a big issue
- Science does not show that traps cause significant injury
- Background of scientist
- Explanation of the science of marine closures – MPA’s

- Measurable criteria to measure success
- What specific habitat are we trying to protect?
- What data has changed to promote closing new areas?
- Need more research on current zones' benefits
- Is there New Science? Request for more info
- What is the problem?
- Why it is beneficial to close more areas?
- What has been accomplished in Zone Management to date/today?
- Has anyone noticed that soft corals are going away? Big seafans, not as many as there used to be.
- Research: How much is there? The Researchers only come for certain months, how much good does that do?
- Has the Ocean water quality vs the Gulf/Bay water quality declined? – based on research? (info request)
- Tortugas Ecological Reserve example: dropped back in the management planning for research/science information to be pulled in for evaluation before zone establishment; ultimately TER zones were established (based on science)
- People who've been around include their opinions of how its doing out there; in addition to the science
- Broad Analysis/scientific research
- Sea Urchins, Starfish, Conch: used to be here, they are gone; remember what it used to be like down here?
- Would like to see more information on managing seagrass restoration

Economic Impacts

- Are the recreational fishermen considered in the economic impact and how much they contribute?
- If we over regulate we will not have an economic basis.
- If this becomes too complicated and restrictive- people will not come to the Keys.
- The pressure is very seasonal- mainly January – March in Key colony Beach Area. People who live here year round will be impacted 12 months/year.
- Grouper closure time frame impacts the realtors and sales and rentals.
- Consideration of economics impact to local communities
- A Financial Study & Plan must be made before any further areas are placed under Management. Example: cost to taxpayer, can the government afford it?
- Would like to see an economic impact study of Sambo Reserve and the potential economic impact of any proposed zones
- Large closed areas will hurt economy
- Cost/benefit assessment of recommendations
- Cost to implement and enforcement
- Increase cost to taxpayers

Site Specific Input

- Expansion of no fish zones off Marathon.

- Why are some of the areas going from shore to the reef instead of along the reef?
- Sombrero Reef under great pressure from uneducated divers
- Suggestion to zone Sombrero Key to 7 Mile Bridge is ridiculous
- Look at Delta Shoal as a potential area for protection
- Shore line fishing restrictions on Grassy Key, start at 20 feet
- Expand existing SPA's that have a deep water habitat
- Protect all of the Tortugas region, like TER South, instead of lots of smaller zones in the main keys.
- Expand Existing Closed Areas – like Sombrero SPA
- Break-up large Closure Areas – Marathon, Big Pine Key, Tortugas discussed; Tortugas with a high % coral cover vs. Marathon, Big Pine Key with low % covers
- Zoning not needed in Back Country
- Better marking of Shallow Bank Systems
- Example: Delta Shoal is an excellent reef, with mooring buoys in place

Water Quality

- Is the impact of sewers on water quality being addressed?
- How much are the sewers helping the water quality vs. Big Sugar and other upstream influences?
- More focus on water quality
- According to the 2011 Condition Report the majority of issues with Resource Degradation are Water Quality related. How do zoning areas have any beneficial effect on Water Quality?
- Water quality is an issue
- Address water quality
- Address water quality issues
- Focus on bigger picture problems (i.e.: water quality, specifically “big sugar”, and restore the Everglades)
- Water Quality issues
- I live bayside, the water is filthy – attribute to all the Rain:
- Marker 3 – water quality is low
- Sprigger/marker 5 – water quality is bad
- Marker 7 – water quality is worse yet
- Very bad on the Bay – just this year it's been worse
- Do Water Quality
- Zones not related to Water Quality protect; at least most zones are not;
- Water Quality / Big Sugar Study: did not get to what is going on down here!
- Table expansion until we know/identify/see what the benefit of the Central Sewer System
- We had these water quality problems that still exist, when we had cesspits
- SAC response: Good data, statistically, for nearshore water quality improvement; harder to see benefits at distances afar from shore
- Q: What kind of studies have been done, thoroughly and accurately, regarding “The Study” on Water Quality & Big Sugar's effects on our water

- Everyone is worried about the reef, but we have a bay out here, too
- Need to mention more on what is going on in FL Bay

Education / Enforcement

- People should be more educated about where to and where not to anchor to not damage the resources.
- How would these areas be marked so people know where they are? How would they be enforced?
- Enforcement: how enforced; can't be enforced
- Education needed
- Enforcement needed
- Enforcement is too weak (but we don't want any more?) Enforce existing regulations
- Education greatly needed for divers and boaters
- Chamber of Commerce should educate tourists
- Education videos needed in English and Spanish
- A lot we can do before we make an area closed: education; enforce existing regulations; gear and anchorage restriction; more mooring balls areas.
- Improve Law Enforcement
- Improve Education
- Education measuring lobster
- Dissuade people from by education combined with Law Enforcement
- More education
- More enforcement
- More education and outreach on using resources
- More education at boat tag agencies and dive shops on laws and enforcement
- More law enforcement and presence
- More mooring buoys in sensitive areas
- Expand buoys in other needed areas
- More buoys, more buoys, more buoys
- What is the cost of maintaining buoys and enforcement of these zones?
- Need more enforcement officers to patrol existing areas
- Tag program for lobster mini season
- Have enforcement officers focus on choke points (channels, etc.)
- Consistent state and federal regulations
- No buoys
- More education
- Enforcement of "closed areas"
- Expand existing enforcement
- Improve enforcement, management, and education at existing zones
- Increase emphasis on law enforcement
- Increase emphasis on education of natural resource users, visitors, residents, and everyone
- Enhanced Information at the Public level

- Fishing Seminars
- Make it simple for the public
- Make them aware that just dropping an anchor can cause damage, many don't realize this
- I like the Lobster Mini-Season Brochure – concise, compact and all the information presented
- Spend that on education, rather than Science/Research [Prompted “That” =? Tax dollars, \$\$]
- Education is one of the big problems:
 - weekend fishermen, take fish too small
 - all bridge fishermen, they need education
 - Do Enforcement
 - Do Education
 - Need more Law Enforcement: officers respond when called, but come by land – not by boat, so yell at the boaters is ineffective response
 - Law Enforcement is a major issue: I've been out bully netting (at night), and I never see them out at night; need more LE presence

Other Issues to Consider

- Need reasonable approaches to limit access – use the model of Fish and Wildlife agencies in managing a finite resource
- Tolls and user fees
- Shallow water closures (i.e.: no motor zones) will impact routes that fishermen use when weather is bad
- More protected areas create more havens for lion fish
- Ability to remove lion fish from SPA's
- No permit to remove lion fish regardless of area, make it easier to remove
- Issue raised with Lionfish, haven't see as many Tropicals lately; even in our canals

Temporal Zoning

- Prefer seasonal closures (spawning)
- No closures (i.e. zones) have seasonal fishery closures instead
- Zones should be re-opened after restoration
- Rotating zones
- Revolving restoration sites – with closures and re-open
- No Commercial harvest for an entire Fish Species; agrees that everything (every fishery) should have a break; support seasonal closures for spawning seasons
- If close areas for restoration, open back up when restored and move to another zone
- Don't agree with Mutton Snapper protection (as proposed by Don DeMaria, referenced) – spawning, breeding grounds, nesting argument for personal protection gain
- Do agree with the success of Mutton Snapper spawning aggregation protection at Riley's Hump; provides for a good showing of a comeback for the Mutton Snapper, I can see that

Fishery Management and Zoning

- Balance what might be closed to fishing “can't close all the good fishing spots.”

- Take word “fish” out of all Sanctuary Regulations
- Take the word “Fish” out of Sanctuary Management
- Bring fish limit down to protect spawning aggregations
- Direct all Fisheries Management to Fisheries Managers, not Sanctuary Managers
- State does Fisheries Management
- FWS has mandate to facilitate angling. Does this plan do that?
- Limit fish to reasonable take numbers instead of creating new zones
- Current SPA and Reserves have not improved catch quality for fishermen
- An awareness of the actual area considered for closure should be made, i.e.: sand bottom off Alligator Light (100 ft.) not spawning area
- Keep bait fishing in SPA’s with permits as it is now
- Working Group should have an understanding of current bait fish regulations and restrictions in existing SPA’s
- Make restriction on size (species specific) instead of closing entire area, *like Grouper
- Area closures are not necessary if fishing management is working properly
- Coordinate recommended closures with fisheries management agencies
- Sites should be evaluated for impacts to Lobster Fishery
- If you want to improve fisheries use traditional regulations, not zoning
- Protect fish spawning aggregations that have conclusive scientific, peer reviewed science documenting them
- Buy out fishing permits of displaced fishermen
- If new zone is established allow sustainable fishing (i.e. lobster, stone crab, hook& line [especially yellowtail], marine life)
- Marine life is excluded from being listed as a sustainable fishery in FKNMS except as allowed by Florida statute and this should be changed to be allowed like any other fishery
- allow fishing on those mooring buoys
- allow continuation of bait-fishing on those mooring buoys
- NMFS Fishery Management Topic Raised
- National Marine Fisheries Service and Fishery Management discussion: don’t agree with the way they propose changes and manage; taking everything away
- Unfortunately, FKNMS management is seen as NOAA and lumped into the same category with NMFS management, to take it all away.
- Bully netters working in very shallow water because they can’t see due to dirty water; tearing up the seagrass/turtle grass beds; They move offshore when you yell at them while on my property, then they just turn out their lights and don’t really leave.

General input regarding zoning

- More and more regulations are going to crush us.
- Restrict the expansion of the No-Take areas.
- Concern about size of areas – review existing ideas.
- Balance of protection vs. economic value
- Difficult to provide input not knowing what the areas are and what the impact would be
- Keep current zoning

- No anchor zones for bottom protection
- No new zones
- Create a deep artificial reef for every new zone
- Be aware of the size of the areas that you are proposing to close
- Please do not move forward until you have it right
- Close the areas where coral is prolific – i.e.: 60 areas and mark them
- On the flats – lots of water movement, etc. – but less fish, so why shut down? Catch and release and water quality intermingle
- Legal constraint of FKNMS to be multi-use
- FKNMS is not in a vacuum – closures ES ENP, BNP, etc. squeeze people – need to look holistically
- Protect the coral nurseries
- Go back to the coral protected areas, traps – could have considered tweaking SPA’s for improving corals with minor or no impact
- Funding needed linked to actions
- How much is enough?
- Don’t close too much of an area
- Concerns with size of areas
- Issue specific management vs. general closures
- Fair and reasonable regulations
- No additional zone closures, will create more pressure on surrounding areas
- Slot size limits
- Not enough employees to manage existing areas
- Marking “closed areas”, How?
- Change charts costs
- Not close areas, limit size
- Add more mooring balls to sites
- Don’t micro-manage, macro-manage
- Need “Cut and Dry” answer as to what you are going to try to close.
- Map of Closures concerns
- Reasonable Areas; not 7-miles of area
- Break-up closure area into smaller chunks – for fishing closures (as previously suggested – above)
- More reef areas can be closed, supported
- Prop Scars and Giant Blow Holes
- mark shallow areas for the boating public: Example – Grassy Key Flats, bait-fishermen are tearing up the bottom
- Electric motors required for use on shallow SG flats, esp. in bait-fishing areas
- As a Businessman, I am willing to sacrifice some things [some reef sites]
- need more mooring balls, to manage anchor damage
- just add more mooring balls, continued uses
- Don’t take the whole pie, just little sections of the pie, not large chunks
- Not Site Specific Closures

- Area Closure worked for Riley's Hump: but this is how you run into problems and public resistance
- Don't need more closures unless you can prove it, that the closure is necessary
- We're not getting to the issue of why we're doing management, not to just expand it.
- Don't need to broaden the Zones at this point
- Why do we need to expand?
- Purpose of one zone may be differing
- Can you highlight the top 5 priority sites/zones? (for the public information)
- Do Maximum Impact with minimum regulation!