

**Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary
Marine Zoning and Regulatory Review
Ecosystem Protection Working Group Regional Meeting
Key Largo – Upper Keys
September 24, 2013**

Comments Compiled in Round-Table Discussion

Working Group Representation

- Representation of all users on SAC and working groups must be maintained; any conflicts of interest must be addressed publically.

Communication/Public Information

- Need these smaller regional meetings – more of them!
- 50 minutes not enough time to discuss issues
- Ineffective communication/presentation of existing data regarding zone/area effectiveness (are they working?)
- Should have provided a summary of problems
- More public notice of process
- The three working groups should coordinate amongst themselves for consistency in the final recommendation.

Impacts to User Group

- Consider closing areas to all uses. If an area needs to be closed, close to all uses to help determine impacts of use and various user groups.
- Impact from divers – do not take from environment, different than impacts from fishing. Divers can contribute to degradation of ecosystem
- Evaluate balance of use of resources and conservation
- This affects our livelihood. Fishermen sometimes feel targeted. This should not be divers vs. fishers. We want the reef and Keys to be healthy. Intelligent compromise!
- Concern about impact/effect to various user groups (e.g. divers mentioned)
- Impact from visitors from mainland (greatest impact to upper Keys region)
- Consider closing areas to all users
- Upper Keys impacted by out-of-town users more than other areas
- Close SPA's to diving
- Buoys are attractants: reefs killed by diver impact
- New, expanded zone closures push me out, on top of your (other)uses
- Areas closed to fishing - should be closed to all users
- Regulate number of divers on any one location
- Closures impact all user groups equally (closed to all)
- Commercial dive industry needs to be more responsible for themselves and customers – SPA damages. Fishermen get the blame
- Too much pressure on SPA's from divers

- Make sure accessibility for fishing and charter interests is maintained when expanding or adding new zones.
- Any existing SPAs closed to fishing should be closed to all activities, including diving and snorkeling.
- A study should be conducted on the impacts of all user groups before any new areas are closed or new regulations are considered.
- Jet skis and kite boarders are ruining good bonefish flats fishing with the disturbance they create.

Environmental/Scientific

- Close areas based on science
- Consider science of closed vs. non-closed areas
- What are the elements to focus on sustaining? - Specific question about sustainability.
- Restore ecosystem and various elements of the ecosystem; healthy fish/corals and ecosystem condition; Consider if/how a larger MPA might help achieve this
- Closed areas need to be developed on the basis of good science and hands-on experience
- Has there been any study on the results of existing closed areas? What are the results? Tortugas Ecological Reserve, Sambos Ecological Reserve – SPA's too small to see results
- 1997 voted zones in. What have the zones shown us? They have not even worked; they haven't been taken care of.
- Science; follow the science
- Scientific/socioeconomic justification of zoning is lacking
- Science based restoration efforts
- Protect fish spawning zones according to scientific data
- What does research/data say about effectiveness of existing management zones/areas?
- What's the hurry? Let's see what the data regarding zone effectiveness is telling us first (before we start making new ones)
- Need scientific justification for zoning strategy. Specifically for zone in Marquesas with no justification
- Provide/share current movement measures throughout Sanctuary (flow patterns). Be specific in areas
- Consider expanding current zone boundaries (some, not all) to include habitat other than and in addition to reef habitat; base decisions on available science; include considering different depths and diversity of habitat in boundary changes.
- 1990 El Niño
- 2010 Cold Spell
- Areas considered for closure should be based entirely on actual science;
- Current results of studies on existing zones should be made public and address whether the zone met its goal/purpose.

Economic Impacts

- Impact to real estate values
- Impacts to livelihood – further closures have a negative impact

- Closures are going to have an effect on real estate value of areas if owners have to run 20 miles to get to a fishing area. Large closures will affect real estate.
- Closures will put me out of business

Site Specific Input

- New Carysfort idea that was brought up by Working Group is a bad idea
- Size of existing areas (i.e.: Molasses, Carysfort) are good
- Davis Reef is loaded with Yellowtail
- Molasses Reef - the fish are 80-90% - still has got fish population
- Hen and Chickens is in good shape
- Look at existing SPA's and look at tweaking them first: Coral Nursery sites: 20-30 sites Acropora protection and Spiny Lobster Amendment 10 (Lobster trapping exclusion areas)
- Idle speed only - 100 yards of all Keys shorelines
- Take half of the Carysfort SPA and close it. Use the closed area for coral restoration
- Between Carysfort and Basin Hill is naturally protected due to shallowness
- Take Pennekamp Lobster Zones and close to all access. Along with Ocean Reef Marker #1 area
- Don't touch anything between French and Davis reefs
- Don't push Yellowtail fishing out to 130 feet of water
- Upper Keys – no more closed areas
- Recommend that Alligator SPA be eliminated; not a dive area, so it shouldn't be a SPA
- Closures that go from shore out to 120 feet deep include billfish feeding territory that is important for tournaments (catch and release) and recreational fishing.
- Interested in policies near residential areas (near shore); concerned with impacts to seagrass in shallow waters near shore.

Water Quality

- Impacts of water quality and non-human impacts (e.g. cold snap and warming)
- Fix the water quality problems
- Water quality issues – Education and Law Enforcement
- Water Quality getting better with sewer system installed. More affected by global water quality. I don't think fishermen should be punished (i.e. additional closures)
- Big Sugar - phosphate increase
- clean up water quality
- South Florida Ecosystem Restoration Taskforce
- Support and advance water quality efforts
- Near shore water quality issues need to be addressed
- Water quality issues – sewers help prevent spreading of bacteria from human waste
- Address water pollution issues from Big Sugar and other agriculture
- How to access water quality data that is collected by other agencies

Education / Enforcement

- Enforcement can't effectively enforce existing areas, does not make sense to make new/larger areas
- Boater education and consider license
- Improve enforcement
- Educate visitors about closures
- Better educational requirements and tools –out-of-town users
- Mandatory free boater education. Online program and certification
- Regional map/chart training areas teach visitors how to navigate Keys waters
- Encourage GPS manufacturers to include zones and access areas
- No signs on drive down to the Keys
- Apps with right – red returning; Green²/Brown² run aground (education messages)
- Short in Law Enforcement, manpower, equipment
- Need more education, water quality, and more Law Enforcement
- Education needed
- Enforcement
- Educate visitors (brochures in rentals, hotels). Educate public on water – not at sandbar on weekends
- Signs for zones, marking area
- Educate: Top 10 List/Rules on safety and protection of the sanctuary
- Visitors who bring a boat to the Keys and launch at ramp where pay vendor at ramp hands it out and visitor must sign it
- In closed places, what kind of information is available?
- Education: red/green/boating education needed
- Education: brown water recognition; shallow water boating teaching – How-to, give knowledge
- More awareness among dive community of how fragile reefs are
- More enforcement
- None of this can be accomplished without better enforcement
- Increased education and enforcement
- Law Enforcement is severely lacking
- More education
- Better law enforcement with rewards
- More education signs with regulations at marinas, bait shops, and boat ramps
- Enforcement issues
- the ability of law enforcement to enforce regulations should be a prime consideration before passing any new regulations.
- All missing signage (navigational and regulatory) and buoys should be maintained and those that are missing should be replaced as soon as possible.

Other Issues to Consider

- Comment about lionfish and impact to ecosystem and juvenile fish
- Concern about number of vessels and pressure on resources

- Consider adaptive management in addressing lionfish
- To consider carrying capacity in management, prohibit anchoring (whether in sand or not) inside zones with mooring buoys when buoys are already being used by boats

Temporal Zoning

- Rotating Closure areas
- Use temporary zoning with better monitoring
- Use calendar for protection of Mutton Snapper spawning areas
- Temporal closures as alternatives to permanent closures
- Closures should not be permanent and should have criteria for review

Fishery Management and Zoning

- Having closed areas in an ecosystem produces a net increase in fishery production and spill over
- Management should be achieved by size limits, bag limits
- More of the SPA's should be opened for catch and release trolling – like the 4 that already have it (Conch, Alligator, Sombrero, Sand) and include live bait fishing and sight casting. It is zero impact
- Do not use zoning/closures to do fishery management
- It would be great to have a Keys specific Fisheries Management Council. If had that, could potentially include closures
- Access to bait fishing areas (Conch Rubble Zone, Alligator, and others)
- More FAD's (fish attraction devices) to distribute fishing pressure and provide habitat
- The fishermen do not have an effect on the reef other than removing the fish
- Mini Lobster season – impacts, economic impacts
- Live in Islamorada, spearfishing can only go within a 20 mile radius
- Yellowtail, Snapper, Grouper – all in good shape
- Big lobster in SPA – true, but very mobile/walk
- Additional closures for spawning aggregations, FKNMS doesn't have...?
- Would like to be able to spearfish inshore, at least for lionfish
- Leave fishery management to state managed fishing councils
- Raise size limits as an alternative to closures to all areas (Mutton, Hog, Snapper, Shallow Water Grouper success without closures)
- If this process is not about fishery management, spawning aggregations should not be included
- Commercial Ballyhoo is one of the cleanest fishing tactics. No damage to bottom. No by-catch
- Sanctuary is the only place to productively find Ballyhoo
- Bait fishing should be allowed in SPAs by permit as already agreed upon (continue status quo) for charter and recreational fishing.
- An impact study should be conducted on the lobster mini season and commercial sponging; conduct a study to eliminate commercial sponging.

General input regarding zoning

- Favor using closed areas to enhance ecosystem (i.e. fish increases)
- Achieve a sense of compromise. Identify areas that can be intelligently conserved; closed enhance the fisheries; enforce regulations
- I do not agree with bigger and more closures. You will never get an area back once it is taken. No compromise for fewer bigger areas.
- Consider fewer but larger MPA's; greater impact for resources easier to enforce; contribute to increasing critical mass of resources (fish and coral)
- Against closures; once an area is closed never given back
- More mooring buoys for all types of uses (fishing). Buoys not just in SPA's
- Better mooring buoy maintenance
- What are these areas attempting to achieve?
- Fish populations – same fish as years ago. To close an area is not going to repair an area
- It's not right
- Solution is not to make it bigger
- Focus on the SPA's you have now, work on cutting them in half. No use to see if they come back
- Federal government takes, never seen them give back
- Closing more zones will create havoc down here
- No support for additional closures, things are getting better
- No way closures
- Prop scarring issues bother me
- Need funding to protect FKNMS
- More mooring balls on reefs
- Keep current SPA's, no expansion
- Establish no anchor zones
- Do not change existing zones
- More mooring buoys or no anchor zones where you want to protect the bottom – like pillar coral areas in Marquesas/Tortugas
- Tweak the existing SPA's, bigger perhaps – educate
- Take care of the areas already zoned before taking more
- Account/report the number of captured areas (protected): square miles
- Working group should dismiss all proposed maps.
- Interested in knowing about the sanctuary's authority to control activities near shore such as anchoring, motoring, types of vessels, etc.
- Address “party areas” because they are expanding into a diversity of habitats and increasing in number.
- Consider above suggestion about addressing party areas because such areas are dangerous and/or near residential areas