

**Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary
Marine Zoning and Regulatory Review
Ecosystem Protection Working Group Regional Meeting
Key West – Marquesas & Tortugas
September 26, 2013**

Comments Compiled in Round-Table Discussion

Working Group Representation

- SAC members should be replaced for lack of attendance
- What are working group member qualifications to be making recommendations?

Communication/Public Information

- Improve dissemination of information on FKNMS science and SAC/Working Group progress and meeting schedules.
- Communicate to public clearly why (e.g., science/habitat resources) specific areas are identified as modified or new zones at the micro level.
- Need to go back to public comment periodically

Impacts to User Group

- All user groups considered equal now and in all future considerations (i.e. area in Tortugas where spearfishing isn't allowed)
- Concern about concentration of effort
- Closed areas create user conflict
- Recreational fishermen are more of an impact now than historically. More recreational fishermen than commercial fishermen in Tortugas region.
- New zones can be created to exclude recreational use; compare these commercial zones to recreational zones.
- Marine Protected Areas (FKNMS) should continue to be managed for multiple use. All user groups need to be considered.
- By creating new zone, it will displace fishing to other areas extending damage
- Zone closures will create congested areas; i.e trap zones will be overloaded.
- Consider pressure, concentration of use
- No-activity zones are causing fear amongst all user groups
- The sanctuary embodies historic use and low impact. It is trying to protect uses we currently have.
- Catch and release should be considered separate from fishing.
- I want to see all of us on an even-keel. Equal for all. If closed, close it to all. This eliminates finger pointing.
- Concentrated fishing pressure will result from closures

Environmental/Scientific

- No additional/expanded closed areas without specific scientific evidence the area is in danger

- Science doesn't match with every day observations in Tortugas/Marquesas
- Recognize limitations of scientific data
- Closures should only be proposed or recommended by actual science
- Do not want to see any no-take zones without scientific proof
- Integrate scientists with fishermen to promote information sharing leading to better decisions on FKNMS issues.
- Consider sponge restoration.
- Study effect of transported sand (e.g., Smathers and Sunset) on Benthic habitat.
- Research study zone – south side of Key West out to reef zone to determine how this area is different than other zones (eg due to cruise ship traffic and impact)
- I have never seen a scientist on these flats (of Marquesas)
- You have to have data to close an area.

Economic Impacts

- Any consideration should have economic impact study associated with it
- Want a socioeconomic study on how closures would affect fishermen to include Florida Keys fishing industry, as well as bait shops, tourism, real estate, tax base.
- Protect jobs.
- Concerned about livelihood and potential impact to livelihood from potential closures

Site Specific Input

- Don't touch the Tortugas and Marquesas: There isn't enough enforcement to maintain now, much less with more area
- Make Tortugas authorized recreational landing site; Make it a site to validate while still on the boat
- No lines/expansion will result from perceived spawning aggregations in Tortugas/Marquesas
- Areas opened up to flats guides (Tortugas/Marquesas); also in front of Western Sambo Ecological Reserve
- Bait fishing allowed Western Sambo Ecological Reserve North side boundary
- No new "no take" areas in Tortugas. Already have largest "no take" zones in this region.
- West and south of Tortuga Banks is last good lobster habitat in area. New closures of those areas would negatively affect commercial lobstermen. TER already concentrates fishing effort in smaller areas than historically.
- Fishing in Tortugas ER did not significantly damage habitat prior to closure.
- Open TER North to commercial and recreational harvest.
- Moving 1 mile west on Riley's Hump would be acceptable, however area is packed with lionfish.
- Strategic mooring balls would be acceptable around the Marquesas for safe harboring of vessels.
- More mooring buoys needed at Dry Tortugas in the west and southwest sides of the current designated mooring area.
- 4' depth zone around Marquesas should be no-take zone, catch and release only with anchoring privileges.

- Reconfigure boundary at Riley's Hump to include grouper and Cubera snapper.
- Marquesas does not need additional protection.
- Open Tortugas North to commercial fishing, keep TER south closed.
- Marquesas zone (from draft maps) does not make sense from a resource/habitat perspective
- I am against any closures in the Marquesas. If it happens – you need to make closures self-expiring
- TER-N & S will never be fished again. Closures work to feed fish back up the Keys.
- Regarding the ideas for the south-side closures of Marquesas: there is no scientific reason for possible closures
- On the west side of Marquesas. Birds were decimated by hurricane Wilma on Wilma Key. But now the birds are fine.
- Can't close the area because of the impacts on birds
- Closing the south side of Marquesas in shallow water is ridiculous. I make my living here. This closure will decimate my business. There is no scientific reason for it.
- One option/proposal was to make inshore waters of Marquesas catch and release.
- Any boat inside is a catch and release fisherman. There is no impact in there. There is no problem with that.
- You can make the south side a catch and release area too. There is no problem with that.
- There is no reef fish data/counts between the Dry Tortugas National Park and the Marquesas.
- Regarding the ideas for closures to flat fishers off of the south-side of Boca Chica: a possible exception can be catch and release off of Boca Chica beach.
- It's silly that I am here trying to protect the flats (of Marquesas).
- The south side of Marquesas contributes a lot to the Keys economy. If fish go west off of Boca Grande, it will just move the fishermen out there as well.
- I propose stopping the proposed boundary (off of south shore of Marquesas) at the 6 or 10 ft contour line.

Water Quality

- More water quality studies: How is outflow of FL Everglades affecting health of reefs?
- Impact of near shore septic systems
- Make sure FKNMS puts efforts into improving water quality.
- More cooperation is needed with Miami-Dade Counties on nutrients through their water discharge creating water quality issues.
- Concentrate more on water quality and less about closing zones. Not in favor of any closures.
- Water quality
- Recommendation for no discharge out to federal waters outside existing FKNMS boundaries (EEZ).
- Water quality issues from external sources – Gulf, Mississippi River.
- Sustainability and water quality are the focus
- Go after the polluters. The ones polluting our waters.

Education / Enforcement

- Create public education program about anchoring and causing less problems
- More mooring balls around protected areas
- Don't charge "us" to educate outsiders
- Better education for law enforcement
- People not as familiar with strict Tortugas rules may get in trouble
- More education and enforcement needs to be focused on non-locals; they are not invested in the resources and not educated about FKNMS.
- Fishing license is easy to get without understanding species/bag limits, etc. Should be more education associated with recreational fishing licensure.
- More education and enforcement.
- Enforcement seems more effective in TER than in other areas in lower Keys and FKNMS.
- Tour boats need to be more regulated. Tourists are not educated and can significantly impact habitat and resources. Education/outreach should be multi-language and all tour operators should properly educate customers.
- Cannot protect more if L.E. cannot protect what we have
- L.E. needs to be more respectful when boardings are done.
- Closures do no good without enforcement, in addition to the lack of justifications to the public
- Law enforcement is underfunded. There are not enough resources to enforce more closures. It is a logistical nightmare for law enforcement.
- Work with the tourism board to inform them of proper, non-destructive conduct in the Keys. Run commercials about the Sanctuary

Other Issues to Consider

- Rate of population growth (full-time residents) in the Keys is not a factor
- Investigate artificial reef for use by everyone: Place further in to protect from wind, Make them a star attraction, Can be a place to direct others to fish/dive/enjoy, instead of sending them to sensitive areas
- Investigate installing FAD on edge of reef
- What is the level of integration between Sanctuary and NPS? It is ridiculous to need a permit to take people to the beach at the Fort
- Too many closed zones will create breeding grounds for the expanding lionfish populations.
- Lift embargo on Cuba.
- Study number of cruise ships and their effect on game fish.
- Charge people that trailer a boat into the Keys a fee which would go to the sanctuary. (Ex. \$10) A fee for MPA entrance occurs in other areas of the world. This is not new for divers. Divers can receive a medallion for their fee in other MPAs. But it is new for fishers.
- Fee collection can occur/be regulated at the marina, boat ramp, etc.
- Boat permit can be issued – as the cost of doing business. (Ex: I pay \$600/year for using my boat in the Dry Tortugas) An uninspected passenger boat with tourists should carry a

sticker. The program would pay for itself. This would raise awareness that you are in a special place.

- Present the Keys as an eco-tourism destination

Temporal Zoning

- Need flexibility to move with in fishery and follow patterns
- Zones which show improvement should be opened to harvest for limited times, or zones should be closed to harvest temporally; zones could rotate closed/open seasons or times depending if increased biomass of targeted species is documented.
- Want to see "temporary" closures re-opened if zones/management has been effective. (i.e. conch, sea turtles, jewfish) If closures work, then should re-open when target species recover.
- Areas should be closed for finite amount of time and rotated geographically to be more balanced. Education and enforcement needs to be part of this.
- Close fishing during spawning.
- Protect known locations of spawning at least seasonally, but let science drive protection type (e.g., temporal or permanent).
- Consider time limited, rotating zones.
- Identify zones and use temporal closures (e.g., breeding stock)
- Are reasons for closures static? Probably not. There is a need to revisit the reason for closures. There need to be finite time periods for closures.
Ex: W. Sambo was designated for a specific reason. The goal was accomplished. Does W. Sambo still need to be there?
- Temporal zoning is difficult to enforce.
- Want to see expiration dates on all closures

Fishery Management and Zoning

- Size bag limits not zones used to manage fisheries
- Sanctuary shouldn't be a part of fisheries management; leave to Gulf management council and South Atlantic council
- Address impact of mini season
- Combine regulations to make Atlantic, Gulf, State consistent
- Alternative to more "closed" areas; have limited, permitted use in some areas. (i.e. and annual lottery; fishermen who get to fish an area one year are taken out of lottery for xx years. Allows for limited harvest.
- FKNMS has no jurisdiction over spawning. Therefore there should be no fishing management.
- Prohibit killing of sharks and rays and barracudas and reef fish.
- Prohibit sponging.
- Fishing gear changes and any impact to habitat and water quality (e.g., shrimper TEDs and seagrass impacts) tickle chain vs. bar)
- Pressure on new areas/zones through closing areas consider bag limits to manage and address pressure
- Consider using "growing" fish, all types, and release – stock enhancement.

- Evaluate fish stocks, identify needs of species and manage for those needs not only use closures (i.e., artificial reefs)
- Muttons, groupers, and grey snappers are healthy
- Lobster season slaughters the Keys

General input regarding zoning

- Closures should be last case scenario after everything else has been attempted (i.e. anchoring zones?)
- Sanctuary management have conflicts of interest; House on sandbar, so he wants sandbar closed
- Concerns on behalf of commercial lobster fishermen; do not want to see additional closures; all areas that have been closed historically only affected fishermen. Concerns that current zones not having any net positive effects.
- If reserves are working (i.e. more, bigger fish), they should be kept intact.
- Don't want Keys to continue degrading. Preservation should be a priority.
- Focus on success of existing zones before creating new ones.
- Marine Protected Areas should focus on sustainability and long-term viability of resources.
- Not in favor of new Ecological Reserves.
- Stop managing the bottom, manage the fish species of interest.
- Need a clear definition of no extractive use.
- Changes to management should include time and objective limits/goals.
- Reasoning and logic should be used for zoning.
- Justification needed with any changes or new zones.
- Consider more information and issues before adding / using more zones.
- Closures – MPAs of any kind are managed by the CFRs (Code of Federal Regulations). If you want to do anything in the zones, you need to get a permit. Ex: Tortugas Ecological Reserve – North permits. In the CFRs, it says you need to call a FKNMS representative at Garden Key. There is no FKNMS representative at Garden Key and will never be one. I got a ticket for not calling this representative. There is no need to put regulations in the CFRs and have to go through Congress to amend it. It is not a good way to manage the sanctuary, it is inflexible.
- Need to be more flexible in managing the regulations/area
- There is a lot of confusion about the no take zones.
- Shutting areas down will not fix anything.
- Just in my time I have seen a lot of differences.
- What are we trying to protect?
- Last year the sanctuary wanted 50 closed zones for corals
- Once they take it, it's gone forever
- I don't have a problem with adaptive management
- I am 100% against any closures. It is not necessary.
- No exceptions would be needed if you move the boundary