

Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary  
Advisory Council

PUBLIC COMMENT

\*PLEASE PRINT ALL INFORMATION AND DISCUSSION CLEARLY

Name: CAPTAIN  
(CRAIG JOHNSON)

Organization: OWEN CHANTON BOAT  
ULTRA GRAND SLAM 33' SEA  
BOARD MEMBER KEY WEST  
CHANTON BOAT ASSC.

Email: [REDACTED]

If you would like to be added to the marine zoning and regulatory review email updates, please indicate your choice below:

Yes, add me to the email list       No, do not add me to the email list

TOPIC TO BE ADDRESSED

WESTERN SAMBALS

PUBLIC COMMENT

DON'T BELIEVE BOUNDARIES SHOULD BE MOVED  
EAST. I HAVE NO PROBLEM MOVING SOUTH BOUNDARY  
TO 90 FRT AND NORTH BOUNDARY OFF THE BEACH  
EDGE FURTHER SOUTH. I ALSO BELIEVE IF THIS ZONE  
IS SHUT OFF TO ANY USER GROUP SUCH AS FISHING, I  
ALWAYS BELIEVED IT SHOULD BE SHUT OFF TO ALL  
USER GROUPS SUCH AS SNORKELING AND DIVING, SO  
WE CAN GET TRUE DATA ON THIS AREA.

# Scoping Session

Inbox x

george halloran [REDACTED]

to me

Jetskis continue to expand into new areas of the Florida Keys, and therefore the Sanctuary. One new expansion I have noticed is the shallows just north of the Hilton Haven peninsula in what is called Paradise Bay. Hilton Haven is a dead-end road with a generally quiet, residential population consisting of condominiums, some small lodging facilities, private homes and a number of houseboats.

On an irregular but increasing basis, 7-10 personal watercraft approach from the west and roar by close to shore with seemingly little regard for residents, kayaks or other small boats. I recently witnessed jetskis in this area passing within 25 feet to either side of a man and woman in kayaks who appeared stunned and very uncomfortable by the commotion. There is no need for this kind of activity.

In the main harbor jetskiers seek out the wakes of larger vessels to get a "lift" from the wave, and seem to have little regard for other boaters. While transiting the harbor recently in a 17 foot skiff, a line of jetskis came close enough to our boat to wet the occupants with spray. Again, no need to be this cozy.

I believe many of the operators of jetskis are making their first attempt with a personal watercraft. It can be a thrilling experience, and the excitement is not conducive to safety or care for others, not to mention the environment. New riders have their hands full, may not know or remember the rules of the road, and may not be able to recognize a turtle's head directly in front of their vessel in time to turn away.

It is my opinion that jetski tours should follow a prescribed route approved by Sanctuary managers and be limited in both the number of tour participants and the number of tours overall in a 24-hour period.

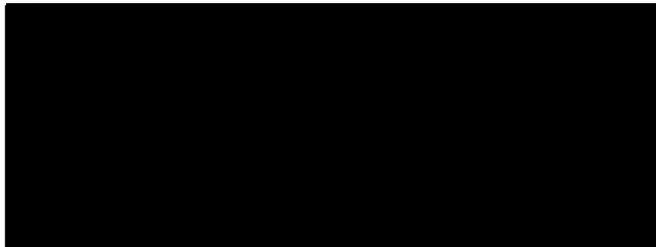
Allowed to go unchallenged, jetski rentals will continue to increase in numbers and locations, thereby claiming an ever increasing slice of the pie. Mother Nature is the cook here, and residents of the Keys are charged with managing the kitchen. Management should not be controlled by greed.

George Halloran - Boater, diver, fisherman, bird and wildlife observer, and forty- year resident of Key West.

[REDACTED]

## Fwd: FKNMS environmental working group meeting today

Inbox x



----- Original message -----

From: Joyce Newman

Date: 05/14/2014 9:27 AM (GMT-05:00)

To: Chris Bergh

Subject: FKNMS environmental working group meeting today

Chris,

I understand the FKNMS Environmental Working Group meets today, and one possible discussion topic is restricting commercial dive trips and use of personal watercraft within the Sanctuary. As I cannot attend that meeting, would you please pass along my position if you will be there?

I believe the Sanctuary is a valuable public resource, to be used gently and consistent with environmental stewardship ethics. Commercial over-use and exploitation has no place in the Sanctuary.

Thanks for your help. Best to you and Beth.

# Fwd: Ecosystem protection public comment

Inbox x



**From:** John O'Hearn [REDACTED]  
**Date:** May 13, 2014 at 10:31:10 PM EDT  
**To:** "[beth.dieveney@noaa.gov](mailto:beth.dieveney@noaa.gov)" <[beth.dieveney@noaa.gov](mailto:beth.dieveney@noaa.gov)>  
**Subject:** Ecosystem protection public comment

Greetings,

I will be unable to attend the meeting tomorrow, but I hope that the below can be included as public comment.

Thanks

John O'Hearn  
LKGA president

The Lower Keys is one of the most most heavily managed area in the Keys, with numerous vessel and speed restriction zones, SPAs and the larger Western Sambo ER. Much of this region, the areas managed in the Refuge system, could be considered the finest in the keys. Due to the regulations enacted in the NWR Backcountry Management Plan, floral, fauna and human use patterns are unrivaled in the Keys. The exclusions of thrill craft (PWC, air boats, water skiing, etc..) is a large reason why. This should NOT be changed. Adaptive management strategies to deal with new and emerging forms of thrill craft merits consideration.

Also, action needs to be taken to control the expansion of sand bar party zones. What was once an geographically isolated event (Marvin, Snipe Pt) is now wide spread with many new areas being converted to "party zones". On a Holiday weekend, seemingly every patch of white sand is covered in boats. These same areas used as party zones (shallow sand bars and adjacent hard or grass bottom) are important nurseries for many of the local fish species. They are more than just a nuisance and an eyesore.

Western Sambo ER, the largest exclusionary zone this side of the Tortugas is far from a model of resource protection. The zones undoubtedly offers refuge for a local population of species, but does little else. It's boundaries do not include important spawning areas. Worse its regulations allows for a use pattern that does not protect the shallow water sand bottom, hard bottom or grass bottom nurseries. It is the region's most heavily used oceanside party area. This ER also handcuffs the flats fishing in area which only target migratory species that do not remain within the zone for any length of time.

The creation of a shallow water catch and release "lane" with in the boundaries of this ER, would allow for limited non extractive use that in no way hinders the zones protection of snapper, grouper, and lobster.

The only fish to be targeted in such a "lane" would be tarpon, permit, and bonefish. The same C&R "lane" style zone could be used in deep water areas allowing sport fishing for migratory species like sailfish Snapper, grouper, and lobster are not targeted by C&R fishermen. Such "lanes" could be used in any new large zones as a way to mitigate their negative economic impact but still provide a high level of ecosystem protection. One needs only to look at the vibrant Marine Protected in Cuba, Mexico, Belize, and Puerto Rico to see the compatibility of C&R with large scale spatial management zone. It works there, it can work here.

The task of managing resource protection while limiting negative economic impact is a challenge. If the Sanctuary intends to include large zones in the new Management plan, Catch and Release is a tool it must include. With very low mortality rates, C&R is sustainable and provides a huge revenue source.

Catch and Release Flats fishing for tarpon, bonefish, and permit provides more than \$460 million dollars a year to the local economy AND it is compatible with all resource protection goals.

Capt John O'Hearn  
LKGA president

Sent from my iPad

PHILIP A. FRANK, PH.D.



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May 15 2014

**To: Sean Morton, Manager, Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary  
Nancy Finley, Manager, Florida Keys National Wildlife Refuges**

**RE: Zoning and Regulatory Review Process, Florida Keys National Marine  
Sanctuary and Florida Keys National Wildlife Refuges.**

In regards to the Zoning and Regulatory Review Process, Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary (FKNMS) and Florida Keys National Wildlife Refuges (FKNWR), I respectfully submit the following comments to be considered during the Zoning and Regulatory Review Process and incorporated into the administrative record.

I understand that during the May 13-14 meetings of the Working Group, the issue of Personal Water Craft (PWC) limitations was discussed. I am writing this letter to re-iterate my previous comments on this issue, and offer a proposal that I believe helps resolve PWC / wildlife conflicts in the Lower Keys. I understand that because I am not a Working Group member, I cannot actually propose this as an alternative, but I am hoping one of the Working Group members does.

Personal water craft are essentially the equivalent of off-road motorcycles on the water. They are small, fast, and can access extremely shallow water. These features make them a hazard to wildlife that seeks refuge in shallow bays and flats generally inaccessible to normal outboard-powered vessels. These features make them incompatible for use within the FKNWR. It is of note that PWC are currently prohibited from operating within the FKNWR in the Lower Keys through the management Plan with the State of Florida (AKA Backcountry Management Plan) . This prohibition should be maintained during the current Zoning and Regulatory Review Process.

In order to provide for a clear, easily enforceable boundary for PWC operation in the Lower Keys, the Personal Watercraft Prohibited Area should be extended to include all waters north of US 1 throughout the Lower Florida Keys, effectively from Bahia Honda Channel west along US 1. See attached figure.

Using US 1 as a delineator for the Personal Watercraft Prohibited Area will create a tangible boundary that is easily understood by PWC operations as well as law enforcement. The current system following section lines that form the FKNWR boundary results in a poor understanding of the limits of the prohibition by both PWC users and law enforcement.

I believe a lot of PWC operators are law abiding, responsible boaters, but the regulations and especially the definition of boundaries in the field are ambiguous. How does someone who rents a house in the Lower keys know where the boundaries of the Great White Heron Refuge are located? There are no signs and no indication of refuge boundaries. Establishing US 1 as a fixed boundary would allow PWC operators to understand, and thus follow the regulations.

**Summary of Recommendations:**

The following are key points detailed in this letter that should be carefully evaluated during the Zoning and Regulatory Review Process:

- Maintain and improve the existing prohibition Personal Water Craft (PWC) in the Lower Keys backcountry through an updated and expanded Personal Watercraft Prohibited Area that includes the waters north of US 1 throughout the Lower Florida Keys, effectively from Big Spanish Channel/Bahia Honda Channel west.
- Establishing US 1 as a boundary for the PWC boundary will allow both PWC users and Law Enforcement to have a boundary that is un-ambiguous and easy to identify.

I appreciate the difficulty of the task of improving management strategies within the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary, and I hope these comments prove useful in your efforts to update the management plans and make the Keys a better place than it is already.

Sincerely,



Philip A. Frank

Proposed Personal Watercraft Prohibited Area  
Florida Keys Backcountry Areas  
Bahia Honda Key to Key West Region  
Prohibit PWC North of US 1 in Lower Keys

