

A RESOLUTION FROM THE FLORIDA KEYS NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARY ADVISORY COUNCIL (SAC) REQUESTING THAT THE SANCTUARY SUPERINTENDENT SUBMIT THIS RECOMMENDATION TO THE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE FOR INCORPORATION INTO THE FINAL GENERAL MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR EVERGLADES NATIONAL PARK (ENP)

April 16, 2013

WHEREAS, the function of the GMP is to guide protection, management, and use of ENP for at least the next 20 years while fulfilling the mission of the National Park Service which requires protecting and conserving biological integrity, natural and cultural resources, and

WHEREAS, the ecological health of the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary (FKNMS) is significantly linked to that of Florida Bay and Everglades National Park, and

WHEREAS, the Florida Bay ecosystem provides the foundation for a multibillion-dollar fishing and tourism industry in south Florida and is also essential to the quality of life in the Florida Keys, and

WHEREAS, a 2008 study conducted by the National Park Service documented increasing prop scar damage within the ENP portion of Florida Bay bottom which is federally designated as ‘submerged wilderness’ under the Wilderness Act which defines wilderness to be “an area where the earth and its community of life are untrammelled by man”, and

WHEREAS, shallow seagrass and mudflat habitat less than three feet deep is the preferred foraging areas for the majority of gamefish and waterbirds which are experiencing populations declines within ENP, and

WHEREAS, the combination of a rapidly growing population, increased fishing activity, habitat alterations, and changes in water quality have placed continued stress on the marine resources in the Keys and Florida Bay ecosystems, and

WHEREAS, boater use within ENP has increased 2.5 times since the last Management Plan was implemented in the late 1970’s, and

WHEREAS, ENP and its marine resources can be expected to be increasingly impacted by ever-growing recreational boat usage and fishing pressure;

NOW THEREFORE, THE FLORIDA KEYS NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARY ADVISORY COUNCIL RESOLVES AND RECOMMENDS:

THE ‘PREFERRED’ ALTERNATIVE IDENTIFIED BY PARK STAFF BE SELECTED FOR IMPLEMENTATION AS THE FINAL GENERAL MANAGEMENT PLAN, with the following caveats:

- 1) ENP planning staff should investigate in greater detail stakeholder comments on the scope of the pole and troll zoned areas delineated in the preferred alternative within Florida Bay. This should include potential deepwater access channels into or through the zones and potential use of idle speed zones in channels deeper than three feet (36”) of water adjacent to or through the zones
- 2) The final GMP should include language that allows for adaptive management of the zoning
- 3) Emphasize integration of a boater education permit program into the Final GMP
- 4) Emphasize the establishment of an ENP Advisory Committee which could assist with implementation phasing of the GMP.

The council is an advisory body to the sanctuary superintendent. The opinions and findings of this publication do not necessarily reflect the position of the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the Florida Department of Environmental Protection, or the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission.