

Resolution of the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary Advisory Council Advancing the Coral Reef Ecosystem Restoration Working Group Recommendations to NOAA for Analysis through a Draft Environmental Impact Statement

Adopted: June 17, 2014

1. Whereas, The Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary harbors a tropical marine ecosystem unique in the continental United States, including the world's third largest barrier coral reef, and
2. Whereas, this State and National environmental treasure experiences intensive usage by local residents and an estimated three million annual visitors to the region including recreational divers, recreational fishers, commercial fishers and boaters and it is subject to water pollution, and climate change impacts originating within and beyond the Sanctuary, and
3. Whereas, visitation and environmental usage are increasing with each passing year, and
4. Whereas, the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary Condition Report (2011) noted stable or declining trends in the abundance and distribution of habitat types, fair to poor status of the condition of habitats, and fair to poor status of human influence on habitat quality in the Florida Keys, and
5. Whereas, the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary Condition Report (2011) noted declining trends in the condition of living marine resources in the Sanctuary including fair to poor status of biodiversity, fair status of non-indigenous species, poor status of key species, and fair to poor status of the levels of human activities that might impact the quality of such resources, and
6. Whereas, the boundaries, zoning, and regulations of the FKNMS are currently under review and it is expected that this review will result in changes that will guide the future of the FKNMS to adapt to and to withstand the environmental impacts associated with increased usage that are inevitable and currently underway, and
7. Whereas, as part of this review, the Sanctuary Advisory Council created a Coral Reef Ecosystem Restoration Working Group charged with the following objectives:
 - Identify specific areas and zones for active restoration of coral reef ecosystem.
 - Identify regulatory impediments and appropriate permitting conditions for active restoration of coral reef ecosystem species.
 - Identify adaptive management measures and criteria for opening area closed for restoration purposes (i.e. performance standards for sunset).

Therefore, the Sanctuary Advisory Council of the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary resolves as follows:

1. We acknowledge the commitment and contribution of Advisory Council and community members who served on the Coral Reef Ecosystem Restoration Working Group.
2. We request that the Coral Reef Ecosystem Restoration Working Group Recommendations are forwarded to the Sanctuary Superintendent for consideration and analysis as part of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement.
3. We request the following also be considered as part of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement:
 - Consider a range of protections necessary for coral nursery sites.

The council is an advisory body to the sanctuary superintendent. The opinions and finding 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.