



# Shallow Water Wildlife & Habitat Protection Working Group: Recommendations to FKNMS SAC



Bruce Popham, Sanctuary Advisory Council – Boating Industry  
Working Group Member  
Steve Werndli, FKNMS Enforcement & Emergency Response  
Coordinator

June 17, 2014

# Working Group Membership



## Sanctuary Advisory Council Members

- Jack Curlett, Working Group Chair, SAC Recreational Fishing
- Justin Bruland, SAC Commercial Fishing
- Bruce Frerer, SAC Recreational Fishing
- Pete Frezza, SAC South Florida Ecosystem Restoration
- Richard Grathwohl, SAC Fishing Charter Flats Guide
- David Makepeace, SAC Citizen at Large – Upper Keys
- Bruce Popham, SAC Boating Industry
- Jessica Pulfer, SAC Conservation and Environment

# Working Group Membership



## Community / Public Members

- Aaron Adams, Bonefish and Tarpon Trust
- Carla Bellenger, Key West Eco Tours, Inc.
- Mike Bresette, InWater Research Group, Inc.
- Tad Burke, Florida Keys Fishing Guide Association
- Charlie Causey, Florida Keys Environmental Fund
- John Coffin, Coffin Marine Services Inc.
- Roy Herndon, Marine Life Collectors
- Meaghan Johnson, The Nature Conservancy
- Bill Keogh, Big Pine Kayak
- John O'Hearn, Lower Keys Guides Association

# Working Group Objectives



1. Evaluate existing Wildlife Management Areas for effectiveness.
2. Develop recommendations considering existing regulations and zoning to further protect shallow water habitats.
3. Address concentrated uses that diminish or destroy habitats.
4. Identify where high impact activities known to occur should be allowed.
5. Identify seagrass and shallow water habitat areas for exclusion to allow for research control areas.
6. Evaluate mangrove habitat protection for bird nesting.
7. Reduce damage to natural resources from improper vessel salvage methods.

# Seven Working Group meetings over 6 months



**January 30:** Clarified Role and Authority of Working Group.

**February 20:** Identified habitats and resources at risk and impacts and uses that affect those resources.

**March 12:** Identified criteria to use for developing options and recommendations.

**April 2:** Identified data layers needed to facilitate development of habitat protection recommendations.

**April 30:** Assessed Wildlife Management Areas and associated access restrictions. Identified potential modifications, new or status quo recommendations.

**May 21:** Developed a recommendation on management options for dealing with natural resource impacts from improper vessel salvage methods.

**June 11:** Developed site specific recommendations on management options for existing Wildlife Management Areas, new areas and refined regulations.

# Working Group Objectives



1. Evaluate existing Wildlife Management Areas for effectiveness.
2. Develop recommendations considering existing regulations and zoning to further protect shallow water habitats.
3. Address concentrated uses that diminish or destroy habitats.
4. Identify where high impact activities known to occur should be allowed.
5. Identify seagrass and shallow water habitat areas for exclusion to allow for research control areas.
6. Evaluate mangrove habitat protection for bird nesting.
7. Reduce damage to natural resources from improper vessel salvage methods.





# Shallow Water Habitat and Resources

The following **Resources of Concern** were identified for Shallow Water, Wildlife and Habitat Protection:

- **Habitat:** Coral (Patch reefs, Reef Margin and Fore Reefs), Seagrass, Hardbottom, Beaches and Coastal Mangrove
- **Resources:** Marine Mammals, Reptiles, Birds, Fishes and Threatened and Endangered Species



# Activities and Uses that Impact Shallow Water Habitat and Resources



Determined current or potential impacts to those resources:

- **Existing:** i.e. Research, Eco tours, diving, snorkeling, boating, fishing.....
- **Emerging/New:** Kite boarding, thrill rides, zodiac tour boats.....
- **Concentrated:** Diving, party zones, jet ski tours, boat races.....
- **High Impact:** Dredging, Marine Salvage, derelict vessels....

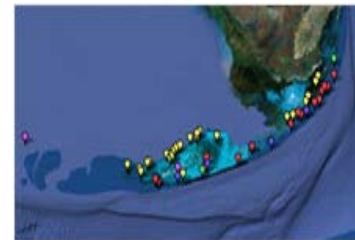




# Considerations for Zoning



- Consider impacts to existing users.
- Manage and enforce zones by the types of access and access restrictions compatible with the goals of natural resource protection.
- Create consistent and fair access restrictions.
- Identify and designate zones closed for research purposes and associated reference sites.
- Consider a balance of areas restricted or closed for certain high use/ high impact activities.
- Encourage the National Wildlife Refuge to take a proactive approach in managing human activity that could negatively impact near-shore and shallow water resources of concern.



# Incorporate Adaptive Management Mechanisms



- Allow for effective and adequate resource protection:
  - ✓ Temporal zoning, buffer zones, specific buoys for zone restrictions that can move for specific resource protection goals
- Proactive in addressing shifting and new high use and high impact activities:
  - ✓ Party zones, new islands/ sandbars, species



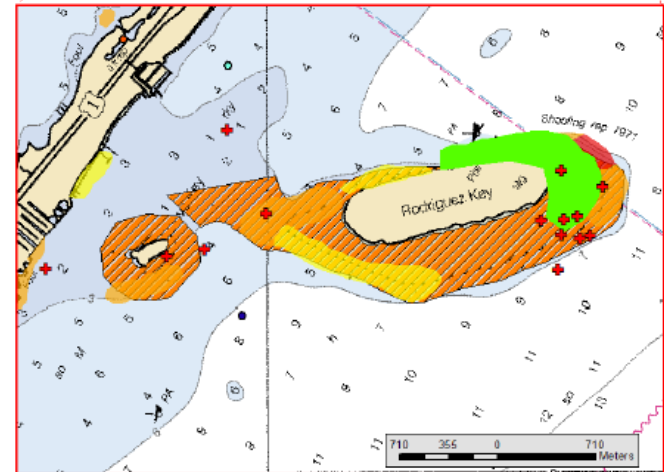
# Zoning for Shallow Water Resource Protection



- Reviewed **27 existing** Wildlife Management Areas for modifications to access restrictions.
- Reviewed **25 new** proposed zones for some type of increased protection for shallow water resources.

## Recommendation:

- Remove 2 existing zones
- Status Quo for 7 existing zones
- Modify 19 existing zones
- Proposed 24 new zones



# Recommendations Overview: Zoning for Shallow Water Resource Protection



- Establish additional no motor, idle only and closed zones.
- Make larger, contiguous zones where appropriate.
- Use buffer zones- both temporal and permanent for wildlife protection.
- Identify zones that include and protect a range of resources.
- Ensure adequate marking of zones.
- Mooring buoy usage- no anchoring where mooring buoys are provided.
- Consider better channel marking for established travel lanes where seagrass damage is prevalent.



# Working Group Objectives



1. Evaluate existing Wildlife Management Areas for effectiveness.
2. Develop recommendations considering existing regulations and zoning to further protect shallow water habitats.
3. Address concentrated uses that diminish or destroy habitats.
4. Identify where high impact activities known to occur should be allowed.
5. Identify seagrass and shallow water habitat areas for exclusion to allow for research control areas.
6. Evaluate mangrove habitat protection for bird nesting.
7. Reduce damage to natural resources from improper vessel salvage methods.

# Objective 7:

## Reduce damage to natural resources from improper vessel salvage methods.



Implement a towing and salvage permit program in the FKNMS:

- Use established and successful programs from Biscayne National Park as a guide.
- Establish a SAC Towing and Salvage Work Group to ensure dialog and coordination with the towing community.
- Include Standard Operating Procedures (use C-Port, USCG, BNP for guidance).
- Promote innovation of techniques.
- Allow for adaptive management.



# Working Group Resources



Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary Marine Zoning and Regulatory Review: [floridakeys.noaa.gov](http://floridakeys.noaa.gov)



Marine Zoning & Regulatory Review

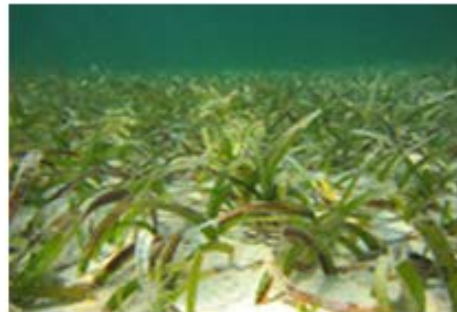
Maps, Data, and GIS Resources:  
[http://ocean.floridamarine.org/fknms\\_zone\\_review](http://ocean.floridamarine.org/fknms_zone_review)



Working Group Recommendations Document:  
<http://floridakeys.noaa.gov/Recommendations-for-SAC.pdf>



**Coral Reef Ecosystem Restoration Working Group**  
Coral health in the sanctuary has declined over the past several



**Shallow Water Wildlife and Habitat Protection Working Group**  
Hardbottom communities and



**Ecosystem Protection: Ecological Reserves, Preservation Areas and Wildlife Protection Working Group**