

**Resolution of the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary Advisory Council Addressing Artificial Habitats for Analysis in a Draft Environmental Impact Statement**

*Motion passed October 21, 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 to declining trends in water quality related to eutrophication, risk to human health, and the impact of multiple stressors, and fair but increasing trends in human activities that may impact water quality.
5. 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
6. 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
7. Whereas, changing environmental conditions and new activities occurring in the sanctuary that were not anticipated when the original rules were written necessitate an update to FKNMS regulations and permitting procedures, and
8. Whereas, certain resource management issues including climate change, resilience, weather, disease, invasive species, or specific impacts from human activity may require more regulatory flexibility that is not currently possible through the existing framework, and
9. 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
10. Whereas, as part of this review, the Sanctuary Advisory Council created a Regulatory and Zoning Alternatives Work-Plan and identified Artificial Habitats as a priority issue to address through this review, and
11. Whereas, the Ecosystem Protection: Ecological Reserves / Preservation Areas and Wildlife Protection Working Group recommended that the Advisory Council establish a sub-committee to

review the drawbacks and benefits of the use of artificial reefs and identified a suite of issues that should be considered when evaluating the use of artificial reefs, and

12. Whereas, the Sanctuary Advisory Council has discussed and accepted recommendations related to artificial habitats made by the Ecosystem Protection: Ecological Reserves / Preservation Areas and Wildlife Protection Working Group at the August 19, 2014 Council meeting.

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

1. We request that the following actions and recommendations outlined for Artificial Habitats be forwarded to the Sanctuary Superintendent for consideration and analysis as part of the range of alternatives in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement:

AH-1 Clarify the definition of artificial habitat/reef.

AH-2 Create a working group to serve as a liaison between the Sanctuary Advisory Council and the research community to identify targeted research needs and funding mechanisms to appropriately assess the benefits and impacts of artificial reefs.

AH-3 Evaluate alternatives including establishing control site(s) on existing artificial reefs to facilitate research on the four investigations identified in the 2007 Management Plan.

*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.*