

Resolution of the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary Advisory Council Addressing Water Quality 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 Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary Protection Act (Public Law 101-605) established a comprehensive Water Quality Protection Program, administered by U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the State of Florida, to identify and implement priority corrective actions to address water quality issues in the sanctuary, and
10. 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

11. Whereas, as part of this review, the Sanctuary Advisory Council created a Regulatory and Zoning Alternatives Work-Plan and identified Water Quality as a priority issue to address through this review, and
12. Whereas, the Sanctuary Advisory Council has discussed issues related to water quality at their February 19, 2013 and August 20, 2013 Council meetings, and
13. Whereas, water quality issues continue to be raised by the public including the existing exemption for discharges of water generated by routine vessel operations including graywater and nutrients in graywater could negatively impact water quality in the same manner as discharges of treated sewage.

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

1. We request that the following recommendation for Water Quality be forwarded to the Sanctuary Superintendent for consideration and analysis as part of the range of alternatives in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement:
 - WQ-1 Evaluate the environmental and economic impact/benefit of implementing a regulation of gray-water discharges from cruise ships similar to other National Marine Sanctuaries.

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.