

FLORIDA KEYS NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARY ADVISORY COUNCIL

Hyatt Place
1996 Overseas Highway
Marathon, FL 33050
Tuesday, February 16, 2016

MEETING SUMMARY

The following serves as a summary of the February 16, 2016 FKNMS Advisory Council Meeting. This summary does not constitute official minutes of the meeting. Draft meeting minutes will be distributed in advance of the April 19, 2016 Advisory Council Meeting for approval by the council.

National Wildlife Refuge Complex Management

Dan Clark, Manager for the National Wildlife Refuge Complex, addressed the Advisory Council sharing his background, goals and vision for future management of the four national wildlife refuges in the Florida Keys National Wildlife Refuge Complex. He emphasized the importance of partnership and working with the community.

Staff from each of the individual refuges presented information on key species and habitat management priorities and activities.

Kate Watts, Senior Wildlife Biologist, provided general background for the entire complex including each individual units mission and priorities, background on the Wilderness Act and how that applies in the Key West and Great White Heron Refuges, responsibilities and authorities under the Endangered Species Act, and partnership with the State of Florida and Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary. She then provided information about four bird species of special concern including White-Crowned Pigeon, Reddish Egret, Magnificent Frigate Bird, and Great White Heron.

Adam Emerick, Wildlife Biologist, presented information on sea turtle presence in the National Wildlife Refuge including their habitat requirements for nesting and foraging, potential impacts to sea turtles and their habitat from both man-made and natural events, and management activities underway. He then provided background on the endangered Lower Keys Marsh Rabbit, including habitat requirements, threats and management actions.

Erica Henry, a North Carolina State Ph.D. candidate, presented her data on two endangered butterfly species. Miami Blue and Bartram's Scrub Hairstreak utilize area in the Lower Keys Refuges. The Miami Blue butterflies last remaining population is present in the Marquesas islands. Both species are affected by habitat degradation, which is the impetus for an experimental habitat restoration project in the Key Deer National Wildlife Refuge.

Jeremy Dixon, Refuge Manager Crocodile Lake National Wildlife Refuge, presented information on the Refuge and two key species, the threatened American Crocodile and endangered Key Largo Woodrat.

Jared Brierley, Refuge Law Enforcement Officer, provided information on National Wildlife Refuge law enforcement authorities, challenges, and most common infractions, which include harassing Key Deer, unrestrained pets, entering closed areas, vehicles on Refuge lands, illegal dumping, homeless camps, human caused wildfires, and vandalism.

Florida Keys Spiny Lobster Ecology and Management Research

Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission staff from the Fish and Wildlife Research Institute presented on their suite of lobster research activities and a recent lobster fishing education and compliance project. General research conducted includes habitat conservation, biology and ecology, marine protected area use by lobster, stock assessments, and marine debris research. A recent and targeted project focused on lobster fishermen knowledge of and compliance with three marine zone types that do not allow lobster fishing or trap gear: Sanctuary Preservation Area, Pennekamp Coral Formation Protection Areas, and Fishery Management Plan Areas Closed to Lobster Trap Gear.

FKNMS Marine Zoning and Regulatory Review – Update and Next Steps

Beth Dieveney, Deputy Superintendent for Science and Policy, provided an update on the regulatory review process and development of a Draft Environmental Impact Statement. NOAA and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is currently developing a range of regulatory and zoning alternatives based on the comments provided through the public scoping, community working group, and advisory council review process. These alternatives are being analyzed for potential economic and environmental benefit and impact. The Draft Environmental Impact Statement is estimated for release for public review and comment in 2016.

Public Comment

No general public comment was made by three individuals:

- Jan Edelstein, Citizen
- Bill Wickers, Key West Charter Boat Association
- Richie Gomez, Key West Charter Boat Association