

Boater Education in the FKNMS

August 16, 2016

FKNMS

Sanctuary Advisory Council Meeting



FLORIDA KEYS NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARY

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Vessel/Boating Licensing and Education



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Summary

Direct impacts from vessels present a threat to the protection and health of Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary resources. More than 300 vessel groundings (vessels 50 feet or less; *FKNMS unpub. data*) are reported annually within the sanctuary, causing physical damage to resources such as seagrass, hard-bottom, and coral reef habitats. In addition, there are a variety of direct impacts from smaller commercial and recreational vessels that may not result in actual groundings but still impact sanctuary resources. The Sanctuary Advisory Council heard a presentation on Coast Guard Auxiliary Boater Education on February 19, 2013 and discussed boater education at the August 20, 2013 meeting. No motion was developed, but the advisory council determined that the next steps would be as follows:

"The Advisory Council will form a subcommittee to engage with Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission Boating Advisory Council to:

- Host a joint meeting / workshop, and
- Present Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary boating and boating education issues to the Boating Advisory Council."

Relevant Advisory Council Meetings

February 19, 2013:

[Agenda](#) (pdf, 21 kb)

[Minutes](#) (pdf, 89 kb)

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Presentations on Boater Education



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August 20, 2013: [Boater Education](#) (834 kb)

Note: Vessel/Boating Licensing and Education is also discussed in Section 2.5 on page 37-8 of the [Sanctuary Advisory Council Regulatory and Zoning Alternatives Development Work-Plan Actions for Review and Recommendation](#) (pdf, 4,464 kb).

Priority Workplan Items

1. Shallow Water Wildlife and Habitat Protection
2. Coral Reef Ecosystem Restoration
3. Ecosystem Protection: Ecological Reserves, Preservation Areas and Wildlife Protection
4. Artificial Habitats
5. Permit Procedures and Adaptive Management
6. Study Areas and Boundary Modifications
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February 19, 2013 SAC meeting

1:30 Boater Education Programs: Phil Goodman, USCG Auxiliary and Sanctuary Advisory Council (Discussion and potential action)

Boater Education/Licensing

- Jessica Pulfer: Consider ways to get more people to take the current boating course (State). Accidents are often from individuals who don't have safety training.
- Rob Mitchell: Consider providing rental companies with more information and training for employees. (Note: It was explained by FWC that they have very strict rules regarding liveries and rental vessels and a training course is mandatory for boat rental operations.)
- Don Kincaid: According to Florida Trends magazine Monroe County leads nation in boating accidents, but only 8-10% accidents in Monroe County are by residents.
- George Garrett: Channel marking plan is both a navigation and resource protection plan.
- Chairperson Nedimyer: Most of the current boater courses are geared toward safety and navigation and not necessarily protecting resources. Many places are without channel markers and people need to know what they are doing to avoid damaging resources.
- Jessica Pulfer: If it's not feasible to have a Coast Guard course just for the sanctuary then maybe a specialty course could be an avenue for getting specific information on navigating in the Keys. The course could have incentives and tie back to sanctuary. (Sanctuary information is taught as part of the auxiliary boating and safety course.)
- Jerry Lorenz: Suggests considering an online course that mirrors the Eco-mariner course, especially to address non-residents.
- Julio Jimenez (audience member, FDEP Coral Program). Suggested the possibility of tying passing the course with lowered insurance rates for boaters (some companies have this already).
- Chairperson Nedimyer: Mandatory boating license should be necessary in Keys, but may not be feasible.
- Ben Daughtry: Due to budgetary constraints, an online course that mirrors the Eco-mariner course could be good. It is apparent that a large portion of boaters are using their own boats or bringing their boats down and they need to be reached regarding sanctuary waters. Ben offered to provide a motion to promote a mandatory course for the sanctuary. (No formal motion was made. The sanctuary superintendent can also take direction/advise from the council.)

Discussion – Boater Education (continued)

The following comments were made after the boating presentation regarding boater education.

- David Hawtof: State should have a boating license for everyone to help solve this problem.
- Rob Mitchell: He would like to see a state license, too. Instead, though, maybe boaters in the sanctuary could be required to have safety card through Coast Guard, Blue Rider, FWC, etc.
- David Makepeace: Keys boater license is unrealistic. Incentive programs are fine, though. This is a unique area and it might be best to ask state and others to partner with the sanctuary on evaluating possible solutions.

Chairperson Nedimyer asked the Sanctuary staff to work with agencies on a boater education and the potential for mandatory programs including licensing.

Superintendent Morton recognized that a mandatory boating license may not be feasible. The Sanctuary will work with the State and will provide a review and options for SAC consideration.

August 20, 2013 SAC meeting

V. MARINE ZONING AND REGULATORY REVIEW: FLORIDA BOATER EDUCATION PROGRAMS

Mr. Todd Hitchins, FKNMS Team O.C.E.A.N Coordinator, gave a presentation on boater education program in the sanctuary. To view this presentation, visit <http://floridakeys.noaa.gov/sac/othermaterials/130820boatereducation.pdf>.

Mr. Hitchins noted that there has been interest in the topic of boater education and how education can help mitigate impacts to the resources. Many of the existing boater education classes emphasize boating safety and seamanship.

Potential next steps include engaging with the FWC Boating Advisory Council, which will be meeting in Key West in May 2014. Suggestions included presenting Keys boating issues to the Boating Advisory Council and/or hosting a meeting/workshop.

Discussion (council members)

A suggestion was made for FWC to consider developing a partnership with local or regional retailers to provide card holders with a discount of sorts as an incentive to get more people to take the course. More marketing on the card to make people aware of its existence was also suggested.

Superintendent Morton explained that he presented in front of the FWC Boating Advisory Council at their request in April 2013. He reviewed the boater education issues that arise in the sanctuary and the council addresses similar issues and was very interested the work of the sanctuary advisory council. The Boating Advisory Council is planning to meet here in Key West and a subcommittee of the advisory council could be formed to work with them and generate specific topics that should be addressed. Recommendations from Shallow Water Wildlife and Habitat Protection Working Group that relate to groundings could be forwarded to this council. This is the right forum for addressing in county and out of county boaters. Sanctuary advisory council members supported this idea of forming a subcommittee to meet with the FWC Boating Advisory Council.



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AGENDA

BOATING ADVISORY COUNCIL MEETING **April 7, 2016** Tallahassee, Florida

1:00

New Business / Information Items

- FWC Proposed Legislative Items
 - Captain's License - *Captain Gary Klein*
 - BUI Refusals - *Captain Tom Shipp*
 - Temporary Certificate Program - *Captain Tom Shipp*
- US Coast Guard Request for Authority to Mandate Boater Education – *Major Richard Moore*
- US Coast Guard /Dept of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles - Changes to Certificate of Number - *Captain Tom Shipp*
- Assessment of Boating Safety Testimonial Videos - *Brian Rehwinkel*

3:45

Council Roundtable

4:00

Public Comment

4:30

Adjourn

What we know from FKNMS staff:

- Boater education is more of a *programmatic* activity, rather than *regulatory*
- However, this type of programmatic activity will be considered for the EIS

The Sanctuary Advisory Council never made specific recommendations to the FKNMS staff to include boater education in the DEIS

Actions after Discussion?

- **None**
- **Administrative** – No resolution – on the record though that the SAC supports the concept of a mandatory boater education program and that staff include such a program as part of the DEIS alternatives
- **Formal** – A resolution noting the above
 - If so, suggested to table today and bring a resolution to the October meeting