

**A RESOLUTION FROM THE FLORIDA KEYS NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARY  
ADVISORY COUNCIL (SAC) RECOMMENDING THE INCORPORATION AND USE OF  
THE UPDATED FKNMS BOATING IMPACT MAPS (2017) PRODUCED BY CURTIS KRUER  
ON BEHALF OF MONROE COUNTY INTO THE DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT  
STATEMENT ON SANCTUARY AND BACKCOUNTRY MANAGEMENT PLAN  
REGULATIONS**

Adopted April 18, 2017

**WHEREAS**, The Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary (FKNMS) harbors a tropical marine ecosystem unique in the continental United States, including the world's third largest barrier coral reef, and

**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

**WHEREAS**, the combination of a rapidly growing population, increased boating activity, increased recreational activity, habitat alterations, and changes in water quality are placing continued stress on the marine resources of the Keys ecosystems, and

**WHEREAS**, the 2011 FKNMS Condition Report noted increasing boat groundings, stable or declining trends in the abundance and distribution of habitat types, fair to poor status of the condition of habitats, fair to poor status of biodiversity, and fair to poor status of human influence on habitat quality in the Florida Keys, and

**WHEREAS**, the 2011 FKNMS Condition Report shows that human actions, such as vessel impacts, increasingly continue to negatively affect and degrade the habitat and living resources of the Sanctuary, but may be improved with long-term management efforts, regulatory compliance, and community involvement, and

**WHEREAS**, shallow seagrass and mudflat habitat less than three feet deep is the preferred foraging areas for the majority of gamefish and waterbirds within the FKNMS, and

**WHEREAS**, boats registered in Monroe County has increased 40% since the last shallow water boating impact and mapping assessment was conducted in the mid-1990s, and

**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

**WHEREAS**, the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary (FKNMS) and Florida Keys National Wildlife Refuges (FKNWRs) protect the unique marine waters and other natural resources of the Florida Keys which are a national treasure of international significance, and

**WHEREAS**, the FKNWRs, which co-manages 20 of the FKNMS's 27 Wildlife Management Areas, is playing a key role in the review while simultaneously updating its own Backcountry Management Plan, and

**WHEREAS**, a primary goal of the SAC during the marine zoning and regulatory review is to improve the diversity of natural biological communities and to protect and where appropriate restore and enhance natural habitats, populations and ecological processes, and

**WHEREAS**, the SAC's Shallow Water Wildlife and Habitat Protection Working Group developed recommendations toward the use of vessel restrictions on access, anchoring, speed, and channel marking in order to protect critical habitats, and

**NOW THEREFORE, THE FKNMS SAC RESOLVES AND RECOMMENDS, to the FKNMS Superintendent and the FKNWRs Manager that the following be considered to be integrated into the Draft Environmental Impact Statement and Backcountry Management Plan update proposal as part of the marine zoning and regulatory review process;**

- 1) We recommend that the Kruer 2017 FKNMS boating impact mapping dataset be considered as part of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement and used to guide implementation of measures to protect and restore shallow water habitats in the Keys through boater's education, increased enforcement, improved channel marking and marine zoning.
- 2) We request that this new mapping update be forwarded to the Sanctuary Superintendent and the FKNWRs Manager for consideration and analysis as part of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement.
- 3) We also request that the updated mapping be incorporated into and posted on the FKNMS website at "Sanctuary Science", and made publically available at other appropriate locations.

*The council is an advisory body to the sanctuary superintendent. The opinions and findings 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.*