

**FLORIDA KEYS NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARY ADVISORY COUNCIL**  
**Hyatt Place 1996 Overseas Highway Marathon, FL 33050**  
**Tuesday, April 16, 2019**  
**MEETING SUMMARY**

The following serves as a summary of the April 16, 2019 FKNMS Advisory Council Meeting. This summary does not constitute official minutes of the meeting. Draft meeting minutes will be distributed in advance of the June 18, 2019 Advisory Council Meeting for approval by the council.

**Celebrating Billy Causey**

In honor of Billy Causey's retirement from federal service the advisory council passed a resolution to express its deep gratitude for his service to the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary, its natural resources and resource-dependent stakeholders, and commends him for his dedication to the protection and sustainable use of our precious ocean places here in the Florida Keys and around the world.

**Marine Protected Area Design and Considerations in a Changing Climate**

Mark Carr, natural resources representative on the MPA Federal Advisory Council, presented information related to MPA goals and design including the ecological considerations when designing MPAs, and how MPAs may provide ecological resilience to environmental changes including climate change. Additional background information can be found in two recent white papers created by the MPA Advisory Council: [Harnessing Ecological Spatial Connectivity for Effective Marine Protected Area Networks and Resilient Marine Ecosystems](#) (Jan 2017) and [How MPAs Enhance the Resilience of Coastal Marine Ecosystems and their Services: A Supplemental Report by the Marine Protected Areas Federal Advisory Committee](#) (November 2018). He related these concepts to the Florida Keys environment and sanctuary marine zones.

**Marine Zoning and Regulatory Review: Highlights/Summary of Sanctuary Advisory Council Marine Zone Recommendations for Agency Analysis**

Beth Dieveney provided a summary of the Advisory Council goals, objectives and recommendations specific to the marine zoning scheme in the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary. She highlighted aspects of the advisory recommendations related to protecting additional habitat types, setting areas aside as research and restoration areas, protecting large and interconnected habitats that support a range of wildlife throughout their life cycle, and protecting sites known to support fish spawning aggregations. She noted that FKNMS research partners from Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commissions Fish and Wildlife Research Institute would present research and data specific to these topics.

Staff from the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission's Fish and Wildlife Research Center presented research they have conducted that is relevant to the recommendations specific to updating the sanctuary marine zones.

**Shallow Water Habitats and their Ecological Importance**

John Hunt presented information about oceanside beaches, sand habitat, beach-side and shallow water seagrass beds, hard bottom habitats and their importance to various juvenile fish and invertebrate species. Through soundscape data (underwater recordings of the environment) he highlighted the role healthy sponge habitat areas play in supporting a diverse assemblage of

marine life including serving as the trigger for lobster settlement. He shared work that FWC with many other partners are conducting to facilitate sponge habitat restoration.

### **Marine Zone Case Study: Western Sambo Ecological Reserve**

Tom Matthews and Alejandro Acosta shared information about the Western Sambo's Ecological Reserve and the impact the reserve has had on lobster and fish species. Tom shared information from three studies related to lobster size, density, and sex ratios inside and outside the marine zone, lobster age inside and outside the marine zone, and lobster movement within and out of the marine zone. Data from these studies show that the Western Sambo Ecological Reserve does have a positive effect on lobster size, density and sex ratios and that female lobsters are using deep reef habitat areas just outside the marine zone for releasing eggs. Alejandro shared highlights from research designed to understand the effect the marine zone has on fish species. He noted that the level of protection provided for fish by the Western Sambo Ecological Reserve was directly related to the marine zone size, configuration, habitat, and the fish life history.

### **Understanding Fish Aggregation Sites**

Danielle Morley presented fish spawning aggregation research in the Florida Keys highlighting work conducted in the Dry Tortugas and Western Dry Rocks. She showed results from tagged fish that travel between the Dry Tortugas National Park Research Natural Area and Riley's Hump in the FKNMS Tortugas South Ecological Reserve at full moons during known spawning months. Other data show the presence of grouper and Cubera snapper in high numbers indicating that Riley's Hump likely supports multifish spawning aggregations. She presented data from tagged grouper at Western Dry Rocks that coupled with other observations indicated that Western Dry Rock is likely a multifish spawning aggregation site.

### **Restoration Blueprint Outreach Tools and Products**

Gena Parsons showcased some of the outreach products that FKNMS and Office of National Marine Sanctuaries staff developed to support advisory council outreach to their colleagues and constituents in advance of the public release of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement. She emphasized the importance engaging the public in advance of the release of the DEIS (aka Restoration Blueprint) to facilitate a high level of public engagement once the document is available for public comment. These products are available at [floridakeys.noaa.gov/blueprint](http://floridakeys.noaa.gov/blueprint).

### **Boater Education in the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary**

Kate Wiltz from Indiana University's Eppley Institute for Parks and Public Lands presented the recently launched Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary Boater Education Course. The advisory council has discussed the need for improved boater education on several occasions and requested that the sanctuary consider boater education options in the updated management plan. The FKNMS Boater Education course is an on-line voluntary course that aims to highlight

### **Public Comment**

There were 5 number of public commenters at this meeting:

- Bill Kelly, Florida Keys Commercial Fisherman's Association
- Janice Hartz, private citizen
- Bill Wickers, Key West Charter Boat Association
- Jeff Bowman, Namaste ECO Charter
- Deborah James, Governors State University