

**Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary
Advisory Council Buoy Working Group - Follow Up Workshop**

May 4, 2023 6:00-8:00pm

Location: Virtual

Attendance:

- **Working Group Members & SAC Members:** Will Benson, Lisa Mongelia, George Garrett, Daniel Padron, Lucja Rice, Ken Reda, Karen Angle, Errin Muller, Caitlin Lustic
- **FKNMS/NOAA Staff:** Nina Garfield, Liz Trueblood, Sarah Fangman

Meeting Summary:

The group revisited the priorities and strategies brainstormed at the April 17 meeting, and discussed how to align these with the Restoration Blueprint. The group discussed how to select priorities, whether by location or by zone type, and created some priorities listed below. The group intends to seek input from the community and the advisory council in June.

Many of the strategies discussed will require additional consideration of logistics, capacity and resources, as well as coordination with other management and regulatory partners.

Draft priorities discussed by the working group are listed here in no particular order:

- **Location Specific Topics:**
 - Maintaining the current mooring buoy system - a number of recommendations were made regarding how operational efficiencies could be enhanced or supported. Suggestions included:
 - An “adopt a wreck/adopt a buoy/adopt a region” approach where dive shops or other associations can assist with managing buoys with proper training
 - Adaptations of current system to relieve stress on lines (e.g. pickup line design)
 - Provide an interface within the existing Marine Sanctuary Explorer app to report missing or damaged buoys;
 - Lower Keys Backcountry
 - Consider using channel markers that are similar to Everglades NP markers. These promote boater safety and protect seagrass.
 - Test the benefit of information buoys in WMAs, particularly at Snipe Key to explore the impact of informational buoys by leaving other areas unmarked
 - Subsurface buoys in restoration areas
 - Aims to ensure access for restoration practitioners and reduce user conflicts.

- **Education:**
 - GPS and mapping:
 - Work with NOAA chart office and software companies to get final rule sanctuary boundaries and regulations on nautical charts and in apps updated regularly.
 - Make sure communication and charted information is clear. (e.g. address information that presents coral nurseries as “Fish Havens” which attracts fishers to sensitive areas).
 - FKNMS Outreach:
 - Explore how to integrate education on zone regulations and proper use of mooring buoys into boating rental and ownership mechanisms.
 - Consider QR codes on rental boats and buoys to link to the Marine Sanctuary Explorer app for information on how to tie up to a buoy
 - Community Engagement and Support:
 - Public Engagement: The group discussed how to use existing SAC meetings as an avenue to allow the community to participate in the buoy program and enable the Advisory Council to leverage local area expertise. SAC meetings are open to the public and a great way for members of the public to meet their council representatives and share perspectives.
 - Discussed an Adopt a Highway model to engage support from associations and businesses in maintaining buoys
 - Boater Safety: work toward getting buoy/zone information into the state boater safety curriculum

Next Steps:

- Identify concrete suggestions for the Marine Sanctuary Explorer app.
- Discuss priorities with sanctuary staff.
- Get clarity on what is possible regarding raising money, including grants, for the purchase, maintenance, and installation of buoys. Also clarify procedures and boundaries for advocating for these issues at state or federal level.
- Build out the communication strategy to engage community members in public input; Solicit public input.
- Present working group updates at the June 20 advisory council meeting, hear feedback and Q&A.
 - Seek input from SAC on regional priorities for buoy modifications. The BWG did not feel comfortable at this time moving forward with regional priorities.
- Host at least one more short meeting (or connect by e-mail) of the BWG to review the recommendations on buoy-related priorities before initiating public input.