

**Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary
Marine Zoning & Regulatory Review
Coral Reef Ecosystem Restoration
March 13, 2013**

Working Group Meeting Summary

Meeting Agenda

1. Update on progress of Shallow Water Wildlife Habitat Protection working group
 2. Presentation: Status of coral reef ecosystem restoration science, including criteria and monitoring considerations
 3. Discussion: Identify potential criteria to consider when identifying active restoration zones and when applying adaptive management for restoration zones
 4. Exercise: Using charts, identify potential areas for active restoration that are aligned with identified criteria
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1. Update on progress of the Coral Reef Ecosystem Restoration and the Ecosystem Protection: Ecological Reserves / Preservation Areas and Wildlife Protection working group
 - Coral Reef Ecosystem Restoration Working Group:
 - Developed a common understanding of key terms: coral reef ecosystem, active restoration, and adaptive management.
 - Identified species of concern for active coral reef ecosystem restoration.
 - Identified activities potentially incompatible with active restoration and discussed potential management solutions for these activities.
 - Discussed challenges and opportunities for regulating and permitting restoration.
 - Identified potential criteria to use when selecting optional sites for active coral reef ecosystem restoration.
 - Ecosystem Protection: Ecological Reserves / Preservation Areas and Wildlife Protection Working Group:
 - Begins meeting on Thursday, March 14.
 2. Discussion: Status of coral reef ecosystem restoration science, including criteria and monitoring considerations
Presentation: Coral Reef Ecosystem Restoration – M/V *Wellwood* Coral Restoration Case Study. The full presentation can be found here: <http://floridakeys.noaa.gov/review/coralrestoration.html>

Working Group Discussion:
 - Explored the potential for structural restoration activities and the use of artificial structures; identified how artificial structures have been used for restoration work
 - Recognized the potential impacts and damage from natural events including hurricanes and storms
 - Discussed potential costs of restoration and how to innovatively fund restoration activities.
 3. Discussion: Identify potential criteria to consider when identifying active restoration zones and when applying adaptive management for restoration zones.

The working group reviewed data and mapping tools to help identify coral reef ecosystem habitats and to facilitate discussion of criteria needed for such habitats, ecosystems and associated species.

- Biological, ecological, and physical factors were identified such as: depth, water quality, water flow, bottom type, biodiversity, connectivity, natural disturbances/events, habitat history and species life stages.
- Social and economic factors were identified such as: Human activity and high use areas, commercial trap fishing/debris issues, regulatory compliance issues, and site accessibility.
- Management tools for the above criteria were identified such as: Managing access to sites by activity type or timing of activity/access, and consider potential funding and access incentives.

Public Comment

Public comment was provided by one individual:

Chris Bergh, The Nature Conservancy and Sanctuary Advisory Council representative. Emphasized the need to identify sites that are accessible such that individuals can observe benefits and consider elements of connectivity, replication, and target site selection based on areas that are already set aside to prevent certain human impacts. He also proposed that the working group not create a new zone but use an existing zone type – Special Use Areas.

4. Exercise: Using charts, identify potential areas for active restoration that are aligned with criteria.

The working group divided into four groups and rotated among charts of 5 regions: Upper, Middle, and Lower Keys, Marquesas, and Dry Tortugas. Using the identified criteria, working group members then identified specific areas for potential coral reef ecosystem restoration and provided notation about data and information needs.

Working Group General Discussion:

- Identified a range of options, potential non-negotiable areas and preferred alternative zones.
- Areas considered included existing management areas, existing restoration or nursery areas, areas with known potential present visitor/commercial use, and areas with a known condition/need for restoration.
- Discussed the potential need for a phased zoning plan for temporal/temporary restricted access, opening zones for public engagement and education, and implementing restoration activities in zones based on restoration progress/success and funding availability.
- Discussed the value of identifying existing managed areas to minimize impacts to fisherman and dive operators.

Public Comment

Public comment was provided by one individual:

Chris Bergh, The Nature Conservancy and Sanctuary Advisory Council representative.

Consider making the restoration zone regulations align with the marker buoy such that the restoration areas could be more easily adjusted with simply moving the marker buoy. Consider how the potential listing of 7 species under the Endangered Species Act might impact the recommendations of this working group. Consider options to expedite the use of available corals on seawalls, power poles, bridge

pilings throughout the Keys; this group could advance efforts to permit harvesting corals off artificial surfaces for restoration purposes.

Follow-Up Actions

- Request for cost of restoration activities per area
- Request for Acroporids location maps used in identification of NMFS lobster trap closed zones
- Working group members to work with their constituents, and, based on their knowledge and use of the areas, identify a range of options, potential non-negotiable areas and preferred alternative zones.

Decision Points

- No decision items were before the working group at this meeting.