

**Resolution of the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary Advisory Council in support of
RESTORE Act and other funding for the proposal,
“Restoring Threatened Corals to Enhance Reef Functions, Fisheries Habitat and Tourism
Opportunities in the Florida Keys.”
July 9, 2013**

Whereas, the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary (FKNMS) was established in 1990 and represents the largest marine zoological park in the United States, and

Whereas, the legislation creating the FKNMS found that adjacent to the Florida Keys land mass are located spectacular, unique, and nationally significant marine environments, including seagrass meadows, mangrove islands, and extensive living coral reefs, and

Whereas, these natural resources are the marine equivalent of tropical rain forests in that they support high levels of biological diversity, are fragile and easily susceptible to damage from human activities, and possess high value to human beings if properly conserved, and

Whereas, More than 33,000 jobs in the Keys are supported by ocean recreation and tourism, accounting for 58% of the local economy and \$2.3 billion in annual sales, and

Whereas, ongoing degradation of coral reefs threatens to undermine the Florida Keys marine ecosystem and the economy which it supports, and

Whereas, the threat of pollution from the Deepwater Horizon oil spill impacting the marine and coastal environment of the Florida Keys was grave enough to drive some tourism and related business away from the region, and

Whereas, the RESTORE Act was passed to ensure that financial penalty funds associated with the Deepwater Horizon oil spill would be focused on restoration of the natural resources and economy of the Gulf of Mexico, and

Whereas, a RESTORE Act project proposal, “Restoring Threatened Corals to Enhance Reef Functions, Fisheries Habitat and Tourism Opportunities in the Florida Keys,” has been submitted to the Florida Department of Environmental Protection by The Nature Conservancy on behalf of the project partners who also include the Coral Restoration Foundation, Mote Marine Laboratory and the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, and

Whereas, if funded this coral restoration proposal would build upon more than a decade of successful coral reef restoration effort in the Florida Keys and lead to at least 14,000 corals per year for up to six years being restored to the reefs of the southern Gulf of Mexico, both enhancing the natural environment and increasing opportunities for nature tourism, now

Therefore, the FKNMS Advisory Council resolves to express strong support for the allocation of RESTORE Act funding for the proposal, “Restoring Threatened Corals to Enhance Reef Functions, Fisheries Habitat and Tourism Opportunities in the Florida Keys,” and requests that the FKNMS Superintendent send copies of this Resolution accompanied by a copy of the project fact sheet to State of Florida, NOAA and any other officials involved in the RESTORE project review and funding allocation process.

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.