

Resolution of the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary Advisory Council Advocating Continued and Strengthened Support for Law Enforcement within Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary

Motion passed April 15, 2014

1. Whereas, The Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary harbors a tropical marine ecosystem unique in the continental United States, including the world's third largest barrier coral reef, and
2. 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
3. Whereas, visitation and environmental usage are increasing with each passing year, and
4. Whereas, the need for ecological restoration, effective management, and adequate enforcement of Sanctuary regulations including marine zoning, water quality protection and others, is ever increasing as usage and environmental decline increases, and
5. 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
6. Whereas a 1997 FEIS study for the FKNMS management plan indicated the need for a total combined law enforcement presence in the FKNMS of 43 uniformed sanctuary officers, and
7. Whereas, in 2001 there were 17 law enforcement officers, which was the highest number ever reached for enforcement officers dedicated to sanctuary enforcement; at this time there are 6 officers, which is the lowest number since the establishment of FKNMS, and
8. Whereas there is an ever growing outcry from all user groups to have a more robust marine law enforcement presence on and around the 2,900 square nautical miles that comprise the FKNMS, and
9. Whereas, the funding, presence, and activity of the law enforcement agencies tasked with enforcement of the laws and regulations that protect the fragile environment and resources of the FKNMS need to be enhanced to adequately meet current and future needs.

Therefore, the Sanctuary Advisory Council of the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary resolves as follows:

1. We express continued strong support for the state and federal agencies providing marine law enforcement resources and strongly support further expansion of coordinated agency enforcement programs within FKNMS. The FKNMS SAC recommends that NOAA and

the Office of National Marine Sanctuaries (ONMS) continue to partner with other agencies to develop and implement effective management and enforcement techniques within FKNMS. The continued development of these partnerships and inter-agency coordination assists all involved in developing a proactive and effective enforcement capability to protect the natural and cultural marine resources of south Florida and the Florida Keys.

2. We encourage NOAA's OLE to include FKNMS enforcement priorities in the Joint Enforcement Agreement
3. We request that NOAA's OLE continue to support NOAA Special Agents in the Florida Keys, and that they consider adding uniformed law enforcement personnel to the Florida Keys.
4. We request that ONMS continue providing adequate resources for these programs, and to support the acquisition of additional personnel and equipment needed to enforce sanctuary regulations.
5. We request a careful and detailed review of the current and future enforcement needs of the FKNMS be completed as part of the Draft EIS. We also request that the Florida FWC re-establish a dispatch center in the Florida Keys to facilitate better law enforcement response capabilities in the FKNMS.
6. Education is an important component toward helping the boating public comply with sanctuary regulations, so we request that FKNMS and ONMS expand its education and outreach capabilities to include signage along the 18 mile stretch, additional signage at popular boat entry locations, and enhanced presence of on the water sanctuary information programs such as Team O.C.E.A.N.
7. We encourage FKNMS and ONMS to work with the popular GPS manufacturers to develop enhanced digital charts for chart plotters that would include real time information about the zones mariners are passing through.
8. We encourage FKNMS and ONMS to look into having a smart phone app developed that would give real time information about the most important sanctuary regulations in place for various locations in the sanctuary. This could be a Hollings grant through the National Marine Sanctuary Foundation.

We resolve to request that the Superintendent forward this resolution to the Director of the office of National Marine Sanctuaries and to the Assistant Administrator for NOAA's Ocean Service.

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.