

FLORIDA KEYS NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARY ADVISORY COUNCIL

Hyatt Place
1996 Overseas Highway
Marathon, FL 33050
Tuesday, August 16, 2016

MEETING SUMMARY

The following serves as a summary of the August 16, 2016 FKNMS Advisory Council Meeting. This summary does not constitute official minutes of the meeting. Draft meeting minutes will be distributed in advance of the October 18, 2016 Advisory Council Meeting for approval by the council.

Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary Volunteer of the Year

Alfred Pasquale was recognized as Volunteer of the Year for his contributions at the Florida Keys Eco-Discovery Center where he has volunteered since 2014. With an average of 340 visitors a day to the Eco-Discovery Center, he is one of the first people visitors meet as they enter the building. Al enhances the visitors' experience and is a favored ambassador for the Florida Keys Eco-Discovery Center and FKNMS.

Enforcement Priorities in the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary

Tracy Dunn, Assistant Director for NOAA's Southeast Regional Office Division of Law Enforcement, gave an update on enforcement in the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary. He highlighted the role that the Office of Law Enforcement, FKNMS and Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission play for enforcement in Florida and how they have been working through a transition to more fully integrate FKNMS enforcement into the overarching Florida joint enforcement agreement and priorities.

Promoting Best Management Practices for Recreational Fishing in the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary

Following a presentation by Nicole Uibel, FKNMS outreach and education staff member, the Advisory Council discussed the development of a voluntary education and recognition program for charter fishing operators. Such a program would be based on the existing Blue Star and Dolphin Smart programs and would aim to recognize charter fishing operators who meet set criteria to educate their customers and increase awareness and stewardship of FKNMS and its resources. Following discussion and public comment from one individual, the Advisory Council passed a unanimous motion to create a working group to help develop this program.

Boater Education and Vessel Impacts to Shallow Water Habitats

Fred Herling, Everglades National Park Planner, provided an update on their recently released General Management Plan. Significant items of note include creating a mandatory boater education program and requiring an annual or day-use boating permit. These programs are still under development and are expected to be phased in over the next year.

Following this presentation, the Advisory Council received an update on a data collection effort to better assess boater impacts in the Florida Keys. Both of these presentations led into a discussion about options to promote better boater operator behavior and the potential for a targeted boater education program in the sanctuary, including mandatory boater education. This issue was tabled for further discussion at the October 18, 2016 Advisory Council meeting.

Oil Spill Science and Coral Population Dynamics

The Advisory Council heard from Monica Wilson of UF/IFAS Florida Sea Grant Program and Florida representative on the Sea Grant Oil Spill Outreach Team. She provided information about new oil spill science outreach information and opportunities for stakeholders to be more engaged and learn more. Andrea Chan, PhD Candidate from Pennsylvania State University, presented recent research related to elkhorn and pillar coral population dynamics and relevant implications for management.

Public Comment

Public comment was provided by four individuals:

- Gary Jennings, American Sportfishing Association
- William Rivenbark Florida Keys Reef Lights
- Bill Wickers, Key West Charter Boat Association
- Richie Gomez, Key West Charter Boat Association