

Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary Advisory Council

December 6th, 2005
Marathon Government Center

FINAL MINUTES

Members Present

Chris Bergh	Martin Moe
Ralph Boragine	Ken Nedimyer
Todd Firm	Kathleen Patton
Debra Harrison	Bruce Popham
David Hawtof	Deborah Shaw
Don Kincaid	Brad Simonds
Mark Klingbeil	

Alternates Present

Tom Dillon
Walter Drabinski
Bob Holston
Diane Silvia

Call to Order/Introductions/Approval of Minutes/Adoption of Agenda

Chair Bruce Popham called the meeting to order at 9:15 a.m.. The minutes were approved as presented. The agenda was adopted as presented.

Sanctuary Advisory Council Mission Statement – Martin Moe (SAC)

Martin Moe reported that he received 10 responses to his e-mail solicitation for preferences between the long and short mission statements that he prepared for review following the October meeting. The long version received 44 points compared to 24 received for the shorter version. After discussion, Mr. Moe moved that the longer version be adopted, seconded by Ralph Boragine. The motion passed unanimously upon roll call vote. The Mission Statement reads:

The Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary Advisory Council is an interactive liaison between the residents and visitors of the Florida Keys and the staff and management of the FKNMS. In this role and with the understanding that a healthy ecosystem is essential to the economy and quality of life in the Florida Keys, the SAC will promote restoration and maintenance of biodiversity and ecological resiliency in the South Florida environment. We will strive to achieve a vibrant, ecologically sustainable ecosystem and economy through application of the best available science and balanced, conservation-based management.

Public Comment

H.T. Pontin, master mariner, said that since September 15th, 1993 when the scientific Boesch Report on Florida Bay sponsored by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation of

the National Park Service, South Florida Water Management District was issued I have kept you abreast of Florida Bay's problems. At the FKNMS February 19, 2002 meeting I presented a Tides Range and Currents Comment which listed the problems of Florida Bay. I have a Copy for you. As the problems in Florida Bay have not been corrected and totally ignored there is no sense allowing more Dirty Water from the Everglades National Park to enter Florida Bay. It can't take care of the water it has been getting since 1993.

Sanctuary Superintendent's Report – Billy Causey (FKNMS)

Billy Causey announced that the new patrol vessel for the Dry Tortugas will be named the P/V Peter Gladding, a tremendous tribute to Peter, who was also honored posthumously at the Gulf and Caribbean Fisheries Institute meeting in San Andres, Colombia. Vice Admiral Lautenbacher will be in the Keys in April for the dedication of the vessel and other ceremonies. He thanked council members for providing support for the Research Natural Area in Dry Tortugas National Park at the Fish & Wildlife Commission meeting. He reported that both he and Dr. Brian Keller attended the First International Marine Protected Area Conference in Geelong, Australia, and that he and SAC members Jerry Lorenz and Jody Thomas are part of the group putting together a research plan for ocean and coastal resources of the state of Florida.

Following Hurricane Wilma, the Sanctuary is working with Monroe County, FWC and the Coast Guard to process the 334 abandoned vessels, including a casino boat in the Saddlebunch Keys. A red tide has been reported off the lower Keys, with associated fish kills, including pelagics. Discussion concerned the effects of Hurricane Katrina. Mr. Hunt observed that it is an extremely unusual event. Dr. Keller noted that there have been Harmful Algal Blooms all summer down the west coast of Florida.

Mr. Causey reported on the budget for FY06, which is down to 84% of last year's budget. Staff members are working to mitigate the impacts. He observed that some great things came out of the retreat, and that it is a great opportunity to change the way we do business. He anticipates greater collaboration between sanctuary staff, advisory council members and Sanctuary Friends of the Florida Keys in the coming year, and quoting Dan Basta, Director of the National Marine Sanctuary Program, he said that we are going to "suck it up, and get the fire in the belly".

Chairman's Report – Bruce Popham (SAC)

Bruce Popham characterized this new approach as a three-legged stool. He said that with the budget cuts, the positive links between staff, SAC and Sanctuary Friends will keep things upright. There is a great partnership with the state and federal agencies, including the Park Service, as was demonstrated at the FWC commission meeting on the Research Natural Area. The council is now in a position to plan strategically and be proactive, not reactive and the Sanctuary is in a position in the community that is unparalleled. Mr. Popham described council members as the heart and soul of volunteer work and ambassadors to the community who will help Sanctuary Friends with a membership drive to help support education and research.

Florida Department of Environmental Protection Report – Anne McCarthy (FKNMS)

Anne McCarthy noted that state matching funds can be brought in with Sanctuary Friends. She announced that Kacky Andrews has moved on and that Stephanie Bailenson from NOAA headquarters will be taking her place as Director of CAMA. Ms. McCarthy reported on the U.S. Coral Reef Task Force meeting in Palau, where she represented the Sanctuary and the Florida coral reef resiliency program. Hurricane Wilma caused significant damage to the Lower Region office in Key West, and it will not be used until extensive remediation has taken place. As a result of budget cuts, alternative sources of funding for sanctuary projects normally funded through DEP and EPA are being sought, with South Florida Water Management District being a possible source. She also noted that the Florida legislature is no longer supportive of money for removing illegal lobster habitat. However, a staff member has been hired to deal with marine debris.

Sanctuary Law Enforcement Report – Lt. Ed Maldonado (FWC)

Lt. Maldonado read the attached report into the record for Capt. Luher concerning hurricane impacts to the sanctuary from Wilma, particularly derelict vessels. The most striking example is the casino boat “Lady Luck” stranded on the gulf side of the Saddlebunch Keys in extremely shallow water.

Wildlife Refuges Report – Van Fischer (U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service)

Mr. Fischer reported that wildlife survival after Hurricane Wilma was not too bad, and that fresh water is starting to return on Big Pine and Cudjoe Keys. There was significant physical rearranging of the Key West National Wildlife Refuge, and it remains to be seen how turtle nesting season will reflect the changes. There is a new permanent manager coming on board.

Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission Report – John Hunt (FWRI)

Mr. Hunt reported that the commissioners voted to reduce the grouper bag limit. He said that Keys Marine Laboratory was damaged by storm surge at a value of several millions of dollars, including the disappearance of sharks used for cancer research. Carrollyn Cox of FWRI gave a paper at the First International Marine Protected Area Conference (IMPAC) in Geelong, Australia, on the continuing evaluation of no-take reserves in the Florida Keys. It was very well received, and is a credit to the partnership between the sanctuary and the state. He also reported on preliminary information on an egg-bearing spiny lobster female moving from Little Africa in the proposed Research Natural Area in Dry Tortugas National Park out to the Tortugas Ecological Reserve, presumably to release her eggs. A great example of connectivity. He thanked the Advisory Council for putting science language into the Mission statement.

Discussion concerned the many successful partnerships within the sanctuary, both amongst agencies, with NGOs, between industry and individuals, as well as with elected officials. Further discussion concerned the need to utilize those partnerships to support Everglades restoration.

“Protecting Corals, Saving Ships” – Erich Frey (NOAA), Katie Rees (NOAA) and Dr. Lee Alexander (U. of New Hampshire)

Ms. Rees, Deputy Director of the Office of Coastal Surveys, gave a PowerPoint presentation on this four year pilot project enhancing electronic nautical charts, to help mariners make informed decisions by adding an environmental information layer to existing charts.

Erich Frey gratefully acknowledged the assistance of the SAC working group in initial development of the project in the Florida Keys.

Dr. Alexander illustrated the utility of such an information layer with a dramatic chart of the entrance to Key West Harbor, in which existing information for mariners does not accurately reflect patch reefs and reef banks. He further illustrated the product which organizes paper information into electronic format, using Looe Key as an example, and said that if it can be refined in the Keys, it can be adapted anywhere and will be recommended to the IUCN for use in places as far flung as Belize, the Moluccan Straits and Australia. Any publicity or public outreach that is available will further the project’s mission. Discussion concerned prudent seamanship and the validity of NOAA charts.

Tribute to Denis Trelewicz – Bruce Popham, Chair

Mr. Popham invited members to remember Major Denis Trelewicz, the Maritime Heritage representative, who passed away on November 19th, 2005.

Major Trelewicz (Denis) was a retired major with the U.S. Air Force Reserve, a graduate of MIT and a SLOAN scholar. He obtained his Masters in Business Management and his Bachelor’s in Aeronautical Engineering.

Denis was a long time volunteer with the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary’s Maritime Heritage Resource Inventory Team. He was also an active board member of the Historical Preservation Society of the Upper Keys, contributing numerous articles on maritime history for the newsletter History Talk. He was an avid diver and contributed hundreds of underwater photographs to the Sanctuary, as well as donating thousands of hours of personal time and the use of his boat to Sanctuary projects. When not in the water, he devoted his time to researching maritime history, and his findings formed the basis for several projects in the Keys. He personally funded and oversaw the restoration of the canon at the Mel Fisher Center which will be on display at the Key Largo Visitor Center. Tenacity, enthusiasm and generosity were his hallmarks, and it will indeed be difficult to fill the position on the Sanctuary Advisory Council that he so ardently wished to occupy.

Maritime Heritage Program – Brenda Altmeier (FKNMS)

Ms. Altmeier gave a PowerPoint presentation, highlighting the efforts to document the so-called “Button Wreck”, named for the quantity of brass and pewter buttons found at the site. Major Denis Trelewicz dug into public records in the United Kingdom and ascertained that the 34th Cumberland Foot were present in Havana, Cuba in the 1860s, consistent with the date of the wreck and the insignia on one of the buttons. An Anglo-

Danish maritime archaeological team came to the Keys over the summer and with the help of a tremendous volunteer force, recorded the remains in situ of this mystery two-masted, 90 foot, American-built wreck. High school students in the Upper Keys were given detailed presentations on the findings. Discussion concerned whether holders of artifacts from the wreck had cooperated with the project, and the effects of treasure salvaging on Sanctuary resources. Acting regional superintendent Billy Causey thanked Ms. Altmeier for her passion, dedication and support for the maritime heritage of the Florida Keys.

Maritime Heritage Resource Inventory Volunteer Awards

Awards were presented to Hyatt Hodgdon, J.J. Kennedy and Robert Hills, who gave so much time and effort in boat and dive support to the Anglo-Danish/State of Florida/Sanctuary excavation of the Button Wreck during the summer of 2005.

Items to be entered into the Record for this Meeting

The six vacant seats on the Council will be advertised in the New Year. They are Maritime Heritage; Citizen-at-Large, Middle Keys; Research & Monitoring, Alternate; Marine Life, Alternate; Education, Alternate; South Florida Ecosystem Restoration, Alternate.

Following on the development of a protocol for determining coral health in captive conditions, there will likely be increased coral reef restoration activity in the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary.

Dr. Brian Keller reported that the Aquarius mission off Key Largo and the entire National Undersea Research Center will not receive any federal funding at all this year in the President's Budget, effectively closing them down. Normally this item is saved through the Senate.

Adjourn – 12:09 p.m.