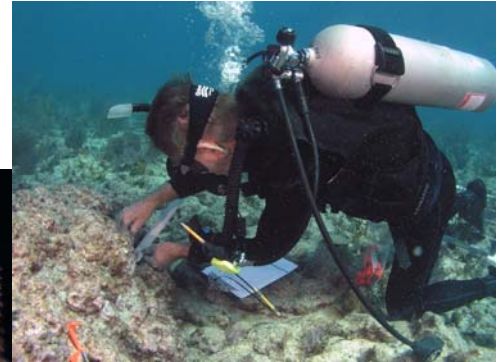


Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary Revised Management Plan



December 2007

U.S. Department of Commerce

National Oceanic and
Atmospheric Administration

National Ocean Service

National Marine Sanctuary Program

This document is the revised management plan for the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary. It replaces the management plan that was implemented in 1996 and will serve as the primary management document for the Sanctuary during the next five years.

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Note to Reader

In an effort to make this document more user-friendly, we have included references to the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary Web site rather than including the entire text of many bulky attachments or appendices that are traditionally included in management plans. Readers who do not have access to the Internet may call the Sanctuary office at (305) 809-4700 to request copies of any documents that are on the Sanctuary's Web site. For readers with Internet access, the Sanctuary's Web site can be found at floridakeys.noaa.gov.

ABOUT THIS DOCUMENT

This document is a report on the results of NOAA's five-year review of the strategies and activities detailed in the 1996 *Final Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement* for the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary. It serves two primary purposes: 1) to update readers on the outcomes of successfully implemented strategies - in short, accomplishments that were merely plans on paper in 1996; and, 2) to disseminate useful information about the Sanctuary and its management strategies, activities and products. The hope is that this information, which charts the next 5 years of Sanctuary management, will enhance the communication and cooperation so vital to protecting important national resources.

Sanctuary Characteristics

The Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary extends approximately 220 nautical miles southwest from the southern tip of the Florida peninsula. The Sanctuary's marine ecosystem supports over 6,000 species of plants, fishes, and invertebrates, including the nation's only living coral reef that lies adjacent to the continent. The area includes one of the largest seagrass communities in this hemisphere. Attracted by this tropical diversity, tourists spend more than thirteen million visitor days in the Florida Keys each year. In addition, the region's natural and man-made resources provide recreation and livelihoods for approximately 80,000 residents.

The Sanctuary is 2,900 square nautical miles of coastal waters, including the 2001 addition of the Tortugas Ecological Reserve. The Sanctuary overlaps four national wildlife refuges, six state parks, three state aquatic preserves and has incorporated two of the earliest national marine sanctuaries to be designated, Key Largo and Looe Key National Marine Sanctuaries. Three national parks have separate jurisdictions, and share a boundary with the Sanctuary. The region also has some of the most significant maritime heritage and historical resources of any coastal community in the nation.

The Sanctuary faces specific threats, including direct human impacts such as vessel groundings, pollution, and overfishing. Threats to the Sanctuary also include indirect human impacts, which are harder to identify but are reflected in coral declines and increases in macroalgae and turbidity. More information about the Sanctuary can be found in this document and at the Sanctuary's Web site.

Management Plan Organization

Within this document, the tools that the Sanctuary uses to achieve its goals are presented in five management divisions: 1) Science; 2) Education, Outreach & Stewardship; 3) Enforcement & Resource Protection; 4) Resource Threat Reduction; and 5) Administration, Community Relations, & Policy Coordination. Each management division contains two or more *action plans*, which are implemented through supporting *strategies* and *activities*. The strategies described in the 1996 *Management Plan* generally retain their designations in this document. As in the 1996 plan, two or more action plans may share a strategy where their goals and aims converge. The 1996 plan can be accessed on the Sanctuary's Web site floridakeys.noaa.gov

Accomplishments and Highlights

The Sanctuary's programs and projects have made significant progress since the original management plan was implemented 1996. An overview of these accomplishments is provided in the Introduction. In addition, each action plan contains bulleted lists of accomplishments since the 1996 management plan was adopted.

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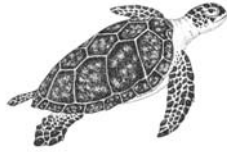
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Acronyms

ACHP	Advisory Council on Historic Preservation
AGRRA	Atlantic and Gulf Rapid Reef Assessment Program
ASA	Abandoned Shipwreck Act
ATBA	Areas to Be Avoided
AWT	Advanced Wastewater Treatment
CAD	Computer Automated Dispatch
CERCLA	Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act
CERP	Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan
CFR	Code of Federal Regulations
CRCP	Coral Reef Conservation Program
DARP	Damage Assessment and Restoration Program
DEP	Florida Department of Environmental Protection
DTNP	Dry Tortugas National Park
EIS	Environmental Impact Statement
EPA	U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
ESA	Endangered Species Act
F.S.	Florida Statutes
FAC	Florida Administrative Code
FDACS	Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services
FDCA	Florida Department of Community Affairs
FDHR	Florida Division of Historical Resources
FDOT	Florida Department of Transportation
FKNMS	Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary
FKNMSPA	Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary Protection Act
FPS	Florida Park Service
FR	Federal Register
FWC	Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission
FWRI	Fish and Wildlife Research Institute
FY	Federal Fiscal Year
GIS	Geographic Information System
GMD	Growth Management Division (Monroe County)
GMFMC	Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council
GPS	Global Positioning System
HAZMAT	Hazardous Materials
ICS	Incident Command Structure
ICW	Intra-coastal Waterway
IMO	International Maritime Organization
MBTA	Migratory Bird Treaty Act
MEERA	Marine Ecosystem Event Response and Assessment
MHR	Maritime Heritage Resources
MMPA	Marine Mammal Protection Act
MMS	Minerals Management Service
MOA	Memorandum of Agreement
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding

MRD	Marine Resources Division (Monroe County)
NCCOS	National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science
NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
NHPA	National Historic Preservation Act
NMFS	National Marine Fisheries Service
NMS	National Marine Sanctuary
NMSA	National Marine Sanctuary Act
NMSF	National Marine Sanctuary Foundation
NMSP	National Marine Sanctuary Program
NOAA	National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NOAA/OLE	NOAA Office of Law Enforcement
NOS	National Ocean Service
NPDES	National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System
NPS	National Park Service
NRDA	Natural Resource Damage Assessment Claims
NURC	National Undersea Research Center
OFW	Outstanding Florida Waters
OSDS	On-Site Disposal System
OSTDS	On-Site Sewage Treatment and Disposal System
PREP	National Prepared for Response Exercise Program
PSSA	Particularly Sensitive Sea Area
RECON	Reef Ecosystem Condition Program
REEF	Reef Environmental Education Foundation
RNA	Research Natural Area
RSMAS	University of Miami/Rosenstiel School of Marine and Atmospheric Science
SAFMC	South Atlantic Fishery Management Council
SAP	Science Advisory Panel
SAV	Submerged Aquatic Vegetation
SCR	Submerged Cultural Resources
SEFSC	Southeast Fisheries Science Center
SFWMD	South Florida Water Management District
SHIELDS	Sanctuary Hazardous Incident Emergency Logistics Database System
SPA	Sanctuary Preservation Area
SWIM	Surface Water Improvement and Management Act
SWM	Stormwater Management
TAC	Technical Advisory Committee
TNC	The Nature Conservancy
USACE	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
USCG	U.S. Coast Guard
USDOC	U.S. Department of Commerce
USDOI	U.S. Department of Interior
USDOS	U.S. Department of State
USDOT	U.S. Department of Transportation
USFWS	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
USGS	U.S. Geological Survey
WAMS	Waterway Assessment and Marking System

WMA Wildlife Management Area
WQPP Water Quality Protection Program
WQSC Water Quality Steering Committee



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A full copy of this document can be found on the FKNMS Web site at floridakeys.noaa.gov/regs/welcome.html

Appendix G - Vessel Operations/PWC Management Regulatory Alternatives

1. Status Quo - No action beyond activities implemented in other action plans related to PWC use (e.g. additional WMAs, concentrated nearshore enforcement, boater-education initiatives).
2. In addition to the existing idle speed from 100 yards of residential shorelines regulation, establish a 400-yard, point-to-point travel corridor from shorelines where repeated high-speed maneuvers for all vessels would be restricted except in specifically identified rental-riding areas, to be determined in conjunction with rental operators. Beyond 400 yards, vessels should operate in a reasonable and prudent manner. Establish PWC rental-riding areas. Guided tours for renters will be permitted outside of rental-riding zones.
3. In sensitive shallow seagrass areas determined to be detrimentally impacted by vessel operation, establish WMA – No-motor Zones. Increase the number and spatial extent of WMAs to effectively manage natural-resource impacts occurring from all vessels operating in shallow water throughout the Sanctuary. Designation and placement of the areas would coincide with recommended no-motor zones identified in the working group’s scoping process. Placement will also be guided by public input and scientific findings throughout the Keys, beginning with the scoping meetings held by the PWC Working Group in 2000 and 2001.

Numerous shallow-water areas on the Florida Bay side of the Keys have been identified as significant areas to Sanctuary wildlife. Additional flats and nearshore areas on the ocean side have been also identified as important habitats in the Middle to Upper Keys (Marathon to Key Largo). These areas serve as examples of candidate sites for WMAs. An associated activity is to work with rental operators to establish marked areas for operation of rental PWCs throughout the Keys. This activity will include consultation with rental operators and law enforcement.
4. In addition to the 100-yard Idle-Speed-Only Zone from residential shorelines regulation, establish a 400-yard, point-to-point travel corridor from all shorelines where repeated high-speed maneuvers for all vessels would be restricted except in specifically identified rental-riding areas, determined in conjunction with rental operators. In areas identified by homeowners as having a need for regulatory markers, establish a process to install 100-yard Idle-Speed-Only markers to address all vessel use, including personal watercraft.
5. Prohibit PWCs throughout the Sanctuary. The Sanctuary Advisory Council has recommended that PWC operation be prohibited within the Sanctuary. This recommendation has raised some questions as the State legislature has passed legislation prohibiting local ordinances from singling out PWCs. Since the state is a co-trustee and partner in the management of the Sanctuary, this recommendation by the Sanctuary Advisory Council raises a difficult issue.

In October 2001, the Sanctuary Advisory Council voted to ban the operation of all vessels in less than two feet of water in the Sanctuary. Although NOAA questions the

feasibility of such a regulatory action, considering the diurnal changes in tides and wind driven currents and the enforceability of such a regulation, this option will be added to the list of regulatory alternatives for consideration during the NEPA process, when the public may review and comment on suggested regulatory changes.