

**A RESOLUTION OF THE FLORIDA KEYS NATIONAL MARINE
SANCTUARY ADVISORY COUNCIL TO THE GULF OF MEXICO FISHERY
MANAGEMENT COUNCIL ON CONCERNS OF DOWNSTREAM IMPACTS OF
OFFSHORE AQUACULTURE TO THE SENSITIVE FISHERIES AND HABITATS OF
FLORIDA BAY AND FLORIDA KEYS
(OR FLORIDA KEYS NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARY)**

June 17, 2008

WHEREAS the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary helps protect the unique marine waters of the Florida Keys that are a national treasure and of international significance ; and

WHEREAS, the Gulf of Mexico and the southwest coast of Florida is connected through currents and has a significant impact on the fisheries and resources of The Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary; and

WHEREAS, the Florida Keys supports a substantial and economically significant fishing industry, which depends on good water quality and healthy brood stocks; and

WHEREAS the economy, fisheries and quality of life in the Florida Keys is dependent upon the health of south Florida's marine ecosystem; and

WHEREAS the total economic value of fishing in Florida is valued at approximately \$9 billion, much of it driven by the fisheries in Florida Bay and the Florida Keys; and

WHEREAS there the various concerns associated with offshore aquaculture such as the deterioration of wild fish stocks, introduction of diseases, water pollution, feed inefficiency, economic competition with wild stock fisheries, and habitat impact to coral, hardbottom, and seagrass communities; and

WHEREAS the Gulf of Mexico is prone to natural catastrophes such as hurricanes and red tides;

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED,

The Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary Advisory Council, through its superintendent, recommends to the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council that prior to approving offshore aquaculture activities in the Gulf of Mexico:

- 1) That an analysis be undertaken on the downstream affects of offshore aquaculture water quality impacts to the sensitive habitats and fisheries of the Florida Keys;
- 2) That an assessment of the impacts of cultured fish escapement on the genetics of wild fisheries and wild fish competition, as well as the effects of disease , occurrence of severe red tide algae blooms, loss of all fish under culture (effect of the death and decay of all cultured fish), use of chemical or biological agents and its impacts to various invertebrates and plantonic life forms; and
- 3) That an economic impact study be conducted on the impacts to wild fisheries in Florida;

- 4) That the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council conduct a series of public hearings in the Florida Keys, including to the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary Advisory Council, to present findings to these concerns and to allow stakeholder input; and
- 5) That Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary Advisory Council and Monroe County constituents concerns be properly addressed prior to approval.

Passed unanimously on this date: June 17, 2008.

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.