

**Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary Advisory Council**

**February 17, 2004  
Marathon Garden Club**

**FINAL MINUTES**

**Members Present**

Wayne Blevins	Don Kincaid
Jack Curlett	Nancy Klingener
Fran Decker	Martin Moe
Todd Firm	Ken Nedimyer
Richard Grathwohl	George Neugent
Debra Harrison	Bruce Popham
David Hawtof	Anita Schwessinger
Tony Iarocci	Deborah Shaw

**Alternates Present**

Jerry Lorenz  
Jim Trice

**Call to Order**

Chair Neugent called the meeting to order at 9:12 a.m.

**Approval of Minutes and Adoption of Agenda**

After discussion about a letter to the National Marine Fisheries Service regarding the marine mammal stranding network, the Minutes of the December 9, 2003 meeting were approved as presented and the Agenda for this meeting was adopted.

**Vote on Adoption of Two New Council Seats**

Following discussion between staff and members concerning balance of representation, Ken Nedimyer moved that the Council accept a new seat to represent South Florida Ecosystem Restoration on the Council, and a new seat to represent Volunteers in the Sanctuary on the Council. The motion was seconded by Fran Decker. After further discussion concerning consensus-based decision making, the motion passed unanimously.

**Status Report on Navy Dredging Project – Lauri MacLaughlin (FKNMS)**

Ms. MacLaughlin gave the attached PowerPoint presentation on the Navy project to conduct a maintenance dredge in Key West Harbor and shipping channel to 34 feet. She emphasized the environmental protections encompassed by the permitting process as well as the continuous monitoring required by law during dredging operations. Additionally, Sanctuary staff and volunteers are relocating coral colonies from the Mole Pier for restoration, research, education and scientific purposes.

Discussion followed, particularly concerning potential impacts of the dredging operations on sea turtles. The consensus was that no significant threat was posed to sea turtles by the planned operations.

### **Public Comment**

H.T. Pontin read the attached comments into the record. He submitted the attached documents into the record. It was clarified that Captain James Watson, MSO Miami, was the Coast Guard representative at the Large Vessel Working Group meeting on February 9<sup>th</sup>, 2004.

### **Sanctuary Superintendent's Report – Billy Causey (FKNMS)**

Mr. Causey introduced Sanctuary Research Interpreter Joanne Delaney. He reported on results of socioeconomic monitoring, the budget for the fiscal year, the status of applications for Council seats and said that the April meeting of the Department of Commerce's Marine Protected Area Advisory Committee will be held in Key Largo. He announced that Captain Jayson Horadam will be leaving the Sanctuary for a new position in Collier County. He also announced that the Sanctuary will hold an internal artificial reef workshop and that the groundbreaking for the Dr. Nancy Foster Florida Keys Environmental Complex will be held in Key West. He noted that the permits for hair-hooking baitfish in a restricted number of Upper Keys SPAs are now available and that several conditions must be met in order to receive a permit.

### **Florida Department of Environmental Protection Report – Anne McCarthy (FDEP)**

Ms. McCarthy reported that Colleen Castile will replace David Struhs as Secretary of the Department of Environmental Protection. She gave updates on recent resource damage incidents in the Sanctuary, and the progress of settlement cases. The mooring buoy program will be deploying an experimental buoy self-cleaning device developed by Craig Quirolo of Reef Relief. She described Sanctuary activities throughout March which is Seagrass Awareness Month in the State of Florida. Ms. McCarthy announced a new voluntary certification program for dive and snorkel operators called the Blue Star program which will be launched soon, details available from Cheva Heck, as well as a workshop for marine mammal viewing protocols and a public meeting on the Vandenburg artificial reef project. She recognized Lauri MacLaughlin for her work on relocating corals from the Navy Mole Pier.

### **Sanctuary Law Enforcement Report – LT Joe Scarpa (FWC)**

LT Scarpa introduced LT Roudebush from the Upper Keys Region and LT Burns from the Lower Keys Region. LT Burns reported on a recent grounding incident at Looe Key and an engine malfunction incident, both of which concluded with a more favorable outcome than might have been predicted. He described a collaborative inter-agency operation between FWC and the Sheriff's department concerning an individual take of 73 mangrove snapper, some under-sized.

LT Scarpa reported on activities undertaken by the recently refurbished NOAA cutter, the Point Monroe, in the Tortugas area, including a treasure salvage case in the Marquesas, a long line vessel violation and several shrimp vessel violations in the Tortugas Ecological

Reserve. He said that the Point Monroe will be sold off and replaced as soon as possible by a more suitable vessel and that in the interim other means will be used to patrol the Tortugas. Discussion concerned the replacement vessel and the origins of vessels that fish illegally in the Tortugas Ecological Reserve.

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

Mr. Hunt clarified that, following on from the commissioners' meeting in November, the trap reduction scheme in the commercial lobster fishery will be suspended for three years while a comprehensive re-evaluation of the fishery is undertaken. The number of traps will remain at the current level. Discussion concerned counterfeit tags. Mr. Hunt informed the Council that the project to release conch larvae simulation vials has received a Sanctuary permit and will be undertaken this summer. Discussion concerned a FWC workshop on bag and vessel limits for permit.

**Florida Bay Watch Report – Brad Rosov (The Nature Conservancy)**

Mr. Rosov gave the attached PowerPoint presentation on a near-shore water quality monitoring program conducted by volunteers over a number of years throughout the Keys, partly funded by EPA. Discussion concerned differences between sampling sites, regional differences within the Keys and the limits to conclusions that can be drawn from this kind of information.

**Acknowledgements**

Mr. Causey and Chair Neugent presented an award to Captain Jayson Horadam in recognition of his professionalism and service in expanding and training the Sanctuary Enforcement Force during his two years back in Monroe County. Captain Horadam is relocating to Collier County.

Chair Neugent recognized alternate member Jim Trice for his involvement in finding solutions in Islamorada to the problems encountered during the two-day mini-season.

**Coral Condition Survey – Dr. William Fisher (EPA)**

Dr. Fisher gave the attached PowerPoint presentation on a recent cruise conducted jointly with NOAA. He said that coral interests at EPA have moved from the office of water more into the office of global change, and that disease is no longer the sole focus. He gave results from five stations in two study areas in the Lower Keys and Tortugas. Discussion concerned future surveys and methodologies to determine per cent coral cover.

**Mangrove Forest Ecology, Management and Restoration – Dr. Robin Lewis (Mangrove Action Project Steering Committee Member, President of Lewis Environmental Services, Inc., Salt Springs, FL)**

Dr. Lewis gave the attached PowerPoint presentation on the ecological importance of mangroves and the human pressures these tidal forests and associated wetlands are under. He outlined some of the activities undertaken by the Mangrove Action Project in education and restoration world-wide. He noted that about half of the world's mangroves have been destroyed in the recent past, particularly by altering hydrology for shrimp aquaculture. Dr. Lewis used snook and shrimp in Florida as examples of the need for an

ecosystem-based approach to mangrove management. Wide-ranging discussion followed: the need in the Keys for a pro-active management plan regarding mangroves and wetlands to take into account the potential effects of sea-level rise and the appropriate agencies and bodies to undertake such a plan; nutrient limitations on growth of mangroves; the need to remove the highly competitive exotic Brazilian pepper from shorelines; the degree of success of restoration after removal of monkeys from the Keys; the use of mangroves as an approach to wastewater management and the importance of educating people about the ecological functions mangroves play in filtering water and providing nutrients and habitats at multiple stages in the marine food web.

Based on research showing the worldwide loss of mangroves and their associated wetlands systems, Dr. Shaw proposed a resolution recognizing mangroves and associated wetlands ecosystems as an inviolate component of Florida's coastal areas and further recognizing the value of said system to coastal storm surge protection, to estuarine and marine nursery areas and to water cleansing functions. The system interconnects with seagrass flats, the near reef and the outer reef. Chair Neugent said that there is a motion on the floor. Ms. Klingener seconded the motion.

Mr. Blevins added a friendly amendment to urge the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Florida Department of Environmental Protection, the South Florida Water Management District and relevant county governments to take pro-active action in forming a policy to add additional protections to the system. Dr. Shaw accepted the amendment.

After discussion, it was agreed that Dr. Shaw will draft the resolution in the form of a letter on Sanctuary Advisory Council letterhead, to be approved by Council members, before being forwarded to Sanctuary managers for distribution to the appropriate agencies. The motion passed unanimously.

### **Ecological Shifts Along the Florida Reef Tract: causes and consequences – Dr. William Precht (PBS&J)**

Dr. Precht gave the attached PowerPoint presentation based on two decades of research throughout the Caribbean Basin. He posed the question: What has been going on in the last two and a half decades, and is there any management decision that would have made a difference? After comparing the Florida Keys with various sites around the Caribbean, he concluded that the region-wide decline in coral cover can be attributed to the major herbivore, *Diadema antillarum*, dying off at the same time that the largest space-occupying and framework building corals died from White Band Disease in the 1980s. He reported on sporadic recoveries of both urchins and acroporids around the region, including the Dry Tortugas, and said that the Florida Keys reef tract is not in the best shape in the region, nor is it the worst. He observed that with increased sea surface temperatures, corals are increasing their ranges northwards.

Discussion concerned the role of parrot fish in spreading White Pox Disease, the association between *Diadema* and acroporid recovery, the facilitative model for succession, and the lack of evidence from extensive monitoring for nearshore nutrients reaching the reef tract. Dr. Precht concluded his presentation by saying that there are

some things that can be managed for, and nearshore water quality is an example, and some things that cannot, such as the spread of diseases and weather-related events. He then showed video footage of a computer-generated cold-water upwelling event on Conch Reef. These upwelling events bring highly nutrient-laden cold water up onto the reef crest several times a year.

### **Public Comment**

Captain Robert Maguire of the Key West Bar Pilots Association read the attached report into the record concerning the Large Vessel Working Group.

### **Turbidity in Key West Harbor: video – Captain Don Kincaid (Stars & Stripes)**

Capt. Kincaid showed video footage of cruise ships entering and leaving Key West Harbor associated with sediment plumes, as well as cruise ships at anchor dominating the skyline. Discussion concerned maneuverability, weather conditions, reasons for not using tugboats and origins of sedimentation in the Harbor. Capt. Maguire contributed to the discussion.

### **Large Vessel Working Group Report – Anne McCarthy (FDEP), Nancy Klingener (The Ocean Conservancy), Capt. Don Kincaid (Stars & Stripes)**

Ms. McCarthy presented a summary of the information gathered at the Working Group on regulations, turbidity, sedimentation, discharges and emissions and vessel-handling operations and procedures.

Ms. Klingener presented three recommendations made by the Working Group to the Sanctuary Advisory Council.

Ms. Klingener moved that the Sanctuary Advisory Council request from Sanctuary managers that the Council receive regular updates on the Navy harbor dredging project during the project. The motion was seconded by Capt. Kincaid and passed unanimously.

Ms. Klingener moved that the Sanctuary Advisory Council request that Sanctuary managers extend the monitoring for sedimentation and turbidity in the harbor, channel and environs from one month to at least 12 months after dredging is completed. She requested that a copy of this motion be forwarded to the Water Quality Protection Program Steering Committee. Council members, Sanctuary staff and Glenn Schuster of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers discussed the monitoring program and concerns were raised about the utility of extending the program beyond one month when there was no baseline monitoring before the dredging operation began. Funding for the extended monitoring was discussed extensively, as were protocols in place for ensuring that environmental damage is minimized. Capt. Kincaid seconded the motion. Upon Roll Call vote it passed with a majority of 11 Ayes and 2 Nos.

Ms. Klingener moved that the Sanctuary Advisory Council request that Sanctuary managers incorporate and evaluate existing physical and oceanographic data, particularly satellite imagery, along with the data collected during the dredge. Captain Kincaid seconded the motion which was passed unanimously.

Discussion amongst council members and staff concerned the proposal by Reef Relief to endorse the City of Key West's recently adopted cruise ship pump out policy. The proposal was not adopted by the Working Group, which instead made a statement in support of the City's efforts to develop fair and effective environmental practices for large ships.

Ms. Harrison moved that the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary Advisory Council recommend to Sanctuary managers the adoption of the resolution made by Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary Advisory Council (MBNMSAC) concerning the pump out of black water, gray water, bilge water, ballast water and any other harmful discharges. Discussion followed amongst council members, staff and Captain Maguire concerning current practices and regulations, and that the MBNMSAC resolution is cruise-ship specific. Dr. Lorenz seconded the motion. The MBNMSAC resolution was read in full and further discussion concerned whether passage of the resolution would cause undue hardship to the cruise industry. Upon clarification from Captain Maguire that this will not be the case, the motion was passed unanimously.

**Any Other Business**

Mr. Nedimyer volunteered to assist in reviewing the Damage Assessment section of the Final Management Plan.

Ms. Harrison thanked the Large Vessel Working Group on behalf of the Council.

Mr. Causey noted that the Biscayne National Park Fisheries Management Plan Working Group, chaired by Jack Curlett, is now reviewing alternatives.

Chair Neugent thanked Captain Maguire for his participation in the discussion.

**Adjourn 4:15 p.m.**

Submitted by

Fiona Wilmot