

Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary Advisory Council

**February 21st, 2006
Marathon Garden Club**

FINAL MINUTES

Members Present

Chris Bergh	Martin Moe
Ralph Boragine	Ken Nedimyer
Jack Curlett	Krueger Nicholson
Todd Firm	George Neugent
Richard Grathwohl	Kathleen Patton
Debra Harrison	Bruce Popham
David Hawtof	Deborah Shaw
Mark Klingbeil	Brad Simonds
Jerry Lorenz	

Alternates Present

Tom Dillon	Bob Holston
Walt Drabinski	Jody Thomas
Scott Fowler	

Call to Order/Roll Call/Approve Minutes of December 6, 2005 Meeting/Adopt Agenda/Introductions

Chair Bruce Popham called the meeting to order at 9:12 a.m. The minutes were approved as presented and the agenda was adopted as presented.

Acting Regional Superintendent Billy Causey introduced the new Director of Coastal and Aquatic Managed Areas for Florida Department of the Environment, Stephanie Bailenson, who comes to Florida from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration in Washington, D.C.

Chair Popham and Superintendent Causey presented Fran Decker original paintings to departing Lower Region Manager Anne McCarthy and Operations Specialist Erskine Robinson.

Tourist Development Council and Tinsley Advertising – Bob Holston (SAC)

Bob Holston described the contribution made by Monroe County's Tourist Development Council (TDC) in promoting the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary, and passed around some examples of materials developed by Tinsley Advertising to bring tourists to the Keys. He noted that the TDC has also contributed \$600,000 to the Nancy Foster Eco-Discovery Center.

Public Comment

Jerry Beaty from Dive Magazine said that the two best known locations in the Caribbean region for sustainable tourism are Bonaire and the Florida Keys, and they demonstrate how advertising can turn a profit yet protect a product.

H.T. Pontin, Master Mariner, read the attached comments into the record.

Sanctuary Superintendent's Report – Billy Causey (FKNMS)

Mr. Causey said that the Florida Oceans Commission, of which he is a member along with council members Jody Thomas and Jerry Lorenz, completed a draft plan which has now been submitted to the legislature. He said that climate change is an issue which requires serious attention. He also reported on progress with regionalization within the sanctuary program, as well as priorities for the South Florida Ecosystem Restoration Task Force.

Mr. Causey thanked members of the advisory council for their testimony before the Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission commissioners in favor of the Research Natural Area (RNA) in Dry Tortugas National Park, and that this proved to be the tipping point in favor of approving the RNA.

Florida Department of Environmental Protection Program Report – Stephanie Bailenson (FDEP)

Ms. Bailenson introduced herself as a coral reef biologist who has made a slight detour into policy and management. She observed that The Gulf of Mexico Alliance has transformed the region, and that at a national level Florida leads the nation for ocean science and technology. She reported that the professionalisation package is with the Governor and that the Governor and Cabinet formally appointed her as the state co-trustee of the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary.

Law Enforcement Report – LT Bill Burns (FWC)

Lt. Burns gave an update on vessel removal following Hurricane Wilma in 2005. He mentioned the Lady Luck casino boat, which is still stranded in the Saddlebunch Keys without salvage insurance, and The Legacy, a 158' yacht stranded similarly in the Calder Channel. Monroe County contractors are handling the derelict vessels using FEMA money. The P/V Peter Gladding arrives in early March, and there will be a dedication ceremony at 10:00 a.m. on the East Quay Wall on April 11th, 2006.

Birds in the Sanctuary

Pelican Problems – Kelly Grinter (Marathon Bird Center)

Ms. Grinter introduced Betsy, the blind pelican, and used her to demonstrate correct handling techniques for an injured bird. There are four Bird Centers in the Keys, in Key Largo, Marathon, Big Pine and Key West. There are two main anthropogenic sources of injury to pelicans: filleted fish carcasses and fishing gear. She noted that there are also deaths attributed to botulism, although the causative agent has yet to be identified through testing at the University of Florida.

Bird Habitats in the Florida Keys – Mark Hedden (Audubon Society of the Florida Keys) Mr. Hedden gave a PowerPoint presentation, going through most of the species that are either resident or migratory through the Keys, and showed a radar image of warblers leaving Cuba to cross the Straits of Florida. Many north American species depend completely on the Keys as either flyways or as breeding grounds, as in the case of Sooty Terns and Brown Noddies in the Dry Tortugas. Mr. Hedden writes a weekly column in the Key West Citizen.

Roseate Spoonbills in Florida Bay: an indicator species – Dr. Jerry Lorenz (Tavernier Science Center, Audubon of Florida)

Dr. Lorenz gave a PowerPoint presentation on the effects of human development in the Keys on feeding and breeding grounds for roseate spoonbills. The significant populations that survived the plume hunters of the early twentieth century have been displaced from the Florida Keys due to habitat loss. The displaced populations have been moving successively westward in Florida Bay due to disruption in breeding season food supply from canalization of the Everglades.

Richard Grathwohl moved to have a letter of support sent to Governor Bush and the Executive Director of the South Florida Water Management District for the total fill in of the airojet canal (C-111) to help restore the freshwater flow to upper Florida Bay as a part of the state's Acceler8 project. The motion was seconded by Ralph Boragine and passed unanimously on roll call vote.

Birding Festival – Joy Tatgenhorst (FKNMS)

Mrs. Tatgenhorst gave a PowerPoint presentation on this annual education and conservation festival held to celebrate the annual southward migration of Peregrine Falcons through the Florida Keys in October. Visiting birders come to Marathon especially for the event.

Development of Working Groups – SAC Members

After discussion, three groups of volunteers were formed to address:

Water Quality

Ecosystem Restoration

Education and Outreach.

Fishing Regulations in National Marine Sanctuaries – SAC Discussion with Stephanie Bailenson

The discussion was deferred until alternate member, Tony Iarocci, on the South Atlantic Fisheries Management Council, could be present.

Oil and Gas Leases – SAC Members

Chair Bruce Popham will discuss the subject with other SAC chairs at the annual meeting in Washington, D.C. in April. The moratorium on exploration off the coast of Florida expires in 2007, and discussion concerned Area 181 lease off the Florida Panhandle, which could have consequences via the Loop Current for the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary. Commissioner George Neugent requested that the SAC support

Monroe County's resolution in favor of a bill sponsored by Florida Senators Nelson and Martinez. Chris Bergh moved in favor of this request, and a vote was deferred until more information was provided to the advisory council.

Mote Marine Laboratory Initiatives – Erich Bartels (Mote)

Mr. Bartels gave a PowerPoint presentation on the work conducted by the Center for Coral Reef Research in the Florida Keys. This includes an annual course on coral diseases, a new course on sponges, and several monitoring programs, notably MEER which collects any and all information on unusual events on the water, coral bleaching information and Black Grouper habitat and spawning site studies. The Center is also involved in coral aquaculture for restoration and *Diadema antillarum* restoration projects. Further information may be found at www.mote.org/Keys. The specialty coral reef vehicle license plate provides a source of funding for these projects.

Monitoring of Reef Restoration Projects in FKNMS – Harold Hudson (Reef Doctor, FKNMS)

Harold Hudson described the repairs undertaken at some of the more significant vessel grounding sites on coral reefs in the Sanctuary. His group has restored structure to these sites, and monitoring of biological recovery is now underway. Some of the sites are being assisted in this recovery with corals salvaged from Key West Harbor and donated acroporid fragments from Ken Nedimyer's nursery. To date no recruits of *Montastrea faveolata* or the *Acropora* species, the major reef building corals, have been found on the restoration sites. Discussion concerned harvesting storm-displaced corals and using them for restoration, rather than leaving them to die.

Oil and Gas Leases continued.

Chris Bergh resubmitted a resolution in support of the Monroe County resolution for the Nelson/Martinez Bill concerning the lease in Area 181. It was seconded by Commissioner Neugent. Significant concern was expressed over passing the resolution. The advisory council's mission to preserve and protect Sanctuary resources was cited in support of it. After further deliberation, the attached resolution passed unanimously upon roll call vote.

Climate Change Effects in South Florida – Dr. Phil Kramer (The Nature Conservancy)

Dr. Kramer gave a PowerPoint presentation on the likely threats to Florida's coral reefs through sea surface temperature increases, and some of the management strategies that are being undertaken to identify and protect resilient reefs. A Keys-wide sampling effort was conducted in 2005 by the newly formed bleaching response team, after a moderate bleaching season mitigated by the four hurricanes that impacted the region. Geographic patterns were observed, as well as depth and location patterns. Discussion concerned interannual variation in bleaching intensity, disease outbreaks, genotypic identification and restoration of staghorn coral populations. A workshop in Homestead was announced for March 9th to address the human dimensions of reef resilience.

Adjourned – 4:15 p.m.