

Martin County Public Workshop
Blake Library, 2351 SE Monterey Road
Stuart, Florida 34996
March 25, 2008 - 5p – 8p

The workshop convened at 5:15 p.m.

FWC GHQ staff included Lieutenant Colonel Bruce Buckson, Major Paul Ouellette, Captain Carol Keyser, Mr. Luke Davis, and Ms. Tara Alford

FWC field staff included Major David Stermen, Captain David Schaeffer, Lieutenant Jorge Pino, and Ms. Gabriella Ferrero. Additional staff included Mr. Russell Watkins and Mr. Charles Sidman, Sea Grant, and Mr. Roger Anderson, PBS&J.

Roundtable participants included Mr. Gerald Ward, Ms. Kathy Fitzpatrick, and Mr. Joe Embres.

Major Ouellette provided a short PowerPoint presentation, which provided information on our authority to regulate the Intracoastal Waterway. He also provided the criteria for Idle Speed No Wake, Slow Speed Minimum Wake, Numerical Speed Limits, Vessel Exclusion Zones, and/or other boating restricted areas.

Dr. Russell Watkins presented his PowerPoint presentation, which was an overview of the data and how the data was collected relative to vessel collision, maritime property endangerment, and public safety relative to various bridges, and segments of the waterways.

Dr. Charles Sidman provided instructions to the audience relative to the Crossroads Area, Blowing Rocks, Jupiter Island and Roosevelt Bridge. Each participant was provided a series of colored dots: Red – vessels affected; yellow – timing of action; blue and orange – no action. Participants affixed dots to the matrix indicating their thoughts on regulation of these areas. They were also able to indicate a 'no change needed' choice.

We had fifty (50) attendees, with the following individuals providing their comments regarding the ICW within Martin County:

Speakers –

Mr. VJ Bell – Charter Boat Captain on Hutchinson Island. Commented on the Crossroads area. Concerned that a No Wake/Slow Speed zone in this area would negatively impact his business. No action needed.

Commissioner (FIND) Gail Byrd – Had to leave for another meeting; Mr. Gerald Ward provided her comments. Believes the study basis should not include "outside of channel data" such as at the Jensen Beach Bridge, and should be reviewed in greater detail. Doesn't believe an additional regulation is needed at the Crossroads as there are strong currents, heavy boat wakes, and the need to maintain a certain speed so as to maintain steerage because of the inlet to the east.

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Mr. Nathaniel Hill – Is opposed to the Crossroads proposal; believes the Blowing Rocks area needs better enforcement but does not want a year 'round or Monday through Friday zone, but perhaps a weekend zone.

Mr. Ted Guy/Ms. Vera Locke – Provided written comments from the Marine Industries Meeting; a copy is attached. (Ms. Locke also provided comments later in these minutes.)

Mr. Robert Walser – Believes boaters need to be better educated; doesn't think that many boaters know the rules of the road. Better education.

Mr. Bob Gallagher – Manager of Jupiter Yacht Club. Believes the existing zone needs to stay 'as is'. This facility has many older guests, as well as children, all of which board or exit boats at this dock.

Mr. Molding Drummond – Keeps a boat at the Jupiter Yacht Club. Wants the zone left intact. Advised they have many young and old visitors alike at this facility. Also mentioned the traffic from the winter boat shows.

Mr. Joe Connelly – Town Manager, Town of Jupiter Island - Discussed that during the life of the current zone (since when it was put it in) they have not experienced any accidents or damage to this facility. The town keeps two patrol boats in the water at all times, and enforces the current zone. Is encouraged by the positive comments on the matrix sheets.

Chief Ted Gonzales – Town of Jupiter Island – Thanked us for our time; requested they be allowed to provide additional background data (citations, warnings issued by their officers) relative to this zone. Will be sending us this information shortly.

Tim Donley – Spends much of his time on his boat at the Stuart Mooring Field (Roosevelt Bridge Area). Advised that depending on wind, tide, and direction of the vessel, passing boats can create a hazardous condition for moored boats. Doesn't believe other areas necessarily need regulation; desires regulation of this area. In the anchorage area large wakes are created by vessels coming on/off plane which creates most of the problems; believes that many boaters don't know the rules of the road, which leads to accidents.

Erik Goodwin – Has been captain on yacht "Madcap" for 14 years. Has experienced accidents in this area even with the regulation; advised there are many elderly folks in this area; doesn't believe the survey accurately depicts the risk at this particular location; believes accidents will occur if zone is removed.

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Mr. Guy Hill – Doesn't want any additional regulation in any area; believes the Crossroads area and Blowing Rocks Marina area don't need any regulation; instead, boaters need to exercise good common sense.

Ms. Vera Locke – Believes the Crossroads area would be very hard to regulate as one would need to be aware of the wind, current, etc.; doesn't believe the area is conducive to a one-size-fits-all regulation.

Mr. Bill Biggs – Owner of Riverwatch Marina, which houses a 300-slip dry storage facility. When boaters from this facility leave the area they go through both the Crossroads and Roosevelt Bridge areas. Believes that regulation of these areas would be detrimental to not only his business, but surrounding businesses as well; believes it would lower property values in this area due to the extended length of time to make it to the inlet. Thinks that the use of breakwaters would be a better solution than imposing additional regulation. He spoke again and understands our mission to improve boater safety, but believes that better marking of the waterways would possibly create better, safer boating.

Mr. George Kay – Is a licensed captain who has made roughly 24 trips between the Chesapeake Bay area to the Stuart area. Believes the Crossroads area is in great need of some type of regulation. He represents the Marine Trawler Owners Association (3,500 members); they have a problem negotiating the Crossroads area at 25 MPH.

Mr. Colin Downey – Has a motor yacht at the Jupiter Yacht Club. Believes that should the zone be lifted, there will be a great increase in accidents; believes that the absence of data might be the strongest data to date.

Mr. Bob Pelosi – Is a licensed captain who wishes to keep zones as they are. Believes the 23'-24' boats are being penalized but are not necessarily the culprits, as it's the larger vessels that are making the wakes. Doesn't believe the zone at the Roosevelt Bridge (Marker 24 west) needs to be as long as currently shown. Advised the Crossroads area has a 25 MPH limit, and it would be adequate if the zone was adequately enforced. Wants the Jupiter Island zone repealed.

Mr. Gerald Ward – Likes the addition of the modeling tool to use; advocates Slow Speed for the bridges and Idle Speed for the locks. Believes the boating safety zones at bridges should be shoreline to shoreline area; believes the Roosevelt Bridge area and Special Anchorage area shouldn't be regulated, but we should work with the city of Stuart to look at the north fork area. Believes the Crossroads area doesn't need more regulation: Better signage and education would serve the public and accomplish the desired task; Jupiter Island zone needs to be based on science.

Mr. Pete Meier – Has been a resident and boater in Martin County for many years. The Crossroads area has been a 25 MPH since its inception, and should remain;

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however, this area does need two things: Strong enforcement on weekends and better signage. Before speed zones were initiated there were 14 manatee deaths in this area, afterwards only six manatee deaths. He spoke again and advised that he has actually told people they were breaking the law.

Captain H. Leonard – Has been resident in Palm City area for 10 years, and is a licensed captain. Doesn't believe any regulation (other than current 25MPH) is needed in this area; believes a slower speed would cause more problems than what is currently posted; believes that people need to understand the rules of the road and thinks licensing of all boaters with the ability to revoke a license would greatly improve boating. The area between Jupiter and the Crossroads is not needed; it is quite long and is absurd. Reminded folks that you are responsible for your wake. Believes the lock going into Lake Okeechobee should be restricted to twice a day.

Captain Peter Murray – Has sailed through the Roosevelt Bridge area at 20-30 knots and desires an exception for sailing vessels. Mr. Murray spoke again about the inability for sailboats to "just slow down".

Mr. Joe Flanagan – Doesn't believe the Roosevelt Bridge area needs to be expanded any larger than what is currently in place; thinks many of the wakes in this area are being generated by vessels coming out the north fork headed to the inlet.

Major Ouellette advised the audience we would be back with a draft of rule and would hold a workshop to discuss it as well as to ask and answer questions.

As there were no other members of the audience wishing to speak, we adjourned the workshop at 7:35 p.m.

After we returned from the workshop, we received the following comments on this issue via electronic mail.

Mr. William Miller - My house is on the island waterway. Over the last several years, we have witnessed significant erosion of the shore line. The boats already speed excessively. There is no refund for the manatees, wild fowl or the water line. Further increases in speed will only accelerate the damage to our environment. Speeds should be reduced.

Ms. Katherine Miller - The current waterway traffic is causing severe erosion from the Jupiter Island Club South. The road that runs along that strip has only a few feet of protection before it too starts to erode. Some residents have had to put in large boulders and fill to protect their properties. No one observes the boat speed now. If it is increased it will obviously become much worse.