

MEMORANDUM



To: Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commissioners
From: Jessica McCawley, Director, Marine Fisheries Management
Date: October 2, 2019
Subject: Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary – Staff Report

Purpose:

Review and discuss proposed regulatory actions for the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary (FKNMS), FWC’s role in managing fisheries resources in the FKNMS, and next steps.

Summary:

NOAA’s Office of National Marine Sanctuaries has proposed to expand the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary boundary, update Sanctuary-wide regulations, modify and establish new marine zones, update regulations for these zones, and revise the FKNMS’s non-regulatory management plan. The goal of the proposal is to meet the purposes and policies of the National Marine Sanctuaries Act, implement actions identified in the 2007 FKNMS management plan, and act upon several recommendations of the FKNMS Sanctuary Advisory Council. These recommendations are based primarily on the 2011 FKNMS condition report, which highlighted continuing and emerging threats to marine resources in the Florida Keys. The FKNMS Restoration Blueprint includes four regulatory alternatives, which build on each other. NOAA is accepting comments on this draft plan through Jan. 31, 2020, and is holding several public meetings to obtain input on potential changes. NOAA will review public comments and consult with state and federal partners before finalizing the plan and associated regulations.

Because the FKNMS includes both federal and state resources, management of the FKNMS involves several federal and state partners. NOAA will consult with the Gulf and South Atlantic fishery management councils regarding parts of the plan that affect federal waters in the FKNMS. FWC has authority to implement marine fisheries regulations for state waters of the FKNMS, and the Governor and Cabinet have final approval over other regulatory changes affecting the state. Because of this management partnership, FWC has been involved in development of this draft plan through involvement on the Sanctuary Advisory Council, participation in working groups as part of the review of the FKNMS management plan, and through extensive research conducted within the Florida Keys ecosystem. FWC will continue to engage with FKNMS and other partners during this process to understand stakeholder views on proposed alternatives and provide FWC perspective, leading to submission of formal comments on the plan prior to January 31, 2020.

Staff Recommendation:

Return to the December 2019 Commission Meeting for a discussion of specific aspects of the FKNMS Restoration Blueprint plan alternatives, and get feedback on possible FWC comments.

Staff Contact and/or Presenter:

Jessica McCawley, Director, Division of Marine Fisheries Management