

# MEMORANDUM



**To:** Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commissioners  
**From:** Jessica McCawley, Director, Marine Fisheries Management  
**Date:** December 12, 2019  
**Subject:** Staff Report – Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary

**Purpose:** Obtain Commission direction on proposed regulatory changes for the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary (FKNMS).

**Why:** NOAA's Office of National Marine Sanctuaries is seeking input from the public and management partners, including FWC, on the FKNMS Restoration Blueprint. This proposal includes expanding the FKNMS boundary; modifying existing and creating new marine zones; and updating regulations and management in the FKNMS.

## Top Points:

- 1) As NOAA and FWC gather public input on the Restoration Blueprint, stakeholder comments have focused on several aspects of the proposal that are of interest to FWC.
- 2) Management of the FKNMS involves several state and federal partners. FWC has the unique authority to implement marine fisheries regulations for state waters of the FKNMS.
- 3) FWC staff continues to review the Restoration Blueprint and stakeholder comments, and will submit formal comments to NOAA following the February Commission meeting.

## Affected Parties:

This proposal affects a diverse range of stakeholders in the Florida Keys, including fishermen, divers, boaters, tourism interests, businesses and residents.

## Summary:

Staff will provide an overview of the following topics from the FKNMS Restoration Blueprint. These topics are of particular interest to stakeholders and FWC.

- FKNMS boundary expansion
- Phase-out of baitfish permits
- Fish feeding regulations
- Protection of large, contiguous habitat
- Expansion of Sanctuary Preservation Areas (SPAs) and Western Sambo Ecological Reserve
- Limited access to Carysfort, Sombrero, and Sand Key SPAs
- Backcountry Wildlife Management Areas
- Western Dry Rocks Wildlife Management Area
- Tortugas Spawning Corridor SPA
- Key Largo Management Area
- Law enforcement

## Staff Recommendation:

Provide direction to staff on proposed changes to regulations and management of the FKNMS.

## Staff Contact and/or Presenter:

John Hunt, Program Administrator, Fish and Wildlife Research Institute  
Jessica McCawley, Director, Marine Fisheries Management