

MEMORANDUM



To: Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commissioners
From: Jessica McCawley, Director, Marine Fisheries Management
Date: February 19, 2020
Subject: Staff Report – Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary

Purpose: Obtain Commission direction on proposed formal comments on the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary (FKNMS) Restoration Blueprint.

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) The FKNMS Restoration Blueprint includes several proposals that are of interest to FWC and stakeholders.
- 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 draft FWC comments on the Restoration Blueprint that were developed considering the following guiding principles discussed by the Commission at its December 2019 meeting:

- Addressing ecosystem-level change as a high priority (water quality, water flow, and coral loss)
- Fisheries management is reserved to FWC in state waters
- Consider closures and access restrictions on a case-by-case basis
- Need to clearly define rationale for proposed actions
 - What issue is being addressed?
 - What has past experience taught us?
 - What are likely outcomes?
 - Evaluate relative to expected stakeholder impacts
- Must be fair to all stakeholders

In addition, staff will address the need for additional law enforcement in the FKNMS. Staff will also outline a proposed process for future FWC rulemaking on fisheries management items in state waters in response to the Restoration Blueprint and stakeholder feedback.

Staff Recommendation:

Provide direction to staff on proposed formal comments to FKNMS on the Restoration Blueprint.

Staff Contact and/or Presenter:

Jessica McCawley, Director, Marine Fisheries Management