

Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary Advisory Council

June 15, 2004

**Marathon Garden Club
FINAL MINUTES**

Members Present

Jack Curlett	Duncan Mathewson
Fran Decker	Martin Moe
Todd Firm	Ken Nedimyer
Mitch Gale	George Neugent
Richard Grathwohl	Bruce Popham
Debra Harrison	Deborah Shaw
Mark Klingbeil	Brad Simonds
Nancy Klingener	

Alternates Present

Jerome Lorenz
Jody Thomas

Call to Order

Chair Neugent called the meeting to order at 9:11 a.m.

Introductions

Chair Neugent welcomed new member Mitch Gale in the Commercial Fishing seat and recognized Coastal and Aquatic Managed Areas Director Kacky Andrews.

Approval of Minutes and Adoption of Agenda

The Minutes were approved as presented. The Agenda was adopted as presented.

Navy Dredging Update

Lauri MacLaughlin gave a statistical update on the progress of removing material. Discussion concerned human error in operating dredging machinery.

Public Comment

Lynda Berrigan on behalf of Marathon Garden Club presented a plan for a Wonder Garden program that will benefit the whole community through education. The program will highlight gardening techniques that are friendly to the marine environment, such as planting native species, using less water, pesticides and fertilizer and removing invasive exotics. She asked for financial support.

Dr. Shaw moved that the Sanctuary Advisory Council request Sanctuary managers to seek any funds available to support the Marathon Garden Club's "The Wonder Garden 2005" project. She said that State and Federal support for such a project is justified because this project directly impacts the health of the nearshore waters and the reef. The motion was passed unanimously.

Sanctuary Superintendent's Report – Billy Causey (FKNMS)

Mr. Causey presented the attached report. He reported on, amongst other things, Capitol Hill Oceans Week, the Blue Star program for dive shops, boat ramp signs and batfish.

Florida Department of Environmental Protection Report – Kacky Andrews (DEP)

Ms. Andrews reported that the Governor's budget came in under the requested amount, but that Florida is still committed to an oceans initiative, with four broad themes

- 1) Closing the gap between scientists and managers
- 2) Educating recreational boaters to minimize impacts on the resource
- 3) Creating a saltwater paddling trail, adding on to local efforts
- 4) Improving coral reef conservation.

Discussion concerned the status of the gas pipeline from the Bahamas, Governors of the Gulf of Mexico discussions, the Gulf of Mexico hypoxia issue. Ms. Andrews described the efforts underway to bring the 11th International Coral Reef Symposium to Florida in 2008. Further discussion concerned development of marinas for other uses and the loss of public access to the water.

Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission – John Hunt (FMRI)

Mr. Hunt reported that from July 1st the reorganized commission will have the acronym FWRI. He said the conch rejuvenation project is going well. In the Western Sambo Ecological Reserve, the sonic tagging project for lobsters is showing sex ratio changes reminiscent of the Tortugas. The Drift Vial study has been active in Mexico and Cuba.

Sanctuary Law Enforcement Report – Capt. Laurie Luher (FWC)

Capt. Luher said that an action film, permitted by the Coast Guard, is being made in the Keys. She reported on the various methods being employed to detect illegal lobster habitat and gave Memorial Day enforcement statistics. A group of Puerto Rican rangers visited the Keys for training in protection and enforcement. Discussion concerned buoys at Molasses Reef and plans for enforcement of mini-season.

Nitrogen in Florida Bay – Billy Causey (FKNMS)

Mr. Causey gave the attached PowerPoint presentation and reviewed various recent discussions in the scientific peer-reviewed literature concerning the effects of nitrogen on various components of the ecosystem. He discussed various sources of nitrogen in the water column and described the status of reef systems at different sites within the Caribbean. Discussion concerned the impacts of herbivory on reef health and other elements, such as phosphorus, that can have significant impacts in different environments.

LIDAR/Video Transect Along the Reef System in the Florida Keys – Dr. John C. Brock (USGS)

Dr. Brock gave the attached PowerPoint presentation and noted that there is a significant difference in the level of resolution between NOAA bathymetry and LIDAR. The study has been developed to determine the relationship between rugosity and fish populations and has revealed the poor development of patch reefs in areas of Pleistocene flooding. It will be able to track ecological changes over time in specific areas. The USGS has

devised an equipment complex with a digital video camera attached at one end of a pole with a GPS locator at the other end linked to a “ruggedized” laptop. This equipment can be deployed from a boat or an airplane. Discussion concerned the degree of resolution, which can even discern the details of sunken galleons after hurricanes have scoured them out.

Report on Biscayne National Park Fisheries Management Plan Working Group – Jack Curlett (Chair), Jerry Lorenz, Martin Moe and Ken Nedimyer

Mr. Curlett gave an overview of the process involved in the Working Group which remained focused on the Park’s mission statement regarding “great natural beauty”. He presented recommendations on four issues from the Working Group to the Sanctuary Advisory Council for the Biscayne National Park Fisheries Management Plan. A fifth issue is to be considered at a future meeting.

Mr. Moe said that the group debated Desired Future Conditions of Park resources in the face of burgeoning population growth. It was decided that abundance and size of key indicator species should increase. He outlined suggestions made by the group to implement those changes.

Dr. Lorenz discussed the law enforcement and education recommendations made by the group, including the establishment of a \$25 permit to support those recommendations which are currently not funded. Although initially law enforcement was not considered, by the end of the five meetings, of the Working Group, it was agreed that it is vital to achieving any other goals that the group sets.

Mr. Nedimyer described the current status of all commercial fisheries within the national park, particularly efforts to reduce bycatch mortality. He said that the group wanted to establish a permitting system to identify persons who specifically fished within Biscayne National Park and mentioned a number of mechanisms to realize this goal.

Mr. Curlett said that the group has discussed matters affecting the recreational fishing sector, which has grown by 400%, including doing away with mini-season, allowing only spearfishing without SCUBA and establishing a license.

Sanctuary Advisory Council members who were not on the working group raised the following concerns:

- 1) The need for legislative approval for any license fee.
- 2) The relationship of the recommendations to traditional fisheries management.
- 3) The impact on the Florida Keys of closing down the mini-season in Biscayne National Park.
- 4) The disproportionate effects of legislative restrictions on commercial as opposed to recreational fishermen.
- 5) A reluctance to vote on an incomplete document.
- 6) The problem of adequately addressing the recreational public through education and enforcement.

- 7) The indiscriminate fishing that is taking place in Biscayne National Park and the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary on the part of recreational fishermen.

Discussion followed concerning the importance of sending a unified, strong message from the Working Group and the Sanctuary Advisory Council to managers. The importance of establishing baseline conditions was discussed. It was clarified that the remaining issues to be discussed by the Working Group that is not part of the package before the Sanctuary Advisory Council is marine protected areas.

Public Comment

Ted Forsgren of CCA thanked Biscayne National Park for putting together a lot of people to discuss resource conditions. He said that a lot of time was spent at the working group meetings on individual words, in many cases. He noted that vessel permit relates to boats yet at the same time was a user permit, that would be a good funding source to pay for education, signage and law enforcement. He recommended that the SAC address the report and accept it as being done as opposed to agreeing with every word.

David White of The Ocean Conservancy said that it is a very good plan as far as it goes, even though it mostly represents consumptive users. He noted that Florida Fish & Wildlife Commission are not currently partners in the General Management Plan, and that FDEP protects habitat. He said that with regard to fishing, if you have a hotspot, fishers will come. He recommended an ecosystem management group, protecting a natural assemblage of native fauna and flora in their natural state.

Discussion followed, concerning procedure.

Mr. Nedimyer moved to vote on the four issue groups presented in the document given to the SAC for review by the Working Group, with the fifth issue being brought before the SAC after a further Working Group meeting in August. The motion was seconded by Mr. Simonds. Ms. Harrison offered a friendly amendment in Issue 4, “to reduce over the course of the next five years maintaining the status quo”. Chair Neugent recommended voting up or down the way that the motion was made. Ms. Harrison requested that Issue 4 be withdrawn. The motion failed 7:6 on roll call vote.

Mr. Nedimyer moved that the Sanctuary Advisory Council accept Biscayne National Park Fisheries Management Plan Working Group’s proposals on Issues 1-3, and will revisit Issue 4 (on the concerns of the numbers of recreational fishermen) and bring it and Issue 5 back to the SAC for approval at the August meeting. The motion was seconded by Ms. Klingener and passed 10:3 on roll call vote.

Sanctuary Advisory Council members not on the Working Group congratulated and thanked Working Group members for their hard work.

Connectivity – Billy Causey

Mr. Causey mentioned the upcoming Sanctuary meeting at the Casa Marina, Key West in August to discuss the status of Sanctuary resources at a local, regional and global level.

Adjourn

