



EVERGLADES COALITION

A Resolution of the Everglades Coalition in Support of Strong Protections in the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary Proposed Management Plan

WHEREAS, the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary (“Sanctuary”) is a national treasure at the southernmost point of the Greater Everglades ecosystem and protects 2,900 square nautical miles of unique and nationally significant marine resources, including part of the world’s third largest barrier reef ecosystem, 1.4 million acres of seagrass beds, 1,800 miles of mangrove-fringed shoreline, and more than 6,000 species of marine life, including sea turtles, manatees, and dolphins;

WHEREAS, the Sanctuary is hugely important economically and contributes \$4.4 billion annually to the state’s economy, with approximately 60% of the Florida Keys economy directly tied to marine-related activities;

WHEREAS, the Sanctuary is directly connected to the waters of Florida Bay and three national parks, including Biscayne, Everglades, and Dry Tortugas, and is closely linked to the health of all northern regions of the Greater Everglades ecosystem;

WHEREAS, the health of the Sanctuary is directly linked to successful implementation of the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP), which will divert harmful Lake Okeechobee discharges away from the northern estuaries and deliver clean, freshwater to the Southern Everglades, Florida Bay, and the waters of the Florida Keys;

WHEREAS, the Sanctuary’s resources, including coral reefs, seagrass beds, and fish populations, have been on the decline for decades due to impacts from increased use, marine debris, pollution, lack of freshwater deliver to Florida Bay, intensifying storms, disease outbreaks, rising ocean temperatures, and acidification;

WHEREAS, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), in partnership with the State of Florida, is in the process of updating the Sanctuary’s Management Plan, which has the opportunity to address to protecting critical natural areas, improving zoning and marine management, and building ecological resiliency in conjunction with ongoing restoration efforts.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED ON OCTOBER 29TH 2021:

The Everglades Coalition, an alliance of conservation and environmental groups dedicated to protecting and restoring America’s Everglades, supports a strong Management Plan and urges NOAA and other decision makers, including the Florida Department of Environmental Protection and Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, to implement conservation policies focused on protecting threatened wildlife and sensitive habitat, reducing stressors on natural resources, restoring degraded areas, and

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strengthening investments in activities to improve the long-term health of the Sanctuary as an essential marine ecosystem of the Greater Everglades.

Specifically, the Everglades Coalition supports measures to:

- Address water quality, such as sources of nutrient pollution, and the impacts of climate change
- Expand Sanctuary boundaries to include Pulley Ridge, home to the deepest known photosynthesizing coral reef off the continental United States
- Expand the number and size of marine protected areas designed to protect habitat and biodiversity, including the Tortugas Corridor
- Prevent propeller damage in the Keys' shallow, sensitive habitats by slowing boats in appropriate shallow waters throughout the Sanctuary
- Protect the most sensitive habitats with shoreline-to-reef zones, such as at Boca Chica and Carysfort Reef
- Strengthen protections for areas of high biodiversity and wildlife corridors



Mark Perry
Co-Chair



Marisa Carrozzo
Co-Chair

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