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August 1, 2022

John Armor  
Director of the Office of National Marine Sanctuaries  
1305 East-West Highway, 11th Floor  
Silver Spring, MD 20910

Dear Mr. Armor:

At our upcoming September meeting, the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) will discuss the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary (FKNMS) Restoration Blueprint Draft Rule. We will receive a joint presentation by FWC and FKNMS staffs, take public comment, and then discuss the Restoration Blueprint Draft Rule and the process for FWC providing comments.

The FKNMS is a critically important area for the State of Florida. It houses the largest contiguous seagrass area in the northern hemisphere and the largest coral reef ecosystem in the continental United States. This Sanctuary houses many of the important recreational and commercial fisheries for our state, such as the spiny lobster fishery. FKNMS also includes significant spawning aggregations for these species, including mutton snapper and black grouper.

The FWC takes its role as a cooperating agency seriously. Although our staff has been involved in the Sanctuary Advisory Council process and assisting with community working groups, as Commissioners we want to ensure that staff has a robust discussion on the items in the plan and the ability to respond to public comments since we will be responsible for implementing the fisheries regulations for state waters of the FKNMS.

On behalf of our Commissioners, I am requesting that the FWC be able to submit comments on the Draft Rule in February 2023, rather than by the public comment deadline of October 26, 2022. This timeframe would allow the Commission to receive presentations from staff at more than one Commission meeting, review the public comments submitted to the FKNMS, and provide detailed direction to staff to inform our commenting letter on the Draft Rule.

It has been a pleasure working with your staff at the FKNMS. We look forward to continuing our great working relationship moving through this process. If you have additional comments or questions, please contact Jessica McCawley, Director of the Division of Marine Fisheries Management: 850-487-0554 or [Jessica.McCawley@MyFWC.com](mailto:Jessica.McCawley@MyFWC.com). Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

Robert Spottswood  
Commissioner

cc: Sarah Fangman  
Ed Lindelof  
Gil McRae  
Shawn Hamilton