

FLORIDA KEYS NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARY
Water Quality Protection Program Steering Committee Meeting

October 29, 2026
9:00 AM – 5:00 PM

Marathon City Hall, 9805 Overseas Highway, Marathon, FL 33050

The meeting will also be broadcast in real time for listening only:

<https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/8430353032120689245>; Webinar ID 108-243-315

Meeting Purpose: Convene the Water Quality Protection Program (WQPP) Steering Committee to review the status of Florida Keys water quality projects and complementary efforts, and discuss timely issues and future actions related to water quality priorities.

Meeting Materials:

- Notes from the July 15, 2026 WQPP Steering Committee meeting
- Overview of the Regulatory Framework for Strategies for Management of *Sargassum* Inundation Events in the United States
- 2026 WQPP Congressional Report (TBD)

Agenda

9:00 AM

I. Welcome and Opening Remarks

- Call to Order, *Lawrence Glenn, DEP / Wade Lehmann, EPA*
- Opening Remarks – DEP and EPA
- Steering Committee Member Introductions
- Housekeeping
- Review and Adopt Agenda
 - *Steering Committee Vote*
- Approve Minutes from July 15, 2026
 - *Steering Committee Vote*

9:20 AM

II. Resource Status and Monitoring Updates

- (20 min) **Development of a Restoration-Focused Coral Reef Decision Support System**, *Dr. David Kochan, Associate Research Scientist, FWC FWRI*
 - (5 min) *Steering Committee Q&A/Discussion*
- (20 min) **Mapping Seascape Mosaics Using Satellite Imagery to Quantify Seagrass Dynamics in the Florida Keys**, *Marianna Coppola, Jonathan Rodemann, W. Ryan James, Jennifer Rehage, and Rolando Santos Corujo, Florida International University*
 - (5 min) *Steering Committee Q&A/Discussion*
- (20 min) **Loss of Habitat Structure in Nearshore Hardbottom Habitats in the Florida Keys**, *Casey Butler, Research Associate, FWC FWRI*
 - (5 min) *Steering Committee Q&A/Discussion*

- 10:35 AM** **III. Regulatory Framework for Management of *Sargassum* Inundation Events,**
Katharine Egan, Southeast and Caribbean Regional Coordinator, NOAA
(20 min) Overview of the regulatory framework and management strategies for *Sargassum* inundation events in the United States, with a focus on the Florida Keys.
• (5 min) *Steering Committee Q&A/Discussion*
- 11:00 AM** **Break** (15 minutes)
- 11:15 AM** **IV. Monitoring Water Quality in the Key West Ship Channel and Surrounding Coral Reefs Pre- and Post-COVID-19 Anthropause,** *Dr. Patrick Rice, Chief Science & Research Officer, College of the Florida Keys*
(25 min) Presentation of results from an EPA-funded study to monitor water quality in Key West Harbor, the shipping channel, and surrounding reefs to understand the effects of natural and anthropogenic stressors on ecologically significant marine waters in the Florida Keys.
• (5 min) *Steering Committee Q&A/Discussion*
- 11:45 AM** **V. Mobile Vessel Pumpout Program,** *Brittany Burtner, Sr. Administrator, Marine Resources Office, Monroe County Planning & Environmental Resources*
(25 min) Overview of the Mobile Vessel Pumpout Program in Monroe County, including vessel pumpout requirements, program implementation and enforcement strategies, and overall results in protecting local water quality.
• (5 min) *Steering Committee Q&A/Discussion*
- 12:15 PM** **Lunch** (1 hour 30 minutes)
- 1:45 PM** **VI. Florida Keys Water Quality Improvement Program,** *Brenda Calvente, Program & Project Delivery Support Branch Chief, USACE SAI PPMD*
(15 min) Update on progress and next steps for the Water Quality Improvement Program.
• (5 min) *Steering Committee Q&A/Discussion*
- 2:05 PM** **VII. Florida Keys Wastewater Regulatory Framework,** *John Truitt, Deputy Secretary for Regulatory Programs, DEP*
(20 min) Overview of the regulatory framework governing wastewater disposal in the Florida Keys, including Advanced Wastewater Treatment (AWT) and Best Available Technology (BAT) standards, capacity thresholds and operational testing, compliance enforcement, and opportunities for public comment.
• (10 min) *Steering Committee Q&A/Discussion*
- 2:35 PM** **VIII. Shallow Injection Well Research Update,** *Lee Kump, Professor of Geosciences, Pennsylvania State University / Christian Lundy, Pennsylvania State University*
(20 min) Presentation of updated results from the EPA-funded study to quantify the impact of shallow wastewater injection on groundwater nutrient fluxes to surface waters in the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary.

- (10 min) *Steering Committee Q&A/Discussion*

3:05 PM **IX. Florida Keys Ecosystem Connectivity Team**, *Marisa Carrozzo, Associate Director, National Parks Conservation Association / Chris Bergh, Field Program Director, The Nature Conservancy*

(10 min) Update on recent activities of the joint SAC/WQPP Florida Keys Ecosystem Connectivity Working Group, including recent resolutions adopted by the SAC on the CERP Southern Everglades Study and Stock Island shallow wastewater injection well.

- (10 min) *Steering Committee Q&A/Discussion*

3:25 PM **Break** (15 minutes)

3:40 PM **X. WQPP Report to Congress**, *Beth Smith, South Florida Program Coordinator, EPA / Karen Bohnsack, Associate Director, NOAA FKNMS*

(10 min) Overview and discussion on the 2026 WQPP Congressional Report and the next report cycle.

- (10 min) *Steering Committee Q&A/Discussion*

4:00 PM **XI. Canal Restoration Subcommittee Update**, *Beth Smith, South Florida Program Coordinator, EPA / Peter Frezza, Environmental Resources Manager, Village of Islamorada*

(10 min) Update on progress and upcoming activities of the Canal Restoration Subcommittee

- (5 min) *Steering Committee Q&A/Discussion*

4:15 PM **XII. Public Comment** (15 minutes)

4:30 PM **XIII. Steering Committee Member Updates**

(25 min) Open forum for members of the Steering Committee to report on recent activities or emerging topics of relevance to the Water Quality Protection Program.

4:55 PM **Wrap-Up and Review Action Items**

5:00 PM **Adjourn**