

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

**March 7, 2024**  
**9:00 AM – 5:00 PM**

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

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

<https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/3103467664290165590>; Webinar ID: 452-130-491

**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.

**Objectives:**

- Advise on the Congressional Report and additional opportunities to improve external communications about the WQPP and ongoing water quality issues and efforts.
- Continue investigating wastewater treatment efforts, including alternative disposal methodologies and research needs.
- Review additional funding allocations for water quality improvements in the Florida Keys.
- Discuss the EPA South Florida Geographic Initiative program, including projects funded in 2023 and priority topic recommendations for 2024 funding.
- Share project planning and outcomes associated with ongoing projects, including: sponge restoration, tidal restoration, and canal restoration efforts.
- Provide an open forum for information sharing and discussion on complementary efforts and emerging topics of relevance to the Water Quality Protection Program.

**Meeting Materials:**

- Minutes from November 29, 2023 WQPP Steering Committee meeting
- Draft WQPP Report to Congress
- Draft list of Management Committee priority topics recommended for 2024 EPA funding

**Agenda**

**9:00 AM**

**I. Welcome and Opening Remarks**

- Call to Order and Opening Remarks, *Wade Lehmann, EPA/ Kim Shugar, DEP*
- Steering Committee Member Introductions
- Housekeeping
- Review and Adopt Agenda
  - *Steering Committee Vote*
- Approve Minutes from November 29, 2023
  - *Steering Committee Vote*

- 9:20 AM**      **II. WQPP Congressional Report Update**  
(5 min) Update on the Water Quality Protection Program Congressional Report: latest status and next steps.
- *Steering Committee Q&A and Discussion* (15 min)
- 9:40 AM**      **III. WQPP Communications**  
Explore opportunities to improve external communications about the WQPP and water quality issues, efforts, successes, and milestones in the Florida Keys.
- *Steering Committee Q&A/Discussion* (20 min)
- 10:00 AM**      **IV. Use of Shallow Injection Wells for Wastewater Disposal**  
Continued discussion on the use of shallow injection wells for wastewater disposal, including considerations for the City of Marathon's wastewater treatment system and additional research needs.
- **City of Marathon Wastewater Updates** (20 min), *George Garrett, City of Marathon*
  - **Outstanding Research Questions and Suggested Next Steps** (5 min), *Dr. Lee Kump and Dr. Miquela Ingalls, Penn State (pre-recorded)*
  - *Steering Committee Q&A and Discussion* (15 min)
- 10:40 AM**      **Break** (20 minutes)
- 11:00 AM**      **V. Direct Potable Wastewater Reuse: Innovative Treatment and Feasibility Studies**, *Lynn Spivey, Director of Utilities, Plant City, FL*  
(30 min) To meet the demand for a future sustainable water supply, many utility providers are considering nontraditional water sources, including highly treated wastewater. These innovative treatment methods and the status of ongoing feasibility studies will be discussed.
- *Steering Committee Q&A/Discussion* (15 min)
- 11:45 AM**      **Lunch** (1 hour 30 minutes)
- 1:15 PM**      **VI. Water Quality Improvement Program**, *Manny Vianzon Jr., USACE*  
(10 min) Update on funding status of planning efforts and next steps.
- *Steering Committee Q&A/Discussion* (20 min)
- 1:45 PM**      **VII. EPA South Florida Geographic Initiative Funding and Priority Topics**
- **FY23 Projects**, *Steve Blackburn, EPA*
    - (10 min) Update of the special study topics that received EPA South Florida Geographic Initiative funds in 2023.
  - **FY24 Priority Topics for Consideration**, *Karen Bohnsack, FKNMS*
    - (5 min) Overview of draft priority topics recommended by the Management Committee for 2024 funding.
  - *Steering Committee Feedback and Discussion* (15 min)
    - *Potential Steering Committee Action Item*

- 2:15 PM**      **VIII. Florida Keys Water Watch Sponge Restoration Aquaculture**, *Shelly Krueger, Florida Sea Grant Extension Agent, UF/IFAS Monroe County Extension*  
(10 min) Preliminary results of sponge propagule reproduction following aquaculture propagation.
- *Steering Committee Q&A/Discussion* (5 minutes)
- 2:30 PM**      **IX. FWC Sponge Restoration Project Update**, *Bill Sharp, FWC*  
(25 min) Update on current status of sponge outplanting efforts and overview of future research objectives.
- *Steering Committee Q&A/Discussion* (10 minutes)
- 3:05 PM**      **Break** (20 minutes)
- 3:25 PM**      **X. Florida Keys Tidal Connection Project**, *Dr. Nicholas Parr, DEP*  
(10 min) Overview of the objectives and planning associated with a new EPA funded tidal connection project in Marathon.
- *Steering Committee Q&A/Discussion* (5 minutes)
- 3:40 PM**      **XI. Injection Wells and Canal Restoration – Preliminary Monitoring Results**, *Stephen Hanks, Senior Engineer, WSP – Environmental Services*  
(20 min) Overview of performance results and preliminary water quality data from the restoration of Canal 114 in the Village of Islamorada. This was the first project to utilize injection well technology in canal restoration.
- *Steering Committee Q&A/Discussion* (10 minutes)
- 4:10 PM**      **XII. Public Comment** (15 minutes)
- 4:25 PM**      **XIII. Steering Committee Member Updates**  
(30 min) Members of the Steering Committee provide updates on recent activities or emerging topics of relevance to the Water Quality Protection Program.
- 4:55 PM**      **XIV. Wrap-Up and Review Action Items**
- 5:00 PM**      **Adjourn**