



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NATIONAL OCEAN SERVICE

Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary

33 East Quay Road
Key West, FL 33040

October 24, 2022

Dr. Carolyn Belcher
Chair
South Atlantic Fishery Management Council
4055 Faber Place Drive, Suite 201
North Charleston SC 29405

Dear Chairperson Belcher:

Thank you for your September 23, 2022, letter requesting an extension until February 24, 2023 for the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council (SAFMC) to provide comment on the notice of proposed rulemaking for the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary.

We view coordination with our regional fishery management council partners as critical to refining and ultimately implementing provisions of the Restoration Blueprint. Providing the opportunity for the relevant SAFMC and its relevant Advisory Panels to be briefed and provide comments to the full Council is an essential part of this process.

Section 304(a)(5) of the National Marine Sanctuaries Act (16 U.S.C. § 1434(a)(5)) and NOAA's sanctuary regulations at 15 C.F.R. § 922.22(b) provide the regional fishery management councils with 120 days to conduct their review, make recommendations and, if appropriate, prepare draft fishery regulations and submit them to NOAA. NOAA initiated that process with the SAFMC with the release of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement of August 2019. While NOAA used SAFMC comments received at that time to inform this notice of proposed rulemaking, we welcome additional comments and recommendations on any fishing regulations within the exclusive economic zone of the proposed expanded boundary of the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary.

Consistent with NOAA policy and to provide adequate time for the SAFMC meetings, including Advisory Panel input, I concur with your request to provide us with your comments by February 24, 2023.

Sincerely,

Sarah Fangman
Sanctuary Superintendent

Cc: Council Members and Staff
Carrie Simmons, GMFMC



Andy Strelcheck, Jack McGovern, Monica Smit-Brunello, NMFS