

**Draft**  
**MANAGEMENT PLAN**

for  
Boot Key Harbor

Monroe County, Florida

**Date: 11 January 2000**

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## **1.0 Intent of management plan**

It is the intent of this Management Plan (Plan) to address the primary management concerns of the proposed Managed Harbor (Harbor), encompassing Boot Key Harbor and Sisters Creek adjacent to the City of Marathon, Monroe County. The Plan will establish a necessary, organized structure for adequate and appropriate management of the Harbor, and to establish use of the Harbor in a manner that will eliminate the potential discharge of pollutants into the waters of the State.

The Monroe County Board of County Commissioners (County), through ownership and management of the Florida Keys Marina, Marathon, has expressed its intent to provide the patrons of the Harbor with:

- adequate services and necessary amenities, and
- to accommodate the needs of as many responsible, considerate, recreational and local liveboard boaters as possible.

Further, it is the stated intent of the County to provide services at reasonable and affordable costs to both long and short-term users of the Harbor.

This Plan may be modified and changed as needed to address unanticipated issues and needs as deemed necessary by the County. However, before any such modifications become effective, these modifications to the Plan must be accepted by the Florida Department of Environmental Protection. The authority to manage the Harbor through the Management Plan will be identified in the Management Agreement signed by the State of Florida and Monroe County concerning the Harbor.

## **2.0 Management plan components**

The Management Plan is provided to address the general authority granted to the County by the State in the terms of a Management Agreement and through the adoption of anticipated local ordinances or resolutions when deemed necessary by the County.

This Management Plan has been prepared to cover the use of provided mooring systems, as identified on the enclosed drawings and referred to as "mooring field", and the use of an anchoring area, identified and referred to as "anchorage field".

The mooring fields are intended for short-term and long-term tenancy. The anchoring field is intended for transient vessels. The remaining areas outside of the designated mooring and anchoring fields, but within the boundaries of the Harbor, will not be intended for anchoring or mooring activities.

Aspects of the County's authority to manage the Harbor include:

- the ability to establish designated mooring fields and anchorage areas;
- the ability to assign responsibility for day to day management of the Harbor to the Harbor Manager;
- the ability to establish vessel safety standards and appropriate rules for use of the mooring fields and anchorage area following the guidance of existing law;
- the ability to establish appropriate and affordable fees for the use of the mooring fields, associated amenities, and services provided by the Harbor Manager; and
- the ability to prohibit certain types of activity and the mooring of vessels typically engaged in commercial activities.

The guidelines identified herein shall apply to any vessel, its owner(s), crew, and guests staying in the Harbor on either a temporary or long-term basis.

### **3.0 Authority of the Harbor Manager.**

It is intended that the County will establish a permanent Harbor Manager at the Florida Keys Marina, Marathon (Marina) that will oversee management of the Harbor on behalf of the County. The Harbor Manager will manage the Harbor in accordance with the authority granted to the County by the State in the Harbor Management Agreement and as established by County ordinance and/or resolution.

### **4.0 Managed Harbor, Mooring Fields, and Anchorage Field**

The Managed Harbor consists of those areas lying within the bounds of Boot Key Harbor to the west (between Daybeacons 5 and 7) and Sisters Creek to the south (beginning at Daybeacon 3) along with its natural tributaries. The Managed Harbor will not include residential canals contiguous with the Harbor area, privately owned submerged land or those areas where other State sovereignty submerged land leases or agreements previously exist, unless provided for by separate specific agreement. Other than for the Florida Keys Marina, Marathon, the Management Agreement should not provide authority for managing any docks, marinas, or other docking structures attached to the land within the Harbor area.

The Managed Harbor area, the mooring fields, and the anchorage field are identified in the attached map graphic.

### **5.0 The Managed Harbor Concept**

The Board of County Commissioners has considered the management issues within the Harbor for nearly 12 years through two appointed working committees. Recommendations to resolve management issues within the Harbor were provided by both committees. It has only been within the past two to three years that the Commission has had the wherewithal to truly resolve any of the problems plaguing the Harbor.

Principal among the management issues raised by the two committees has been the fact that most of the human waste generated by boats in the Harbor is being put directly into the Harbor waters rather than into approved wastewater facilities. This was clearly the greatest concern expressed by the most recent committee, the Boot Key Harbor Committee appointed by the Board almost five years ago. Since the recommendations of that Committee were provided to the Board of County Commissioners in December of 1997, the principal concerns of the Committee have been resolved.

The Committee recommended that purchase of a land base was essential to the adequate management of the Harbor and that wastewater pump-out facilities should be provided at that site. In addition, it was the committee's recommendation that a manager or dock master should be placed at the Marina to assist in the day to day operations of the land base and operations of the Harbor.

The Board of County Commissioners completed a land purchase/trade with the Florida Keys Electric Cooperative for what is now known as the Florida Keys Marina, Marathon in the summer of 1997. A manager for the Marina was selected in late 1998 and pump-out improvements were completed in the winter of 2000.

Other recommendations of the Boot Key Harbor Committee are now being implemented, including the development of a mooring field plan as recognized in this document. The purpose for this effort is many fold, but couldn't be underscored more greatly than by the impacts of the major storm events of the past year and by the on-going need and effort to remove sunken and derelict vessels from the Harbor.

In this regard, it is the intent of the Board of County Commissioners to develop a Harbor Management Plan, complete necessary permit requirements, and implement the Plan through the

installation of moorings and the establishment of necessary county policy and regulations. At a minimum, the County's authority, as granted by the State of Florida and through adoption of local ordinances and resolutions, will address the following management issues and principles:

**5.1 Vessel Safety Standards**

**5.1.1 Registered vessels only.**

Only vessels with current registration and acceptable documentation should be allowed to stay within the mooring and anchorage fields.

**5.1.2 Seaworthy Vessels only.**

As a matter of safety, only seaworthy vessels in good operational condition and with approved U.S. Coast Guard equipment such as life preservers, fire extinguishers, flares, and sounding devices should be allowed to moor or anchor within the Harbor.

**5.2 Leasing requirements for tenants of the mooring field(s)**

The County, by separate resolution, should assess any charges deemed necessary to cover the costs of operation, maintenance, or the projected costs of future expansions of the mooring fields and the Marina. If income generated exceeds the needs of the Harbor and the Marina, that money should also be considered for improvements at the adjacent County park.

Charges should be assessed through a lease agreement with tenants which may include security deposits or other means of securing the County's interest in the mooring fields. Any charges, which are ultimately adopted by the Board of County Commissioners, should remain reasonable and affordable to the long-term residents of the Harbor.

**5.3 Anchorage/Mooring Rules**

**5.3.1 Registration of vessels.**

All vessels using the mooring or anchorage fields should be required to register at the Marina office within a reasonable period of time. This will allow the Harbor Manager to have information available concerning the owner of each vessel and the condition of his/her boat in the event of a vessel emergency or a major storm.

**5.3.2 Use of moorings**

To assure the safety and integrity of the mooring system and the safety of vessels on moorings, all vessels within the mooring field(s) should only use the established buoys and mooring systems.

**5.3.3 Placement of anchors in the mooring and anchorage fields.**

Dropping or placement of anchors from any vessel in the mooring field(s) should not be allowed, as these anchored vessels could interfere with the free swing or rotation of vessels attached to moorings.

**5.3.4 Leaving vessels unattended.**

Vessels should not be left unattended without previously contacting the Harbor Manager to ensure the safety of the vessel, adjacent vessels, and their owners or occupants.

**5.3.5 Non-tenant use of mooring or anchoring fields prohibited.**

Non-tenant vessels should not be allowed to moor within the mooring or anchoring fields without approval of the Harbor Manager.

5.3.6 No anchoring or mooring of commercial vessels allowed.  
Anchoring and mooring should only be made available to long-term residents and recreational vessels and not to commercially registered vessels engaged in commercial activity within the mooring or anchoring fields.

#### **5.4 No Discharge Zone**

##### 5.4.1 Discharge of waste or other materials.

Discharge into the Harbor of any wastewater or hazardous material should be strictly regulated within the Harbor. A no discharge zone ordinance already applies to Boot Key Harbor; suggested changes to the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary regulations could broaden the physical extent of this ordinance. Facilities for the disposal of oil and hydraulic fluid should be available as well.

##### 5.4.2 Use of sewage pump out facilities upon Harbor entry.

Regulations should be established which require that all vessels will have their holding tanks inspected and pumped out into an approved system and secured.

#### **5.5 Other Harbor Regulations**

##### 5.5.1 Conduct of tenants.

Specific rules of conduct governing behavior of tenants should be adopted to safeguard the rights of all tenants to enjoy the amenities of the Harbor.

##### 5.5.2 Major vessel repairs within the Harbor.

Regulations, which limit major repairs or refitting of vessels within the mooring or anchoring fields, including any activity which could result in a deposition of materials into the water body or within the Harbor, should be adopted to protect and enhance water quality in the Harbor. Limited emergency repairs would be provided for and exempted within these regulations.

#### **6.0 Amenities and Services**

##### 6.1 Dinghy docks.

Dinghy docks are available at the Marina.

##### 6.2 Sewage pump-out dock

A sewage pump-out dock, wastewater dump-station, and waste oil disposal station are located on the southwestern face of the Marina property, adjacent to the Marina basin.

##### 6.3 Shower and laundry facilities

Shower and laundry facilities are available for tenant use as needed.

##### 6.4 Other services

The marina offers modest services such as general mail service, reading areas, and television.

##### 6.5 Use of County Park

The County and Harbor Manager encourage the use of the adjacent County park by tenants and visitors to the Marina and Harbor.

##### 6.6 Use of Marina amenities

Marina services are available for all tenants and guests of the Marina. Services are provided for nominal cost so as to make the services affordable.

**7.0 Severe Storm or Hurricane Plan**

All vessels will be encouraged to vacate the Harbor if the Keys come under a hurricane watch or warning. Monroe County Emergency Management personnel and the County Administrator will establish County policy regarding the specifics of Harbor evacuation procedures.

The Harbor is considered safe refuge for vessels at sea. If a vessel owner chooses to remain in the Harbor or should the Harbor become the last resort for a vessel at sea, the vessel owner should be considered responsible for damages (public or private) that result from their vessel or property during the storm.

**8.0 Plans for Future expansion of Managed Anchorage/Mooring Field(s)**

It may become necessary or desirable to expand the field(s) to provide additional moorings as needed to meet future demand. This expansion may also include additional management issues and concerns. As a result, this plan may be modified to include these areas.