



# Bugle Bulletin

## ***Despite What Your May Eyes Tell You, Keys Waters Aren't Exactly Clean***

Keys' water may look clear, but it's full of excessive nutrients, contaminants, and pharmaceuticals that are having a harmful impact on our fisheries, our seagrass, our corals – all our marine life. Our health, too, is at risk. A long-standing source of this pollution is the shallow sewage wells still used by the City of Marathon. A group of concerned citizens has initiated a Clean Water Act lawsuit against the City of Marathon, asking the Court to order Marathon to stop using shallow wells and dig a deep well. A win in Marathon can be used to stop shallow well use elsewhere in the Keys. Last Stand supports the lawsuit, and we hope you'll make your voice heard, too.

### **Keys Geology Dictates Sewage Solutions**

Decades ago, the Keys were mandated by the Courts and the Legislature to move from septic tanks and cesspits to centralized sewer systems, because the wastewater migrated into the surrounding ocean. A good start, but NOT ENOUGH. Why? Because Marathon, the County, and Key West Resort Utilities on Stock Island still use shallow sewage wells. And, for the very same reasons that septic tanks didn't work, shallow wells don't work either.

The Keys' geology of porous limestone, full of conduits and caverns, allows rapid movement of shallow well wastewater into the surrounding coastal waters. Shallow wells only inject the partially treated wastewater about 90-120 feet down into the limestone, where it quickly finds its way to our coastal waters. Fresh water and wastewater are more buoyant than salt water and this, plus the movement of the tides, quickly sends the wastewater into our nearshore waters. Tracer dye tests performed in 2014 at Cudjoe Regional Wastewater Treatment plant, and elsewhere in the Keys, proved this. Citizen pressure and a lawsuit

forced Cudjoe Regional to dig a deep well in 2014. A deep injection well, 3,000 feet deep, is the only way to prevent sewage contamination from reaching nearshore surface waters.

### **Studies Show Our Waters Aren't Safe**

Data collected for the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary (FKNMS) show our protected coastal waters still do not meet state or federal water quality standards and remain impaired.

In February 2022, the Bonefish and Tarpon Trust released a major study of pharmaceutical contamination ***throughout the entire Keys' chain*** high enough to pose a major risk to our fisheries, and the source of that contamination is human wastewater. <https://fb.watch/aXMSjkbX59/>

A different, recently published study found two plumes of wastewater with extremely high concentrations of sucralose on both the north and south coast of Marathon. Sucralose is an artificial sweetener and is a scientifically accepted indicator of the presence of human wastewater. <http://coastecology.org/science/wastewater.html>

### **Progress in Addressing the Issue**

In the 2019 Maui Decision, the US Supreme Court ruled that pollutant discharges through groundwater could be the "functional equivalent of a direct discharge" into U.S. waters, and thus prohibited. Previously, indirect discharges – moving through groundwater in the limestone rock into surface waters – had not been held to be pollution.

### **Marathon Needs to Switch to Deep Wells**

1. Please write to the members of the Marathon City Council ([council@ci.marathon.fl.us](mailto:council@ci.marathon.fl.us)).
2. Sign the Petition at the FOLKs website ([www.friendsofthelowerkeys.org/petition](http://www.friendsofthelowerkeys.org/petition)).
3. Share this information – talk to your friends and create awareness of the problem!

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## **Last Stand Needs You**

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In 1988, a group of motivated citizens joined to form Protect Key West Inc., soon to be known as Last Stand. From the beginning, the members sustained enthusiasm and attracted new people to join and continue advocating for environmental and quality of life issues up and down the Florida Keys.

Today, thirty-four years later, it is evident, more than ever before, Last Stand thrives because of the people who get involved. **And now we need more of you!**

No matter how big or small, your support and contributions are essential to ensure Last Stand can sustain our fight to preserve and protect the quality of life in the Florida Keys.

Here's **how YOU can help** us stay strong for today and the future:

1. Follow us on social media and share our posts! A simple click by you helps us effect change and build awareness to protect the Keys.
2. Suggest projects or issues for us to follow – we need everybody's eyes on the Keys!
3. Offer ideas on connections and partnerships within the community – we are stronger together!
4. Host a fundraiser. Advocacy, often times, costs money. Help us raise money to help fight "the good fight".
5. Join the Board. Last Stand is currently looking for concerned citizens like YOU!
6. Suggest to friends and family they get involved. You don't have to be a local to protect the Florida Keys, many of our members participate remotely.

Remember **every kind** of contribution counts. Email us today at: [info@keyslaststand.org](mailto:info@keyslaststand.org).

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## **New Board Members**

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We're thrilled to announce two new board members: Chris Hamilton and Roger McVeigh. Both bring a wealth of knowledge and volunteer spirit.

Chris moved to Key West in 2015 and quickly became known as a local transportation planning expert via his founding of the *Friends of Car-Free Key West & Duval Street/Historic Downtown* advocacy group ([Facebook](#), [Blog](#)) and his [Streets for People](#) column in KONK Life news. His passion for the nexus of transportation, land-use and the environment led him to Last Stand.



Roger is a sixteen-year resident of Key West and has dedicated his spare time to public service in Key West, since retiring in 2006 from a career in public accounting. Roger actively follows local government and serves, or has served, as a Board Member of a diverse group of nonprofit and civic organizations covering education, social services, recreation and the arts, among others. Roger has received numerous awards, his own "day" from then Key West Mayor Cates (2013), and "Honorary Conch" by the County's Mayor Carruthers (2013).

[www.keyslaststand.org/board-member-forum/](http://www.keyslaststand.org/board-member-forum/)

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## **YOUR Chance to be Heard!**

**– Join our Zoom June 8<sup>th</sup> at 6 pm –**

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Don't miss this opportunity – Monroe County wants your input! Last Stand will be the **ONLY** group represented with a focus on environment and quality of life. Your answers have a direct impact on County operations.

Monroe County Sr Director of Strategic Planning has invited Last Stand members to participate in a 30-minute survey to help set strategic priorities for the coming years. During the survey, participants will anonymously answer 10 questions via cell phone and will be able to see the answers tallying up in real time!

**Email us for the Zoom link:** [info@keyslaststand.org](mailto:info@keyslaststand.org).