



Adopted by Last Stand Board of Directors August 31, 2013

Whereas, Last Stand has studied the impact of cruise ship tourism on the quality of life for Key West residents and near shore water quality for over 15 years;

Whereas, the consistent arrival and departure of large cruise ships causes increased turbidity and the resulting settlement of siltation has been documented by several studies to be detrimental to the growth and reproduction of coral reefs, sea grasses and other benthic resources important to overall health of the near shore waters;

Whereas, in 2008 the City of Key West requested the Army Corps of Engineers to prepare a reconnaissance study on the possibility to widen the channel to Key West harbor by dredging in order to accommodate larger cruise ships;

Whereas, the 2010 Reconnaissance Study has noted the following expected impacts:

1. This project is anticipated to have a significant negative effect on environmental quality.
2. Widening the channel would have significant and negative effects on an unspecified amount of coral lightly distributed over approximately 17 acres.
3. The project would also have negative effects on an unspecified amount of critical environmental habitat.
4. Increased cruise traffic, as with an increase in any waterborne commerce, would likely also cause an increase in water pollution and turbidity.
5. While it is possible to relocate the actual colonies of coral, the critical habitat would be permanently removed. It is highly likely that the removal of several acres of occupied designated critical habitat (habitat where the species has been shown to be able to flourish under baseline conditions) could be considered an adverse modification of critical habitat under Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act.

Whereas, the 2010 Reconnaissance Study restates the regulations implemented under Public Law 101-605 which prohibit “. . . drilling into, dredging or otherwise altering the seabed of the Sanctuary (Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary).” 33 CFR 922.163(a)(3);

Whereas, the 2010 Reconnaissance Study concludes:

It is likely that the Corps would be restricted from entering into a Feasibility Study with the current proposed channel widening recommended plan design until relief from regulations implemented under Public Law 101-605 has been granted;

Whereas, the 2010 Reconnaissance Study shows there is only an economic benefit if there would be a significant increase in the number of cruise ship passengers and crew visiting Key West;

Whereas, the 2010 Reconnaissance Study has estimated that the cost of environmental remediation to be 3.0 to 3.8 times the actual cost to perform the dredging;

Whereas, at this time two species of coral present in the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary have been listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act, and review is continuing to add protected status for seven additional coral species;

Whereas, as documented in several travel advisories, including the December 2012 – January 2013 AARP magazine which recommends readers skip Key West on cruise ship itineraries because “its charms are hidden on crowded cruise-ship days”, the impacts of the simultaneous arrival of thousands of cruise ship passengers strains the capacity of Old Town Key West to provide a quality experience to the extent it has degraded the Key West experience of our home town main street for many visitors;

Whereas, the Key West City Commission has placed a binding referendum on the October 1, 2013 ballot whether it should request a feasibility study be performed;

Whereas, Last Stand has consistently supported the environmental protection and preservation purpose for establishing the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary and cannot support exceptions purely for commercial purposes to the regulations enacted to accomplish this purpose;

Whereas, the preponderance of negative environmental and social impacts of the proposal to bring larger cruise ships to Key West are far greater than the uncertain economic value of increased cruise ship tourism;

Now Therefore,

The board of directors of Last Stand does hereby resolve:

To urge all registered voters of Key West to Vote No on the referendum on October 1, 2013, and

To take such appropriate steps within the restrictions placed upon IRC Section 501(c)(3) organizations to publicize this recommendation to Vote No and the reasons thereof.