




## MEMORANDUM

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Date: September 14, 2023

To: Honorable Mayor and Commissioners

Via: Albert P. Childress   
City Manager

From: Katie Halloran  
Planning Director

Subject: **Presentation of the Draft Key West Water Quality Improvement Plan**

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### **Introduction**

One of the goals of the Key West Forward Strategic Plan is to improve the cleanliness of our near shore waters. To that end, the Sustainability Coordinator convened a working group of water quality experts to help the City identify priorities, resulting in this draft Key West Water Quality Improvement Plan containing 38 actions filtered and ranked by benefit, effort, cost and ultimate effectiveness that any Keys local government could initiate to improve near shore water quality. Currently, State of Florida Department of Health tests indicate that Key West's near shore water quality is at times poor and may negatively affect the health of some swimmers.

### **Background**

The following goals are the culmination of eight meetings with technical experts from five entities (Florida Department of Environmental Protection, Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary, University of Florida / Monroe County Extension Service, Monroe County Marine Resources and College of the Florida Keys). The group reviewed related priorities and goals across 3 Plans and 8 Programs (NOAA's Florida Marine Debris Plan, The Nature Conservancy's Resilience Action Plan for Florida's Coral Reef, Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuaries draft Restoration Blueprint, Monroe County's Marine Resources Programs, FDEP's Water Quality Monitoring Protocols, UF/Monroe's Florida Sea Grant program, College of the Florida Keys Marine Science Program and the Sanctuary Advisory Council's Water Quality Protection Program Priorities). This prioritized list of 38 actions could be implemented by any Florida Keys municipality to make a difference in near shore water quality.

This partnership has already led to the award of an EPA grant to expand the College of the Florida Keys' water quality monitoring of our nearshore waters for sucralose, oxybenzone and hydrogen sulfide.

**Procurement**

On April 5<sup>th</sup>, 2022, the Commission passed an ordinance to establish a funding mechanism for a Coral Reef Restoration Fund and water quality testing from the \$1M+ the City annually received from cruise ships. In FY23, the City set aside \$280,000 in new funds for water quality partnerships with Mote Marine and College of the Florida Keys. In FY24, we are seeking \$164,000 for coral restoration and water quality work to focus on advancing associated goals in the Key West Water Quality Improvement Plan. In FY25, we will be seeking funds for either a contract or new FTE to help carry out the remainder of the Plan.

**Recommendation**

Staff wishes to gain feedback from the Commission on these goals in order to create the draft Key West Water Quality Improvement Plan and complete a workplan for FY24. Once the Plan is complete, it will be placed on a future City Commission agenda for final review and approval.