

# RESTORE ACT Direct Component Multiyear Implementation Plan Narrative

## Department of the Treasury

OMB Approval  
No. 1505-0250

**Directions: Use this form for the Initial Multiyear Implementation Plan and any subsequent amendments to an accepted Multiyear Implementation Plan. For amendments, include only new and/or materially modified activities.**

Multiyear Implementation Plan Version (Initial or Amendment Number): <b>Amendment #1</b>	Initial
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Eligible Entity Name:	Monroe County Board of County Commissioners
Name and Contact Information of the Person to be contacted (POC) on matters concerning this Multiyear Implementation Plan:	
POC Name:	Brittany Burtner
POC Title:	Senior Administrator, Marine Resources
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POC Phone:	305-289-2805

<b>NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION:</b>
<p>1. Please provide the following for <b>EACH</b> proposed activity (i.e. project or program) listed in the matrix:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Description of the proposed activity (i.e. project or program);</li> <li>- If the activity includes third-party funding, describe the amount and current status of funding (e.g., for another grant, whether the funds have been requested or awarded; if requested, where they are in the approval process) from other sources and provide a description of the specific portion of the project to be funded by the RESTORE Act Direct Component;</li> <li>- Need (i.e., What is the problem this activity seeks to address, or the anticipated benefit to the community?);</li> <li>-Purpose and objective(s) (i.e., How will the proposed activity address the need? What are the desired outcomes?);</li> <li>-Anticipated milestones (i.e. What are key phases and milestones by which the entity will monitor progress towards completion?);</li> <li>-Milestones for each activity</li> <li>-Criteria applicant will use to evaluate the success of each activity (project or program), (i.e., How will the entity determine that the activity achieved its objectives and solved or ameliorated the problem the activity(project or</li> </ul>

program) sought to address or provided the anticipated benefits? Note that this does not need to be at the level of proposed performance metrics, which will be negotiated with Treasury at the time of application for an award.) Please also provide **either** a) an individual map of each and every proposed activity listed on the matrix, clearly showing the location of the activity or b) a single map showing all proposed activities listed on the matrix. Note that all proposed activities must be carried out in the Gulf Coast Region, as defined by 31 C.F.R. 34.2 and pursuant to 31 CFR 34.201, except activities designed for the promotion of tourism in the Gulf Coast Region, including promotion of recreational fishing; the promotion of the consumption of seafood harvested from the Gulf Coast Region; and planning assistance.

This amendment to the Monroe County MYIP proposes one new project for direct component funding:

### **BOCA CHICA MOORING FIELD SHORESIDE FACILITY**

**Project Need:** Historically, the use of unregulated or traditional anchoring in the Florida Keys has caused extensive damage to seafloor and benthic habitats, particularly to seagrass beds and coral communities. Without designated anchoring areas or mooring systems, vessels often drop anchors indiscriminately and use improvised mooring systems such as concrete blocks or scrap metal with heavy chains that continually shift and drag across the seabed with winds and tides. This repeated dragging scars the sea floor bottom, uprooting seagrass and fracturing coral structures, disrupting the complex benthic ecosystems that support fish, crustaceans, and other marine life. In high-traffic areas, cumulative impacts have led to the loss of large areas of critical habitat, reduced water quality from resuspended sediments, and long-term degradation of marine biodiversity. These damages are not only ecologically significant but also difficult and costly to remediate, underscoring the urgent need for properly managed and environmentally sound mooring systems like the one proposed at Boca Chica.

Boca Chica Basin, located between Stock Island and Boca Chica Key in the Lower Keys, is one of Monroe County's largest unmanaged anchorages. It has long been home to dozens of liveaboard boats, as well as derelict and abandoned vessels that create safety hazards, environmental damage, and significant public expense for removal:

- The basin lacks pump-out facilities, which can result in the illegal discharge of untreated sewage, and has no designated waste disposal options for liveaboard boaters, allowing marine debris to accumulate.
- Without a managed mooring system, vessels often stay in anchored positions for years, leading to overcrowding, dereliction and abandonment.
- Abandoned or derelict boats accumulate, creating hazards to navigation and increasing the risk of vessels breaking free during storms.
- Monroe County's derelict vessel removal program has repeatedly targeted Boca Chica Basin, underscoring the persistent nature of the problem and the ongoing public cost of remediation.
- Storm events have resulted in boats dragging anchor into invaluable natural resources, but also docks, power lines, and shorelines, causing environmental and property damage and blocking navigation channels.

- Degraded water quality and threatened wildlife habitat within the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary and an Area of Critical State Concern has heightened state and federal attention on the need for a management solution.

The conditions in this basin have been studied for more than three decades. The need for the Boca Chica Mooring Field has been reaffirmed repeatedly in numerous studies and planning documents — including the *1992 Boating Impact Management Plan*, *2001 Keys Wide Mooring Field Project Proposal*, *2002 Preliminary Planning Document*, *2008 Boca Chica Harbor Boating Management Plan*, *2011 Boca Chica Vessel Mooring Study*, and the *2014 Mooring Field Feasibility Study* — all recommend establishing a managed mooring field in Boca Chica Basin as a priority action. These reports consistently identify the same issues: unmanaged anchorages, unregulated vessels, lack of vessel pump-out stations, and unmitigated environmental degradation.

In summary, the project is urgently needed to protect sensitive environmental resources, comply with state regulations, reduce recurring public costs for derelict vessel removal, and provide a safe, sanitary, and legal long-term anchoring option. With decades of supporting studies, strong statutory backing, and clear environmental and social benefits, the Boca Chica Mooring Field and Shoreside Facility represent a long-overdue solution to a persistent and well-documented problem in Monroe County's waters.

**Project Purpose:** The Boca Chica Mooring Field Project will protect the Florida Keys' fragile natural resources, particularly seagrass beds, coral reefs, and water quality, through the creation of a managed, environmentally responsible anchoring system. These resources are vital to the ecological health and economic vitality of the region. The intensity of recreational boating activity (and unmanaged anchoring) in Monroe County continues to impact the unique and fragile marine habitats of the Florida Keys. The project aims to mitigate these impacts by offering a structured alternative that reduces anchor damage, improves oversight of vessel activity, and ensures compliance with environmental regulations.

The Boca Chica Mooring Field Project will prevent anchor-related damage to seagrass beds and coral reefs caused by traditional anchoring methods, reducing seabed disturbance and turbidity and preserving the habitats of fish, crustaceans, and other marine life. It will decrease the risk of vessel groundings, which can lead to fuel, oil, and sewage leaks in sensitive habitats and enable better regulation of vessel activity, including monitoring of vessel condition, proper sewage discharge, and use of pump-out services.

Mooring fields are a proven and effective tool for minimizing the environmental footprint of boating. They provide designated professionally maintained mooring systems that eliminate the need for traditional anchoring—protecting fragile seafloor habitats while also enabling better oversight of vessel activity.

Further, establishing the Boca Chica Mooring Field directly supports Florida's statutory requirements by creating a designated, regulated anchorage that allows the County to enforce vessel condition standards and environmental protections. Florida Statute 327.4108 and related legislation encourage the creation of managed mooring fields to reduce illegal discharges, protect sovereign submerged lands, and improve boating safety. In 2022, the Legislature enacted SB 1432, requiring Monroe County to implement

managed mooring fields around Key West before it can enforce a 90-day anchoring limit in surrounding waters.

NOAA's Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary has documented that mooring buoys eliminate anchor scarring, allowing seagrass and reef habitats to recover.

**Project Description:** Construction of the Shoreside Facility

This direct component grant is requested for the construction of a shoreside support facility, a **mandatory regulatory requirement** under Florida law for all public mooring fields. The shoreside facility must be operational before any in-water moorings can be activated, as a condition of state permitting and compliance.

Development of the facility will include: design and planning, site preparation (utility connections and protective hardening upgrades, such as seawall repairs, stormwater management) and construction of the primary facility to include necessary sanitation and hygiene facilities, parking and access infrastructure (car and bicycle parking), dinghy docks, signage, and lighting, and a dockmaster/harbor master office for registration, enforcement, and public interaction; and a staff housing unit to allow on-site 24/7 oversight and management.

The shoreside facility is essential to support environmental compliance, provide boater access and services, facilitate effective management and enforcement, and encourage participation and proper usage of the mooring field. All vessels utilizing the mooring field must be fully operational and will be required to use pump-out services regularly in accordance with the project's environmental management plan. A dedicated harbor master will oversee daily operations, enforce usage rules, and ensure compliance with environmental regulations, such as ensuring against vessel dereliction and preventing illegal discharges.

The fully equipped shoreside facility will provide sewage pump-out, trash receptacles and recycling services, dinghy docks, restrooms, showers, and laundry for liveaboard and transient boaters. Services will also include navigational guidance, maps, weather updates, emergency communications, and boater education. The facility will enable the County to provide comprehensive support for the field while protecting surrounding natural resources.

By regulating vessel behavior and supporting essential environmental services, this project will protect the Florida Keys' marine ecosystems, enhance water quality, and support sustainable access to one of the state's most ecologically and economically valuable coastal regions.

Please note these activities are part of the overall Boca Chica Mooring Field but are *funded separately and not part of this grant request*.

- The site for the shoreside facility, 6633 Maloney Avenue, Stock Island, has been selected for its location on the waterfront, proximal to the placement of the moorings. The property has already

been acquired by Monroe County. Preliminary planning, survey and design work for the shoreside facility have been completed.

- The in-water infrastructure of the mooring field will consist of 40 professionally engineered mooring buoys (specially designed for minimal impact to seafloor bottom), boundary marker buoys to delineate the mooring field, and approach channel buoys to guide safe navigation into the field.

### **Project Cost and Funding**

- **Project Cost: \$5.15M.**

The Initial estimate for the cost for the site work, construction, and infrastructure necessary to complete the shoreside facility is \$5.15M. Final costs will be determined by bids received.

- **Direct Component Funding: \$3.5M**

Direct component funding will be applied to the site work, construction and infrastructure necessary to complete the shoreside facility.

- **Non-Federal Share: Monroe County: \$1.65M.**

Monroe County secured \$1.65M in Fiscal Year 2026 State of Florida legislative appropriation for construction costs of the shoreside facility, specifically any required upland work, including seawall repairs and dock installation.

### **Milestones for Each Activity**

- 1) Complete Shoreside Facility Site Design and Engineering: Expected completion May 2026.
- 2) Complete Shoreside Facility Permitting and Construction: Expected completion July 2027.
- 3) Opening of fully operational Mooring Field: Expected August 2027.

### **Criteria for Evaluating Success**

The County will consider the project successful if it achieves the following:

- Completes construction of upland facility.
- Opens fully operational mooring facility.

2. Please summarize the process for developing the draft multiyear implementation plan, including how projects were initially evaluated and prioritized, and how the entity made the draft multiyear implementation plan available for a minimum of 45 days for public review and comment, in a manner calculated to obtain broad-based participation from individuals, businesses, Indian tribes, and non-profit organizations, such as through public meetings, presentations in languages other than English, and postings on the Internet.

Attach:

- Documentation (e.g., a copy of public notices) to demonstrate that the entity made its multiyear implementation plan available to the public for at least 45 days;
- A copy of all meaningful public comments received (OGCR defines “meaningful” as all comments pertaining to the selection of each activity (projects and programs) or the approach to or design of any proposed activities (projects and program));
- Any responses provided to meaningful public comments;
- A list of changes made as a result of meaningful public comments. If critical comments were received but no changes were made, the entity should explain why incorporating these comments is infeasible or not in keeping with the public interest; and
- A letter from the applicant's leadership approving submission of the multiyear implementation plan to Treasury or a resolution approving the applicant's multiyear implementation plan.

### **Public Engagement Process for the Draft Multiyear Implementation Plan**

The draft MYIP was placed on the Monroe County Board of County Commissioners at a regularly scheduled meeting (October 2025) with published agenda, where the Commission approved adding the mooring field project to the Monroe County RESTORE Act MYIP and approved publishing the draft MYIP on the County Website, making it available for public comment for 45 days and soliciting public comment.

Public support for mooring fields in Monroe County and the Florida Keys is grounded in decades of local policy, planning, and community engagement.

The Monroe County Board of County Commissioners have consistently prioritized mooring fields in its official planning efforts, facilitating numerous studies including the *1992 Boating Impact Management Plan*, *2001 Keys Wide Mooring Field Project Proposal*, *2002 Preliminary Planning Document*, *2008 Boca Chica Harbor Boating Management Plan*, *2011 Boca Chica Vessel Mooring Study*, and the *2014 Mooring Field Feasibility Study* — all of which recommend managed mooring field in Boca Chica Basin as a priority action item.

The Monroe County Board of County Commissioners have had scores of public discussions about the need for and benefits of managed mooring at Boca Chica, the damage and costs of derelict vessels, the needs for vessel pump out (even developing its own mobile pump-out program a decade ago that to date has diverted millions of gallons of sewage from Keys nearshore waters), and the impacts of traditional anchoring on seagrass and benthic habitat.

The County Commission consistently identifies the development of new mooring fields, stronger anchoring regulations, and funding for derelict vessel removal funding and vessel pump-out as legislative priorities in their annual State Legislative Agendas and in discussions with state lawmakers.

The local governments of Monroe County, Marathon, and Key West have invested in public mooring fields following extensive community engagement and institutional support. They have established and maintained municipal mooring fields specifically to protect sensitive marine habitats, reduce illegal anchoring, and improve water quality. These programs have been shaped through public meetings, studies, ordinance adoption, and inclusion in comprehensive plans, and local funding - all reflecting community consensus on their value.

State and federal environmental agencies (State of Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission and NOAA/Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary) have supported and in some cases mandated the use of mooring fields to reduce habitat damage. State and federal agencies' endorsements and long-term investments underscore mooring fields' effectiveness and necessity.

### **Project Evaluation and Prioritization**

This project was evaluated and chosen based on the following criteria:

Due to their environmental benefits, mooring fields have earned immense public support in the Florida Keys. Decades of local planning and policy have repeatedly endorsed managed mooring in Boca Chica. Public forums and government action show ongoing community engagement and support.

Mooring fields are widely considered as a best practice for managing boating impacts in sensitive marine environments by state and federal environmental agencies.

Mooring field benefits align squarely with RESTORE Act priorities:

- Restoration and protection of natural resources.
- Mitigation of damage to fish and wildlife and natural resources.

The Boca Chica Mooring Field supports long-standing local public priorities while advancing key RESTORE Act goals:

- Protection and restoration of marine habitats. By preventing anchor damage to coral reefs and seagrass beds, mooring fields directly advance the RESTORE Act's goal of restoring and conserving habitat.
- Protection and improvements to water quality. Mooring field facilities with pump-out stations reduce illegal discharges from vessels, supporting RESTORE Act priorities related to water quality improvements and mitigation of environmental harm.
- Balancing environmental protection and economic activity. Managed mooring areas attract visiting boaters, extend visitor stays, and enhance the overall visitor experience—directly contributing to sustainable tourism, while implementing measures to mitigate impacts to the environment.

**Attached Documentation of Public Review and Comment:**

- Board approval at a regularly scheduled meeting (October 2025) with published agenda, to add mooring field project to the Monroe County RESTORE Act MYIP, and to publish the draft MYIP on the County Website and making it available for public comment for 45 days.
- Documentation (e.g. a copy of public notices) that demonstrates that Monroe made its multiyear implementation plan available to the public for at least 45 days, posting the draft plan on the County's official website and providing a dedicated email address for public feedback.
- All comments received during the public review period were compiled, reviewed, and addressed as appropriate in the final MYIP submitted to the U.S. Department of the Treasury.
- A copy of all meaningful public comments received and responses provided to meaningful public comments;
- If applicable, a list of changes made as a result of meaningful public comments. If critical comments were received but no changes were made, we will explain why incorporating these comments is not feasible or not in keeping with the public interest;
- A letter from the Monroe County BOCC approving submission of the multiyear implementation plan to Treasury or a resolution approving the applicant's multiyear implementation plan.