



DERELICT VESSELS

For the past two years, CWC policy has been to encourage enhanced enforcement as the primary means of clearing City and County waters of dangerous and unsightly vessels. City of VB and IR Shores Police Departments, IRC Sheriff's Office, FL FWC patrol officers have all been engaged in this effort to different degrees. Support on the actual removal of vessels has been provided by the County Natural Resources Manager.

But today the situation is as bad as it has been in recent years, so I think we have to ask ourselves "Are we on the right track?". It takes constant monitoring and pressure on the enforcement agencies. Even when vessels are eventually approved for removal, the completion of the process usually takes months. I think the answer to the question above, based on the objective evidence, is "No". This conclusion is by no means a reflection on the efforts of the IRC Sheriff's Office and also Eric Charest, County Natural Resources Manager, which have been excellent.

So what alternatives are available?

A major part of the problem is that FL FWC has five criteria for removal, one of which must be met for the removal process to begin, attached. There are many vessels in City of Vero Beach, Indian River Shores, Sebastian and Indian River County waters which are clearly abandoned, derelict and unsightly but which cannot be removed using FWC historical criteria. Many of these boats have been in the same position and condition for months, if not years.

Recognizing this problem, FWC introduced new language which was signed into law on July 1 2021.

This new legislation makes it straightforward for Counties to apply for areas of their waterway to be designated an "anchoring limitation area" (see F.S. 327.4108(2)(a) attached). The applicant needs to be a County so this would require IRC, COVB, IR Shores and City of Sebastian to work together.

The Bili which led to this new provision was an Agency Bill. The language presumes that the area will be established. The County notices FL FWC who then publishes the notice. Absent any valid objection the area is then established. The provision does not restrict the ability of a transient boater to anchor and there are provisions for boats to anchor in the event of breakdown or inclement weather. Vessel removal would be funded by FWC 100%, as currently. The vessel removal fund was amply replenished in the current State Budget in excess of \$12 million. Additionally, F.I.N.D will reimburse up to 75%, \$50,000 per county annually. The County has well established procedures for executing the removals by private contractors following FWC approval.

CWC requests that the County leads an effort to establish appropriate Anchoring Limitation Areas.

Suggested Anchoring Limitation Areas for discussion:

COVB West of Riverside Park

COVB areas North of the Marina Mooring Field and Fritz Island, to the City Line.

All of IR Shores waters.

City of Sebastian waters TBD.

Other County Waters TBD.

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