

## **An open letter to Tyndall Air Force Base:**

We, as area businesses whose livelihoods depend on access to the waters of St. Andrew Bay, East Bay, and Crooked Island Sound, would like to address a draft Waterway Restriction Proposal recently submitted by the TAFB 325th Security Forces Squadron commander. We appreciate TAFB's openness in this process and your giving us the opportunity to respectfully provide this input.

This proposal draws a 500-foot buffer zone out into the waters around all Tyndall property, impacting 129 miles of shoreline. Tyndall spokespeople have stated that this zone would be patrolled for threats to the base, and sections closed off to the public's access only if threats are identified. Closures are intended to be temporary and limited to only those areas with a threat impact.

While we understand and support Tyndall's need to protect our military assets, our concern is that the regulation is written too broadly, and that future implementations could affect the marine economy.

We propose two changes that would resolve this concern:

- 1) Remove the 500-foot buffer from Shell Island and Crooked Island.
- 2) Mandate a five-year public re-evaluation in order to re-assess the impact.

Our reasoning:

◆ Shell Island and Crooked Island are uninhabited and have no military assets on them. The 500-foot buffer around mainland Tyndall should suffice for protection.

◆ 70 percent of area boating activity is at Shell Island and Crooked Island, and our livelihoods depend on that access. Any additional patrols and/or closures will impact our customers' perceptions of the accessibility of the areas and whether their valuable time and money will be wasted when trying to go out. With many other activities to choose from, they will go elsewhere, costing us business and costing the area's marine economy jobs.

◆ The area marine industry is worth hundreds of millions of dollars to the local economy and supports thousands of jobs. This small change to the Tyndall proposal would help support this economic impact.

◆ The area marine industry feeds the overall tourist economy, worth \$1 billion annually. Many visitors choose Panama City over other destinations because they can visit Shell Island and/or Crooked Island as part of their trip.

◆ A re-evaluation of this proposal in five years is a simple way to reassess whether this proposal is the optimal way for Tyndall to protect its assets while maximizing the public's access to our waterways. It is even more important since the Tyndall proposal, at 129 miles of coastline, impacts more coastline than any other military restriction in the country. A five-year trial period would give the opportunity to assess its workability.

Signed,

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Jim Purcell, Bay Ice Cream  
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Ric Corley, Corley & Son Surveyors  
Ricky Snellgrove, Howell Tackle Supply  
Jimmy Bus, Boatworks  
Tom Putnam, Half Hitch Tackle  
George Laird, Treasure Island Marina  
JR Williams, Custom Marine Services  
Robert Barnes, Estuary Cruises of Florida, LLC  
Jeanne Harris, C.B.Sails  
Ronnie Groom, C&G Sporting Goods  
Bo Fitzsimmons, Surf Side Surf and Pawn  
Ben Busby, Tarpon Dock Metal Craft  
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Lee Barker, Angler's Tackle  
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