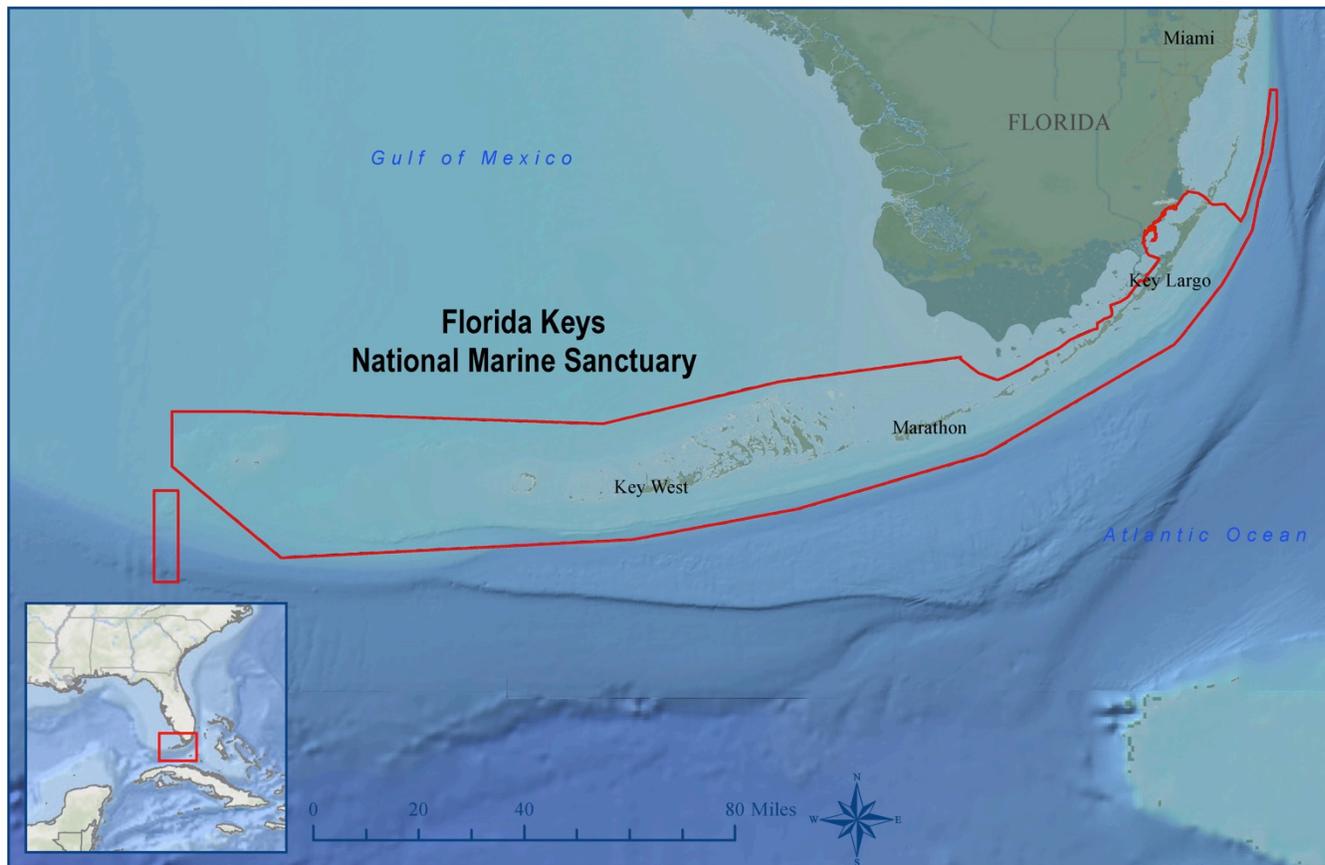


FY19 Accomplishments



BACKGROUND

Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary was established in 1990 to protect and preserve spectacular, unique, and nationally significant marine resources. Within the 3,800-square-mile sanctuary is North America's only coral barrier reef, extensive seagrass beds, mangrove-fringed islands, and more than 6,000 species of marine life. The sanctuary also protects an estimated 800 underwater historical sites. Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary is part of the National Marine Sanctuary System, which is a network of underwater parks

encompassing more than 600,000 square miles of marine and Great Lakes waters from Washington state to the Florida Keys, and from Lake Huron to American Samoa. National marine sanctuaries are managed for the conservation of their natural and cultural resources, while supporting sustainable recreation, tourism and compatible commercial activities. The network includes a system of 14 national marine sanctuaries and Papahānaumokuākea and Rose Atoll marine national monuments.



Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary

Restoration Blueprint released for comment

NOAA released a draft proposal recommending potential changes to existing boundaries, regulations, and marine zones in Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary to better address long-term declines to the region's marine resources as well as ongoing and emerging threats due to changing ocean conditions. These actions include proposals to both restore important reefs and to modify existing sanctuary regulations regarding the use of certain areas. The proposed plan takes into account more than 20 years of science, management achievements, technical experience, and local community involvement.

Partners in coral disease response

The sanctuary and other parts of NOAA continue collaborating with the Florida Department of Environmental Protection, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, and other partners to aggressively address an unprecedented coral disease event that threatens the marine ecosystem and the local economy. Partners are working to document the stony coral tissue loss disease outbreak, identify likely causes, understand factors that may be contributing to the outbreak and spread, and develop treatments and interventions while planning for restoration.

Sanctuary-specific boater education course

The sanctuary launched a voluntary online course to inform the boating public about the natural and historical resources within the sanctuary, provide strategies for responsible boating and stewardship, and highlight relevant rules and regulations. The course covers marine zones and regulations, the management tools that protect sanctuary resources, and consequences of illegal actions. The 30-to-45 minute course complements existing safe boating courses. It is a component of the sanctuary's current management plan review process.

Looking Ahead to FY20

- NOAA and Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary will consider comments received during the public review of the Restoration Blueprint to draft a single, refined proposal that will also be released for public comment.
- The sanctuary and partners will announce an unprecedented, decades-long coral reef restoration effort, Mission: Iconic Reefs, to restore nearly three million square feet of the Florida Reef Tract at seven distinct sites.
- The sanctuary and NOAA continue to lead the response to stony coral tissue loss disease, working with partners to rescue healthy coral, establish gene banks, develop techniques to grow susceptible and threatened species, and determine methods for reef restoration.



Photo: Greg McFall/NOAA

Healthy, productive reefs are one of the goals of the Restoration Blueprint for the sanctuary.



Photo: NOAA

The sanctuary has stepped up coral restoration efforts in the face of disease outbreak.



Photo: NOAA

A new education course aims to reach boaters before they hit the water.