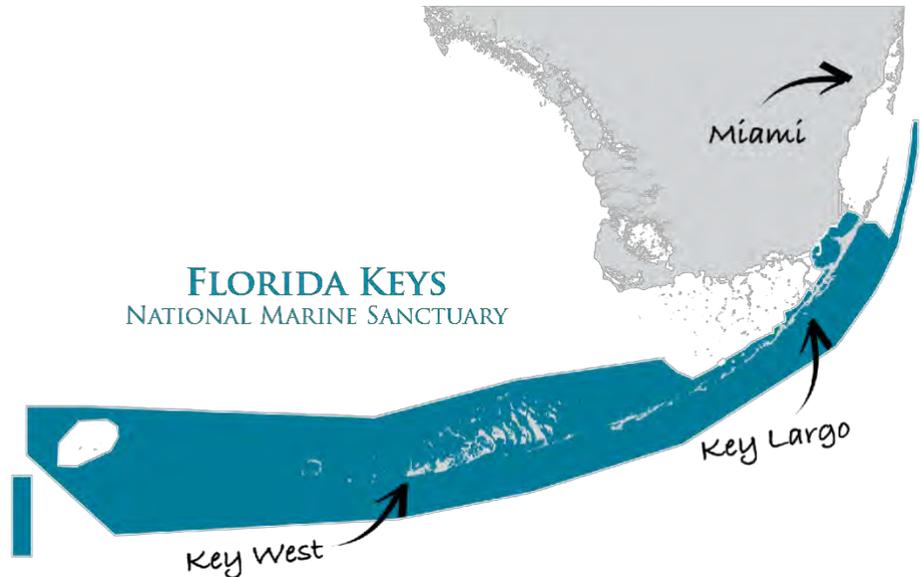


Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary Accomplishments

Fiscal Year 2020

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.

Visit floridakeys.noaa.gov for more information.



Public engages with Restoration Blueprint

After the release of the Restoration Blueprint in August of 2019, sanctuary staff embarked on a six-month campaign to raise public awareness and garner comments on the draft proposal to update the sanctuary's regulations and management plan. Presentations were given to more than 60 organizations, and at eight large-scale public gatherings, including sanctuary advisory council meetings, providing a stage for more than 120 oral public comments. By the close of the comment period in January, more than 1,000 comments and letters were received, representing more than 32,000 individuals.



Sanctuary staff present the Restoration Blueprint to a crowd of 1,200 in Key West, Florida. Photo: Gena Parsons/NOAA

Sanctuary focus on Leave No Trace education

The sanctuary was selected as a focus for the Leave No Trace Center for Outdoor Ethics' Hot Spot program, the program's first selected marine environment location. Through workshops, outreach, and service projects, the trainers connected with hundreds of Florida Keys residents and visitors to encourage sustainable, low-impact recreation. The week culminated in an action planning workshop with sanctuary staff and other resource managers brainstorming solutions to address the impacts of recreation in the sanctuary. This effort represented the start of a productive partnership between the Leave No Trace Center and NOAA.



Volunteers collected more than 1,800 pounds of marine debris during Hot Spot week. Photo: Leave No Trace

NOAA launches *Mission: Iconic Reefs*

NOAA and partners announced “*Restoring Seven Iconic Reefs: A Mission to Recover the Coral Reefs of the Florida Keys*,” one of the largest investments in reef restoration anywhere in the world. By restoring corals at ecologically and economically valuable sites in Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary over the next two decades, *Mission: Iconic Reefs* aims to change the trajectory of an entire ecosystem. Collaboration among federal and state agencies, leading coral reef experts, local restoration practitioners, and the Florida Keys community will be key to the success of this effort.



Seven iconic reef sites, shown on the map, are focal areas for this unprecedented restoration plan. Credit: NOAA



Divers outplant staghorn coral at Carysfort Reef. Photo: Alex Neufeld/Coral Restoration Foundation

Looking Ahead

- The sanctuary is preparing to release and accept public comment on a draft rule for sanctuary boundary, zone, and regulation updates that considers cutting-edge science, technical expertise, and community input received during the public review of the Restoration Blueprint.
- After finalizing exterior renovations, the sanctuary will update the interior exhibits and messaging in the Eco-Discovery Center in Key West to encourage visitors to become advocates for the unique Florida Keys marine environments.
- The sanctuary will welcome a new dive and buoy vessel, a 36-foot commercial duty, fiberglass hull workboat that will replace the aging R/V *Rachel Carson*.

NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARY SYSTEM



Scale varies in this perspective. Adapted from National Geographic Maps.

- National Marine Sanctuary
- ▲ Marine National Monument
- Proposed National Marine Sanctuary

The National Marine Sanctuary System is a network of underwater parks encompassing more than 600,000 square miles of marine and Great Lakes waters. The network includes a system of 14 national marine sanctuaries and Papahānaumokuākea and Rose Atoll marine national monuments.