Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary

More than 1,000 historic shipwrecks are scattered beneath the waters of the Florida Keys.

Seven species of stony corals found in the Florida Keys are protected under the Endangered Species Act.

Mangrove trees form a productive habitat along 1,800 miles of natural shoreline in the Keys.

A diver explores coral reefs in Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary.

Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary (FKNMS) protects a coral reef ecosystem that is home to one of North America’s most diverse communities of underwater plants and animals. Nearly 6,000 marine species inhabit the coral reefs, mangrove forests, seagrass meadows and other habitats of the Florida Keys. The sanctuary protects these resources, which are critical to supporting the tourist and fishing based economy of the area. The ecosystem attracts tourists who enjoy diving, boating and other forms of ocean recreation, and sustains valuable commercial and recreational fisheries. The sanctuary also helps preserve the nation’s maritime history by protecting shipwrecks and other irreplaceable heritage resources.

Research and Monitoring
In coordination with many research partners, the sanctuary facilitates research and monitoring projects that further resource protection goals. Research projects focus on ecosystem health, coral reef ecology and habitat restoration, fisheries, and marine reserves. Under the sanctuary’s Water Quality Protection Program, long-term monitoring of coral reefs, seagrass meadows and water quality aids in identifying changes in habitats and marine life, as well as the role humans play in those environmental changes. Sanctuary managers use this information to develop programs and strategies to better conserve and restore sanctuary habitats.

Education and Outreach
Promoting sanctuary stewardship, best practices, sustainable use, and the results of research and monitoring studies are critical to resource protection. Programs and exhibits at the Florida Keys Eco-Discovery Center, located in Key West, deliver messages of ocean conservation to visitors from around the world. Through its Blue Star program, the sanctuary recognizes dive operators who voluntarily educate their customers about sustainable diving practices. The sanctuary’s Team OCEAN program teaches boaters how to reduce their impacts to coral reefs. Social media, radio, news print, the sanctuary’s website, partnerships and community-based programs are also used to reach local, national, and international audiences who visit and live in the Florida Keys.

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http://floridakeys.noaa.gov
Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary

**Location**
The water surrounding the archipelago formed by the Florida Keys

**Protected Area**
3,801 square miles

**Designation**
November 1990

**Habitats**
Coral reefs
Hardbottom
Mangrove-fringed shorelines and islands
Sand flats
Seagrass meadows

**Key Species**
Bottlenose dolphin
Brain and star coral
Grouper
Loggerhead sponge
Spiny lobster
Tropical reef fish

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**Find Us**
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**Office of National Marine Sanctuaries**
Network of marine protected areas
Encompasses more than 600,000 square miles
Established October 1972

**On the Web**
sanctuaries.noaa.gov
www.facebook.com/NOAAOfficeofNationalMarineSanctuaries
Twitter: @noaasanctuaries
Tumblr: @noaasanctuaries

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The wreck of the *City of Washington* lies on Elbow Reef, east of Key Largo.

A scorpionfish hides in the seagrass beds.

Florida Keys NMS protects the third largest living coral barrier reef system in the world.

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