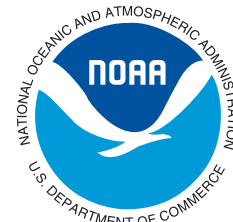


# Safe Sanctuaries 2005

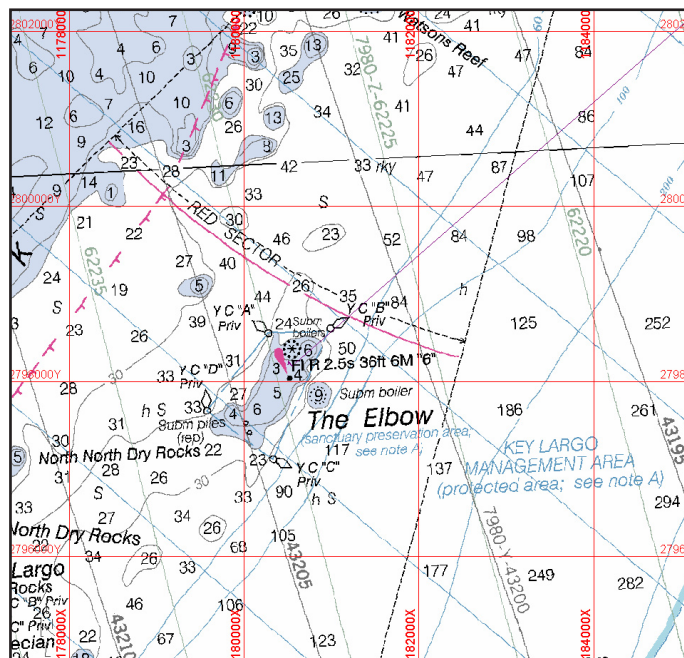
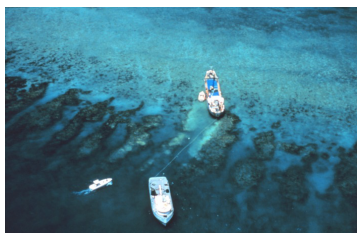


**S**afe Sanctuaries 2005 (SS2005) will exercise NOAA emergency response capabilities on March 15-17, and April 20-21 in the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary (FKNMS). The exercise will highlight NOAA's ability to deliver data, observations, forecasts, and expertise during emergencies threatening life, commerce, and the environment. It will provide an opportunity to put into action the new NOAA Response Plan drafted by the Emergency Response Program. The National Marine Sanctuary Program (NMSPP) and the Office of Response and Restoration (OR&R) are leading the exercise design, working closely with partners in NOAA, the United States Coast Guard, and Florida State Department of Environmental Protection.

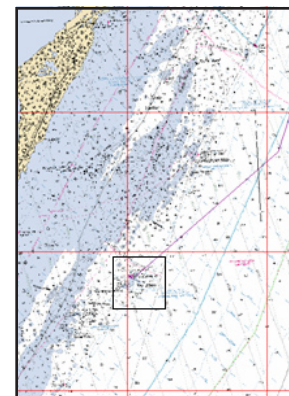
## Exercise Design and Objectives

SS2005 will revolve around the *M/V Portsmouth Trader*, an 800-foot cargo vessel carrying 1,200,000 gallons of fuel that grounds near Elbow Reef in the FKNMS. This scenario provides a setting for integrating people and capabilities across NOAA. The exercise objectives will stress NOAA's trustee responsibilities, internal and external communications, procedures for deploying technical capabilities during emergencies, and the health and safety of NOAA response personnel.

The grounding will injure coral habitat and historical artifacts and spilled oil will threaten other resources. Of particular interest in this exercise, is the reaction by the resource protection staff in responding to the impact of the grounding and subsequent spills on historical



resources. *M/V Portsmouth Trader* will ground on the *City of Washington*, an historic resource listed on the Florida Keys Shipwreck trail. Elbow Reef also contains the remains of other historic Dry vessels that may be impacted by the grounding. The exercise will challenge the staff in the proper treatment of historic and cultural resources within the context of an oil spill event.



The exercise includes a tabletop component in March and field operations in April. The field exercise will showcase capabilities from across NOAA, with over 100 personnel on-scene. Overall, there will be more than 150 total personnel participating, including the U.S. Coast Guard, the U.S. Department of the Interior, the Florida Department of Environmental Protection, the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission,

and Monroe County. The National Weather Service will deploy an Incident Meteorologist and a Warning Coordination Meteorologist and activate NOAA All Hazards radio. The National Environmental Satellite and Data Information Service SARSAT program will provide information for a simulated boat accident. National Marine Fisheries Service field personnel will support injury assessment activities. The National Ocean Service will deploy National Geodetic Survey aircraft to provide digital photography, the Center for Operational Oceanographic Products and Services (CO-OPS) will deploy a real-time observation buoy, and Office of Coast Survey will conduct rapid bathymetric surveys. The NMSF and OR&R will deploy scientists on-scene to forecast pollution fate, evaluate response alternatives, and document natural resource injuries.

### Training

A significant component of SS2005 is providing training in emergency response management, including Sanctuaries-specific training in the use of the Sanctuaries Hazardous Incident Emergency Logistics Database System (SHIELDS) and in the Incident Command System (ICS). Training has included headquarters staff in Silver Spring to support integration across all NOAA levels. The ICS training and the March tabletop component will address the first 36 hours of the incident, setting the stage for NOAA trustee and capabilities issues to be played out during the April field operations.

### Conclusion

The training, tabletop, and field exercises provide the opportunity to both highlight NOAA's strengths in operational capabilities and to analyze future requirements. A post exercise debriefing, similar to the one recently held for the M/V *Athos I* spill, will help identify gaps in operational capabilities, areas requiring further research, and training that can enhance future operations.

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