



Islands in the Stream: **A Concept for the Gulf of Mexico**

**Marine Protected Areas
Federal Advisory Committee**

**Great Lakes Maritime Heritage Center
Alpena, Michigan**

October 24, 2007

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Regional Director
Southeast Region*

National Marine Sanctuary Program



4 Regions - 13 National Marine Sanctuaries & Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument



Conserve, protect, and enhance biodiversity, ecological integrity, and marine heritage.





“Islands in the Stream” Concept



Message Points

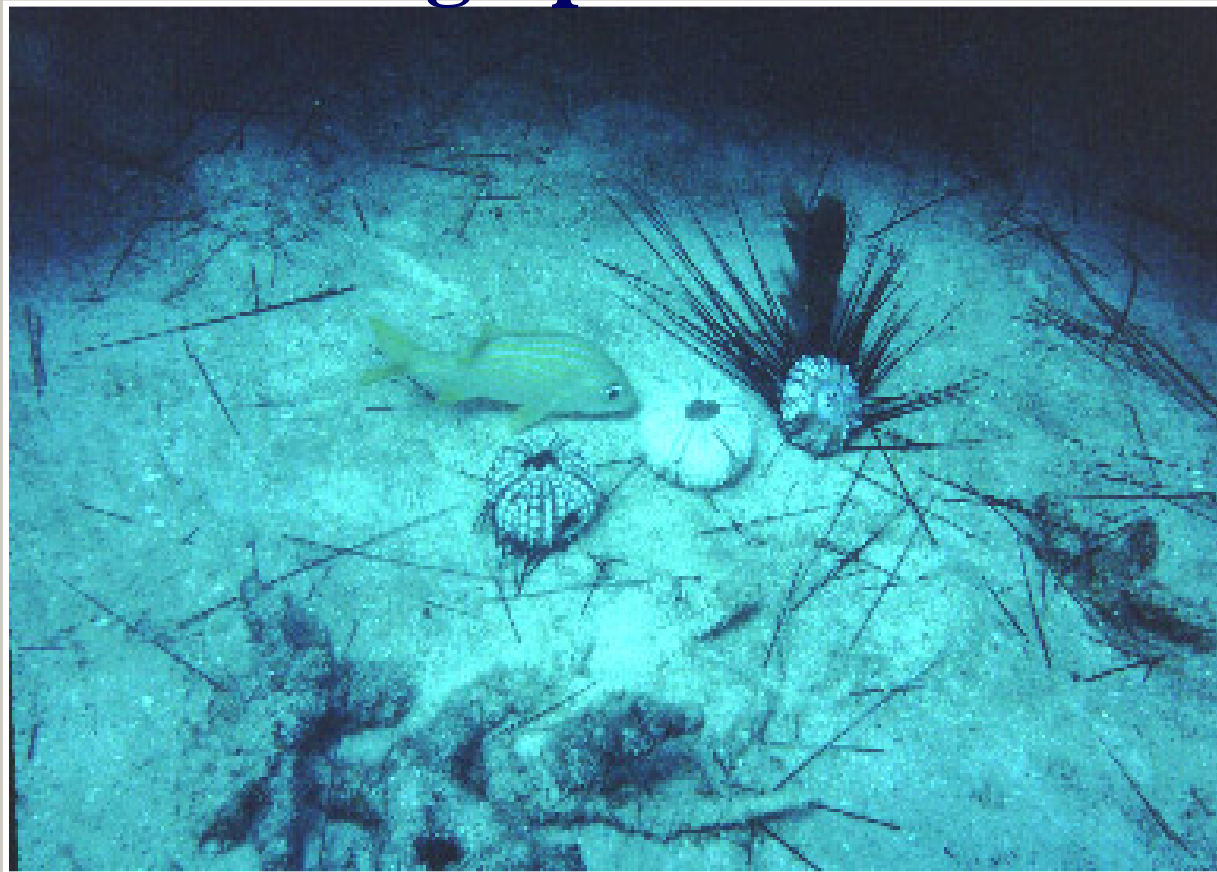
- Briefing you on a conceptual proposal
- 4 page internal discussion piece has been developed within NOAA
- No position taken by the Administration or NOAA
- CEQ is aware of the Gulf project – interested in exploring it as a concept
- No decision has been made to implement the project
- If implemented, a thorough public process will be included



Evidence of Regional Connectivity



**Came with the Caribbean wide die-off of
the Long Spine Sea Urchin**



1983 Diadema die-off

Long Spine Sea Urchin

Credit: H.A. Lessios (1984)

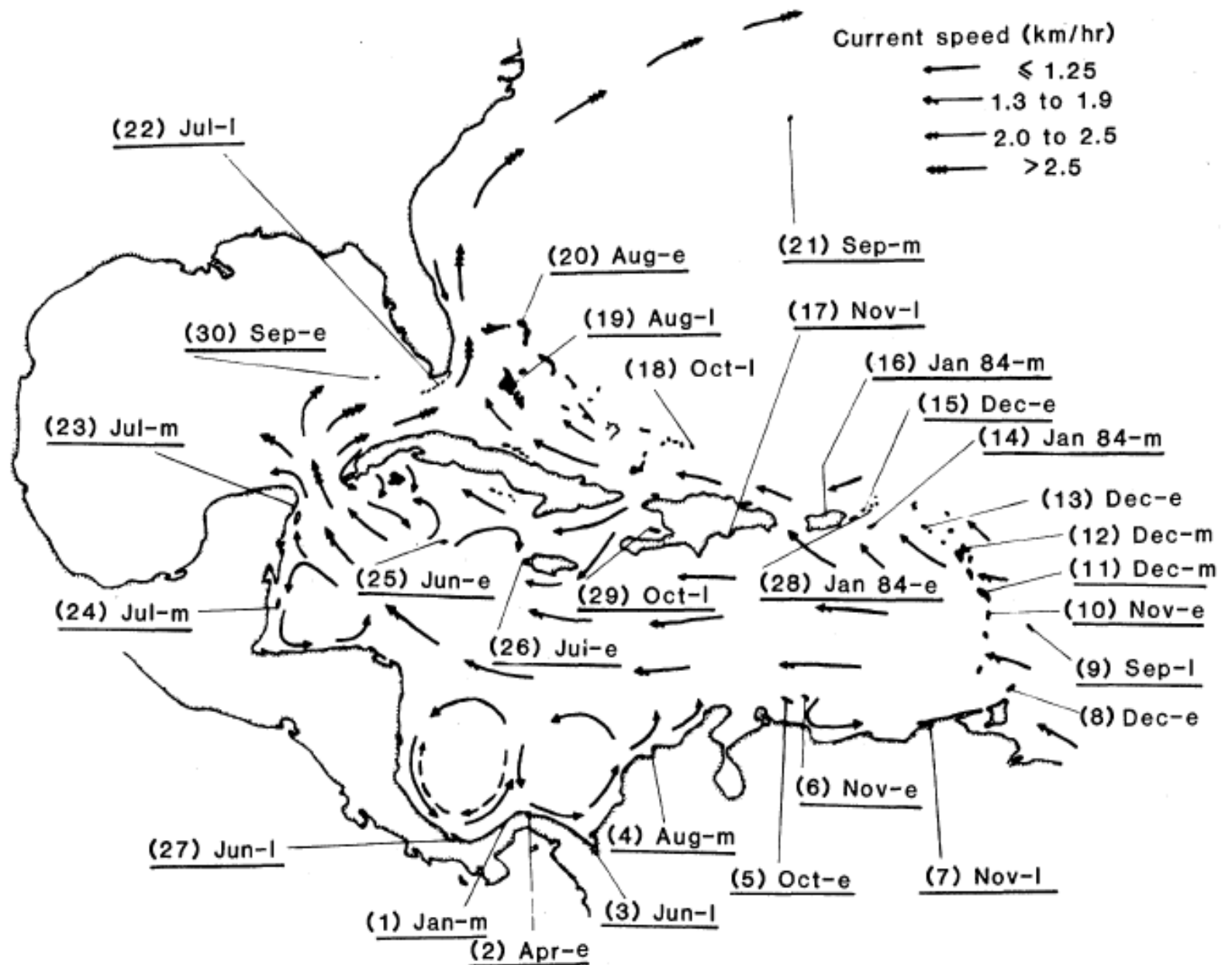
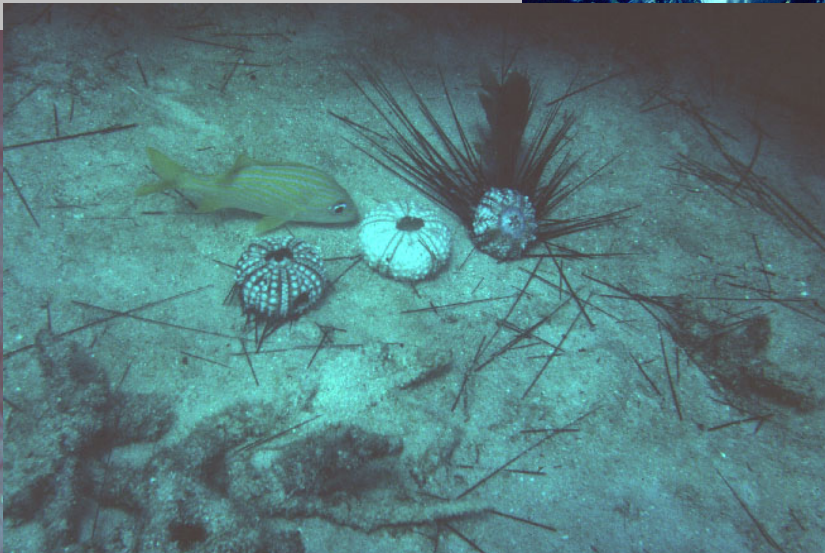
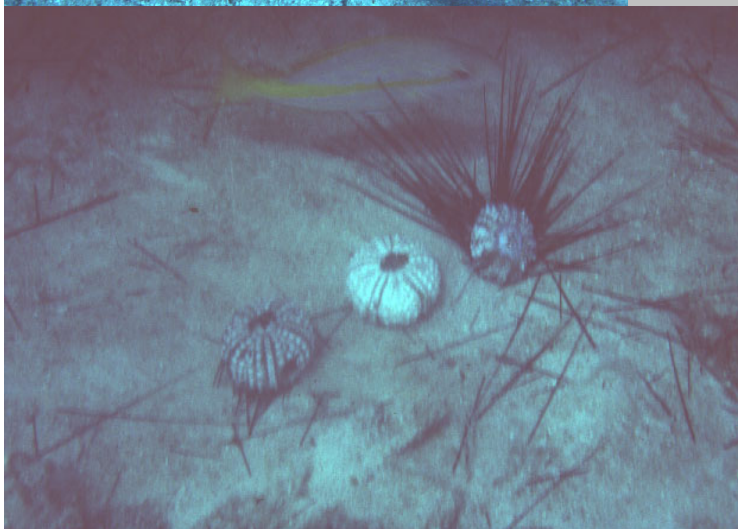
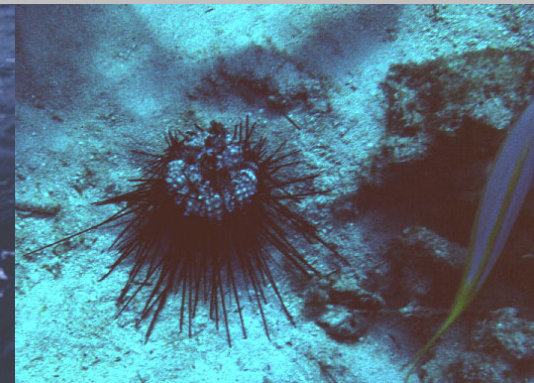


Fig. 2. Spread of *Diadema* mass mortality through the Caribbean and the western Atlantic. Underlined dates indicate the first time mortality was noted at each locality.

Harilaos Lessios - *Diadema* die-off - Looe Key NMS



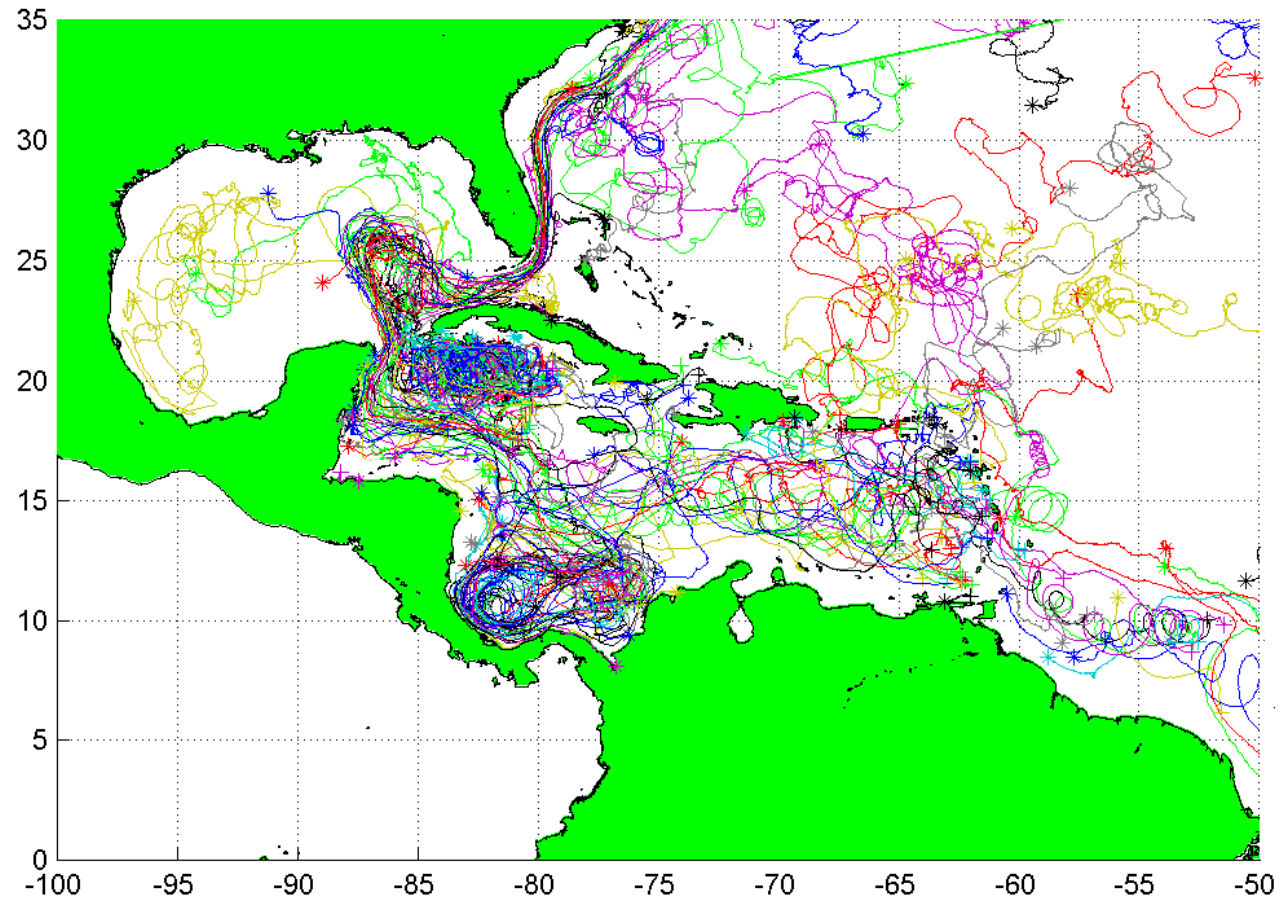
**July
1983**



NATIONAL MARINE
SANCTUARIES

Current Drifters (1998-2000)

Credit: Kevin Leaman (UM/RSMAS)



NATIONAL MARINE
SANCTUARIES™

FLORIDA KEYS

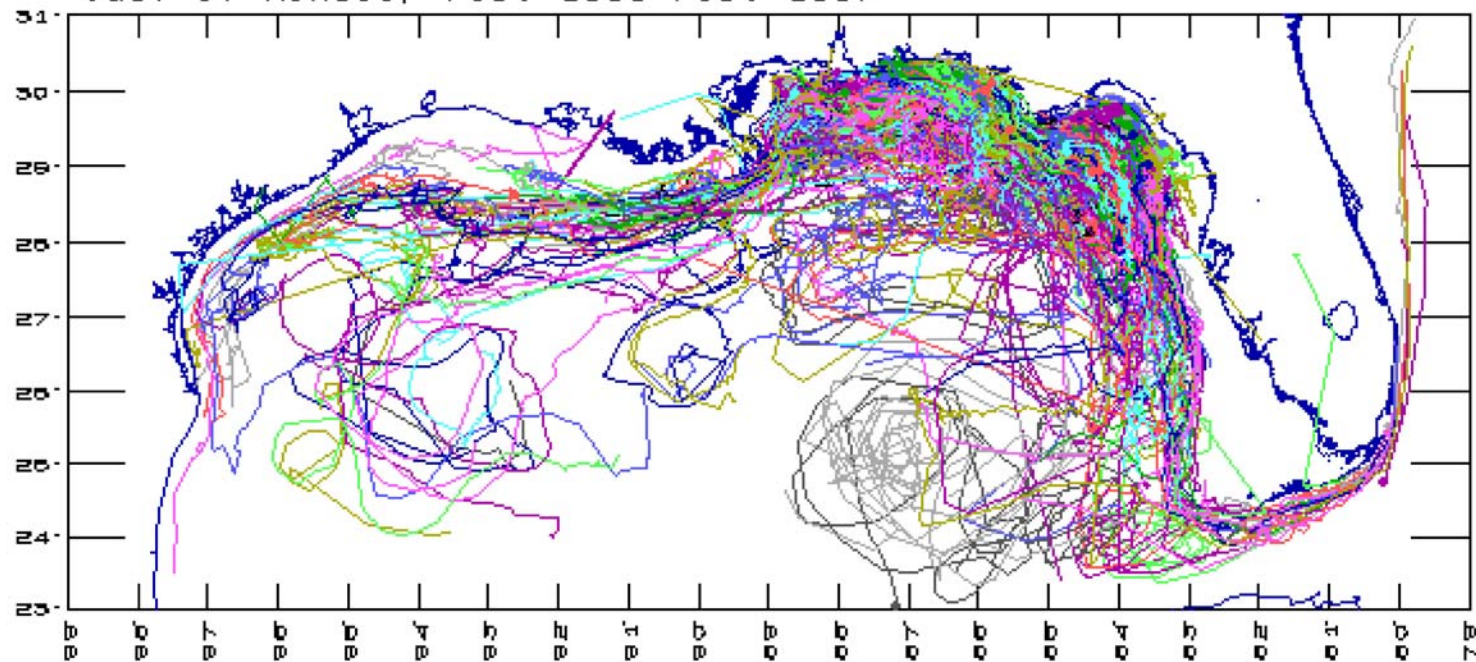


Water Circulation in the Gulf



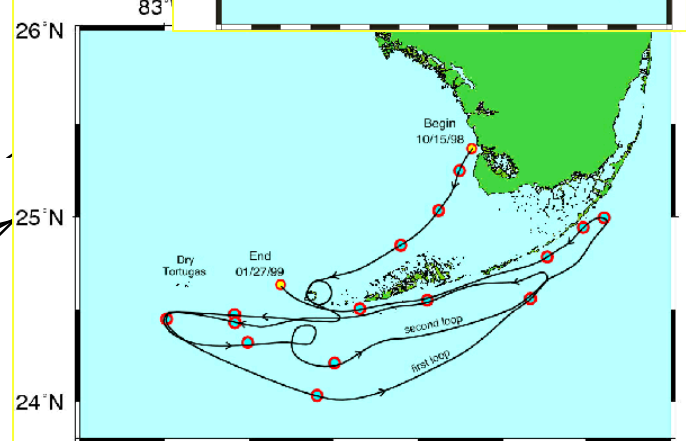
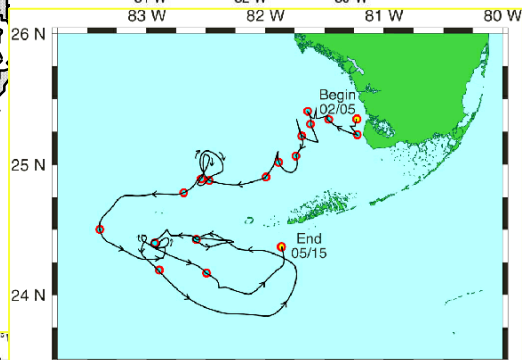
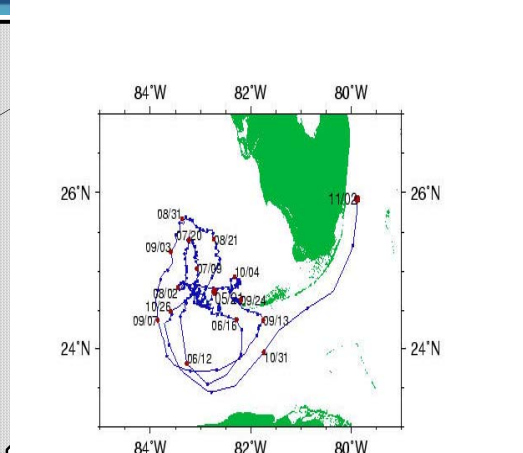
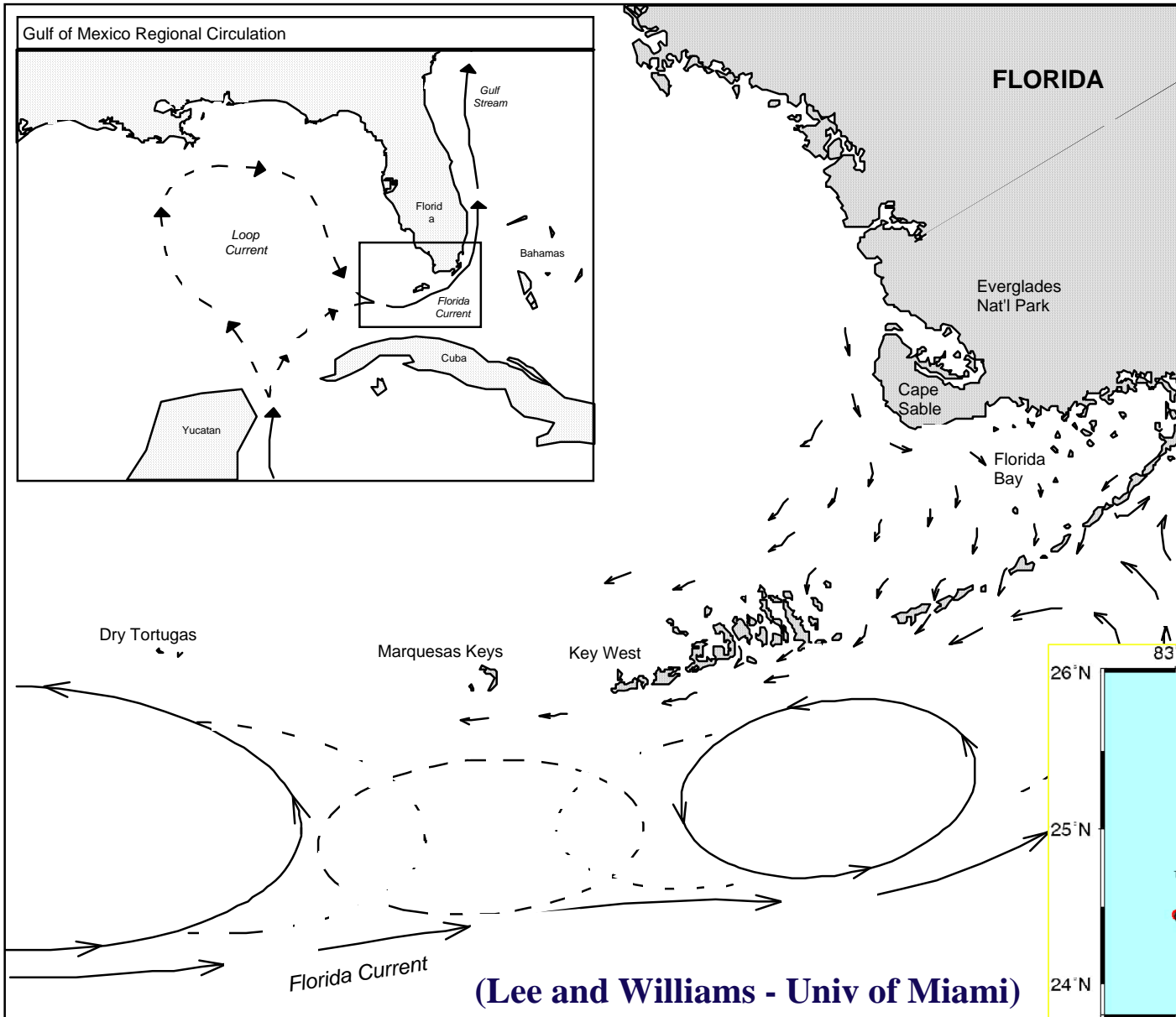
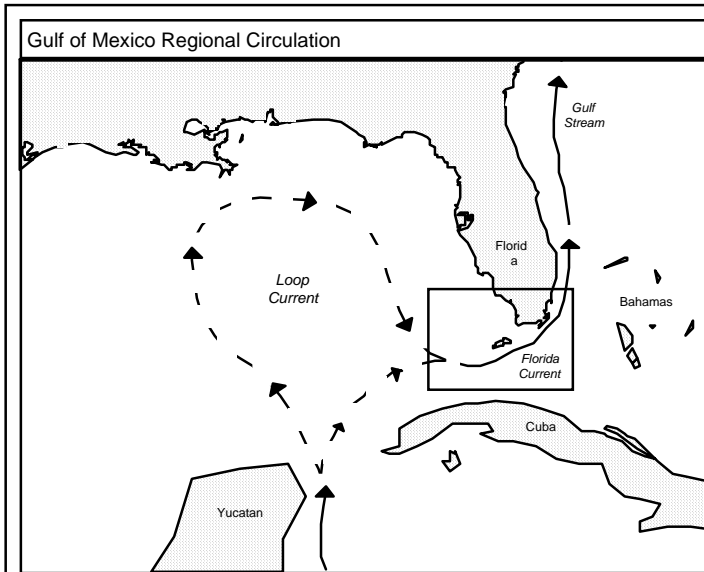
MMS

Gulf of Mexico, Feb. 1996-Feb. 1997





Water Circulation



(Lee and Williams - Univ of Miami)

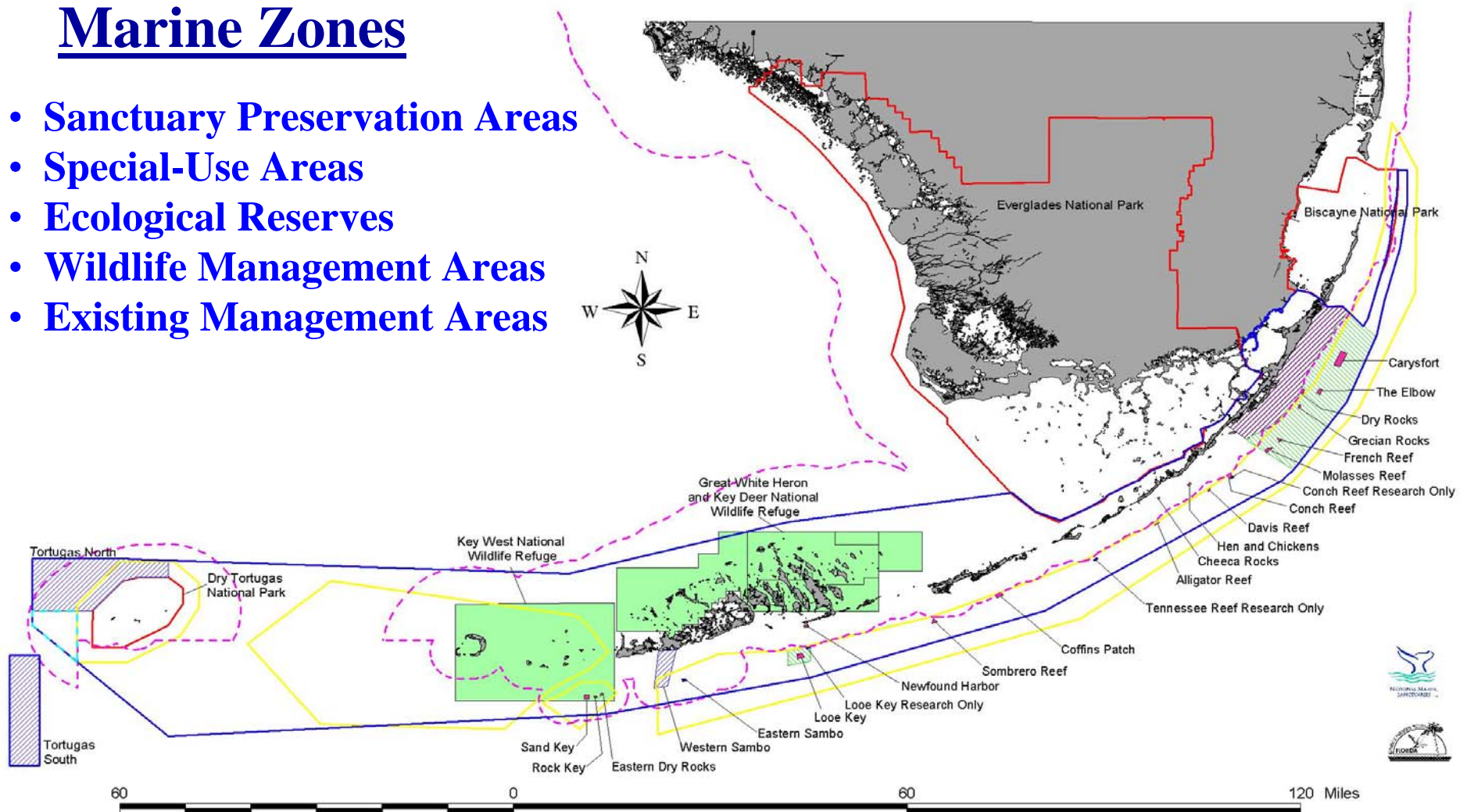


Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary



Marine Zones

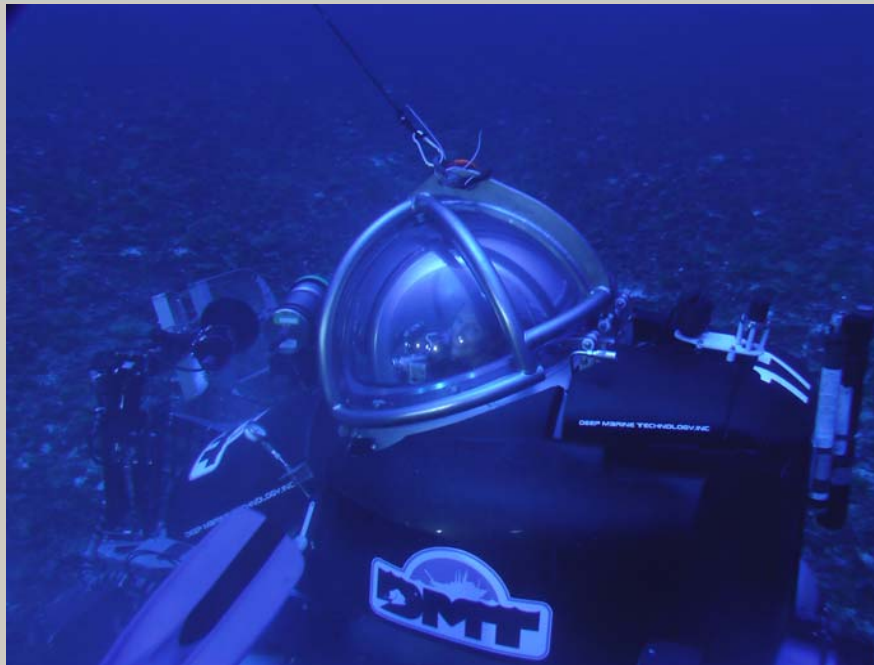
- Sanctuary Preservation Areas
- Special-Use Areas
- Ecological Reserves
- Wildlife Management Areas
- Existing Management Areas



created by Kevin Kirsch
11/11/2011



“Islands in the Stream”



Tim Taylor © 2005

Not a New
Concept



Tim Taylor © 2005

5 Year *Sustainable Seas
Expedition*

*“Islands in the Stream”
Belize to North Carolina*



“Islands in the Stream” Concept



Qualifier:

When using the term MPA, I am using your definition.

Executive Order No. 13158 on Marine Protected Areas

For the purposes of this order:

(a) "Marine protected area" means any area of the marine environment that has been reserved by Federal, State, territorial, tribal, or local laws or regulations to provide lasting protection for part or all of the natural and cultural resources therein.

– President William J. Clinton, May 2000



“Islands in the Stream” Concept



Key Points About This Initiative

- Establishment of the Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument
- One idea: a network of MPAs in the Gulf of Mexico linked by ocean currents
- Would establish the largest and first ever internationally connected network of MPAs
- The initiative proposes an international network of MPAs with Mexico and Belize
- Gulf of Mexico: ideal location – energy and marine conservation can co-exist
- General concept: create small discrete MPAs where marine resources are protected
- And multiple uses are allowed



“Islands in the Stream” Concept



Key Points About This Initiative

- Functionally-connected network of the Nation’s northernmost coral reefs, banks, ridges and pinnacles
- Ensure conservation of sensitive habitats and communities critical to the Gulf’s most recognizable and threatened living resources
- Would provide for recreational and ocean uses that are compatible with the primary objective of conservation



“Islands in the Stream” Concept



Key Points About This Initiative

- A unique opportunity exists to protect special marine areas in the Gulf of Mexico
- Protecting special marine areas in the Gulf of Mexico would give the President the marine equivalent of Teddy Roosevelt’s legacy of land conservation.
- The initiative would build on other similar actions such as the June 2006 decision to designate the Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument
- The Administration has not taken a formal position on the initiative yet. Rather, it is considering the merits of this initiative, along with other possibilities.
- NOAA would not support the designation without a thorough public discussion of all the relevant issues.



“Islands in the Stream” Concept



Possible Management Opportunities

- Provides an opportunity for holistic and complete management of the special marine areas in the Gulf of Mexico without limitations on the uses
- Immediate protection for certain activities could be provided by the President under the Antiquities Act and co-management by MMS and NOAA
- Long-term management and protection would be established after a thorough public process under the highly collaborative and inclusive NMS Act designation process.
- Long-term management of these MPAs would be collaborative and coordinated
- Will take into account current management measures in place under other authorities such as the Outer Continental Shelf Lands Act, the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, and the Clean Water Act.



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Recreational & Commercial Fishing

- The initiative has the potential to significantly enhance fishing in the Gulf of Mexico by extending the concept of wildlife refuges to the offshore environment
- The initiative is targeted in that only small discrete areas will be subject to additional protection
- Most areas considered are already subjected to some form of fishing restrictions under the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act
- Most designated as HAPCs by Gulf Council
- Provides a unique opportunity to study the benefits of MPAs in ecosystem management
- The initiative would be designed to establish management options based on sound science and after a thorough public process



“Islands in the Stream” Concept



Energy Industry

- Initiative will confirm that the energy industry can conduct its operations profitably while having little to no impact on very sensitive marine resources in the same area
- Initiative will allow for current energy industry operations to continue and also allow future, environmentally sound access to protected areas
- Since initiative is targeted, only small discrete areas will be subject to additional protections
- There is no plan to close off the entire Gulf of Mexico to energy industry operations
- Most areas considered in the initiative are already subjected to some form of restriction by MMS as No-Activity Areas or the eastern Gulf of Mexico, which is wholly off-limits to new activities.



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Conservation

- The initiative would establish the world’s first, and largest, ecologically connected system of marine protected areas
- Apply an ecosystem-based approach to management
- Will improve on ocean governance
- Protection and management targeted to small discrete areas - but would be a significant improvement to the disparate and largely uncoordinated status quo
- The initiative would provide a model for creating true networks of MPAs
- The initiative does not establish a negative precedent by allowing the energy industry to continue current operations in marine protected areas.



“Islands in the Stream” Concept



**The “Islands- the special places- in the Stream (Loop Current)”
in the US include:**

- South Texas Banks
- Flower Garden Banks National Marine Sanctuary
- North Texas-Louisiana Banks
- Mississippi-Alabama Shelf Pinnacles
- Madison Swanson
- Florida Middle Grounds
- Steamboat Lumps
- Pulley Ridge
- Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary/Tortugas Ecological Reserve



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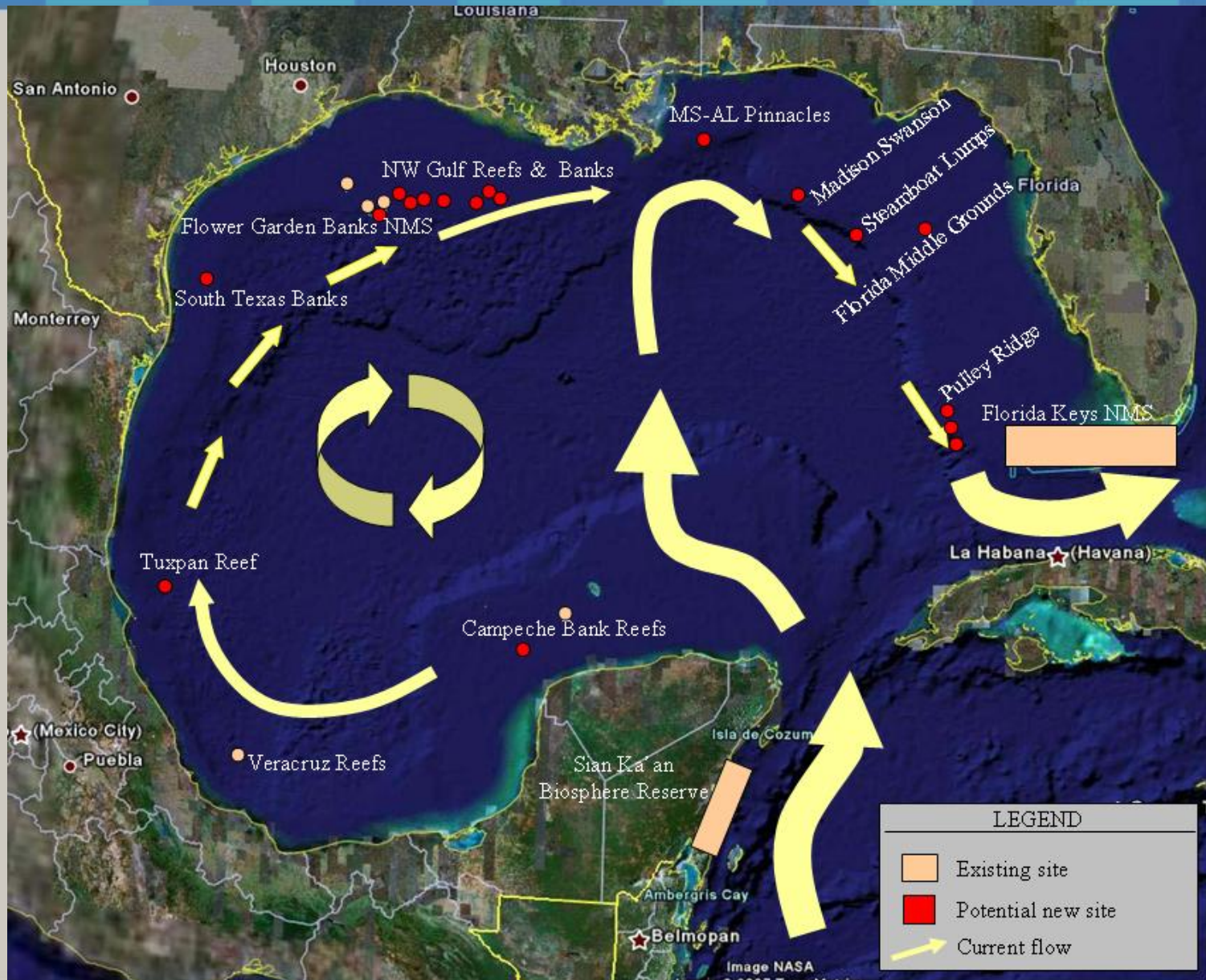


Flower Garden Banks NMS

- **Management Plan Review Process**
- **Separate process – but a center-piece of the MPA network**
- **Working with a well-balanced SAC**
- **Developing Alternatives for Boundary Expansion**



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Questions?





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