

Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary



Photo: NOAA

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



Photo: Bill Goodwin, NOAA

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



Photo: NOAA

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

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.

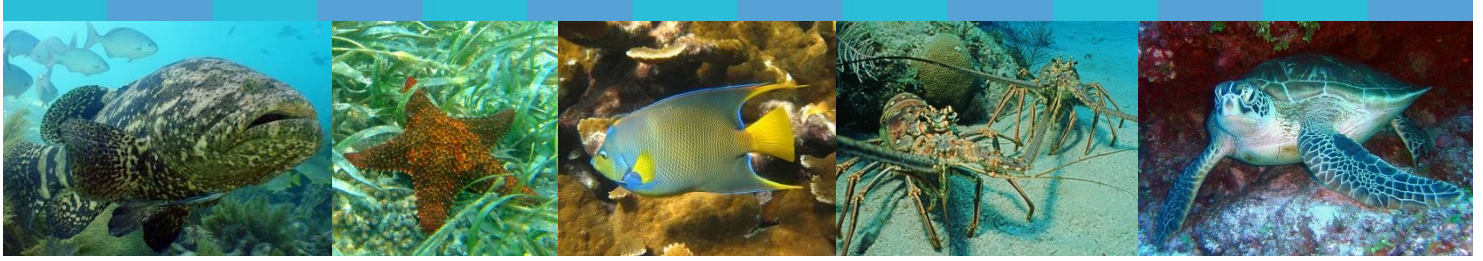
Education and Outreach

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.



Photo: NOAA

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



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

NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARY SYSTEM



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On the Web

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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
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Photo: Indiana University

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



Photo: NOAA

A scorpionfish hides in the seagrass beds.



Photo: NOAA

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

<http://floridakeys.noaa.gov>