

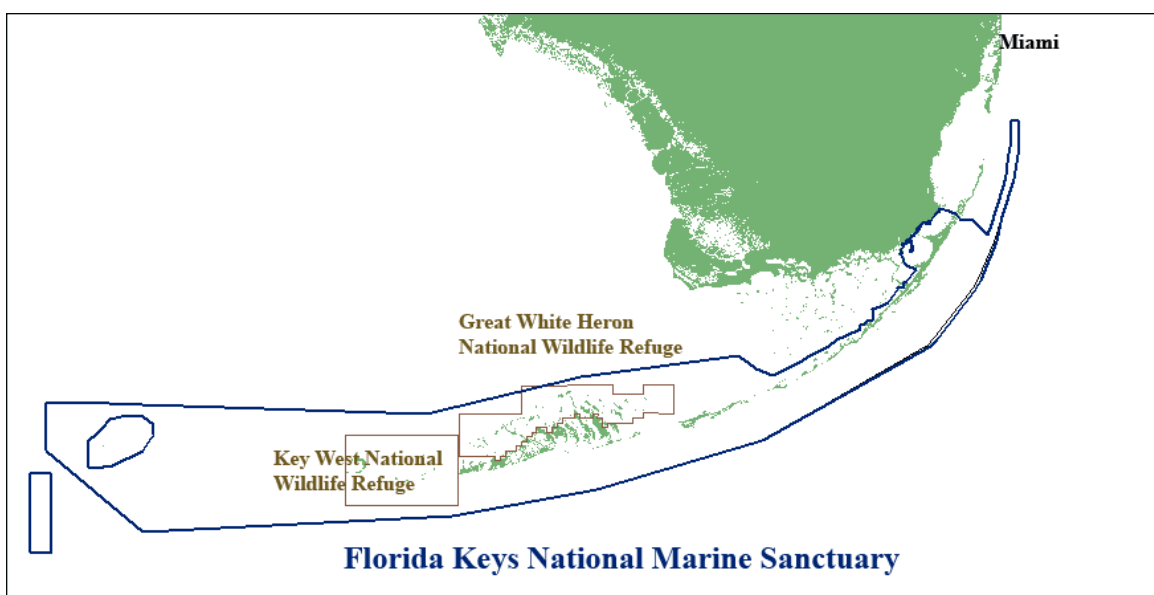


Marine Zoning and Regulatory Review

Shaping the future of Florida Keys marine conservation

Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary Advisory Council is embarking on a multi-year comprehensive review of sanctuary marine zones and regulations, and will be soliciting public input throughout the process. The revisions made during this process will shape the future of marine conservation management in the Florida Keys for decades.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's (USFWS) Florida Keys National Wildlife Refuges Complex, which co-manages 20 of the sanctuary's 27 Wildlife Management Areas, will also play a key role in the review while simultaneously updating its own Backcountry Management Plan.



Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary, Key West and Great White Heron National Wildlife Refuges

What is the role of the Sanctuary Advisory Council?

Sanctuary Advisory Councils are community-based advisory groups that provide advice and recommendations to the superintendents of national marine sanctuaries. Composed of members representing diverse stakeholder groups, the council will help determine the topics to be explored during the marine zoning and regulatory review, provide input on potential changes to marine zoning or other regulations, and aid the sanctuary in ensuring that citizens are aware of and engaged in the review process. Find out who your advisory council representative is by visiting the sanctuary's web site.

Why are sanctuary marine zones and regulations important?

The Florida Keys economy and quality of life are directly linked to the health of the marine environment. Marine zones and regulations are tools that allow managers to protect the marine environment on which the Florida Keys tourism-based economy relies. The different types of zones help protect sensitive natural resources from disturbance or overuse by human activities, separate visitors engaged in conflicting uses like diving and fishing, and preserve the biodiversity of an area. Some regulations apply to all the waters of the sanctuary while others are specific to certain zones or zone types.

Why review marine zones and regulations?

- *Community Interest:* In past management plan reviews and over the subsequent years, many members of the public have made clear our need to reexamine our management and conservation strategies. At the August 2011 meeting, the SAC passed a resolution requesting that FKNMS initiate a formal regulatory review process.
- *It's good management:* Periodic evaluation of regulations is good adaptive management practice, ensuring that marine zones and regulations continue to function best for dynamic natural resources and evolving patterns of human use.
- *The science shows we need to:* Improvements made in understanding marine ecosystems, especially coral reefs, may indicate different zones or regulations are needed to best conserve Florida Keys marine resources. The Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary Condition Report 2011 shows that human actions — such as poaching, boat groundings, and pollution — continue to degrade the habitat and living resource of the sanctuary, but may be improved with long term management efforts, regulatory compliance, and community involvement.
- *Emerging threats need to be addressed:* Climate change, ocean acidification, invasive lionfish, and threatened elkhorn and staghorn coral populations were largely unanticipated when the 1996 regulations were issued.
- *Requirements:* Both federal law and state resolution require the Sanctuary Management Plan to be reviewed every five years, and examining regulations is an integral part of that review. The USFWS's 1992 Backcountry Management Plan also requires updating and renewal.

What will the marine zone and regulatory review entail?

During the comprehensive review, and with extensive involvement from the public, the sanctuary and its advisory council will evaluate whether existing management strategies, including regulations and marine zones, are sufficient to address threats to marine resources, and if new or expanded protection strategies are warranted to better address these threats.

Utilizing comprehensive research and long-term scientific monitoring information, the marine zoning and regulatory review will include an evaluation of:

- Sanctuary boundary
- Sanctuary-wide regulations
- The types, location, and number of marine zones
- Zone-specific regulations



Typical day at Looe Key Existing Management Area

What do you want the Florida Keys to look like in 20 years?

Get involved and be part of the change!

The formal first step in gathering public input is the *scoping* process. During scoping, the Sanctuary Advisory Council and sanctuary will actively seek and compile public comments on marine zones and regulations. Scoping is expected to begin in May/June 2012, during which time public meetings will be held in the Florida Keys and south Florida. Comments will also be accepted through an online system, and regular mail.

In order to stay informed of public meetings and ways to participate in the review process, you are encouraged to contact your representative on the Sanctuary Advisory Council, attend advisory council meetings, bookmark the sanctuary's online events calendar, follow us on Facebook, and sign up for the marine zoning and regulatory review listserv. To add yourself to the list, send a message to requests@willamette.nos.noaa.gov with subject "Subscribe floridakeysreview". Your name will be added to the list of subscribers.

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