

2012 ACCOMPLISHMENTS



ADVISORY COUNCIL REVIEWS MARINE ZONES, REGULATION

The Sanctuary Advisory Council, working with public and community experts, is developing recommendations for changes to sanctuary marine zones and regulations. In 2012, using direction from the sanctuary management plan, the advisory council's marine zoning and regulatory review goals and objectives, and approximately 1,300 public comments received during the 2012 scoping period, the council identified priority issues to be addressed through working groups and workshops. The review is an ongoing process, continuing into 2015.



RESEARCH CRUISE STUDIED FISHED SPAWNING BEHAVIOR

Sanctuary and partner agency scientists studied fish spawning behaviors and habitat characteristics for nine days aboard the NOAA Ship *Nancy Foster* in July 2012. Scientists performed 214 scuba dives, mapped 266 miles of seafloor, and documented spawning behaviors of mutton, cubera snapper, and ocean triggerfish inside the sanctuary's Tortugas Ecological Reserve. Data gathered will support future science and management decisions, including greater emphasis on protection of fish spawning aggregations — a recurring theme in the sanctuary's marine zoning and regulatory review.



SHIPWRECK MYSTERY SOLVED

The survey and mapping efforts of volunteer science divers from the National Association of Black Scuba Divers in September 2012 helped the sanctuary positively identify an early 20th century shipwreck off Key Largo, Fla, to be the British steamship *Hannah M. Bell*. Sanctuary staff compared the dimensions and construction characteristics of an unknown shipwreck with historic shipping records to positively identify the wreck. The wreck's shallow depth allows snorkelers and divers to appreciate Keys maritime heritage and provides charter businesses with an educational opportunity for visitors.



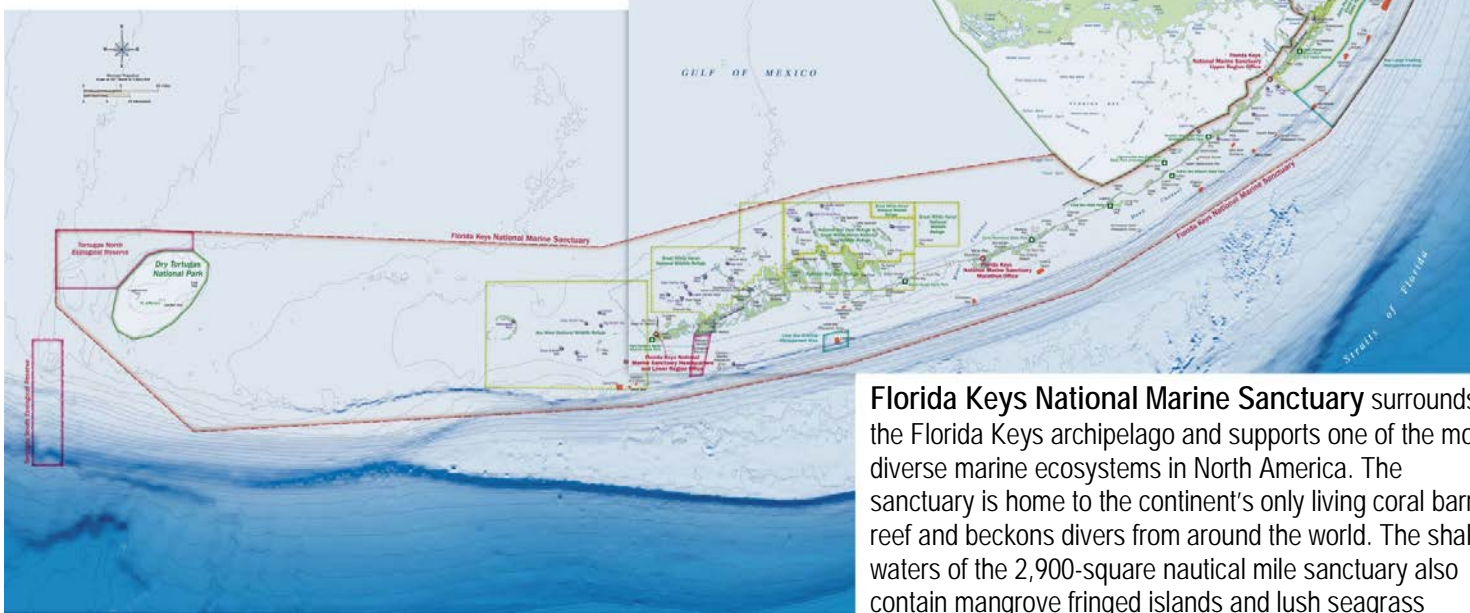
PROGRAM EDUCATED DIVERS AND SNORKELERS

The Sanctuary's Blue Star coral conservation and stewardship program welcomed an additional three dive and snorkel operators in 2012, bringing the total number of participating operators to 15. Blue Star recognizes charter companies that help protect the Florida Keys coral reef ecosystem by promoting responsible snorkeling and diving practices, and educating patrons on the role humans play in reef health. Tour operators are front-line educators, reaching the more than 700,000 people who snorkel and dive Florida Keys reefs annually.

LOOKING AHEAD

Three advisory council working groups, comprised of council members and community experts, will be helping develop recommendations for changes to sanctuary marine zones and regulations in FY2013. The Coral Reef Ecosystem Restoration Working Group will identify areas in need of restoration, appropriate permitting conditions, and criteria for re-opening closed areas. The Shallow Water Wildlife and Habitat working group will consider the use of vessel restrictions on access, anchoring and speed, and additional channel marking to further protect shallow water habitats. The Ecological Reserves, Preservation Areas and Wildlife Protection working group will make recommendations

to promote sustainable use of the sanctuary resources and consider new or modified marine reserves to protect spawning aggregations and wildlife.



Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary surrounds the Florida Keys archipelago and supports one of the most diverse marine ecosystems in North America. The sanctuary is home to the continent's only living coral barrier reef and beckons divers from around the world. The shallow waters of the 2,900-square nautical mile sanctuary also contain mangrove fringed islands and lush seagrass meadows. Together, these complex ecosystems provide the basis for the valuable tourism and fishing industries that are vital to Florida's economy. Established Nov. 16, 1990.

NOAA's Office of National Marine Sanctuaries is committed to supporting lives and livelihoods across the nation and in sanctuary communities through socioeconomic research and monitoring to understand the economic and social drivers of sanctuary resources and improve management practices.

NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARY SYSTEM



The Office of National Marine Sanctuaries serves as the trustee for a system of 14 marine protected areas encompassing more than 150,000 square miles of marine and Great Lakes waters from Washington state to the Florida Keys, and from Lake Huron to American Samoa. The system includes 13 national marine sanctuaries and the Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument. For more information on the National Marine Sanctuary System, visit: <http://sanctuaries.noaa.gov>