

National Marine Sanctuaries
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

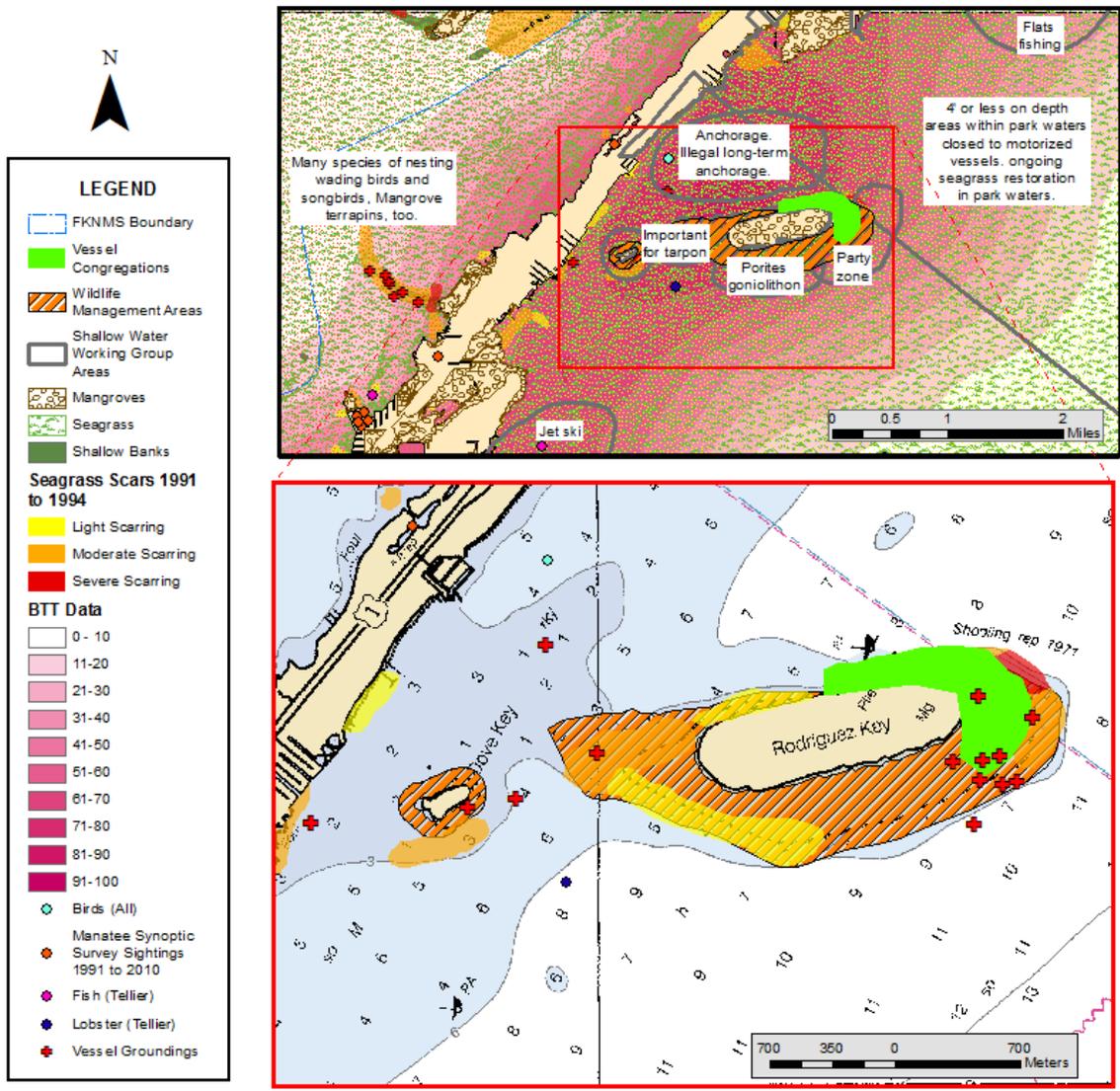


Shallow Water Wildlife and Habitat Protection Working Group

Draft Recommendations for Existing Wildlife Management
Areas and Proposed New Zones

UPPER KEYS

Dove Key Wildlife Management Area



Dove Key: Area of very shallow flats that are heavily used by a variety of birds as well as bonefish and other desirable fish species.

Existing Access Restrictions: No-motor zone on tidal flats; area around the two small islands closed.

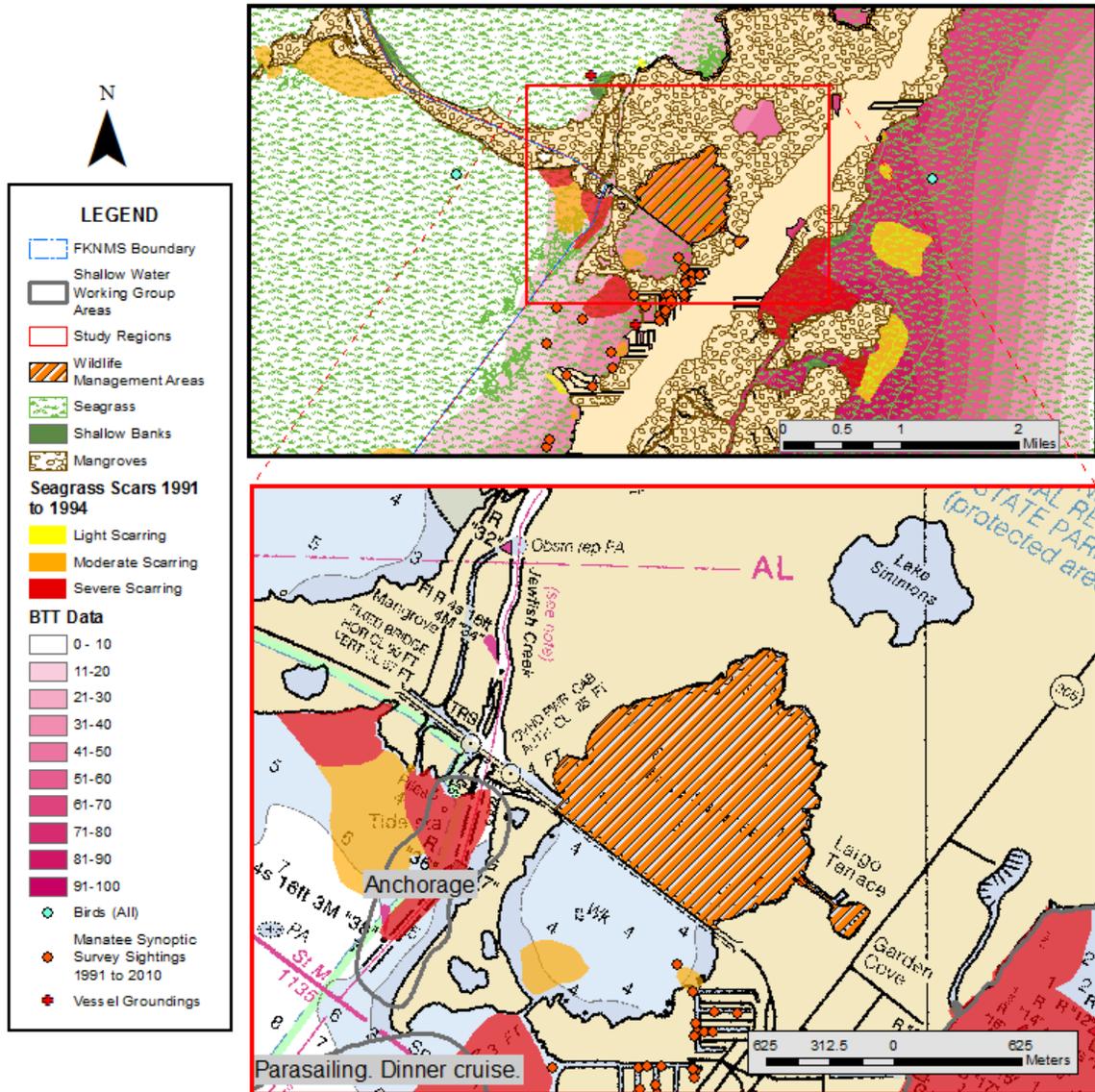
Proposed Recommendations:

Recommendation 1: Determine if closed area is appropriate.

Recommendation 2: Keep Dove Key and Rodriguez Key as separate areas.

Recommendation 3: Connect Dove Key and Rodriguez Key areas.

Eastern Lake Surprise Wildlife Management Area

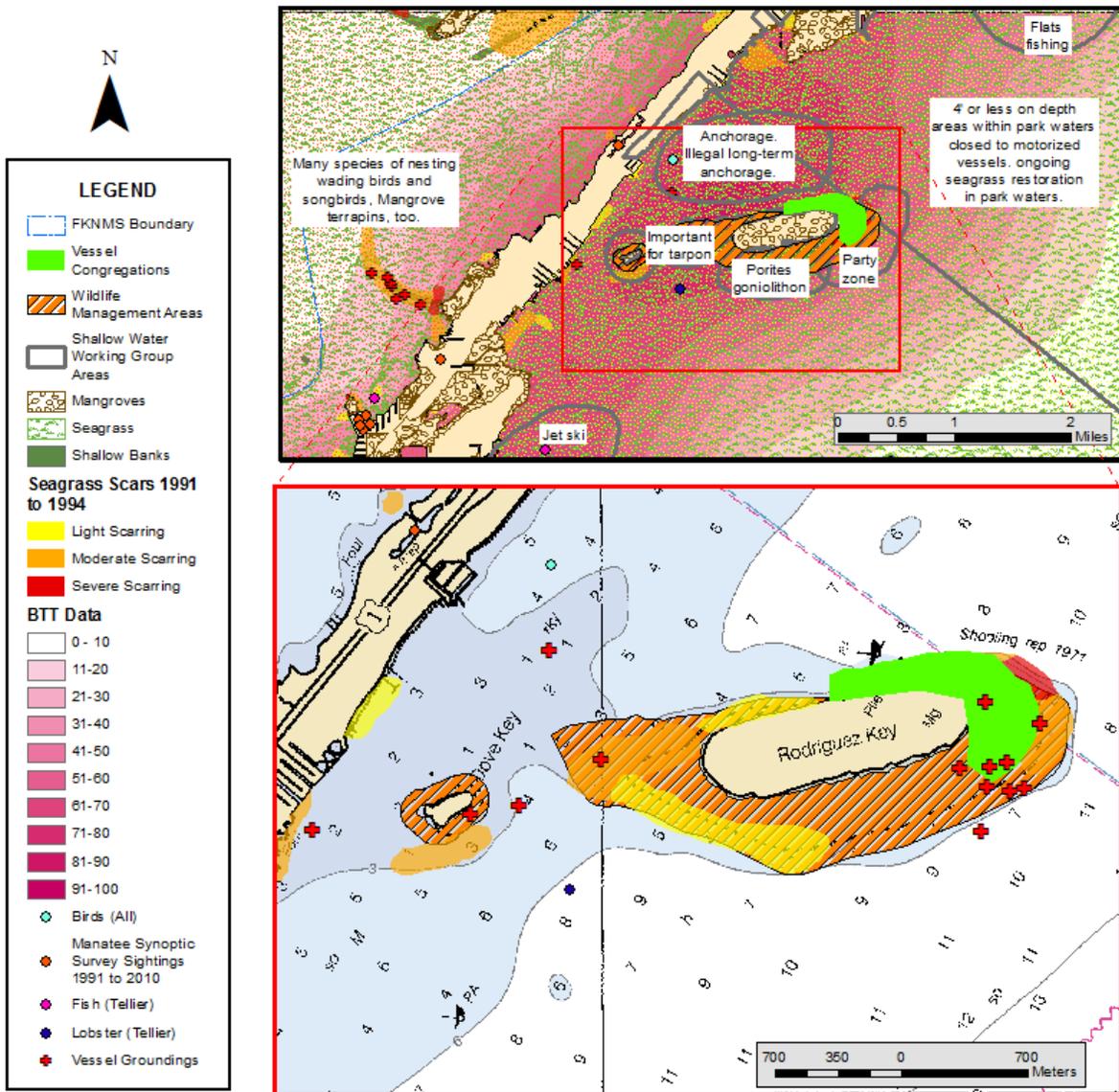


Eastern Lake Surprise: Protect the endangered American crocodile and West Indian manatee that inhabit the area from vessel traffic.

Existing Access Restrictions: Idle speed only/no-wake zone east of highway U.S. 1.

Proposed Recommendation: Maintain existing zoning and restrictions.

Rodriguez Key Wildlife Management Area



Rodriguez Key: Area of very shallow flats that are heavily used by a variety of birds as well as bonefish and other desirable fish species.

Existing Access Restrictions: No-motor zone on tidal flats.

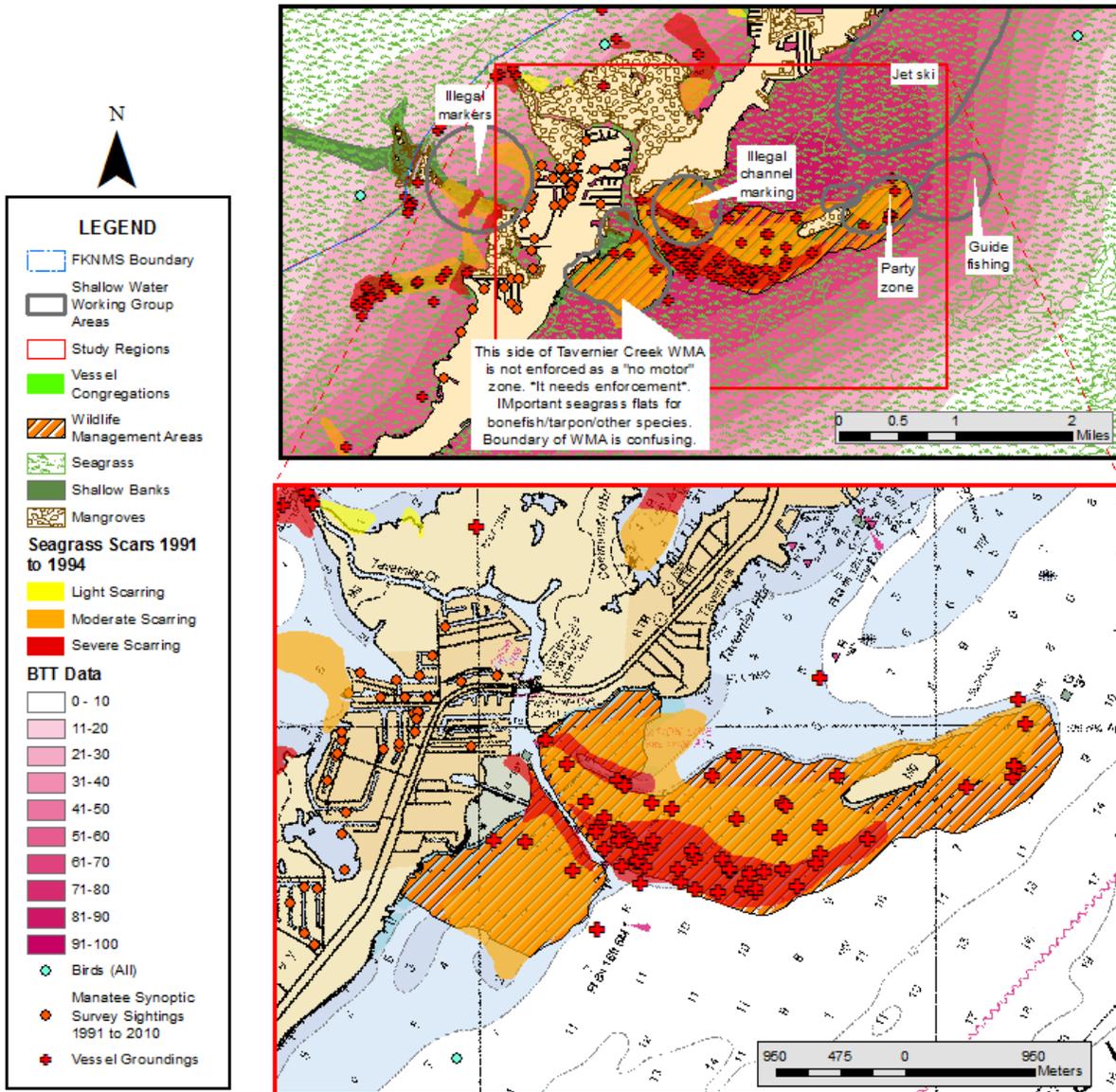
Proposed Recommendations:

Recommendation 1: Maintain existing restrictions and establish No Anchor Zone within existing area.

Recommendation 2: Keep Dove Key and Rodriguez Key as separate areas.

Recommendation 3: Connect Dove Key and Rodriguez Key areas.

Tavernier Key Wildlife Management Area



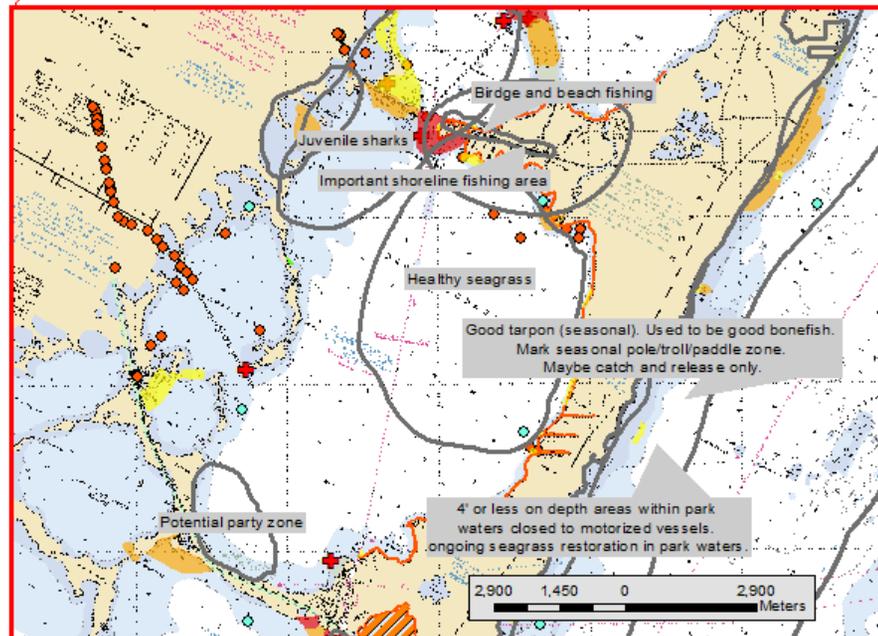
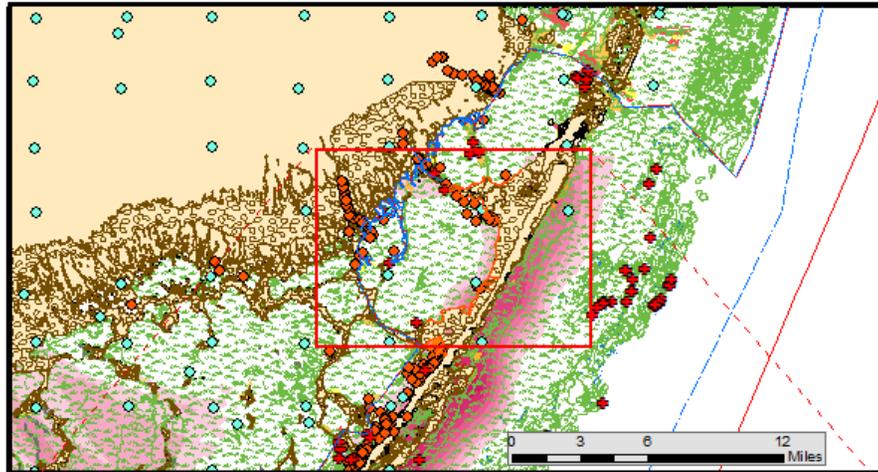
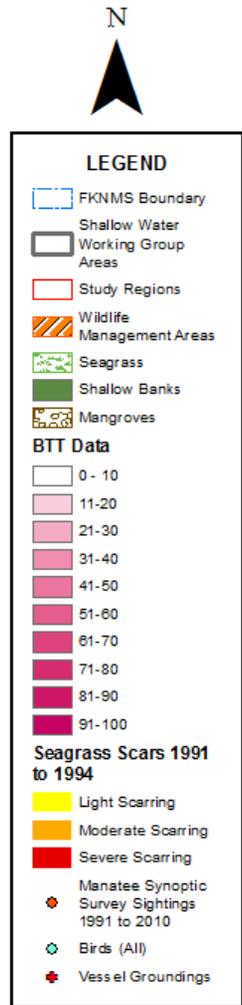
Tavernier Key: Area of very shallow flats that are heavily used by a variety of birds as well as bonefish and other desirable fish species.

Existing Access Restrictions: No-motor zone on tidal flats.

Proposed Recommendation:

Recommendation 1: Maintain existing restrictions and establish a No Anchor Zone within the existing area.

Crocodile Lake Wildlife Management Area



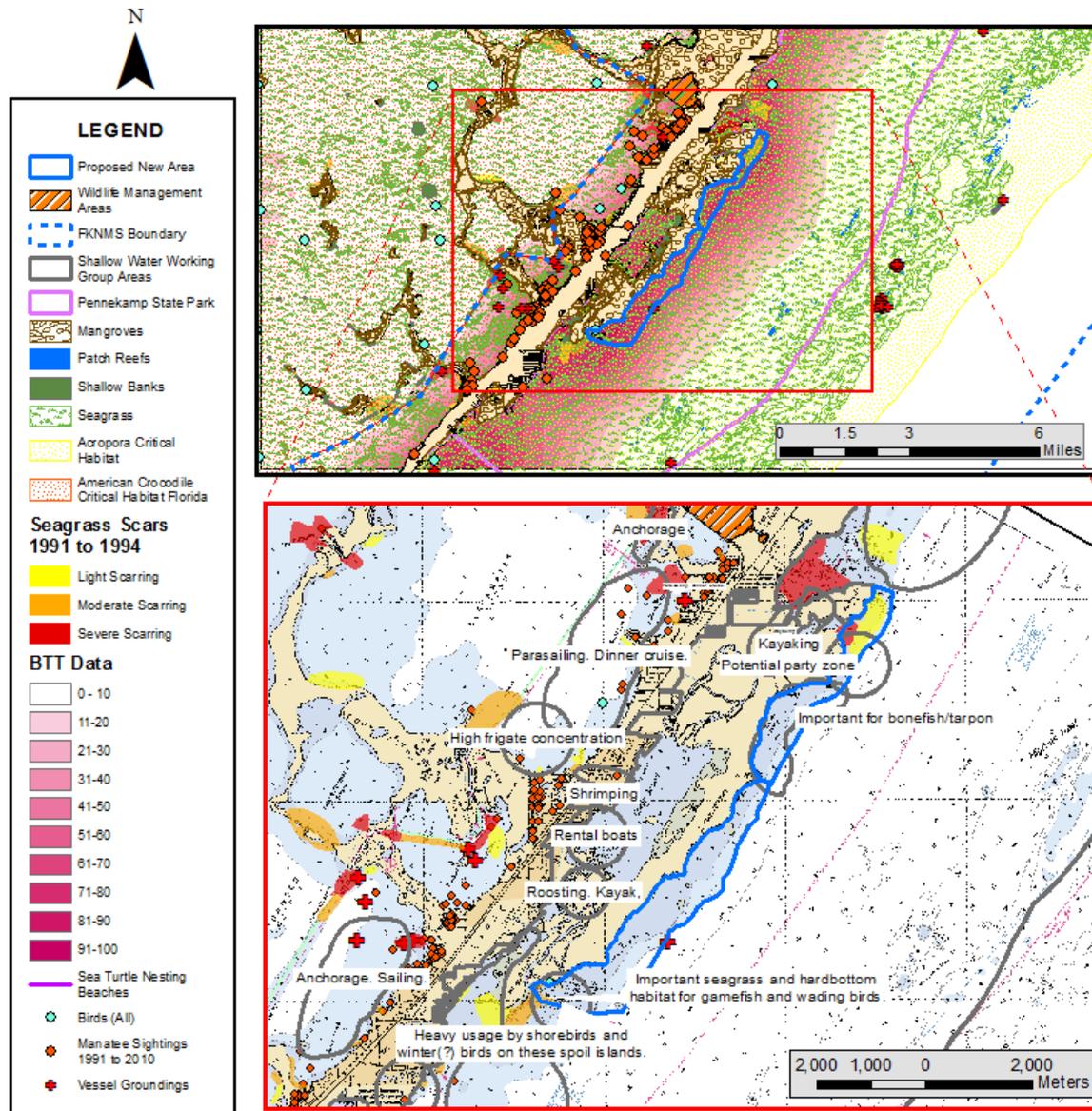
Crocodile Lake: This area has the most extensive stands of tropical hardwood hammocks in the United States. It harbors a number of endangered and threatened species, including the American crocodile and the West Indian manatee.

Existing Access Restrictions: No-Entry buffer zone (100 feet) along shoreline between March 1 and October 1.

Proposed Recommendation:

Recommendation 1: Maintain existing zoning and restrictions.

Whitmore Bight/El Radabob Key/Rattlesnake Key (proposed new area)



Whitmore Bight/El Radabob/Rattlesnake Key: This area has the most extensive stands of tropical hardwood hammocks in the United States. It harbors a number of endangered and threatened species, including the American crocodile and the West Indian manatee.

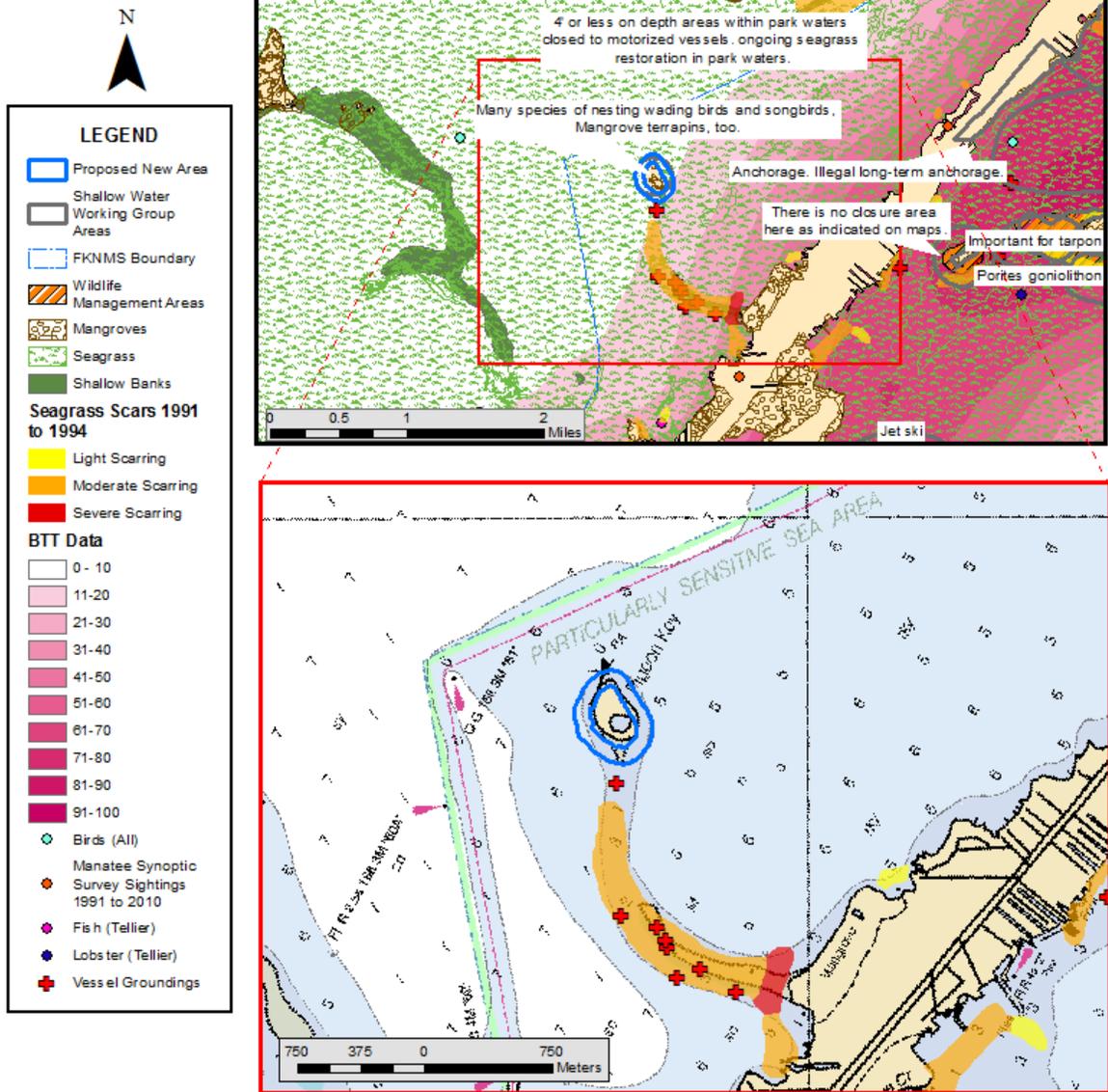
Proposed Recommendations:

Recommendation 1: Establish Closed/Research Only Area from South Sound Creek to Point Willie and Pole/Troll Zone from Point Willie to northeast point of Rattlesnake Key.

Recommendation 2: Establish Pole/Troll Zone from South Sound Creek to northeast point of Rattlesnake Key.

Recommendation 3: Establish Pole/Troll Zone from Point Willie to northeast point of Rattlesnake Key.

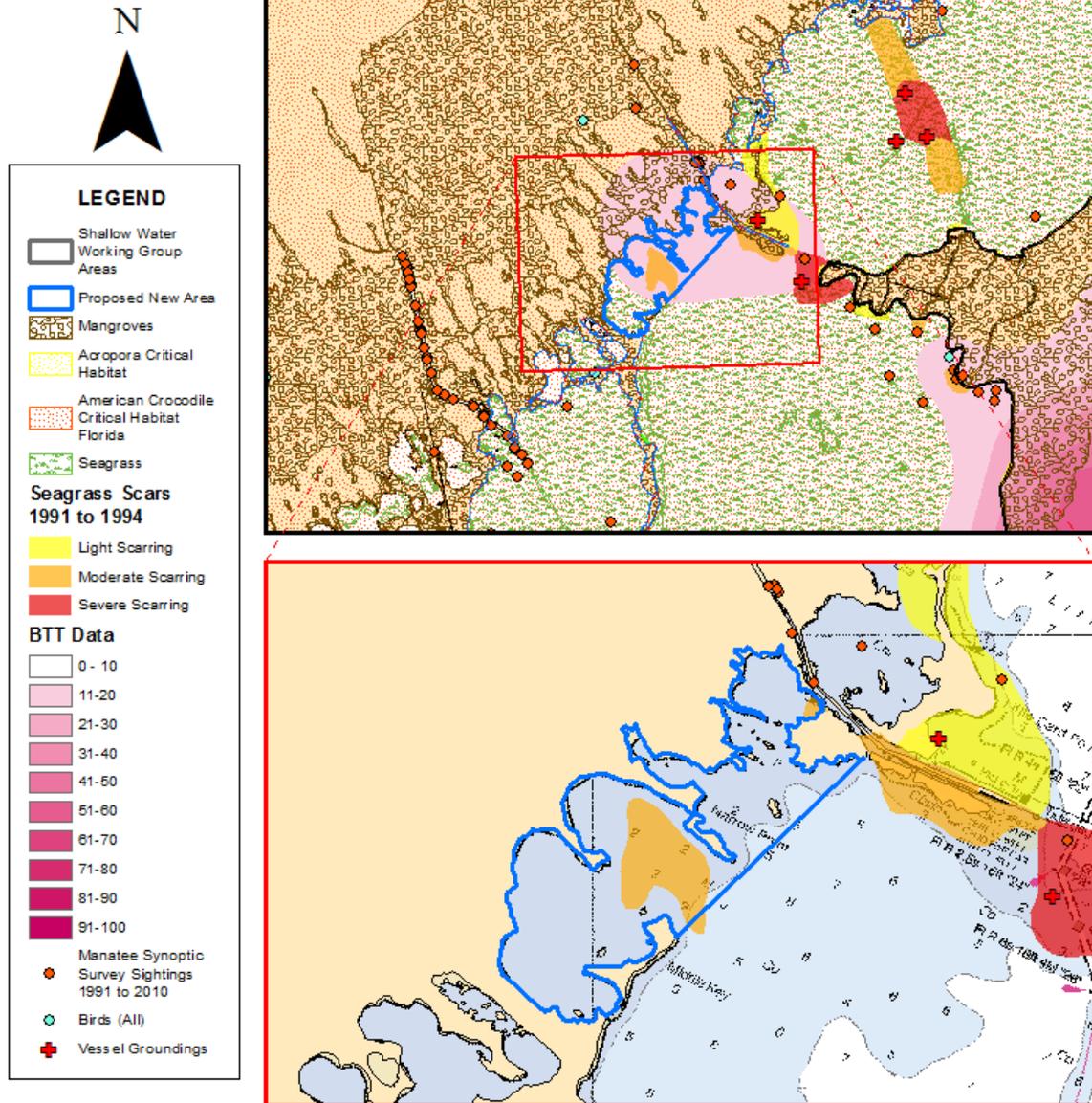
Pigeon Key – Florida Bay (proposed new area)



Pigeon Key: This is the only island of its kind in the upper keys within the FKNMS that supports high and significant numbers of nesting wading bird species as well as unique reptiles. It is adjacent to the intra-coastal waterway so gets impacted heavily by boaters.

Proposed Recommendation: Establish 100 yard No Entry Zone around island.

Barnes Sound (proposed new area)



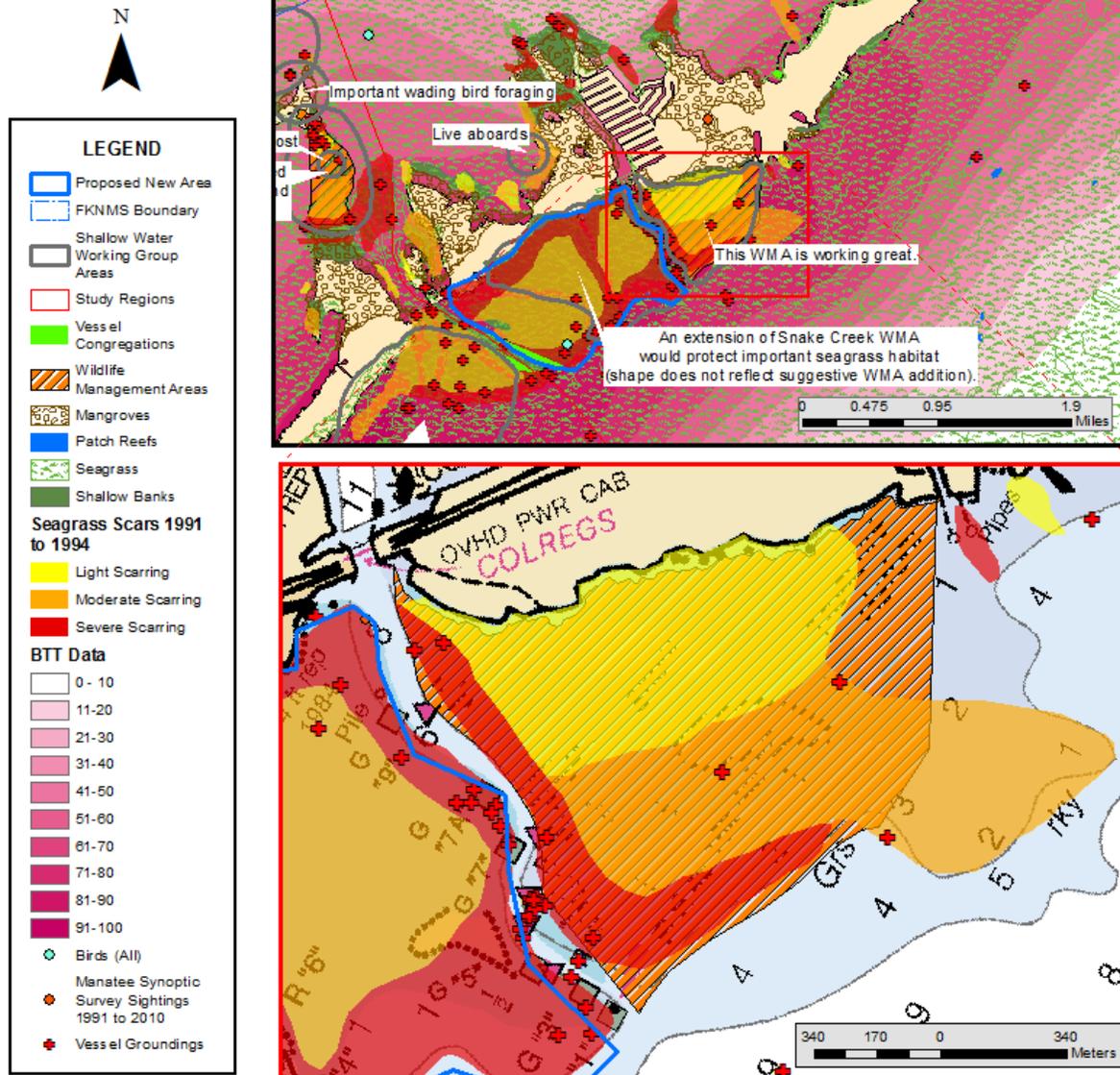
Barnes Sound: Shallow Bays in the NW corner of Barnes Sound. Area in blue below is proposed new WMA.

Commercial crab trappers (all of which appears to be done illegally) are destroying the benthic community in segments of this area and are constantly disturbing wildlife. Wading birds nest on an island here. A seagrass and macroalgae monitoring program has existed in this area for 17 years and the research is being jeopardized by all of the prop scar damage. This area would serve the purpose of inclusion as a shallow water habitat area for a research control area.

Proposed Recommendation: Establish Pole/Troll Zone.

MIDDLE KEYS

Snake Creek Wildlife Management Area



Snake Creek: It is an area of very shallow flats that are heavily used by a variety of birds, as well as bonefish and other desirable fish species.

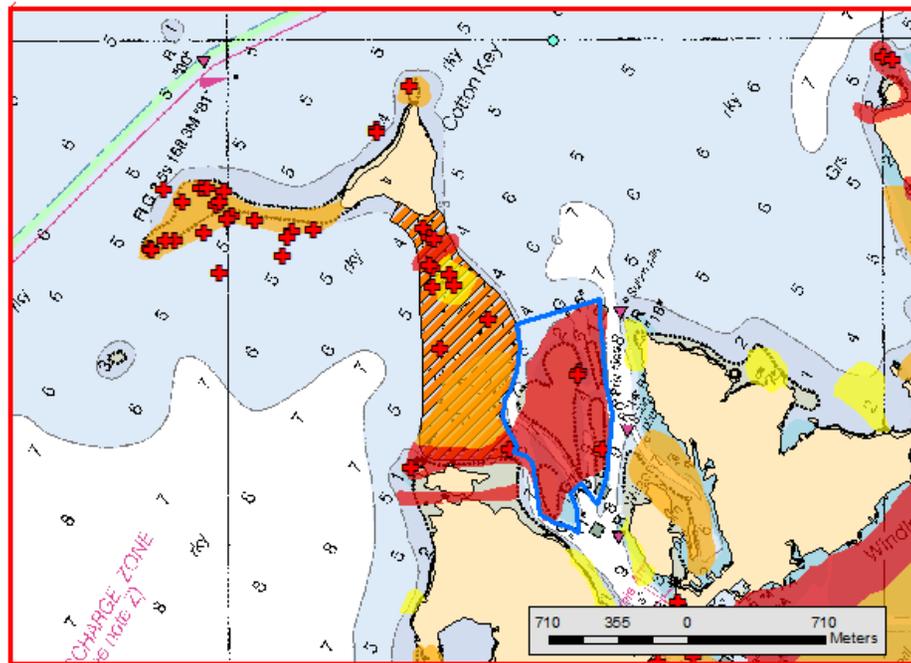
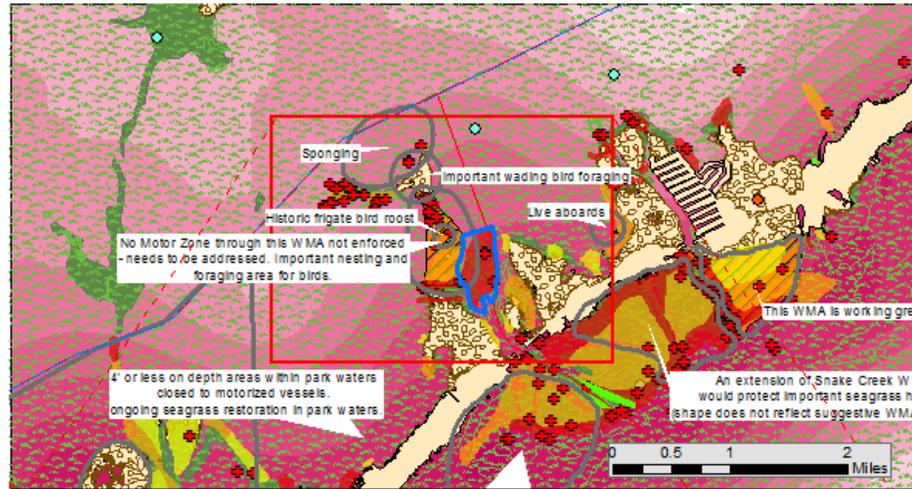
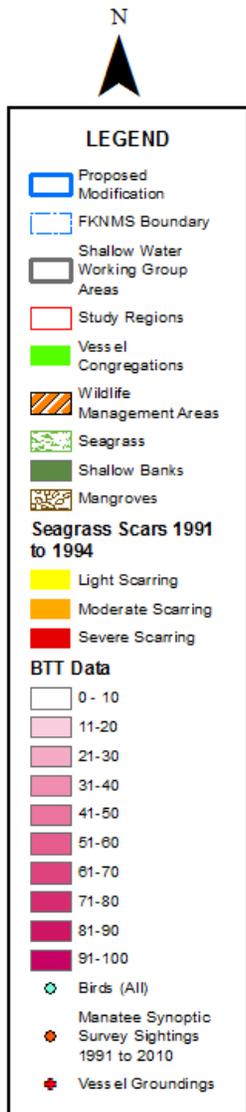
Existing Access Restrictions: No-motor zone on tidal flat.

Proposed Recommendations:

Recommendation 1: Maintain existing restrictions and expand zone to Whale Harbor Channel.

Recommendation 2: Maintain existing restrictions, expand zone to Whale Harbor Channel and establish 100 yard Idle Speed/No Wake Zone along shoreline; allow use of transit channels.

Cotton Key Wildlife Management Area

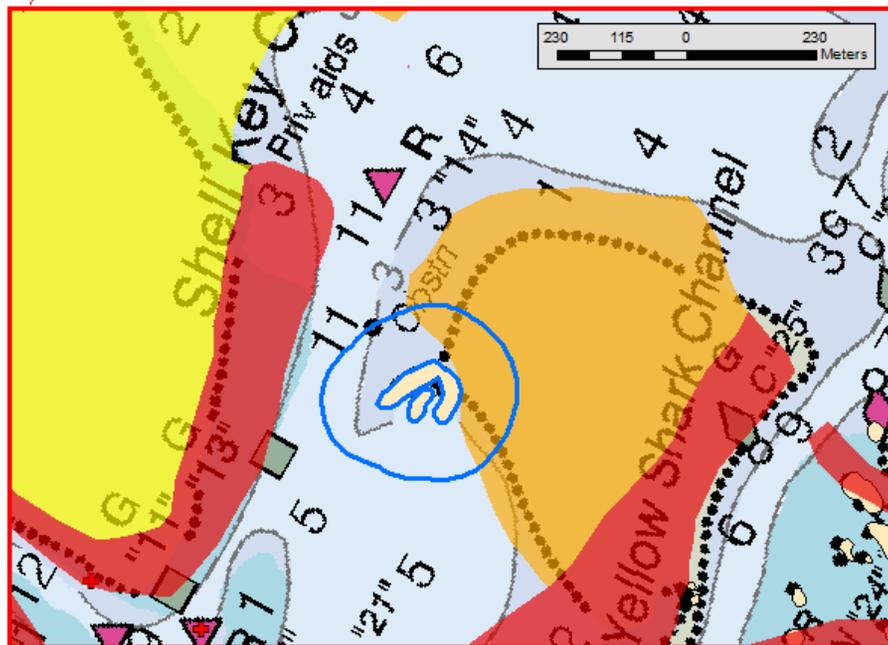
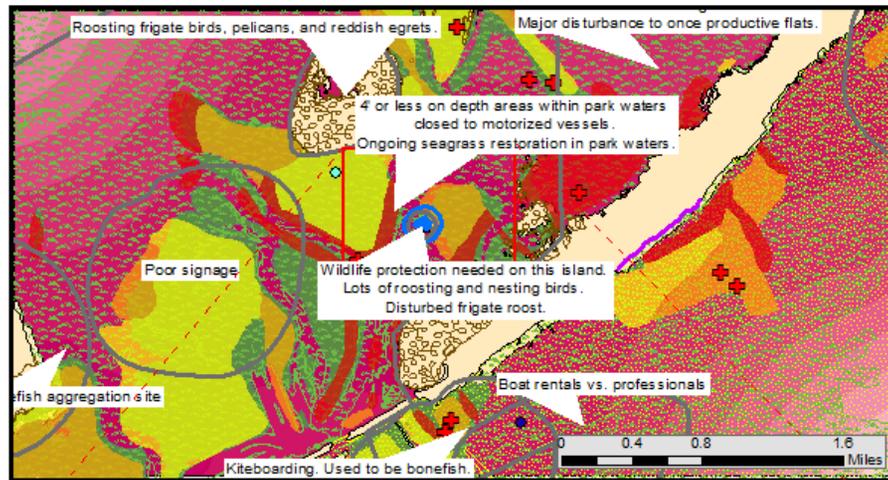
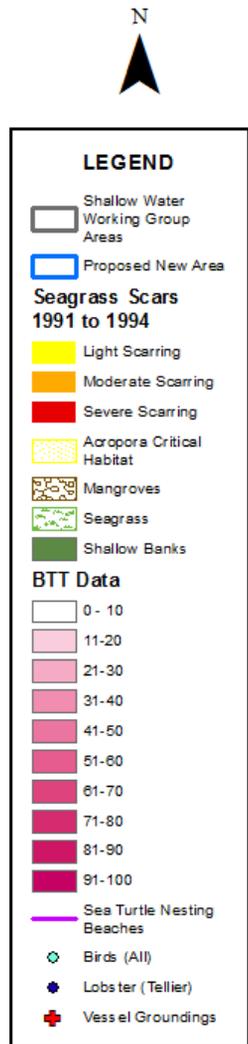


Cotton Key: It is an area of very shallow flats that are heavily used by a variety of birds as well as bonefish and other desirable fish species. There are also several small mangrove islands that serve as nesting sites for a variety of birds, including pelicans, cormorants, and at least four species of herons. Cotton Key is also a preferred roost for magnificent frigate birds

Existing Access Restrictions: No-motor zone on tidal flat.

Proposed Recommendation: Maintain existing restrictions and expand zone to include bayside Whale Harbor Flats, islands, and deep channels with Idle Speed/No Wake Zone in channels.

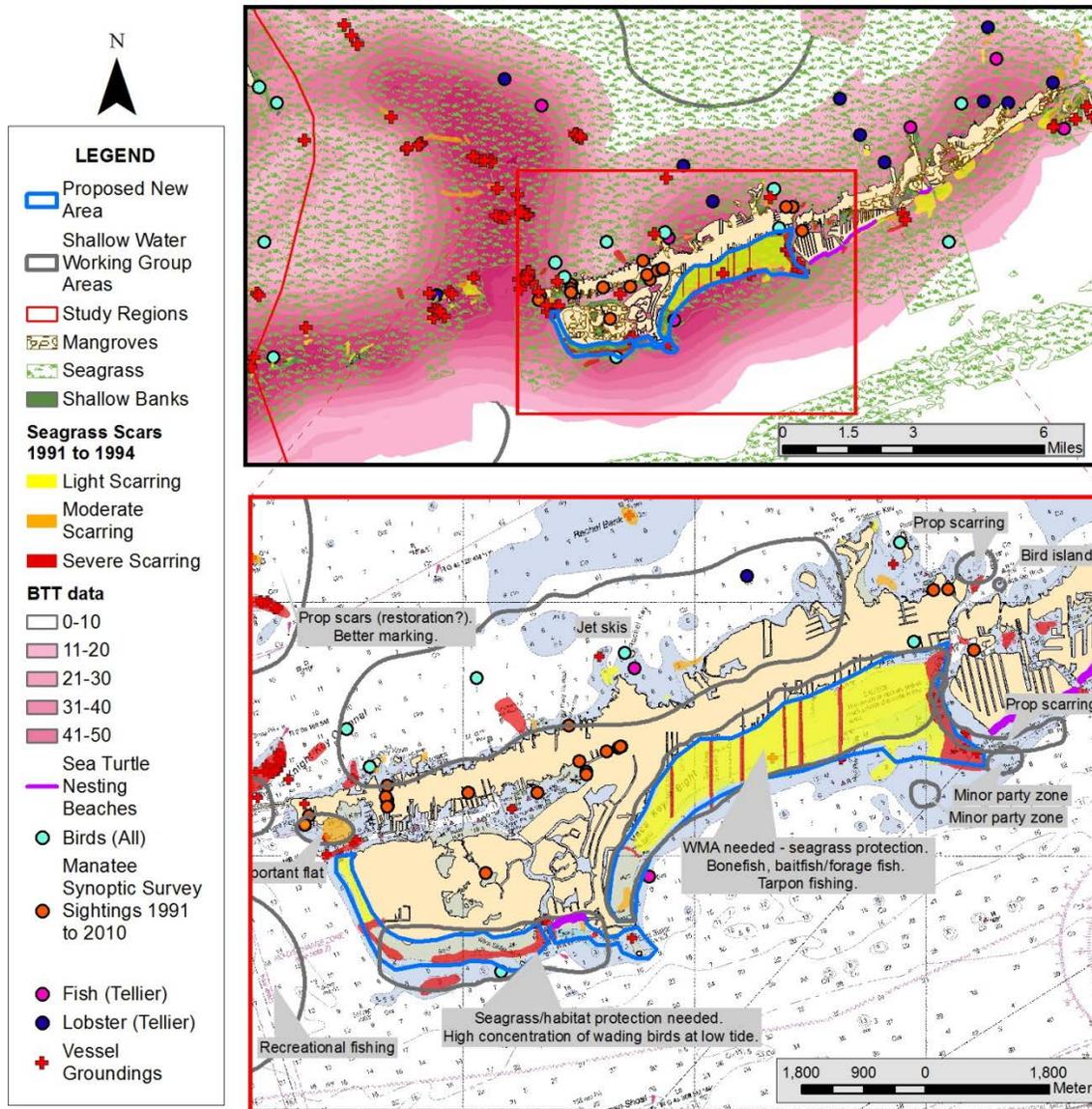
Ashbey/Horseshoe Key (proposed new area)



Asheby/Horseshoe Key: This is a unique island in the middle keys region that attracts high numbers and high diversity of birds. Many wading bird species nest on this small island including Great White Herons. This is the most important island in the area for roosting frigate birds, brown pelicans, and double crested cormorants. Yellow warblers also nest on this island. It is in a heavy use area and gets a lot of unnecessary boating and fishing pressure. Fishing line and hooks are very frequently left in the mangroves here entangling birds, leading to high bird mortality on this island. I have viewed this personally on many occasions and the Florida Keys Wild Bird Center responds to calls about birds hanging in trees on this island frequently. This is a problem that can be addressed through zoning as a WMA. A no motor zone would reduce fishing impact heavily.

Proposed Recommendation: Establish 100 yard No Entry Zone around island.

Marathon Oceanside Shoreline (proposed new area)



Marathon Oceanside Shoreline: From Vaca Cut southwest to Sombrero Beach and entire ocean facing shoreline of Boot Key.

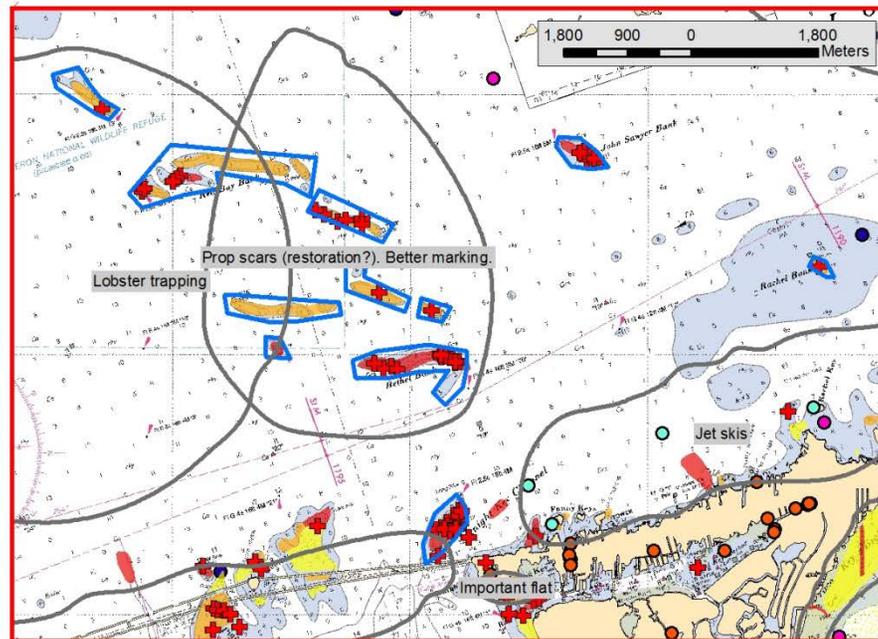
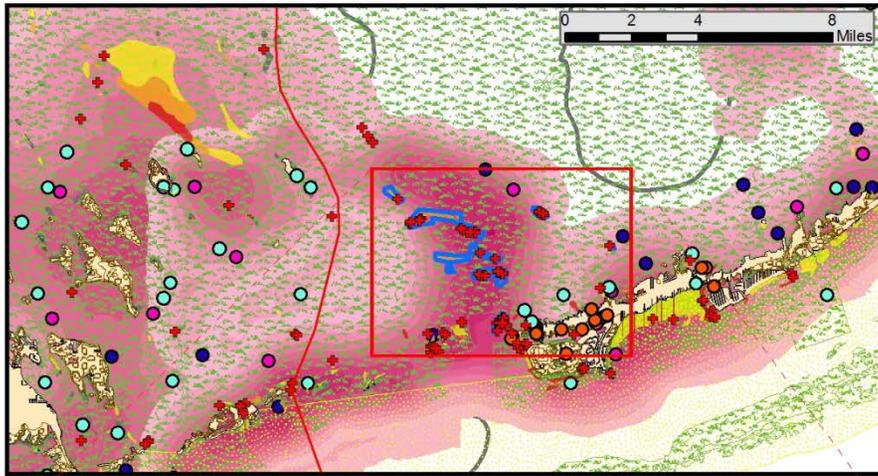
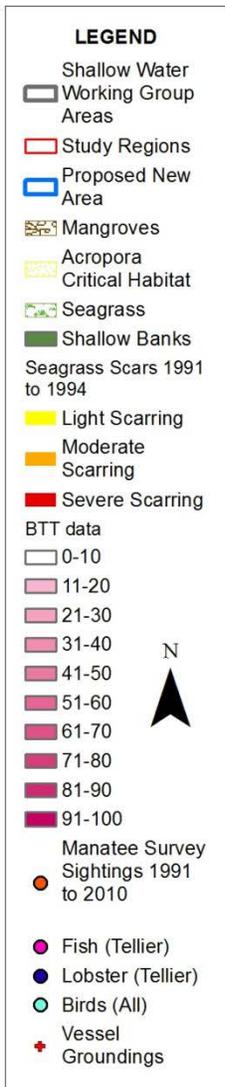
The concept of a WMA in this region was proposed in 2003 by the Marathon Guides Association. The concept was accepted by the County Commission and cities of Marathon and Key Colony Beach.

Proposed Recommendations:

Recommendation 1: Establish Idle Speed/No Wake Zone and leave access channels for home owners.

Recommendation 2: Establish Idle Speed/No Wake Zone from Vaca Cut west to first channel.

Moser Channel Banks (proposed new area)



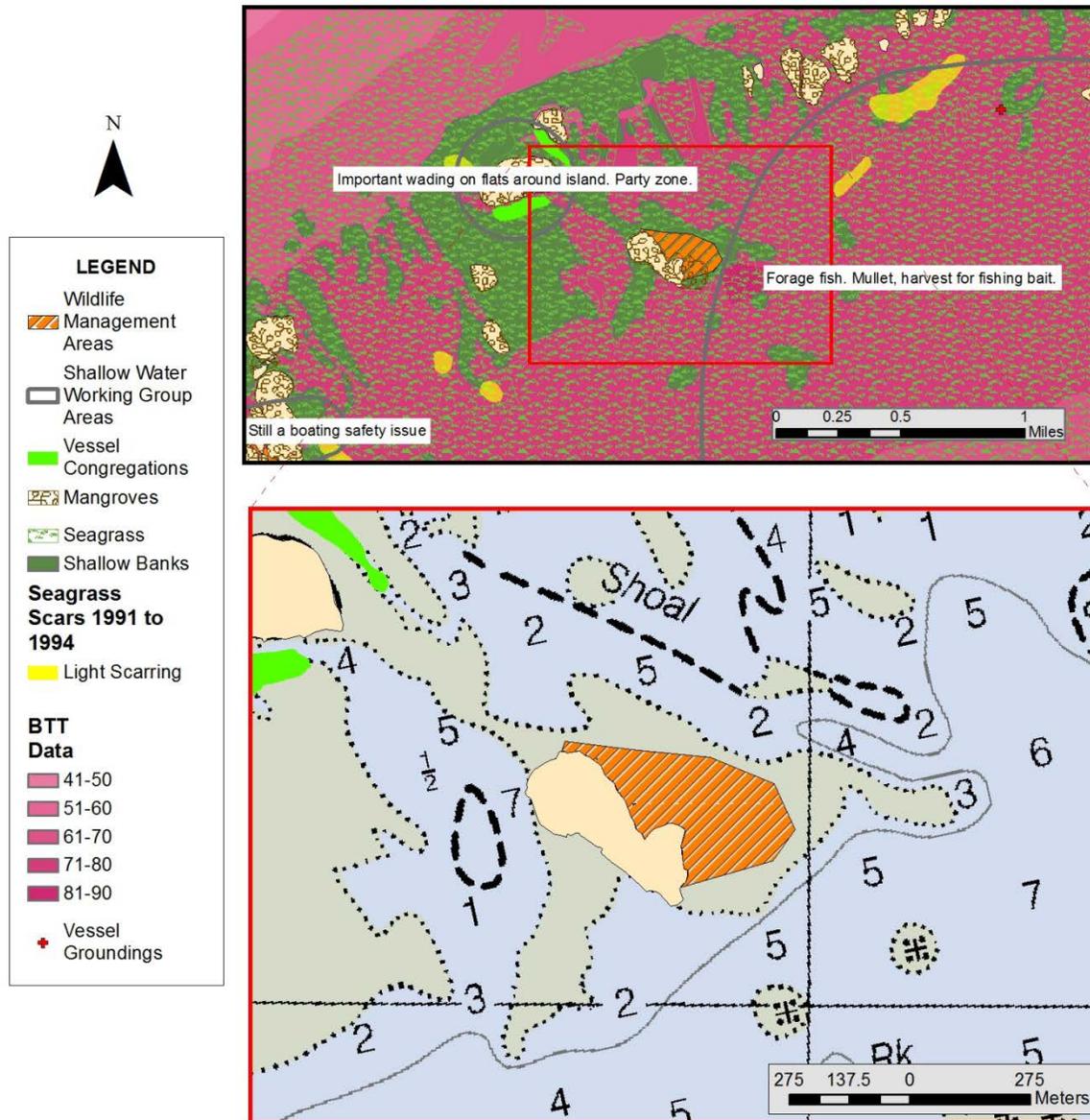
Moser Channel Banks: Due to their location, the lack of navigational features in, and the poorly drawn charts of the area, the banks are hard to locate and are susceptible to boat groundings. Banks also support diverse assemblages of corals, sponges, macro-algae, and seagrasses.

Proposed Recommendations:

Recommendation 1: Establish Idle Speed/No Wake Zones for each bank.

LOWER KEYS

Tidal Flat South of Marvin Key Wildlife Management Area

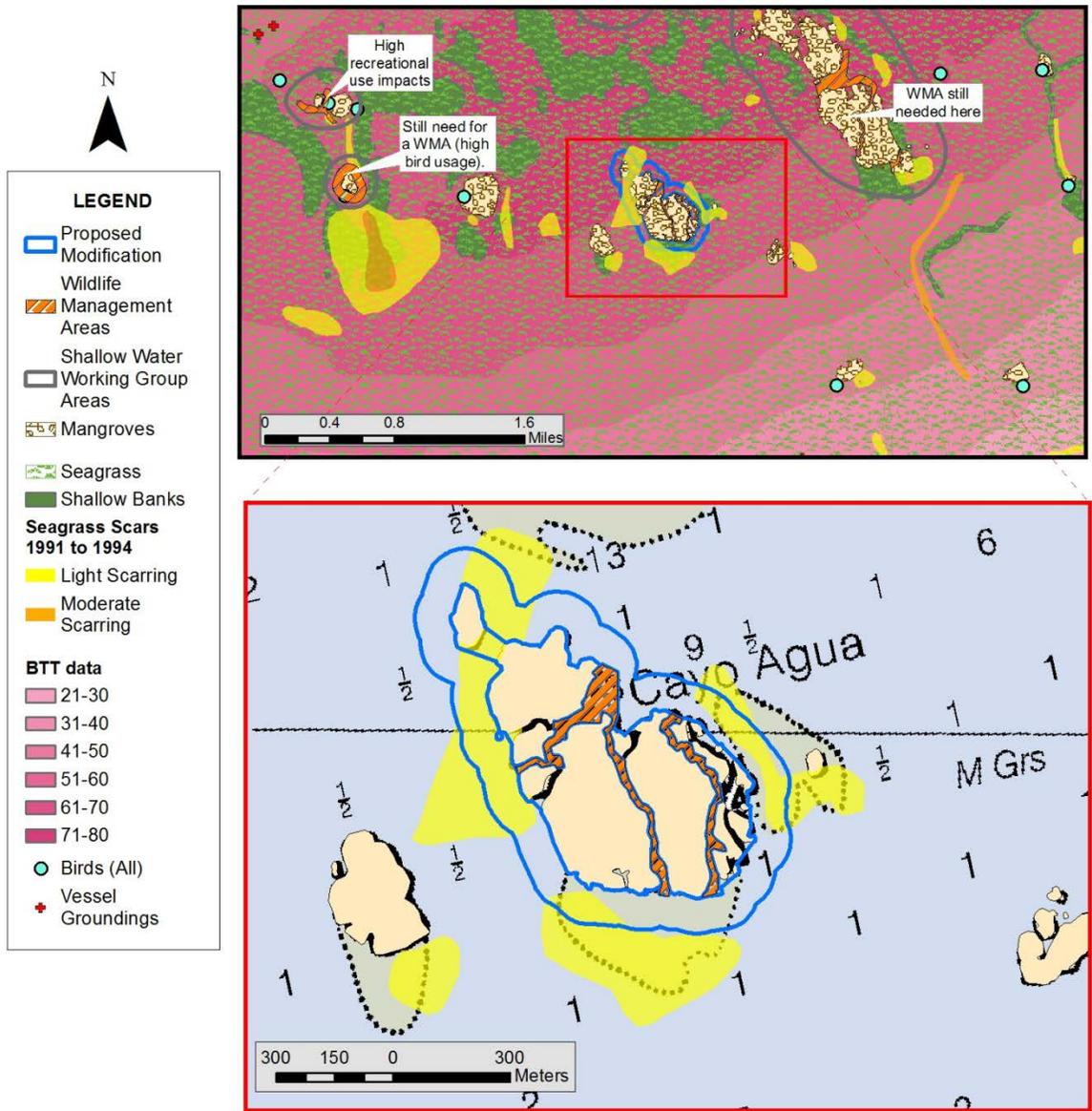


Tidal Flat South of Marvin Key: Large numbers of resting shorebirds use the flats.

Existing Access Restrictions: No-Entry buffer zone on tidal flat.

Proposed Recommendation: Maintain existing zoning and restrictions.

Cayo Agua Keys Wildlife Management Area

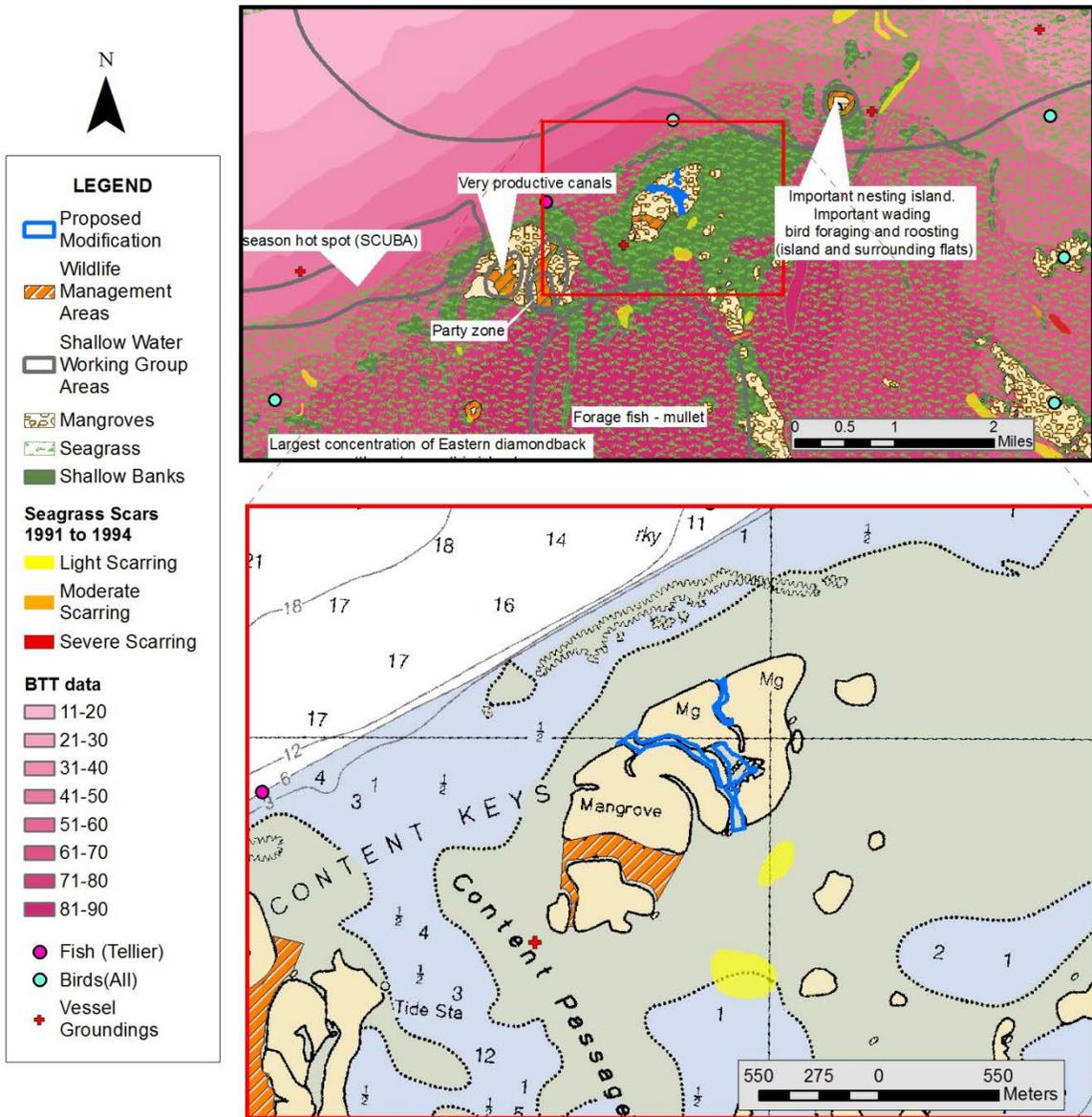


Cayo Agua Keys: The Cayo Agua islands consist largely of red mangroves and are used by great white herons and ospreys.

Existing Access Restrictions: Idle speed only/no-wake zones in all navigable tidal creeks.

Proposed Recommendation: Maintain existing Idle Speed/No Wake Zone and establish temporal 100 yard No Entry Zone during bird nesting/roosting seasons or when species of concern are present.

East Content Keys Wildlife Management Area

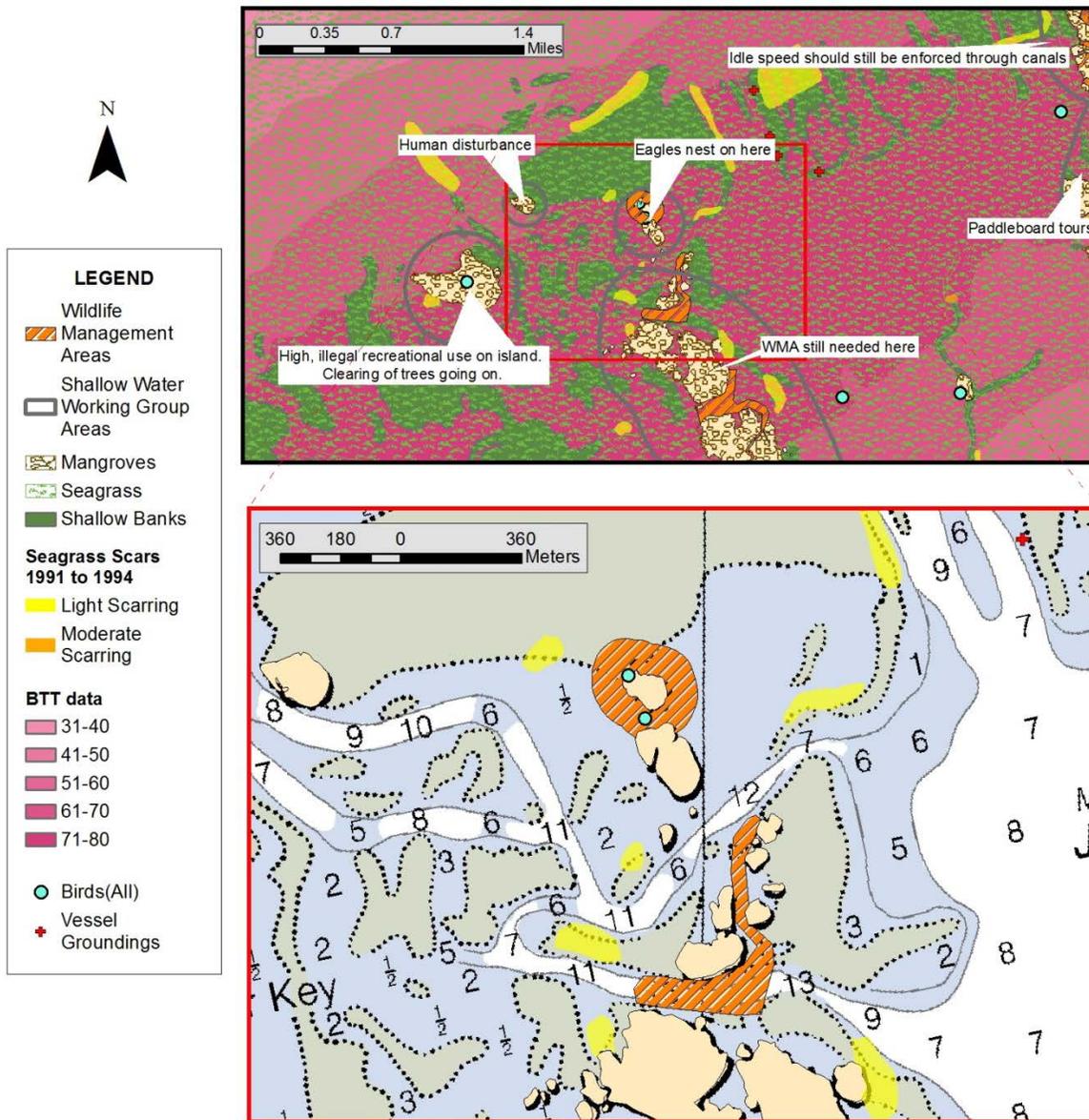


East Content Keys: Herons and white ibises use the interior tidal creeks.

Existing Access Restrictions: Idle speed only/no-wake zones in tidal creeks between southwesternmost keys.

Proposed Recommendation: Maintain existing Idle Speed/No Wake Zone and expand to include creek and inland water complex on northern part of East Content Key.

East Harbor Key Wildlife Management Area

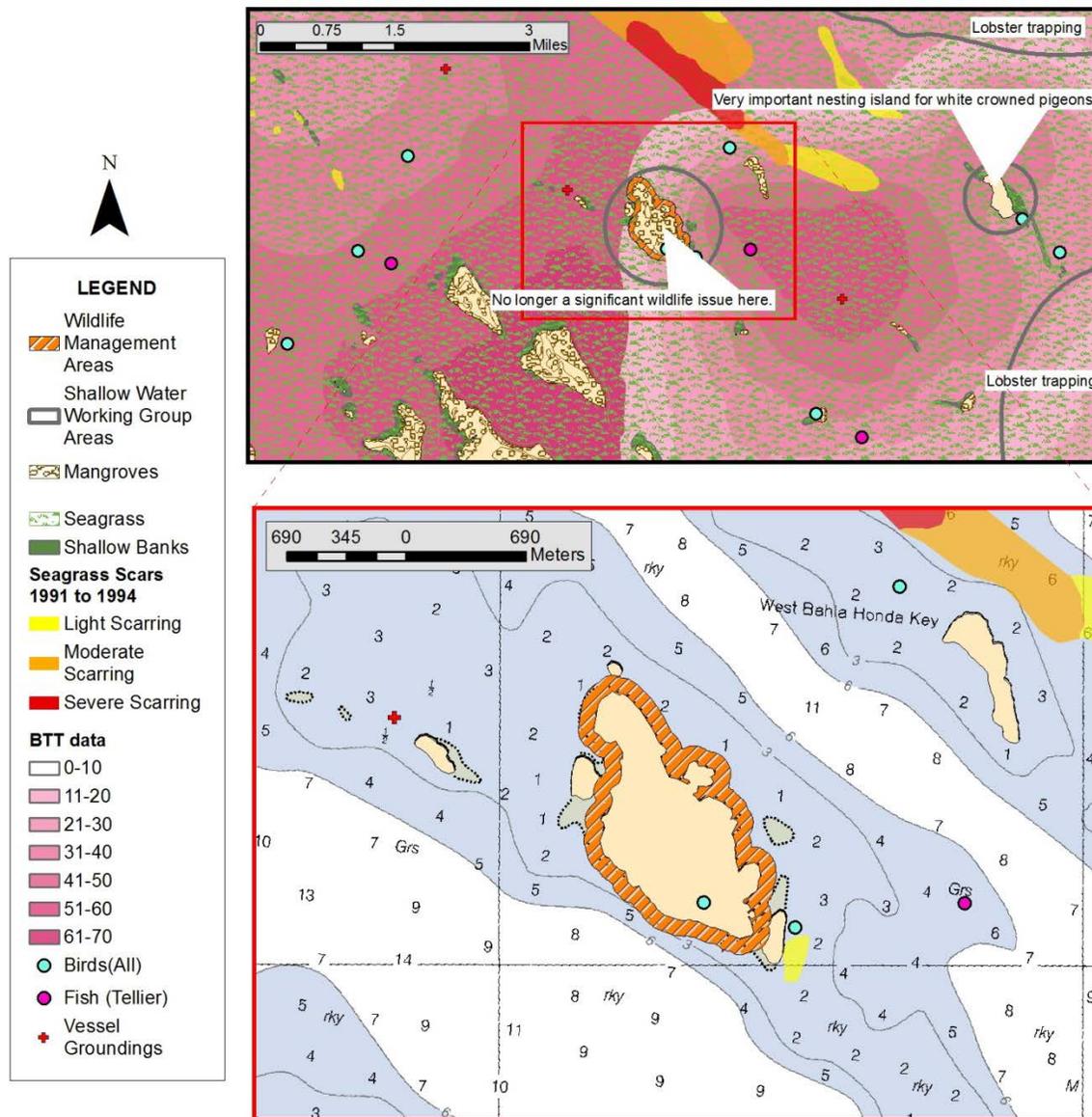


East Harbor Key: All but one of the keys are mangrove islands. The islands are heavily used by boaters, especially on weekends.

Existing Access Restrictions: No-Entry buffer zone (300 feet) around northernmost island.

Proposed Recommendation: Maintain existing 100 yard No Entry Zone around island.

Horseshoe Key Wildlife Management Area

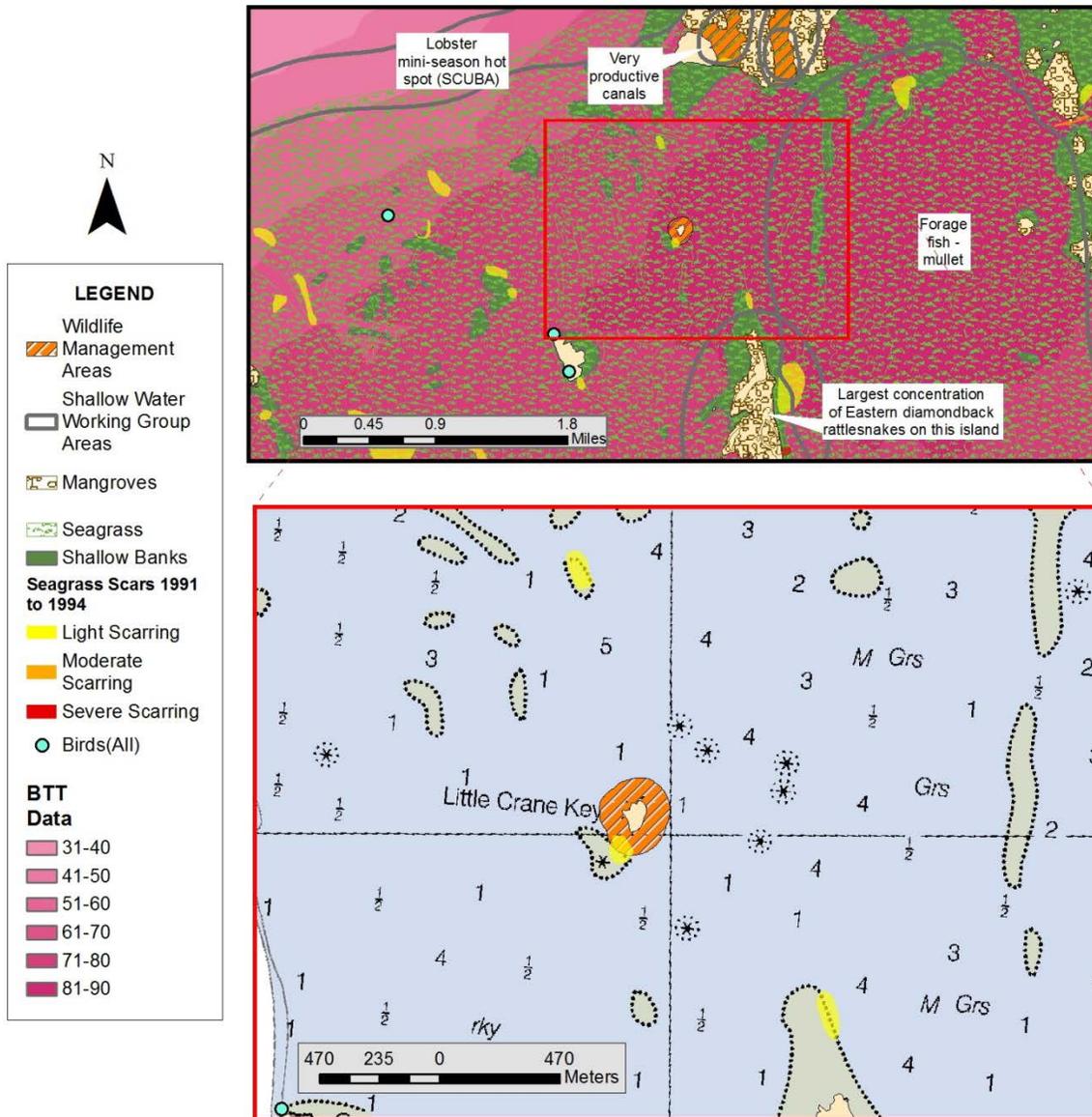


Horseshoe Key: Heron, willet, and osprey nesting sites have been documented. The island is closed to public access.

Existing Access Restrictions: No-Entry buffer zone (300 feet) around main island (main island closed by Department of the Interior).

Proposed Recommendation: Maintain existing 100 yard No Entry Zone around island.

Little Crane Key Wildlife Management Area

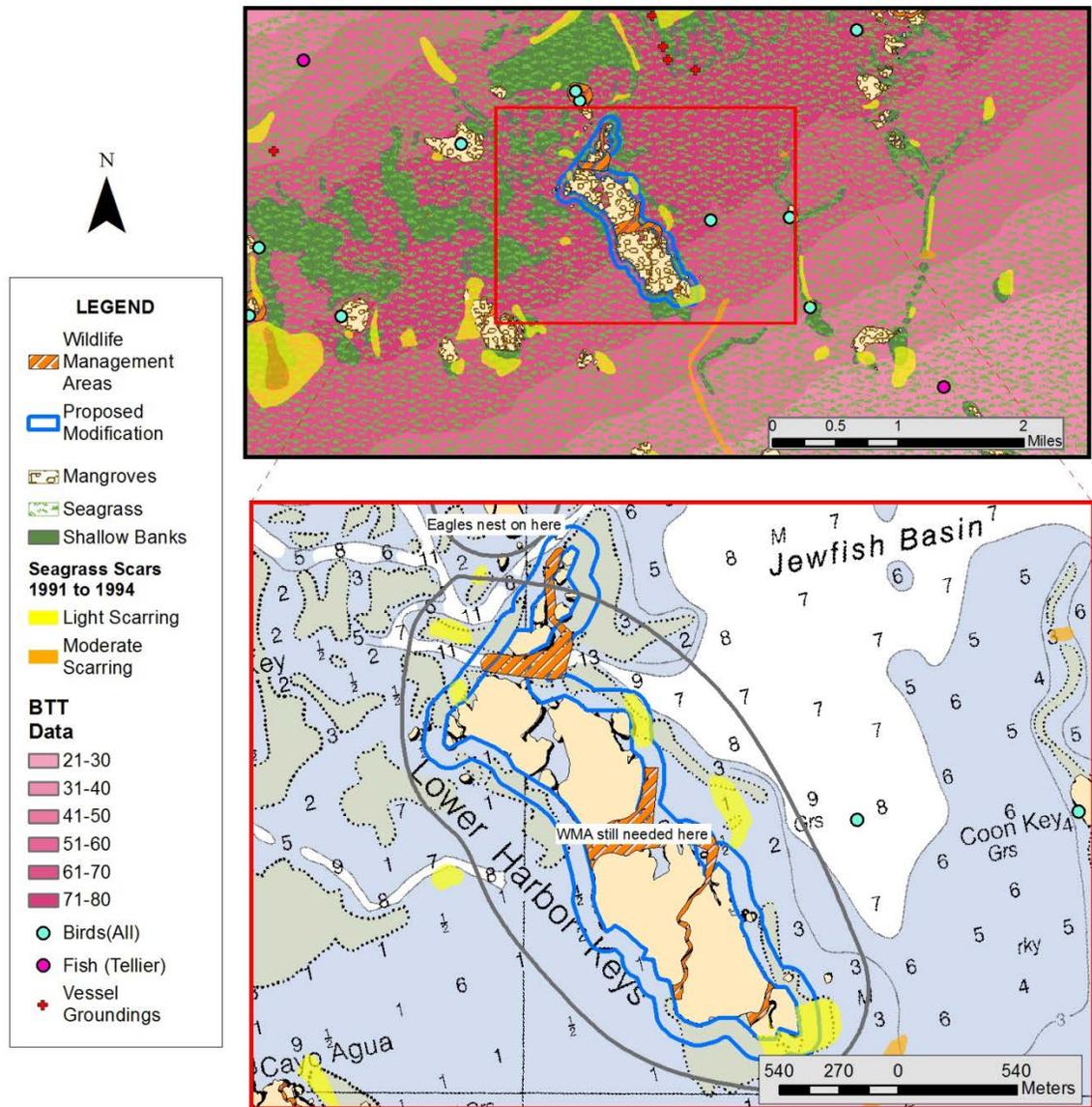


Little Crane Key: The island contains a large frigatebird roost and nesting areas for great egrets and double-crested cormorants.

Existing Access Restrictions: No-Entry buffer zone (300 feet) around entire key.

Proposed Recommendation: Confirm that island is gone and eliminate zone.

Lower Harbor Keys Wildlife Management Area

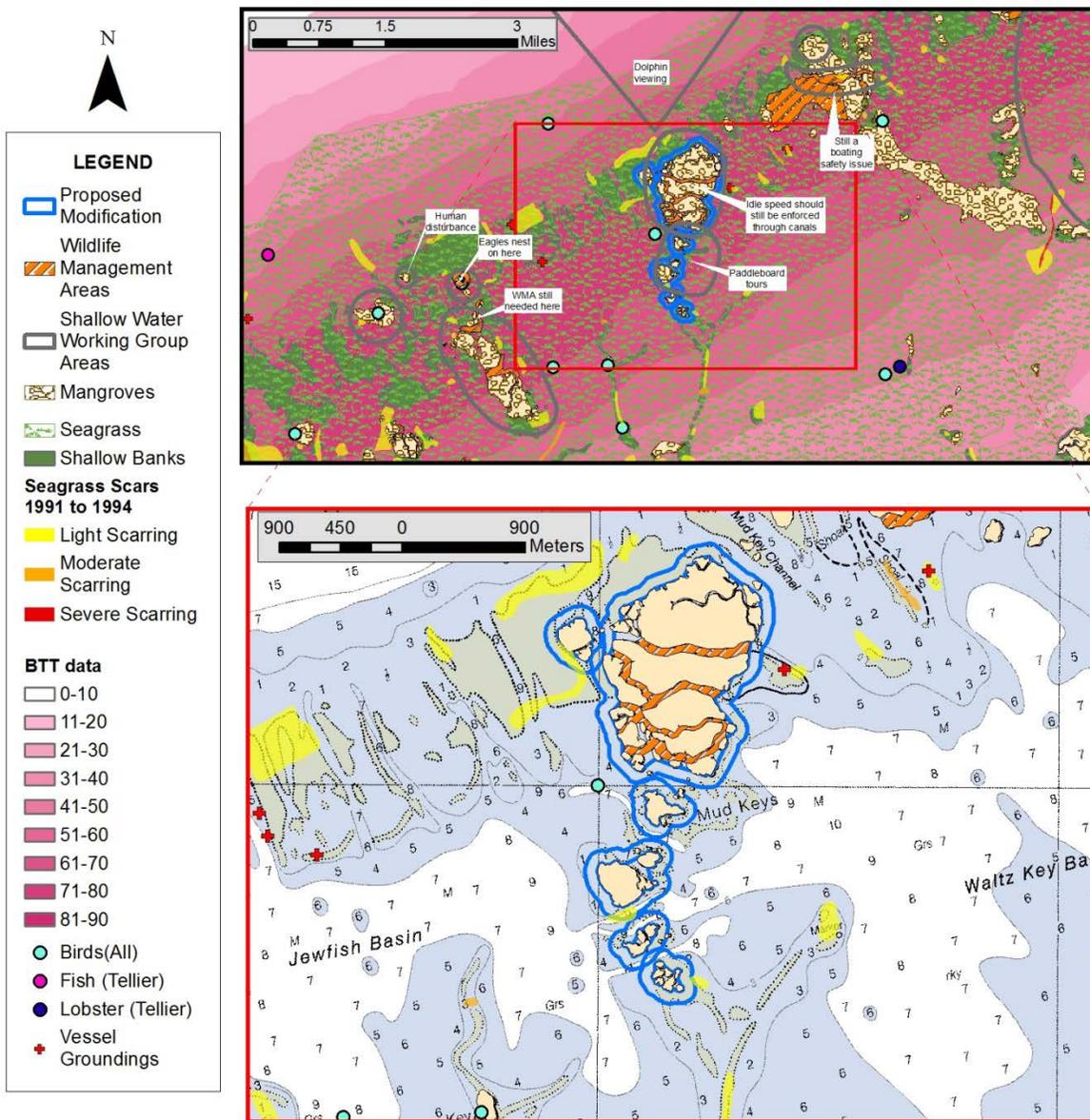


Lower Harbor Keys: The islands contain nesting great white herons, double-crested cormorants, and osprey. A variety of other wading birds use the islands as well. Boat traffic is sometimes heavy on weekends.

Existing Access Restrictions: Idle speed only/no-wake zones in selected tidal creeks.

Proposed Recommendation: Maintain existing Idle Speed/No Wake Zone in creeks and establish temporal No Entry Zone during bird nesting/roosting seasons or when species of concern are present.

Mud Keys Wildlife Management Area

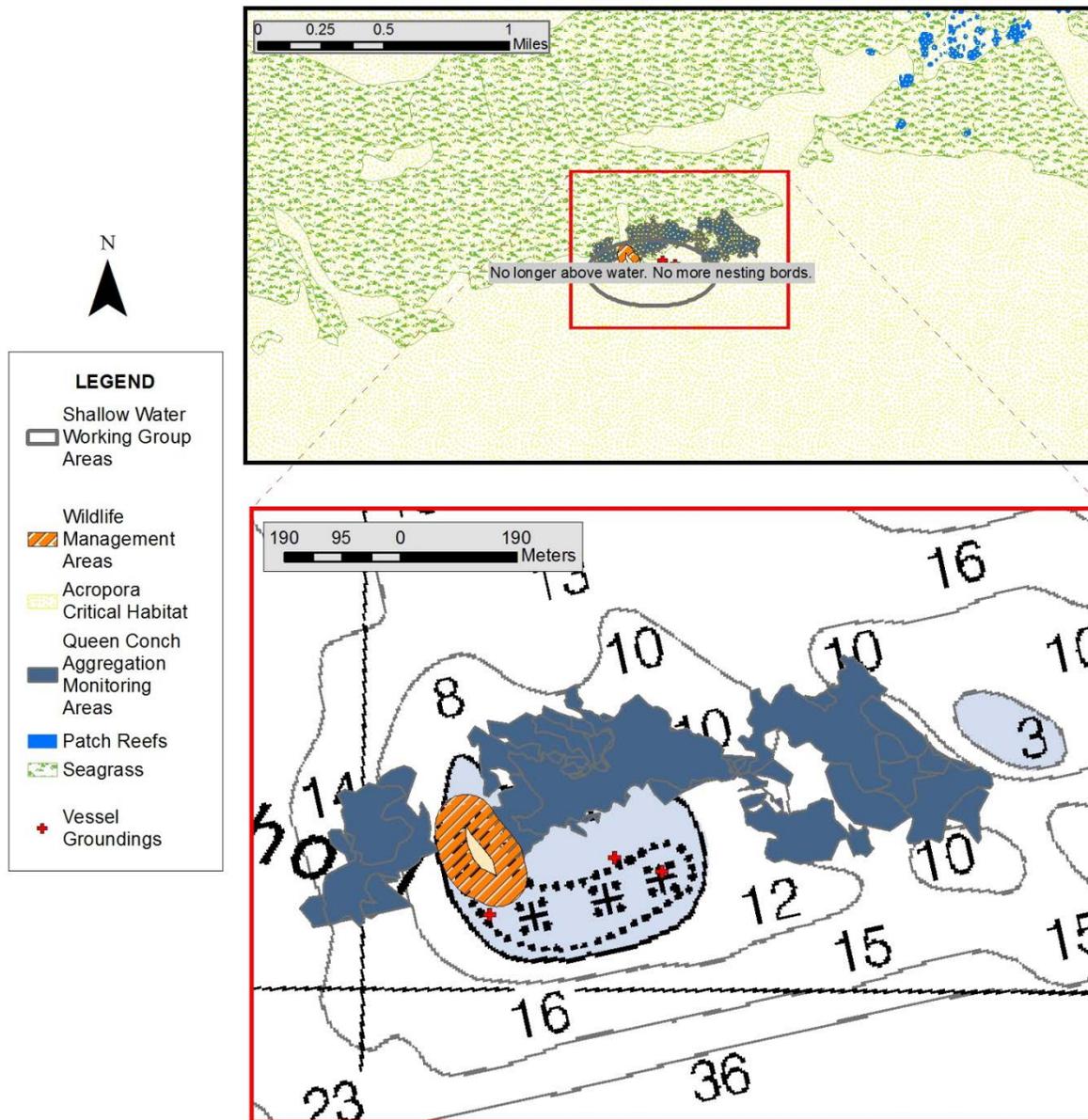


Mud Keys: The islands contain nesting ospreys and a small great white heron rookery. Frigatebirds sometimes roost on the islands.

Existing Access Restrictions: (i) Idle speed only/no-wake zones in the two main tidal creeks; (ii) two smaller creeks on west side closed.

Proposed Recommendation: Maintain existing Idle Speed/No Wake Zone in creeks and establish temporal No Entry Zone during bird nesting/roosting seasons or when species of concern are present.

Pelican Shoal Wildlife Management Area

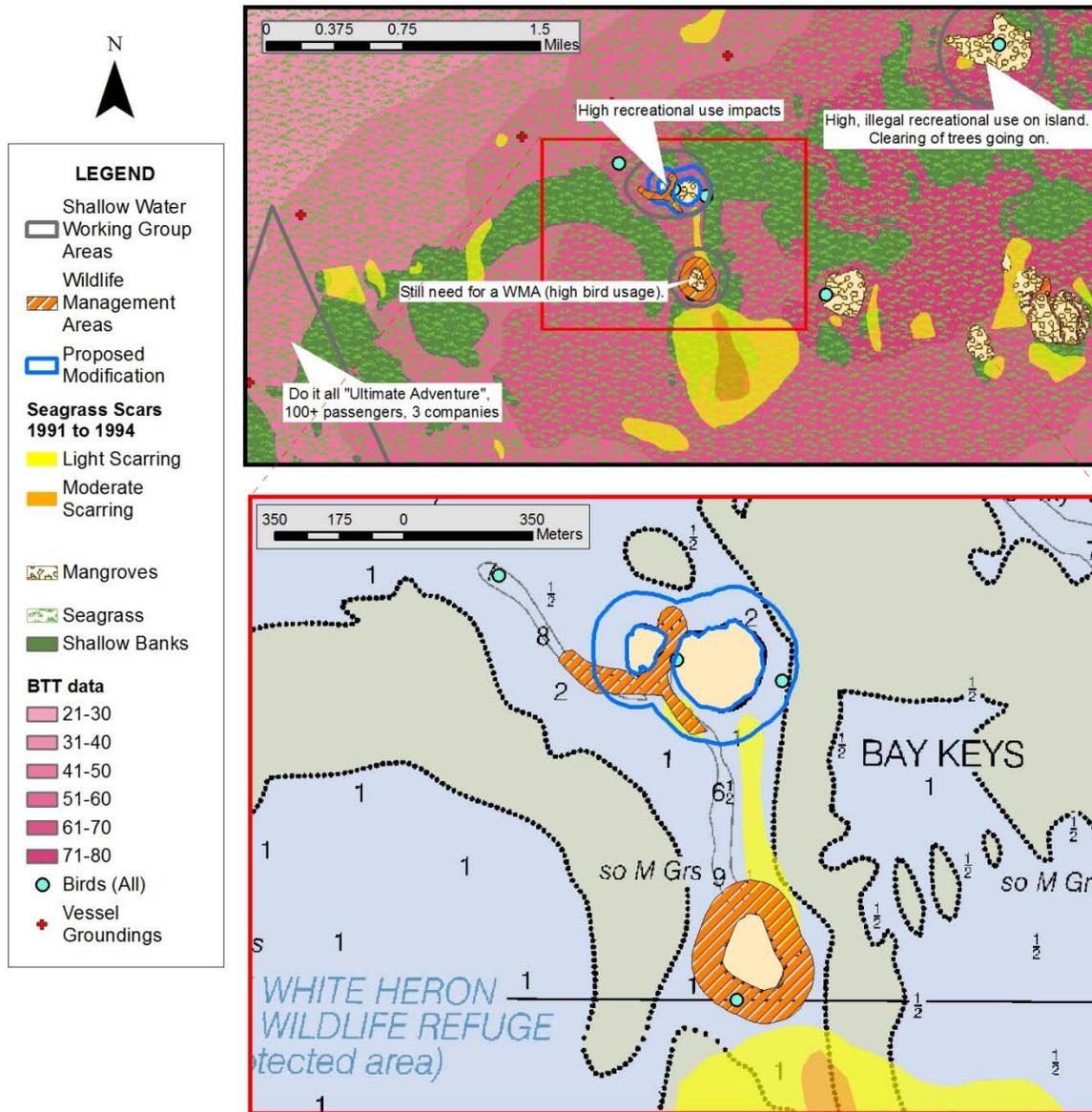


Pelican Shoal: A small rubble island that provides an important nesting site for birds. Visitor use is low in this area

Existing Access Restrictions: No-Entry buffer zone out to 50 meters from shore between April 1 and August 31 (shoal closed by the Florida Game and Freshwater Fish Commission).

Proposed Recommendation: Island is gone. Eliminate zone.

Bay Keys Wildlife Management Area

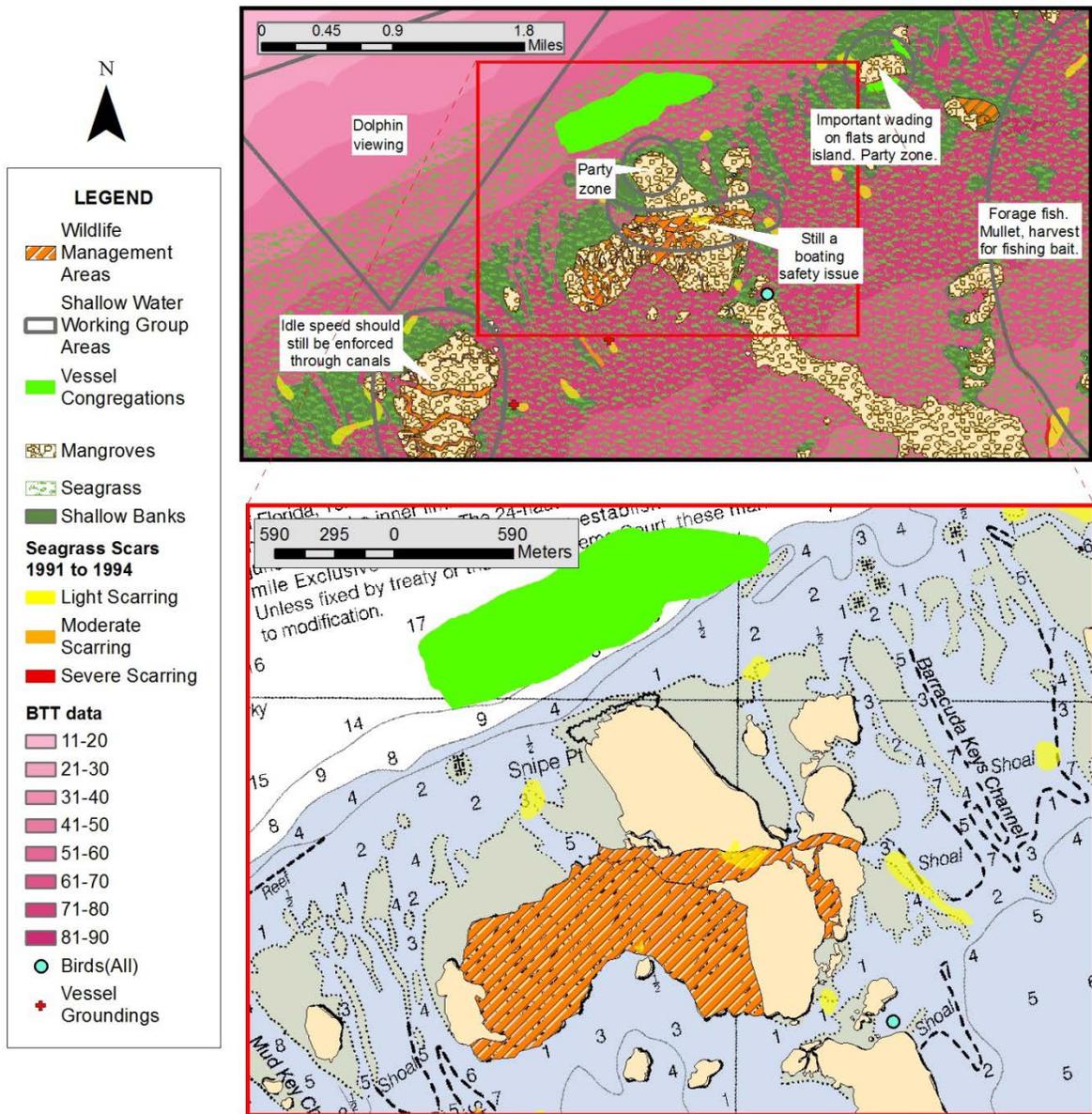


Bay Keys: The islands are unspoiled and largely composed of red mangroves. The largest key harbors great white herons and a considerable number of tricolored and little blue herons.

Existing Access Restrictions: No-motor zone (300 feet) around one key; idle speed only/no-wake zones in tidal creeks.

Proposed Recommendation: Establish temporal No Entry Zone during bird nesting/roosting seasons or when species of concern are present.

Snipe Keys Wildlife Management Area

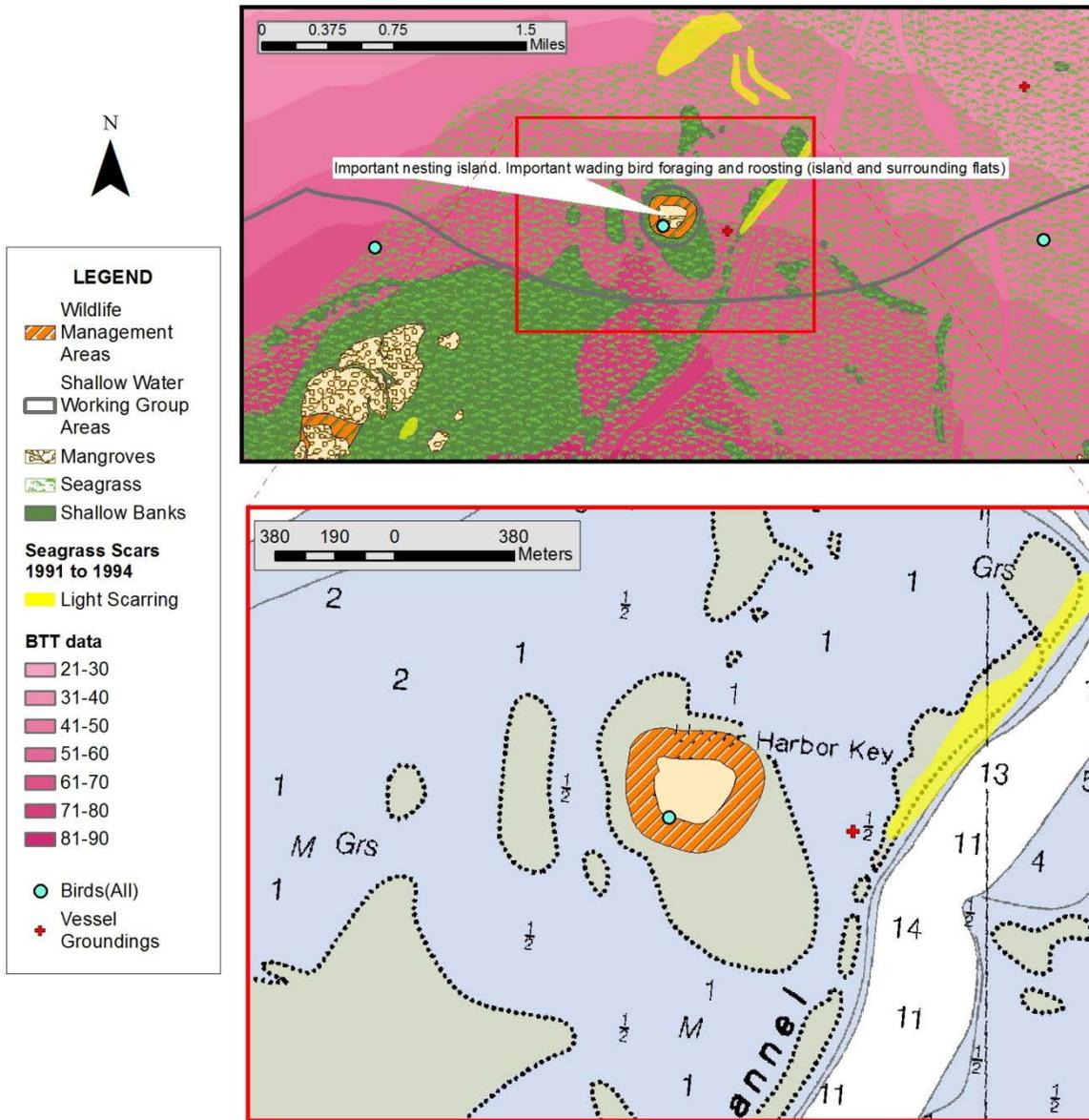


Snipe Keys: Groups of little blue herons are present on the tidal creeks. Snipe Point is used by terns and various shorebirds.

Existing Access Restrictions: (i) Idle speed only/no-wake zone in main tidal creek; (ii) no-motor zone in all other tidal creeks.

Proposed Recommendation: Maintain existing zoning and restrictions.

Upper Harbor Keys Wildlife Management Area

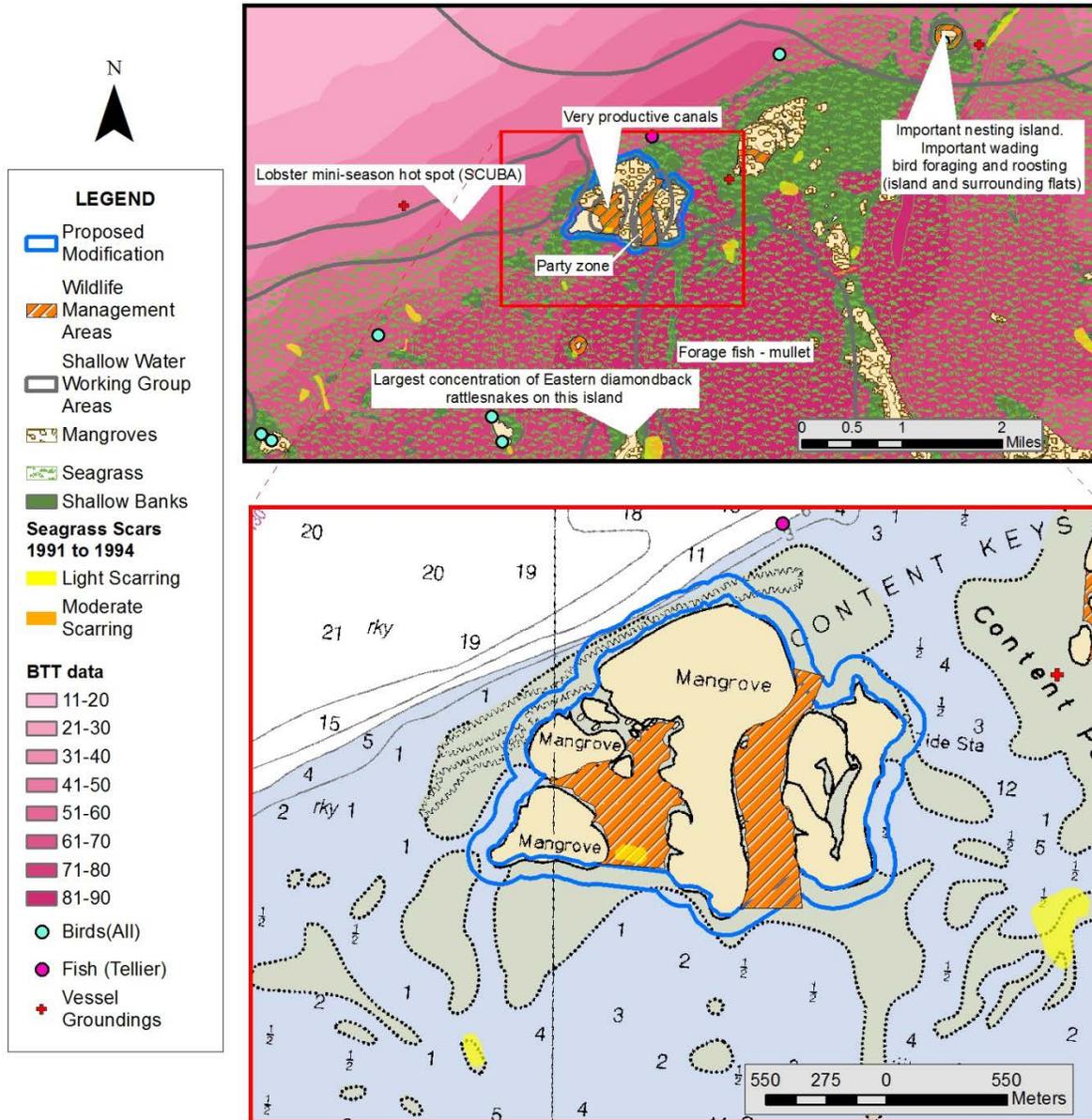


Upper Harbor Keys: It is a premier area for wading birds. The island is used by various bird species including ospreys, frigatebirds, double-crested cormorants, and wading birds.

Existing Access Restrictions: No-Entry buffer zone (300 feet) around entire key.

Proposed Recommendation: Establish temporal No Entry Zone during bird nesting/roosting seasons or when species of concern are present.

West Content Keys Wildlife Management Area

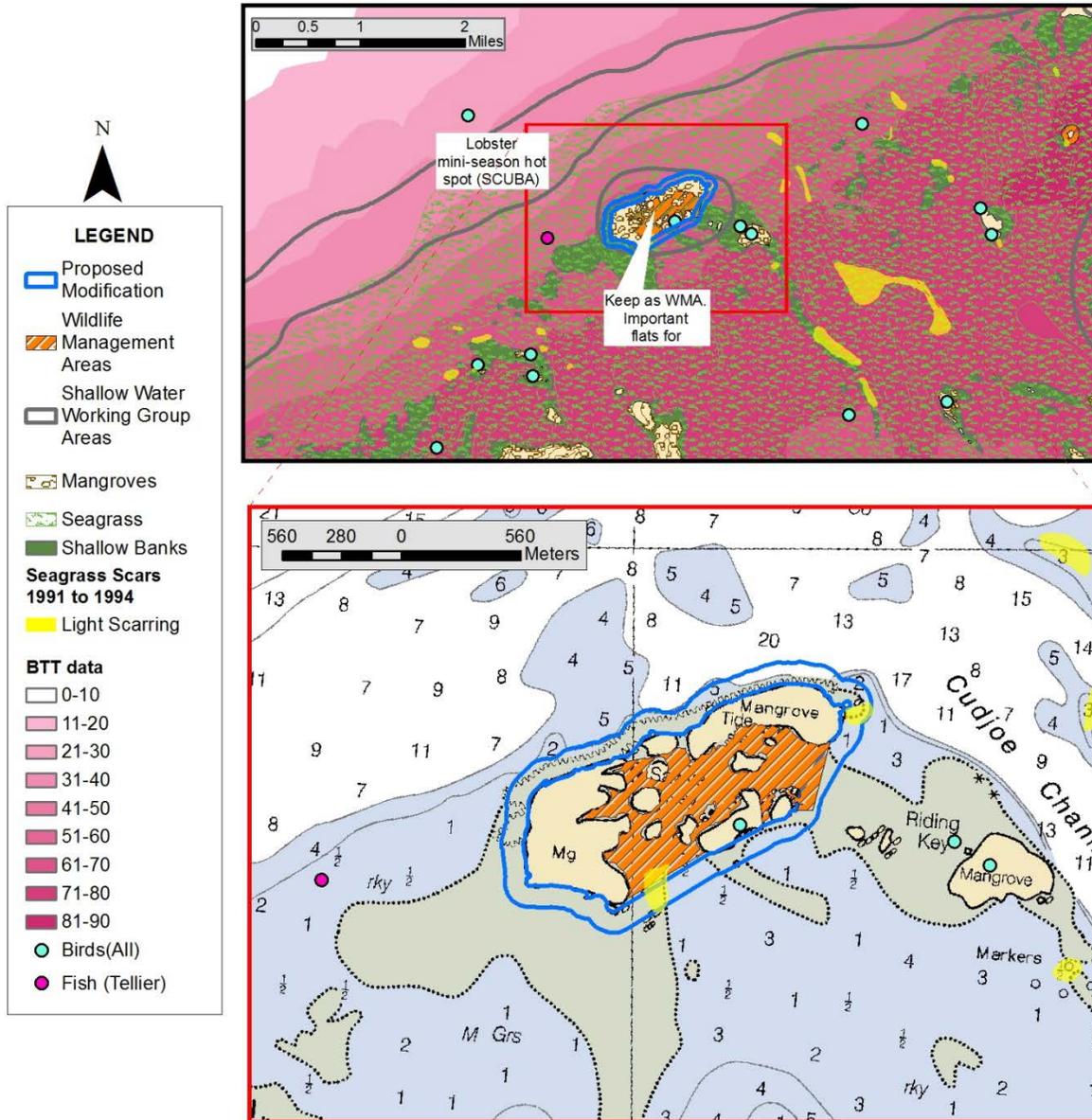


West Content Keys: Broad, shallow tidal creeks dissect the area, and nesting ospreys and wading birds inhabit the islands.

Existing Access Restrictions: Idle speed only/no-wake zones in selected tidal creeks; No-Entry buffer zone in one cove.

Proposed Recommendation: Maintain existing Idle Speed/No Wake Zone and establish temporal No Entry Zone during bird nesting/roosting/feeding seasons or when species of concern are present.

Sawyer Keys Wildlife Management Area

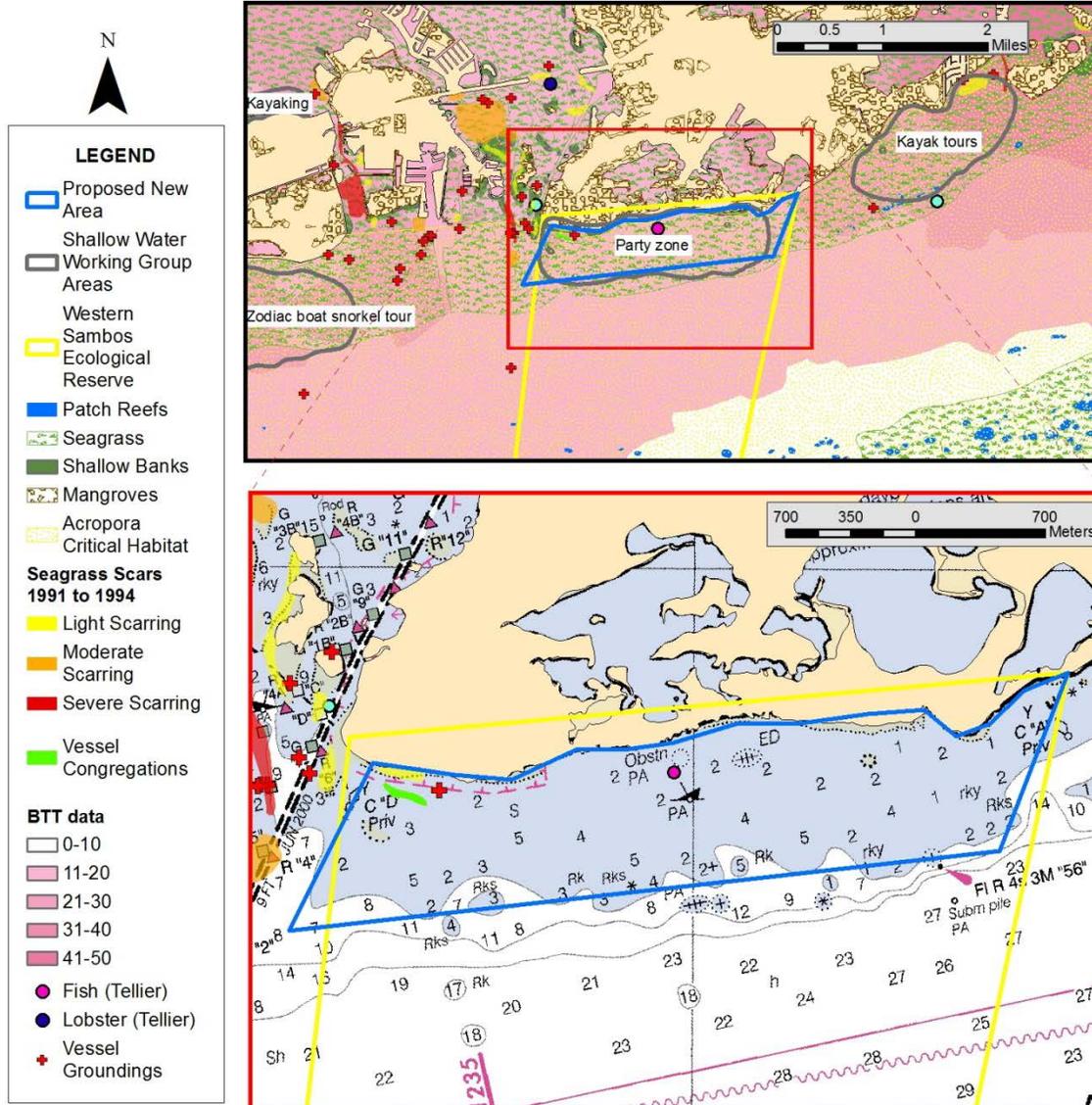


Sawyer Keys: The northwest side of the largest island is privately owned. Sawyer Keys harbor nesting ospreys. The area is also used by 11 species of wading birds. The area south of the two largest islands is an important staging area for migrant shorebirds in autumn.

Existing Access Restrictions: Tidal creeks on south side closed.

Proposed Recommendation: Establish temporal No Entry Zone during bird nesting/roosting seasons or when species of concern are present.

Western Sambo Ecological Reserve



Western Sambo: The Western Sambo Ecological Reserve contains the greatest habitat diversity in the Lower Keys. Significant coral features include spur-and-groove formations, bank reefs, and nearshore patch reefs. Western Sambo has one of the last remaining stands of living elkhorn coral in the Lower Keys, a species once abundant throughout the Keys.

Existing Access Restrictions:

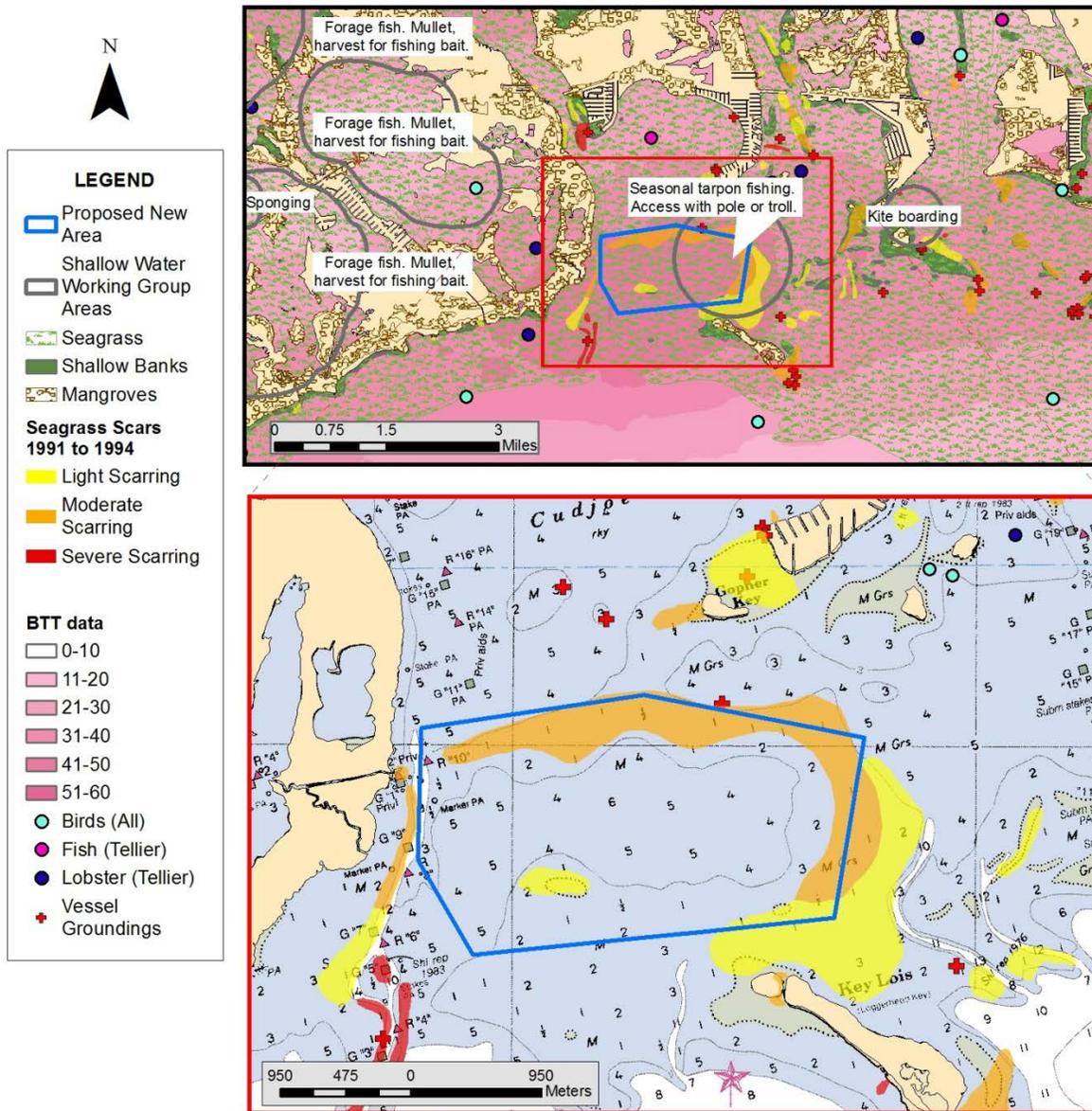
Prohibited activities include:
 discharging any matter except cooling water or engine exhaust; fishing by any means; removing, harvesting, or possessing marine life;
 touching/standing on coral; anchoring on coral or attached organisms;
 anchoring on living or dead coral or any attached organism, anchoring when a buoy is available.

Proposed Recommendations:

Recommendation 1: Maintain existing zoning and restrictions.

Recommendation 2: Establish Idle Speed/No Wake Zone in Northern quadrant (<10').

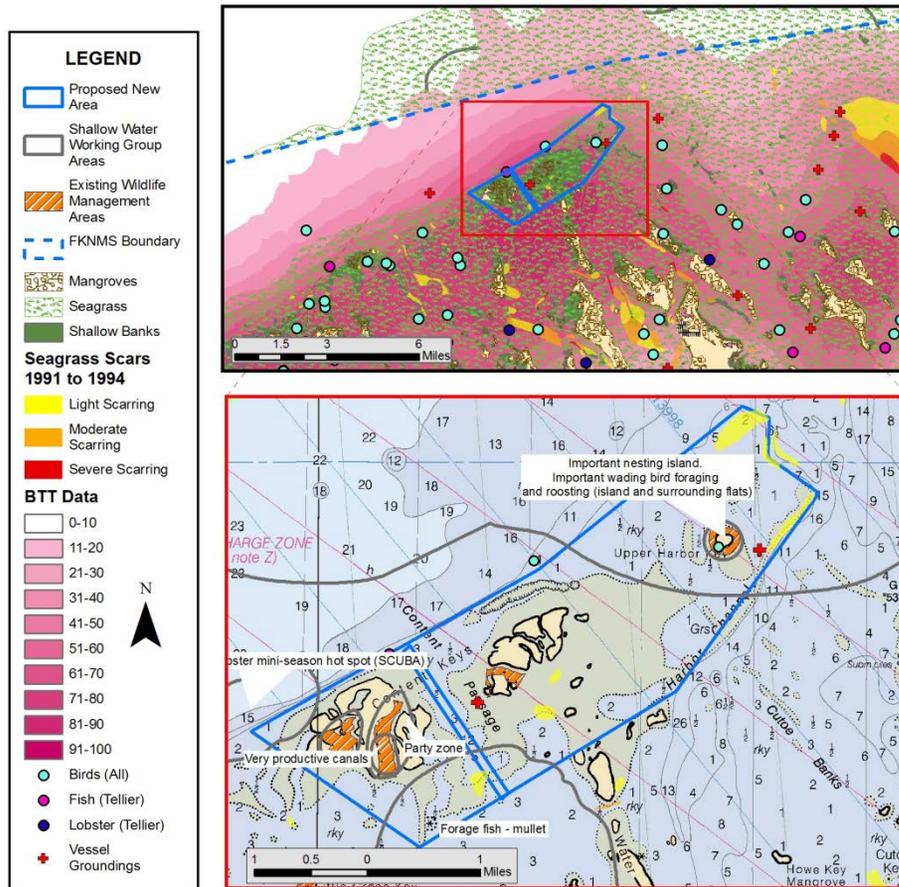
Key Lois-Loggerhead Basin (proposed new area)



Key Lois-Loggerhead Basin: This basin area is highly used by migratory tarpon and flats fishermen from Feb thru the end of June. It is also located near highly populated areas and a heavily trafficked channel (Bow Channel).

Proposed Recommendation: Establish Pole/Troll/Idle Zone.

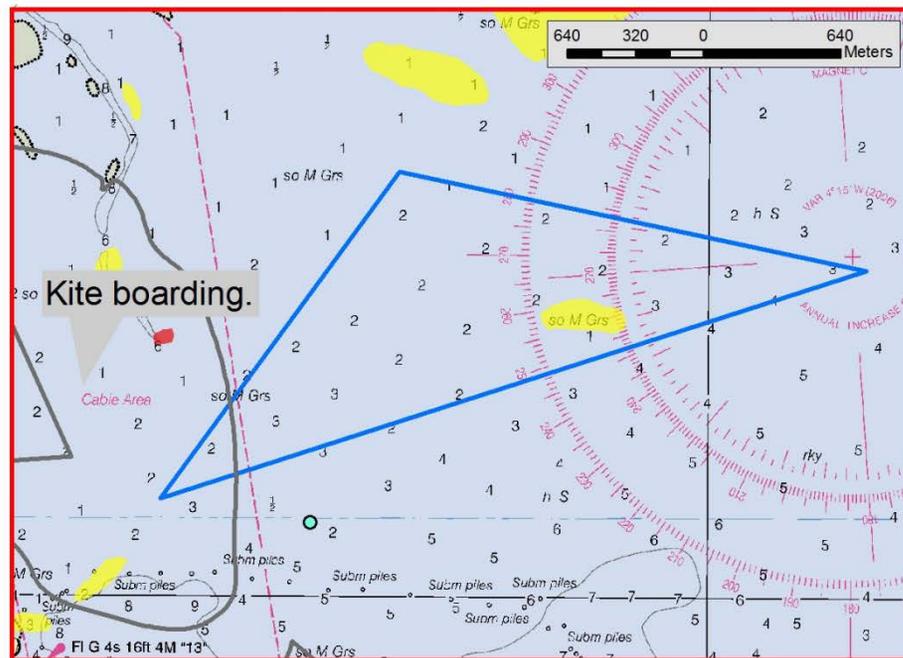
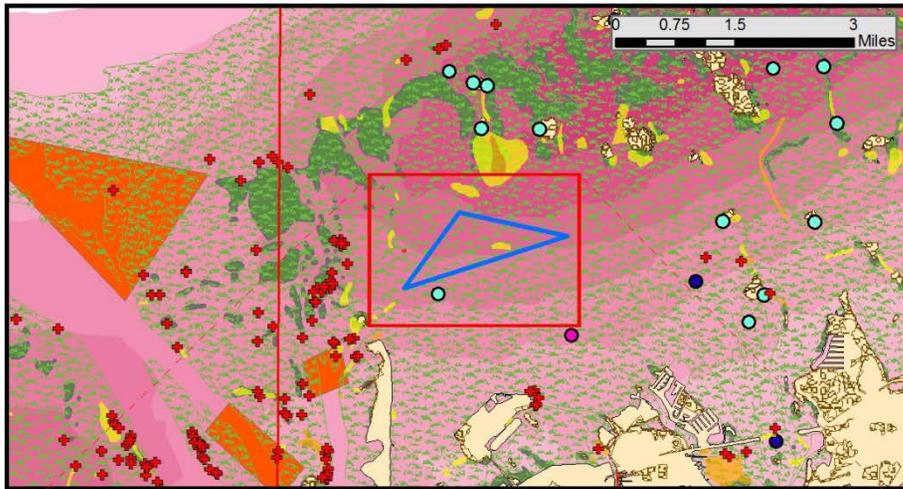
Content Keys and Upper Harbor Key (proposed new area)



Content Keys and Upper Harbor Key: Many non-fishing boaters ignore the channel and "run" the grass flats in order to reach shallow sandy areas or the Gulf.

Proposed Recommendation: Establish Pole/Troll/Idle Zone with Content Pass to remain open to normal operation.

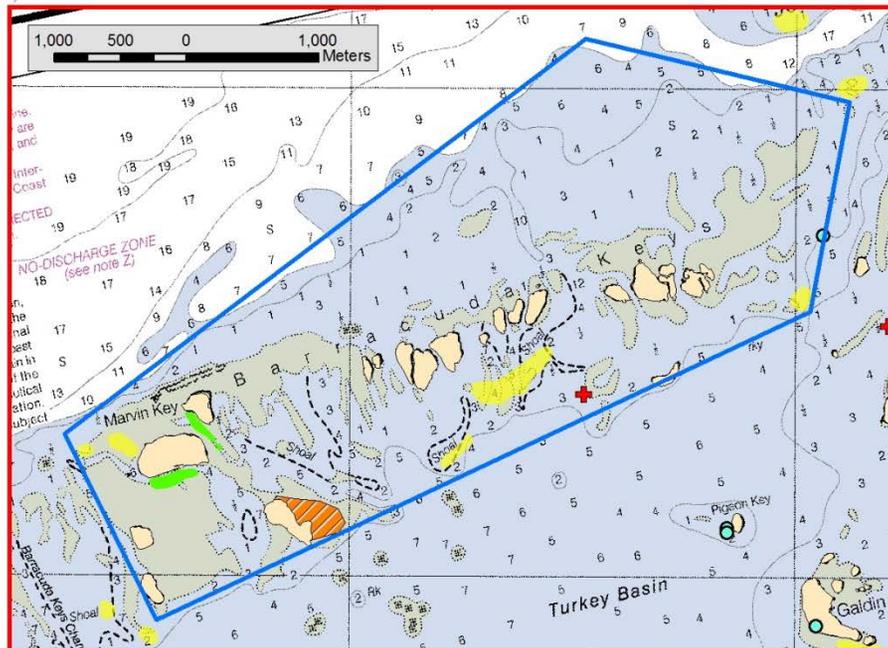
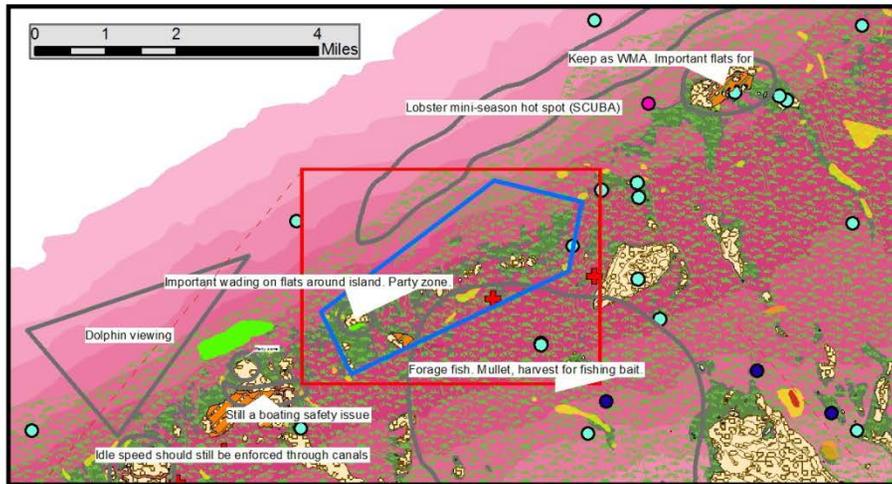
Seaplane Basin (proposed new area)



Seaplane Basin: Like Loggerhead Basin, this area will seasonally hold large numbers of tarpon and flats fishermen, but is located near a high traffic area.

Proposed Recommendation: Establish Pole/Troll/Idle Zone.

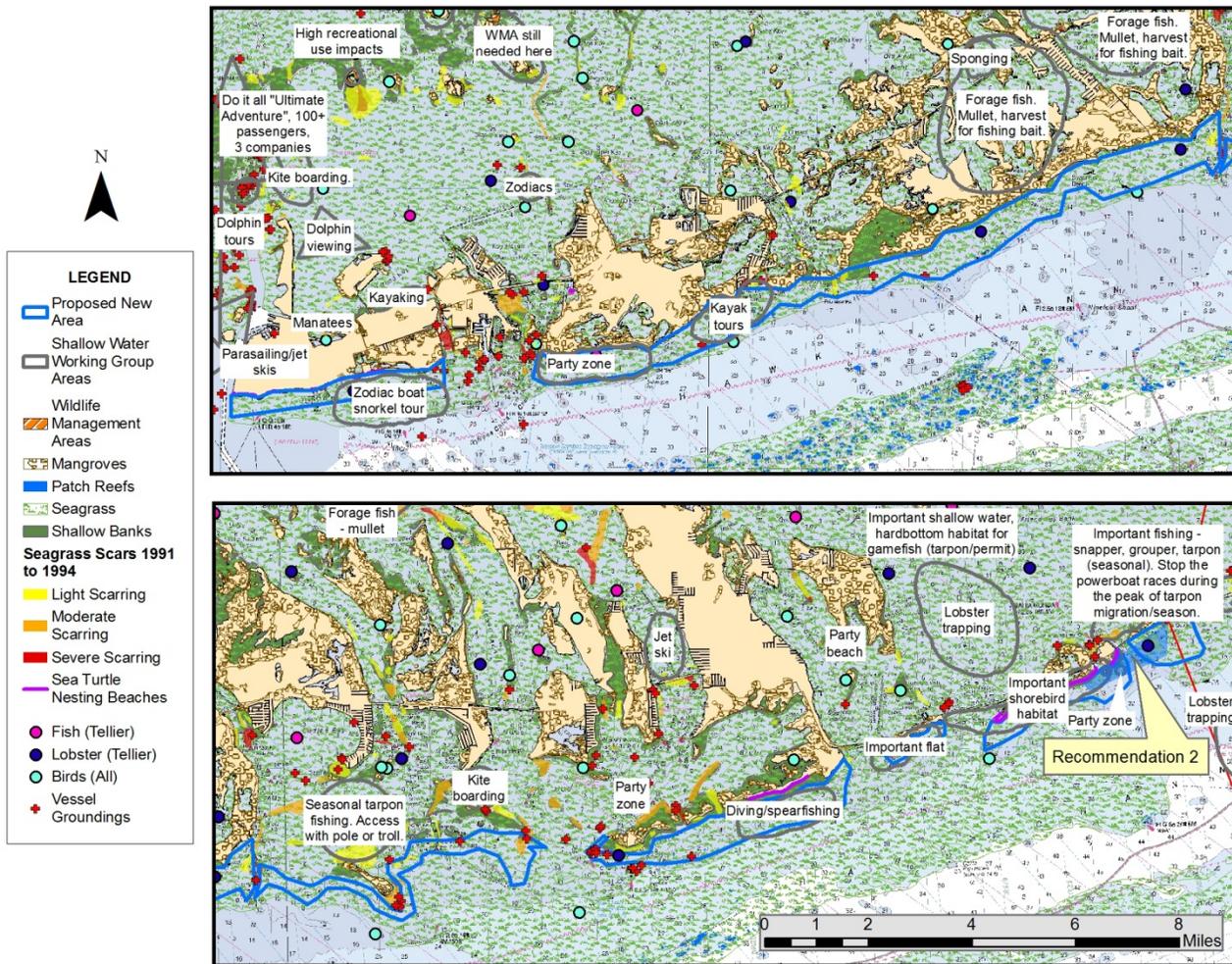
Marvin Key and Barracuda Keys (proposed new area)



Marvin Keys and Barracuda Keys:
This zone will protect shallow fishing areas and relieve conflict between fishermen and other boaters who transit the area to reach “party areas”.

Proposed Recommendation: Establish Pole/Troll Zone with Idle Speed/No Wake Zones in all channels.

Tarpon Wildlife Migration Line (proposed new area)



Tarpon Migration Line:

Existing Access Restrictions:

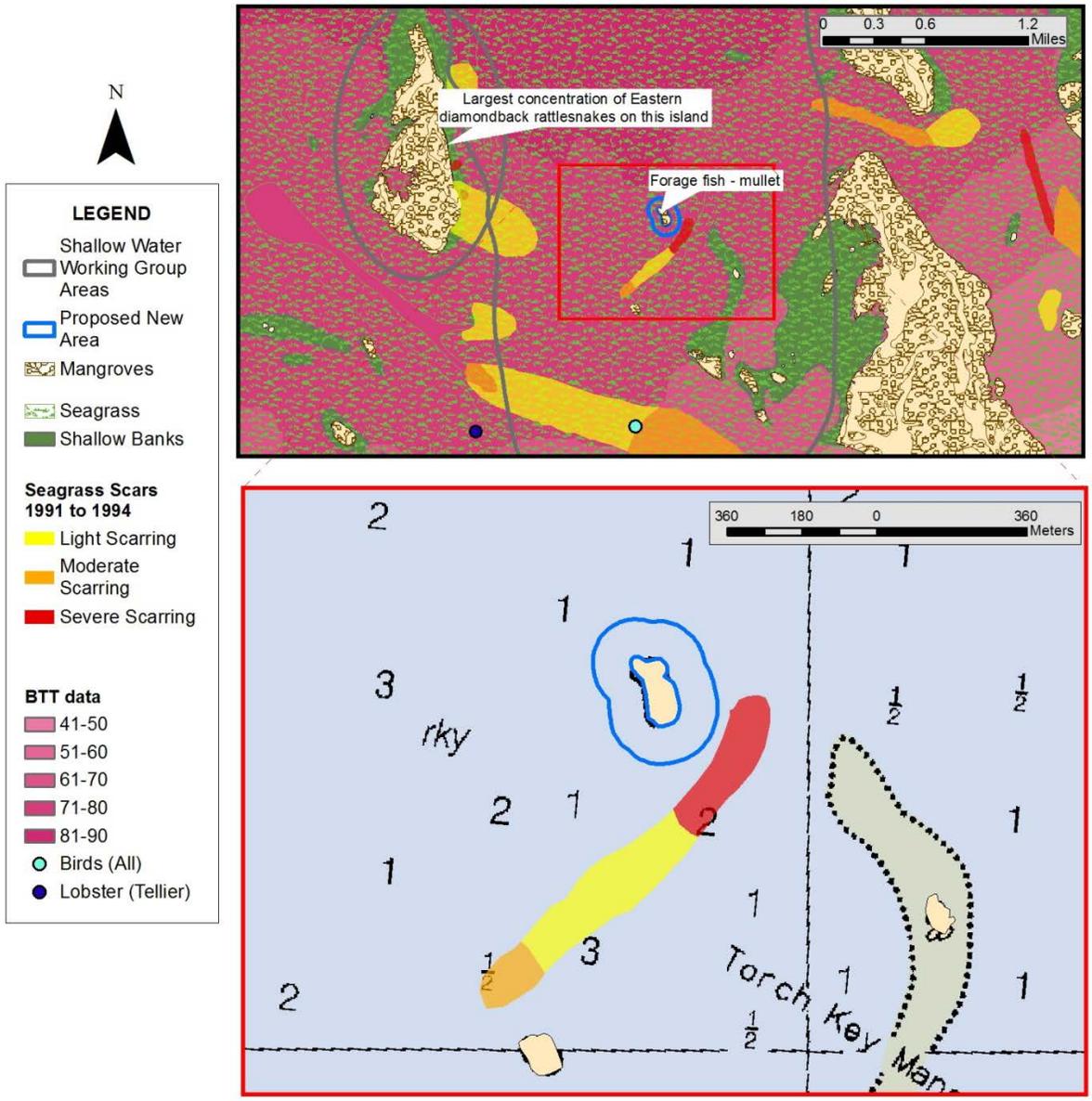
Temporal (April-June) idle only zone to protect the Oceanside migratory travel lanes used by Tarpon (*Megalops atlanticus*).

Proposed Recommendations:

Recommendation 1: Establish an Idle Speed/No Wake Zone (April-June) along oceanside shorelines from east end of Key West to west end of Ohio Key.

Recommendation 2: Establish an Idle Speed/No Wake Zone (April-June) from east end of Bahia Honda to west end of Ohio Key.

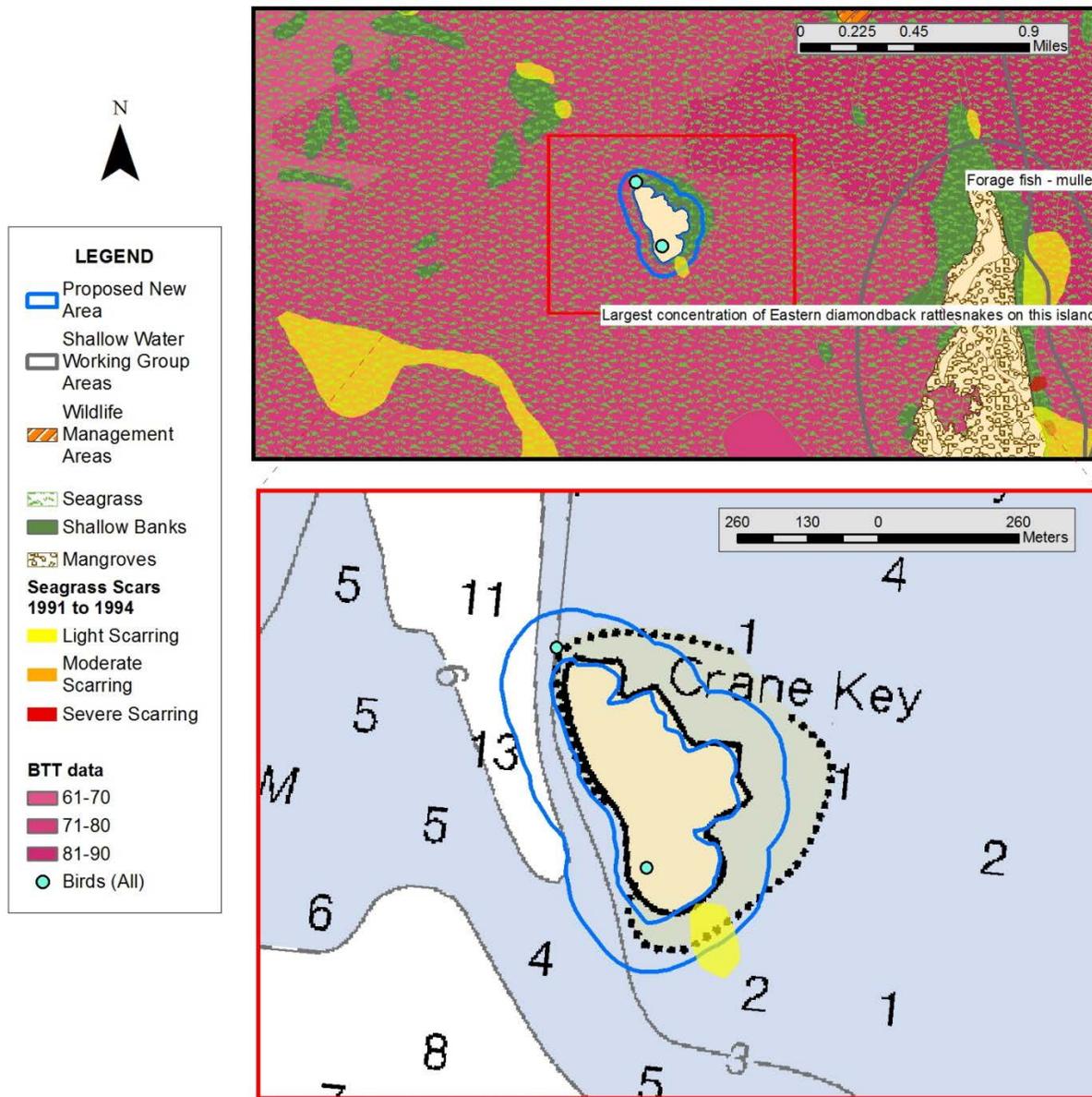
Island near Torch Key (proposed new area)



Island Near Torch Key: Huge frigatebird roost, and there is also great white heron activity there.

Proposed Recommendation: Establish 100 yard No Entry Zone around island.

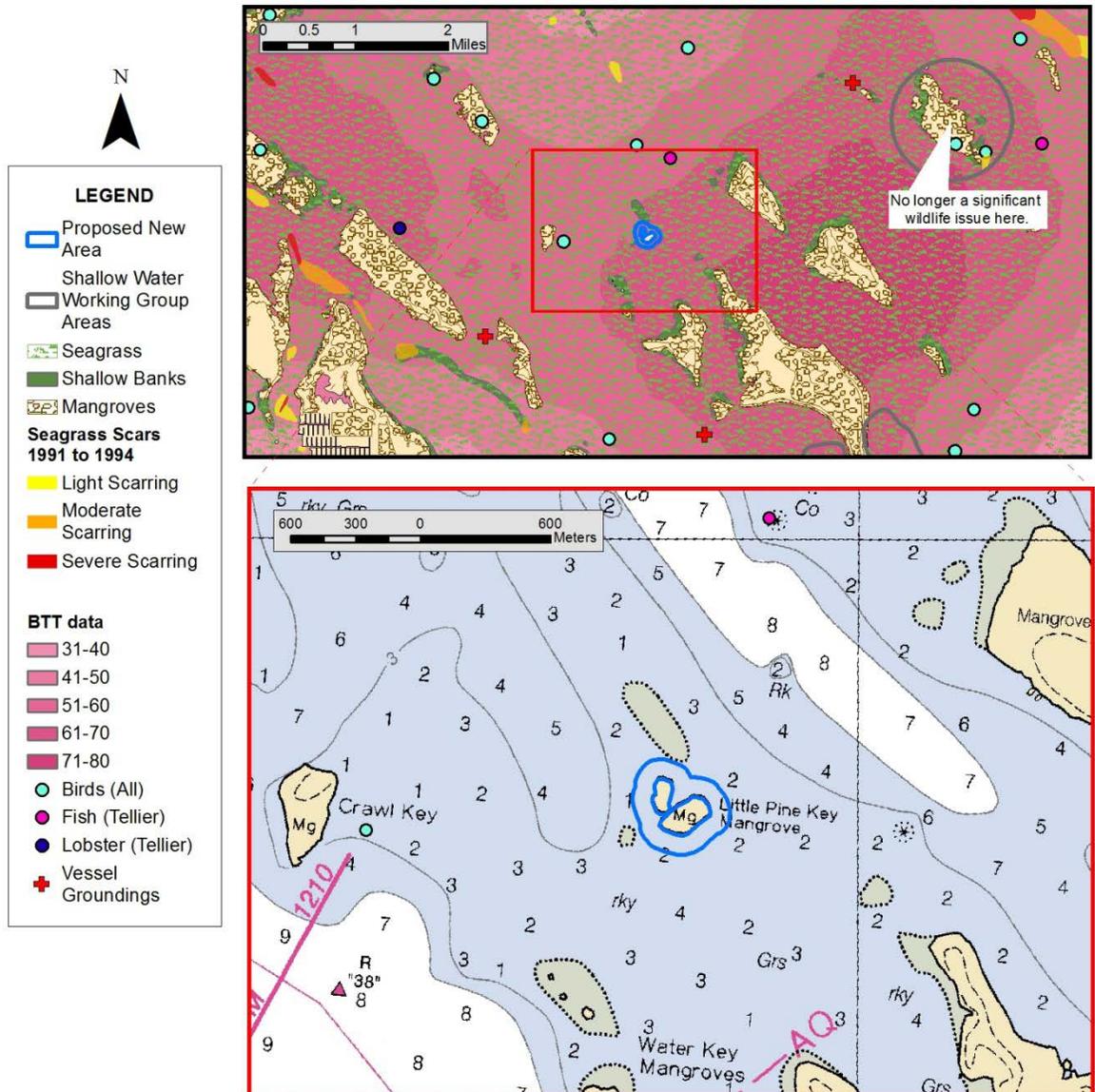
Crane Key (proposed new areas)



Crane Key: Public scoping comment with no description.

Proposed Recommendation: Establish 100 yard No Entry Zone around island and temporal No Entry Zone when it is determined that a species of concern uses this area.

Little Pine Mangrove Key (proposed new areas)

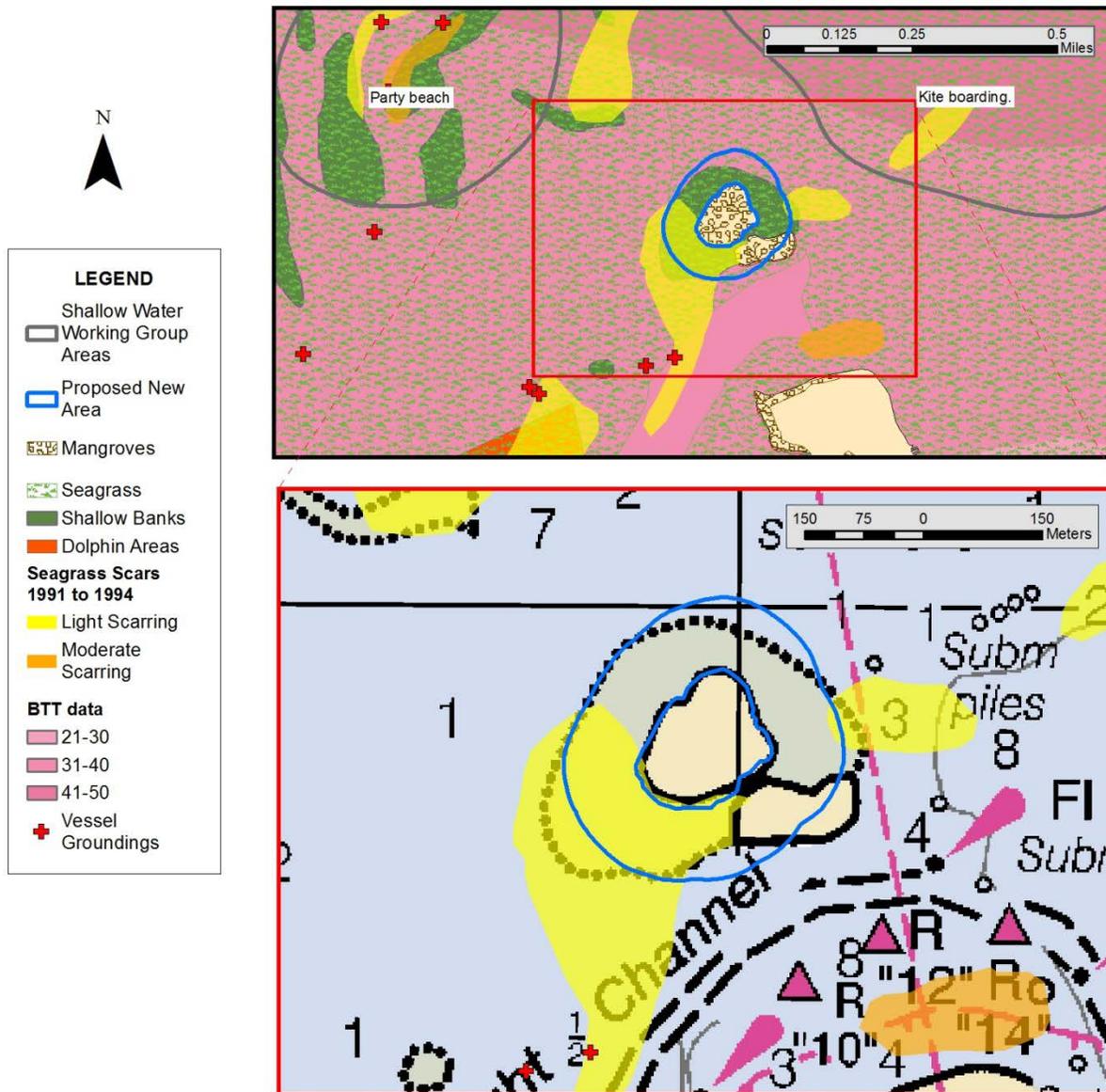


Little Pine Mangrove Key:

Frigatebird roost, nesting reddish egrets, tri-colored and great white herons.

Proposed Recommendation: Establish temporal No Entry Zone during bird nesting/roosting seasons or when species of concern are present.

Demolition Key (proposed new areas)



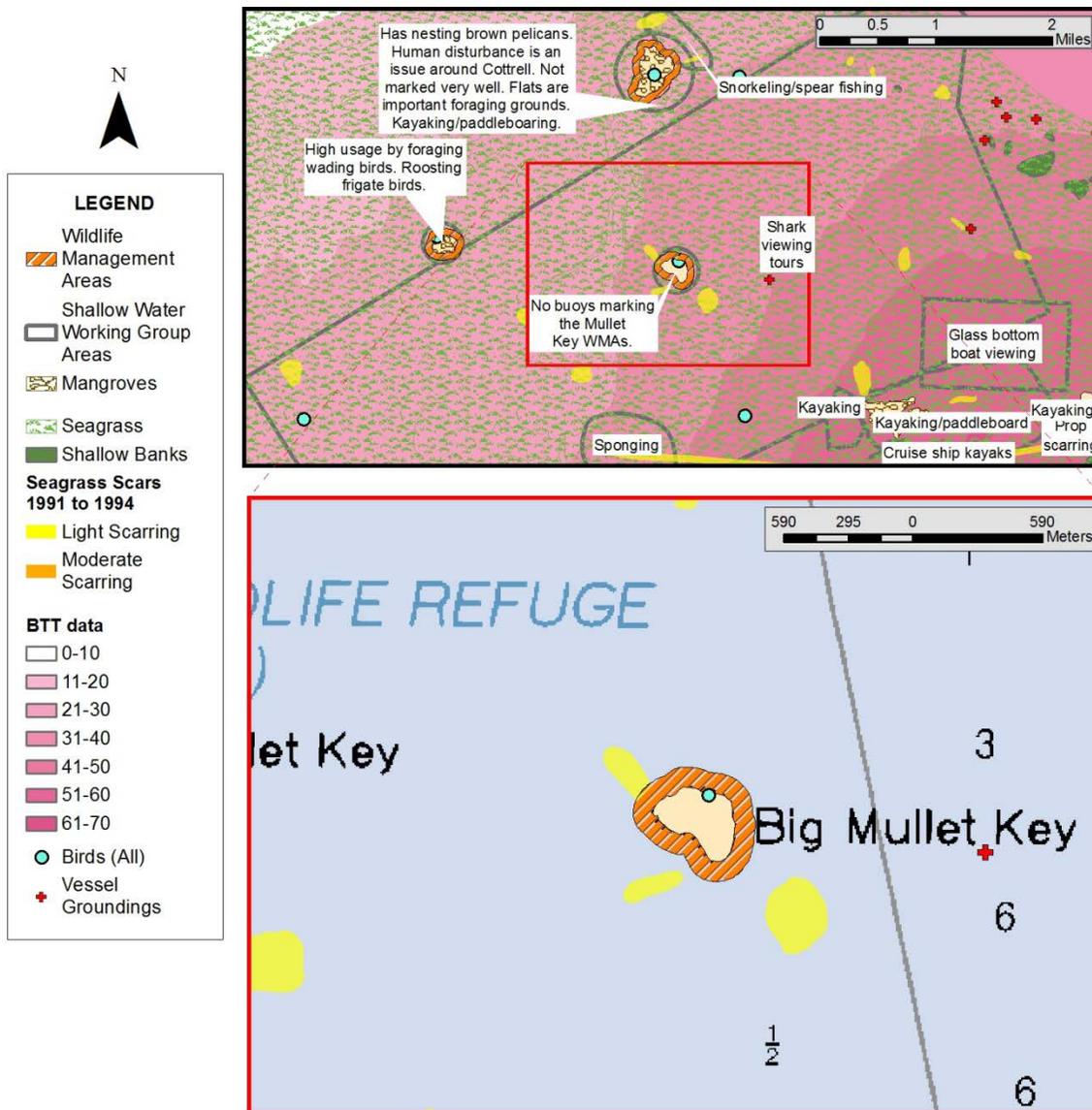
Demolition Key: Island that includes great white heron nests and frigatebirds.

Existing Access Restrictions: No-Entry buffer zone around shallow flats.

Proposed Recommendation: Establish temporal No Entry Zone during bird nesting/roosting seasons or when species of concern are present.

MARQUESAS

Big Mullet Key Wildlife Management Area

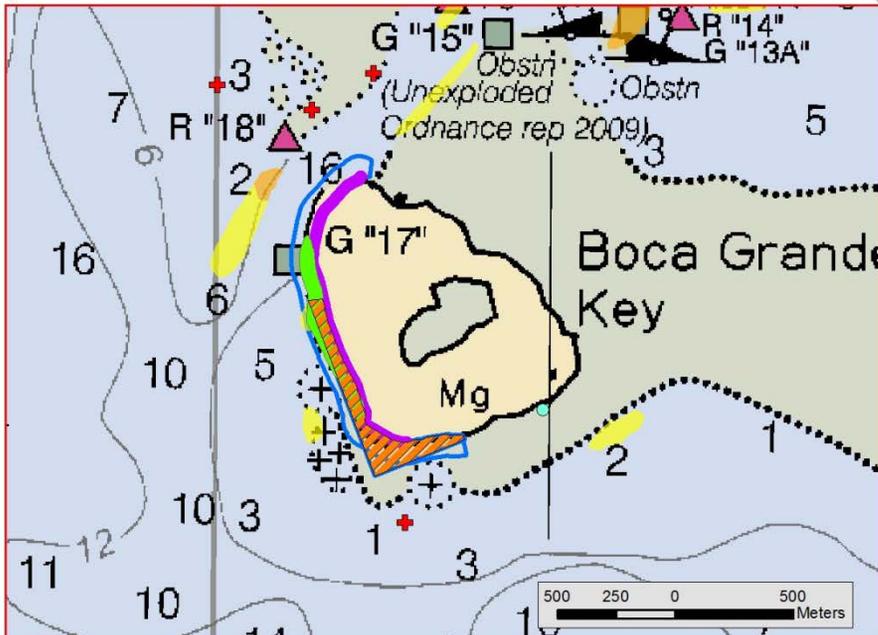
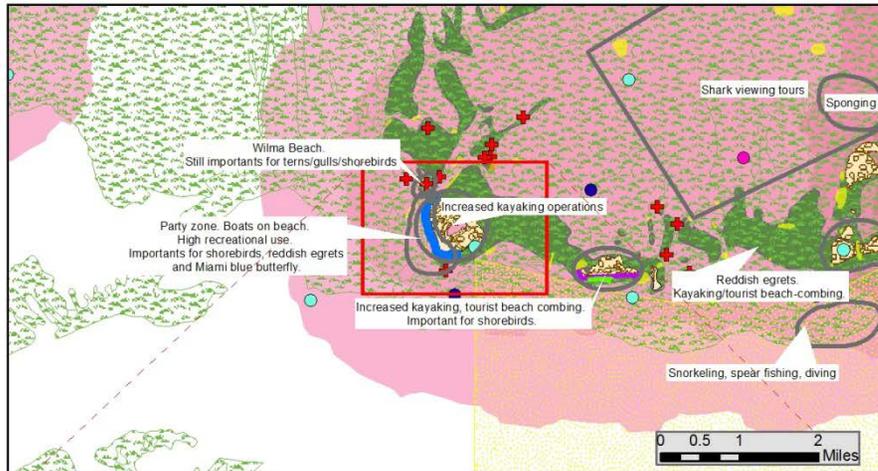


Big Mullet Key: The island harbors nesting great white herons and a variety of other wading birds. Mangrove terrapins are also present.

Existing Access Restrictions: No-motor zone (300 feet) around entire key.

Proposed Recommendation: Establish temporal No Entry Zone during bird nesting/roosting seasons or when species of concern are present.

Boca Grande Key Wildlife Management Area



Boca Grande Key: Many species of birds use this area, including some that are listed as federally endangered and threatened. Also turtle nesting.

Existing Access Restrictions: South one-half of beach closed (beach above mean high water closed by Department of the Interior).

Proposed Recommendations:

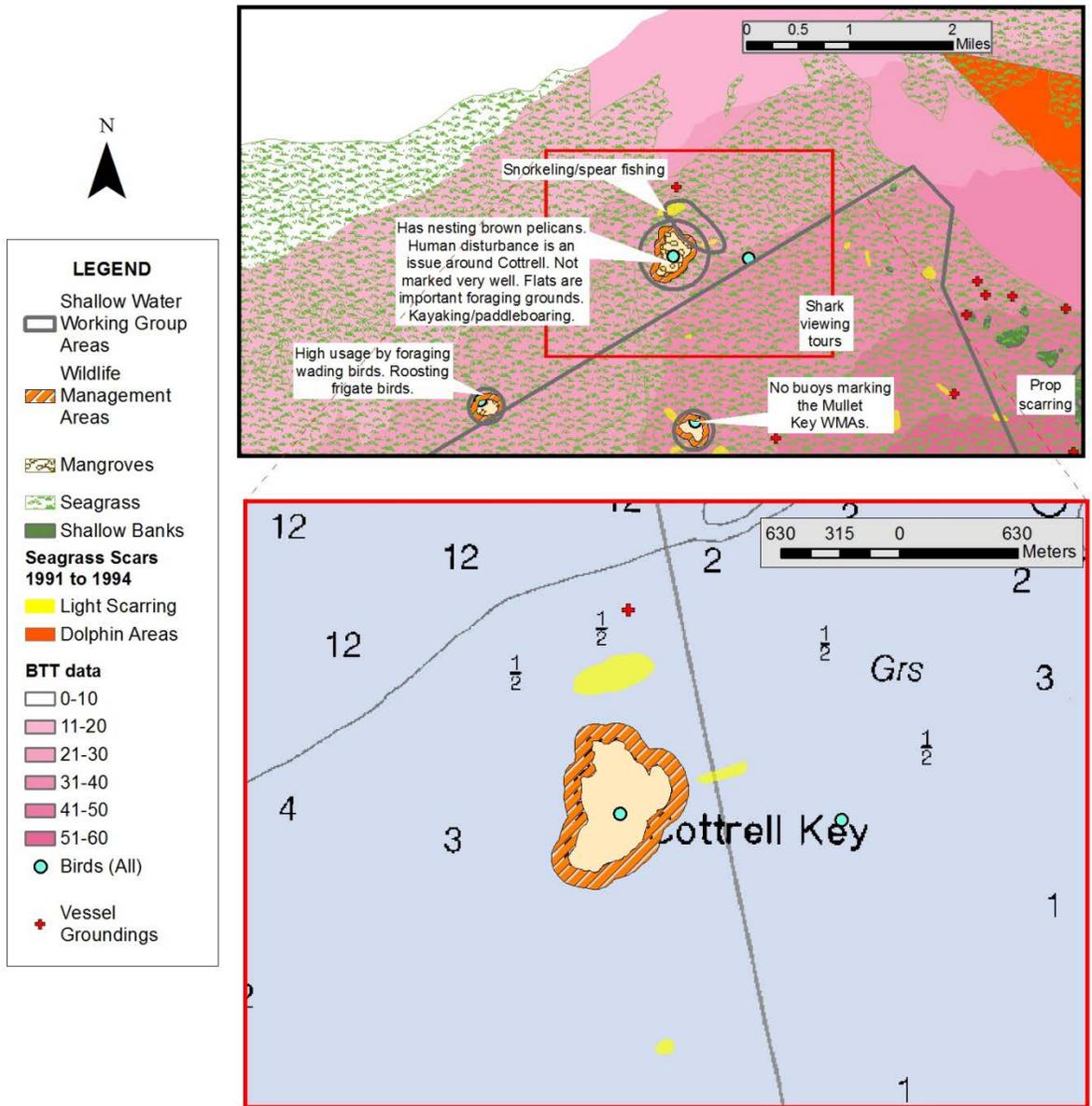
Recommendation 1: Maintain existing closed zones.

Recommendation 2: Establish temporal No Entry Zone during turtle nesting seasons or when species of concern are present.

Recommendation 3: Establish temporal No Entry Zone 100 yards out from beaches.

Recommendation 4: Establish No Anchor Zone or No Motor Zone 100 yards out from beach.

Cottrell Key Wildlife Management Area



Cottrell Key: Cottrell Key contains a variety of wading birds, and mangrove terrapins.

Existing Access Restrictions: No-motor zone (300 feet) around entire key.

Proposed Recommendation: Establish temporal No Entry Zone during bird nesting/roosting seasons or when species of concern are present.

Little Mullet Key Wildlife Management Area

N
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LEGEND

Wildlife
 Management Areas

 Mangroves

 Seagrass

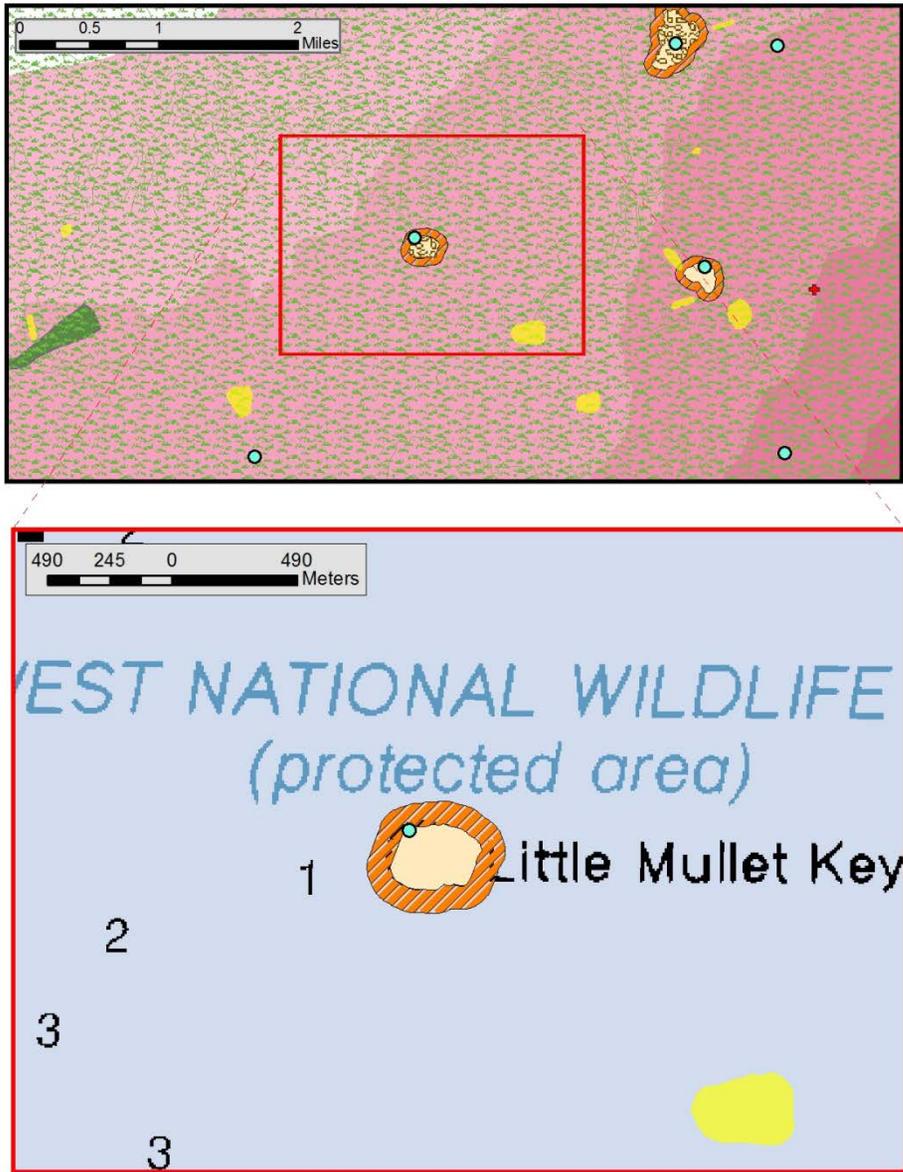
 Shallow Banks

Seagrass Scars 1991 to 1994
 Light Scarring

BTT Data

 0-10
 11-20
 21-30
 31-40
 41-50
 51-60

 Birds(All)
 Vessel Groundings

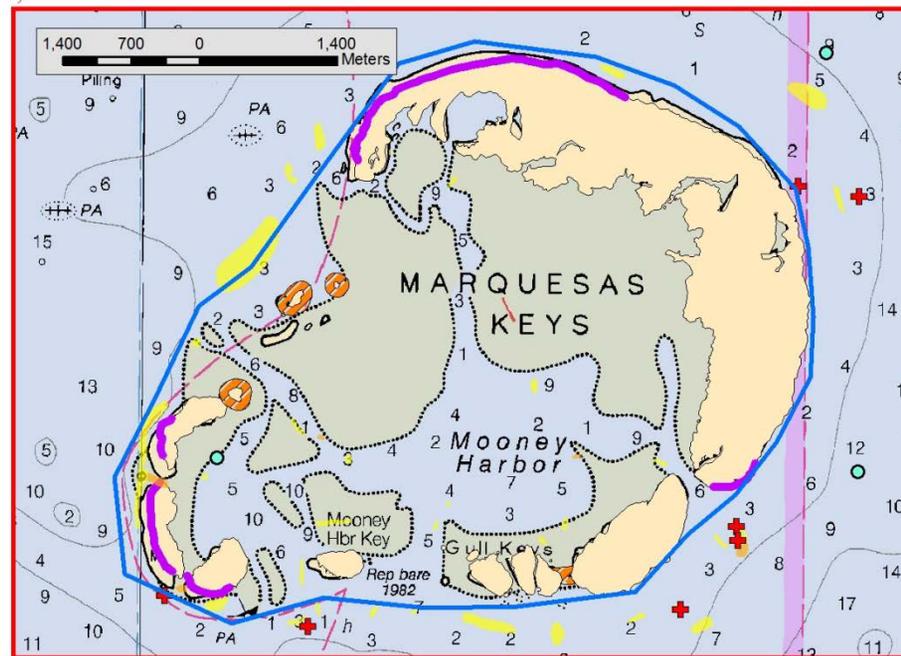
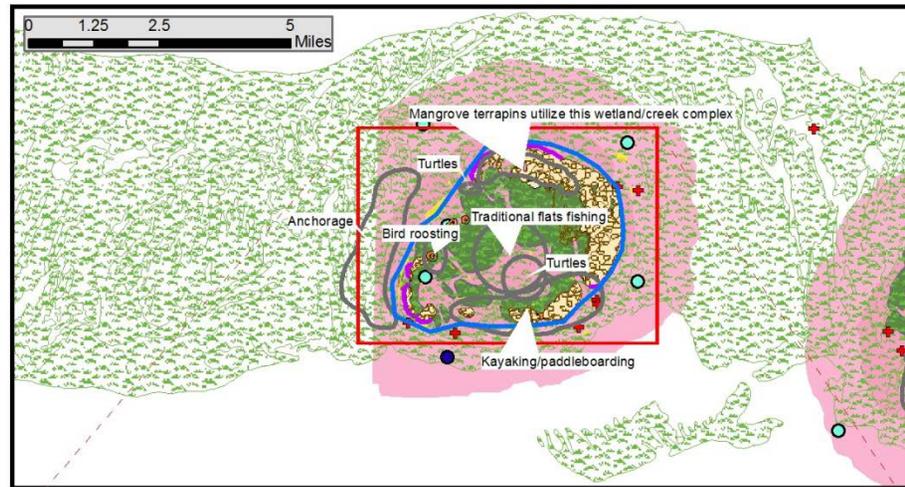


Little Mullet: Little Mullet Key is a small mangrove located about 15 kilometers northwest of Key West.

Existing Access Restrictions: No-Entry buffer zone (300 feet) around entire key.

Proposed Recommendation: Maintain existing zoning and restrictions.

Marquesas Keys Wildlife Management Area

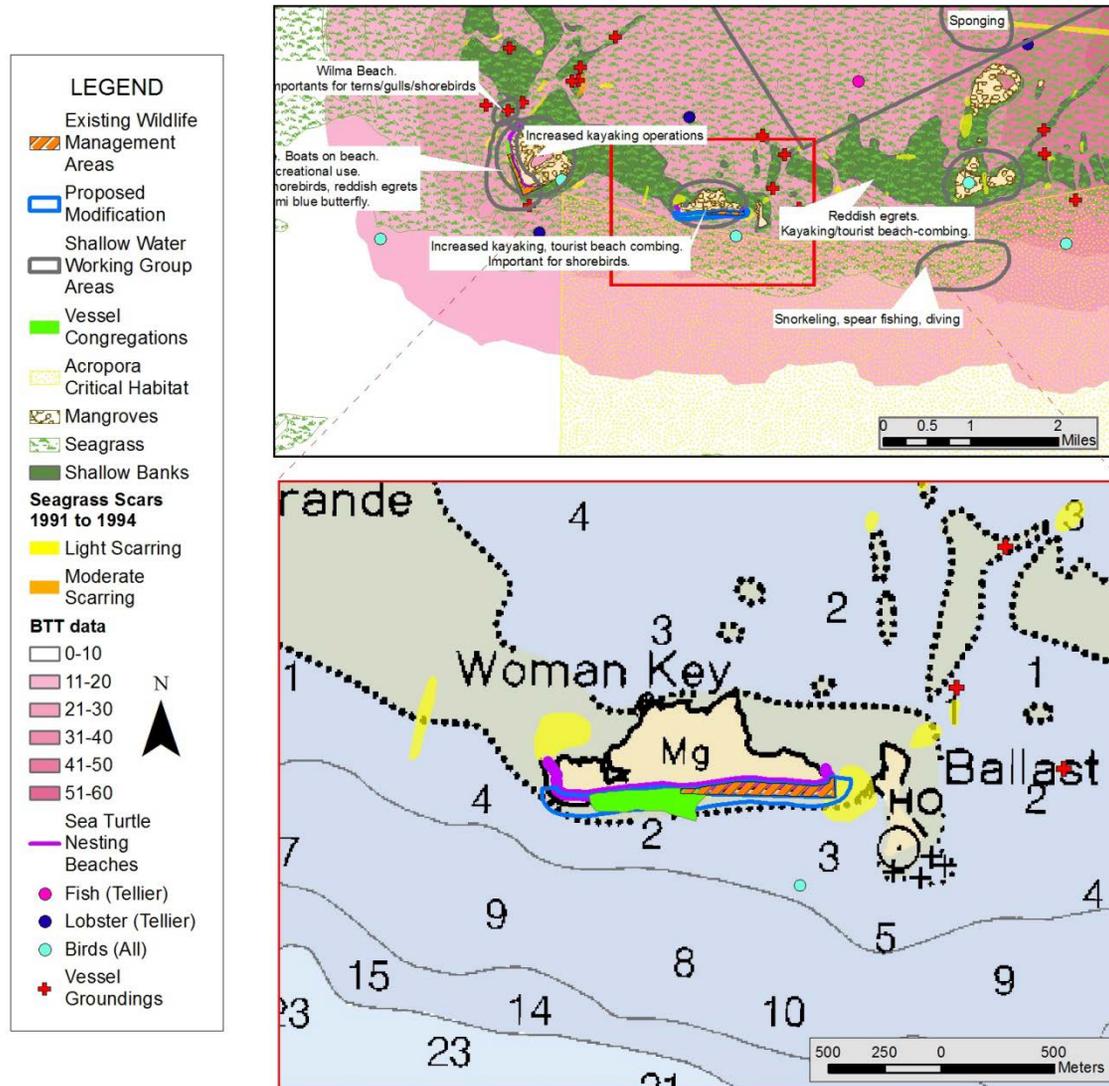


Marquesas Keys: The islands are used by sea turtles and birds for nesting, feeding, and roosting.

Existing Access Restrictions: (i) No-motor zones (300 feet) around three smallest keys on western side of chain; (ii) no-Entry buffer zone (300 feet) around one island at western side of chain; (iii) idle speed only/no-wake zone in southwest tidal creek.

Proposed Recommendation: Designate all flats and tidal creeks as Idle Speed/No Wake Zone and establish temporal No Entry Zones during bird nesting/roosting seasons or when species of concern are present.

Woman Key Wildlife Management Area



Woman Key: Half of the beach and sand spit on the southeast side is closed. Loggerhead turtles and several species of wading birds nest in the area and a large number of shorebirds use the sand spits on the southeast side of the island.

Existing Access Restrictions: One-half of beach and sand spit on southeast side closed (beach and sand spit above mean high water closed by Department of the Interior).

Proposed Recommendations:

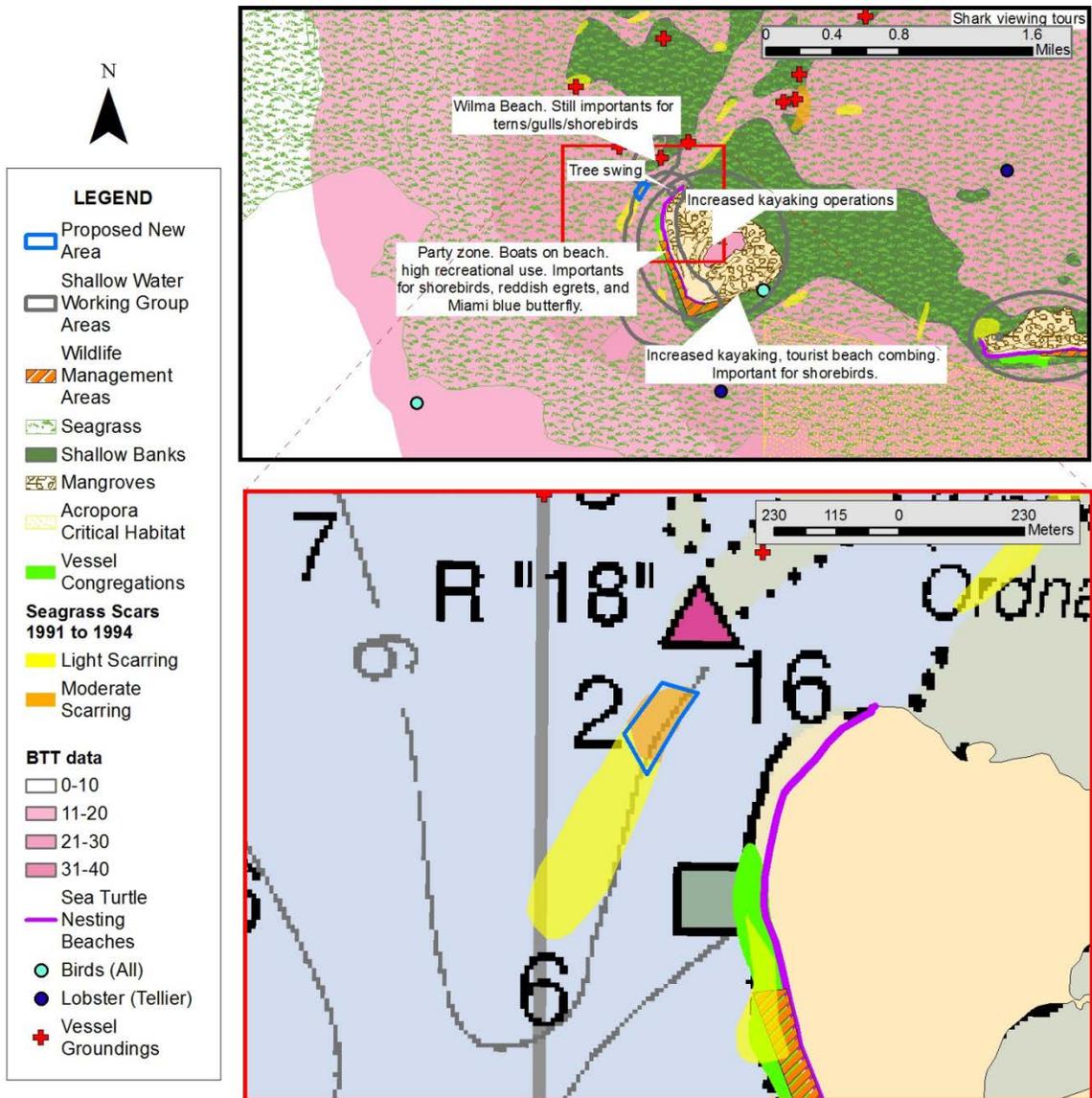
Recommendation 1: Maintain existing closed zones.

Recommendation 2: Establish temporal No Entry Zone during turtle nesting seasons or when species of concern are present and designate all surrounding flats as Idle Speed/No Wake Zone.

Recommendation 3: Establish temporal No Entry Zone 100 yards out from beaches.

Recommendation 4: Establish No Anchor Zone or No Motor Zone 100 yards out from beach.

Wilma Key (proposed new area)



Wilma Key: Despite its changes it is still worth zoning as a WMA to minimize disturbance to nesting terns and plovers and resting water birds of many species.

Existing Access Restrictions: No Entry buffer zone.

Proposed Recommendation: No Entry Zone; verify that this is needed because area could be protected by the Boca Grande/Woman Key Bank proposed area.

Marquesas Keys (proposed new area)

N

LEGEND

- Shallow Water
- Working Group Areas
- Proposed Modification
- Wildlife
- Management Areas
- Seagrass
- Shallow Banks
- Mangroves
- Acropora
- Critical Habitat

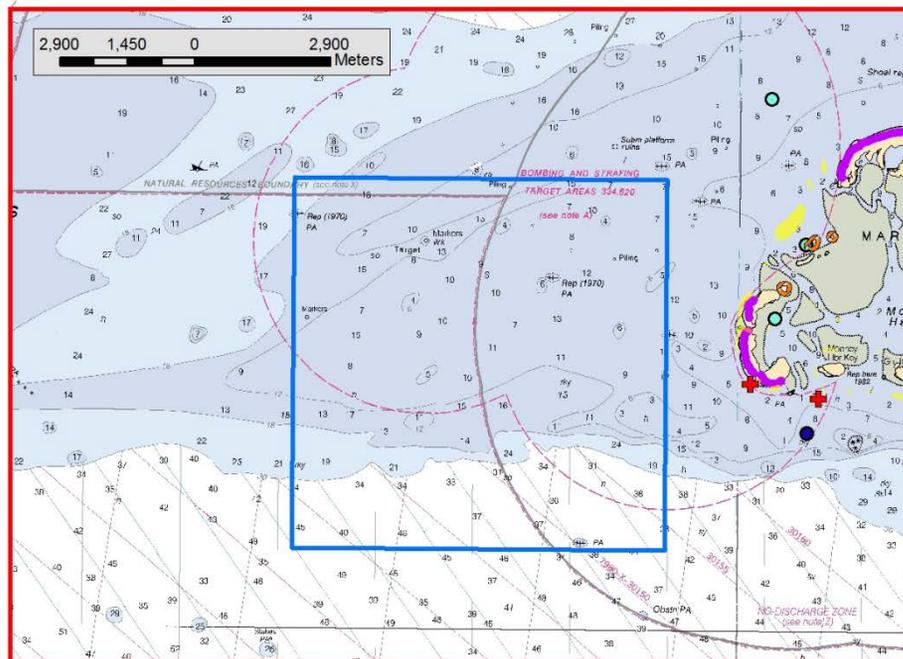
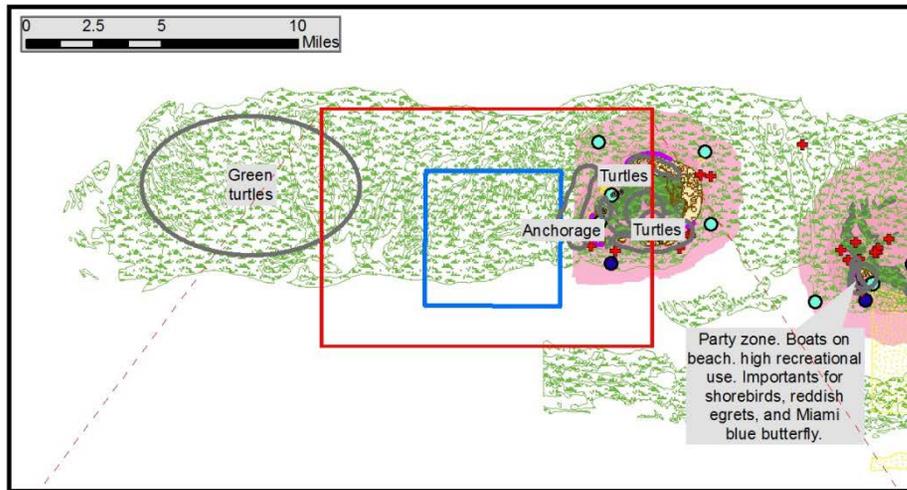
Seagrass Scars 1991 to 1994

- Light Scarring
- Moderate Scarring
- Severe Scarring

BTT data

- 0-10
- 11-20
- 21-30
- 31-40

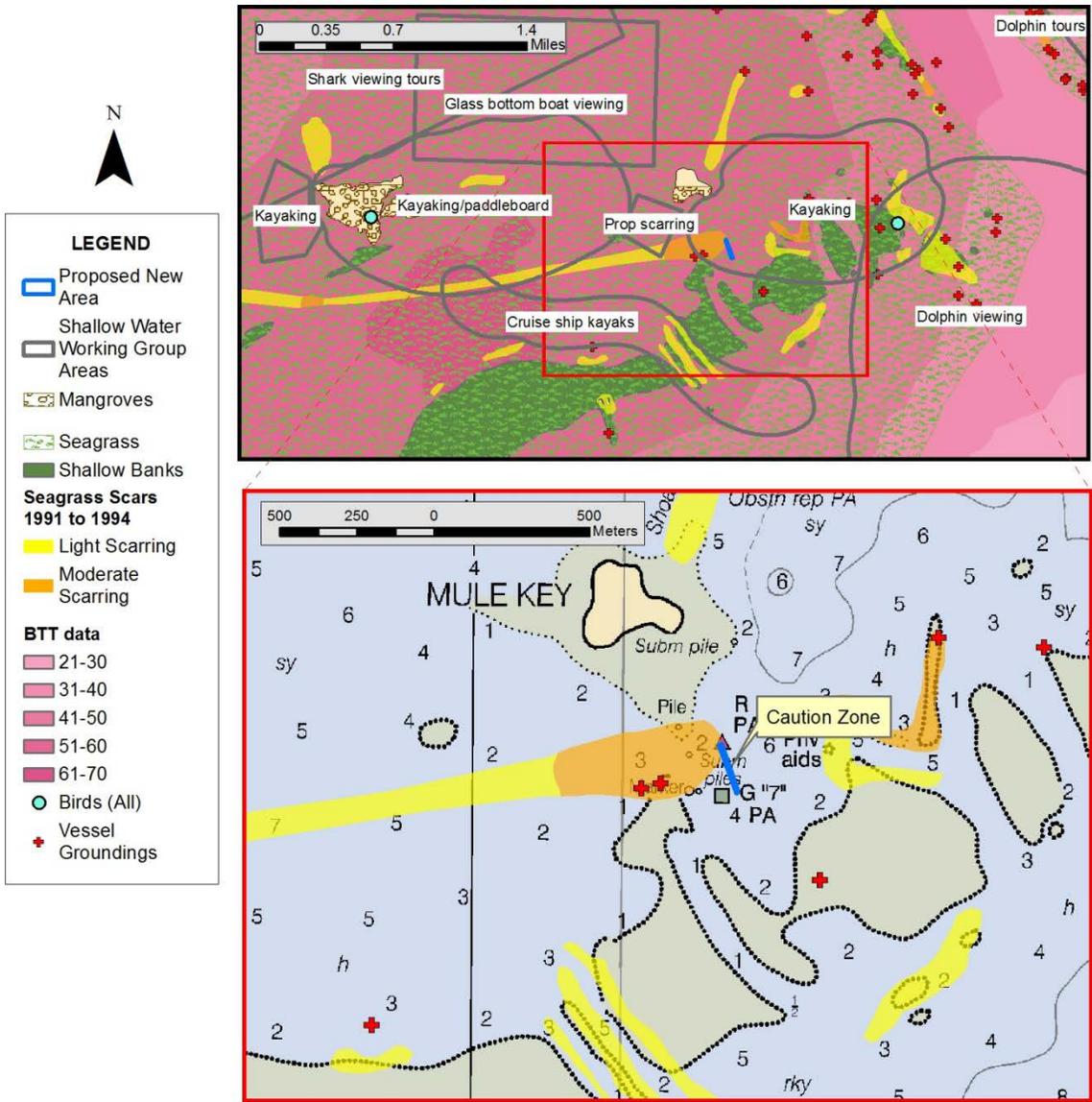
- Sea Turtle Nesting Beaches
- Birds (All)
- Lobster (Tellier)
- Vessel Groundings



Marquesas Keys: Protects green turtles on an internationally important foraging ground from boat strikes and fishery interactions. Also, allows for important research on green turtles and their importance to the seagrass ecosystem.

Proposed Recommendation: Research Only Zone, 12 square mile area 1 mile due west of the Marquesas Keys for 10 years.

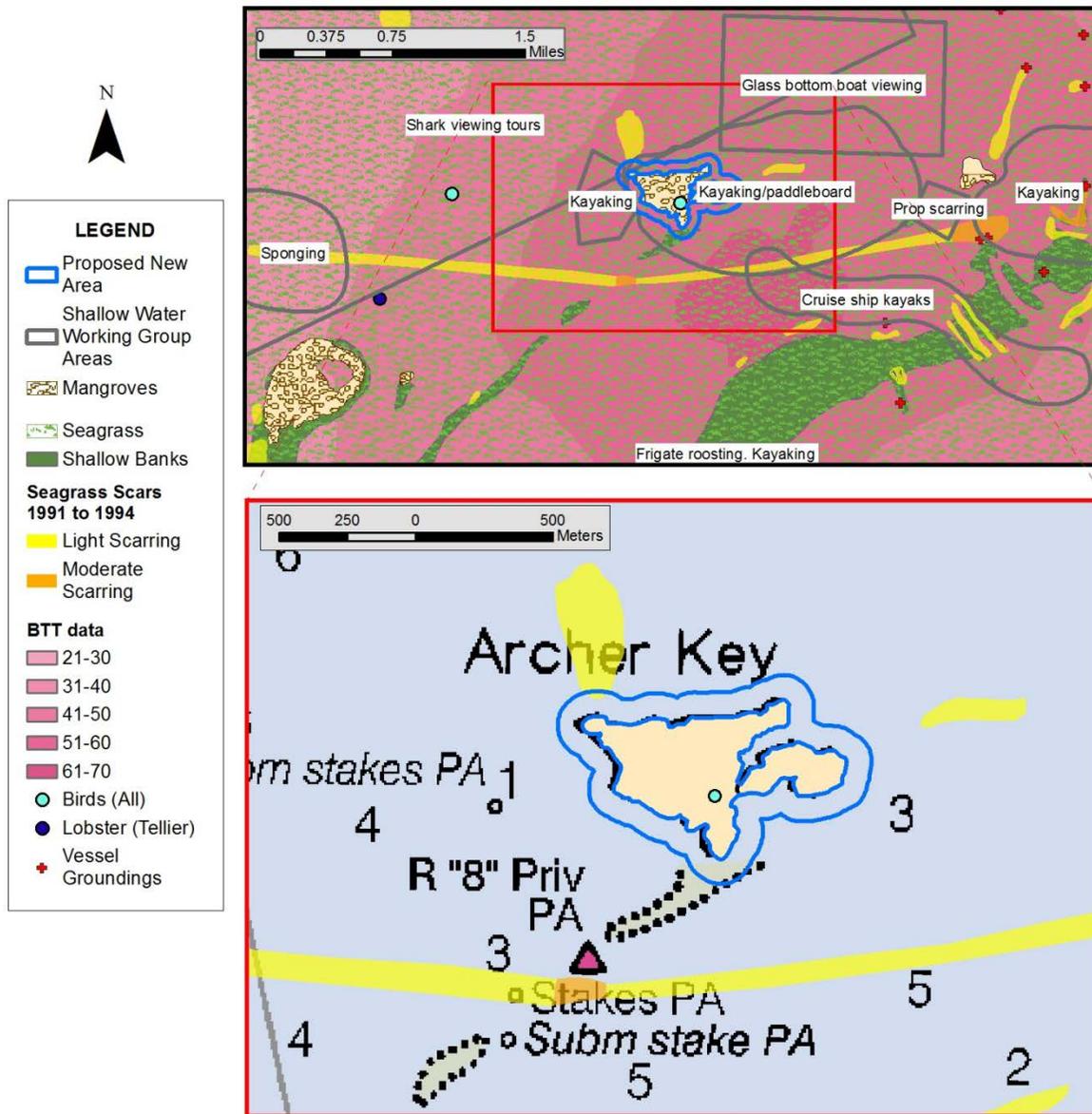
Mule Key (proposed new area)



Mule Key: Protects sea grass from prop scarring in an area that has seen continued seagrass damage from boat traffic.

Proposed Recommendation: Install markers displaying controlling depth at all entrances to Lakes.

Archer Key (proposed new area)



Archer Key: Reduces disturbance to nesting and roosting birds and protects seagrass habitat.

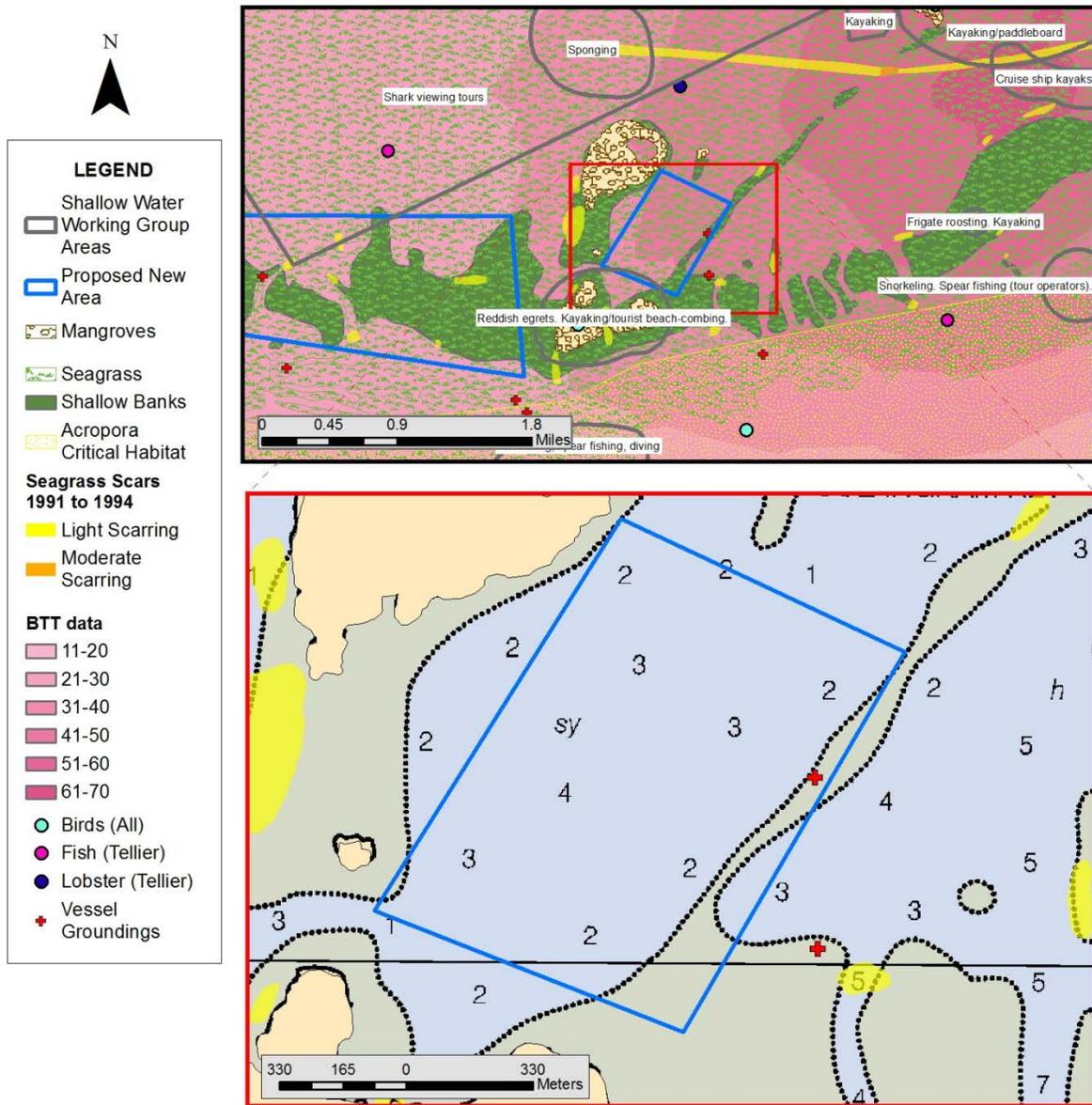
Proposed Recommendations:

Recommendation 1: Establish temporal No Entry Zone during bird nesting/roosting seasons or when species of concern are present.

Recommendation 2: Establish temporal Not Entry Zone 100 yards around island and No Anchor Zone.

Recommendation 3: Establish temporal Not Entry Zone 100 yards around island and No Overnight Anchor Zone.

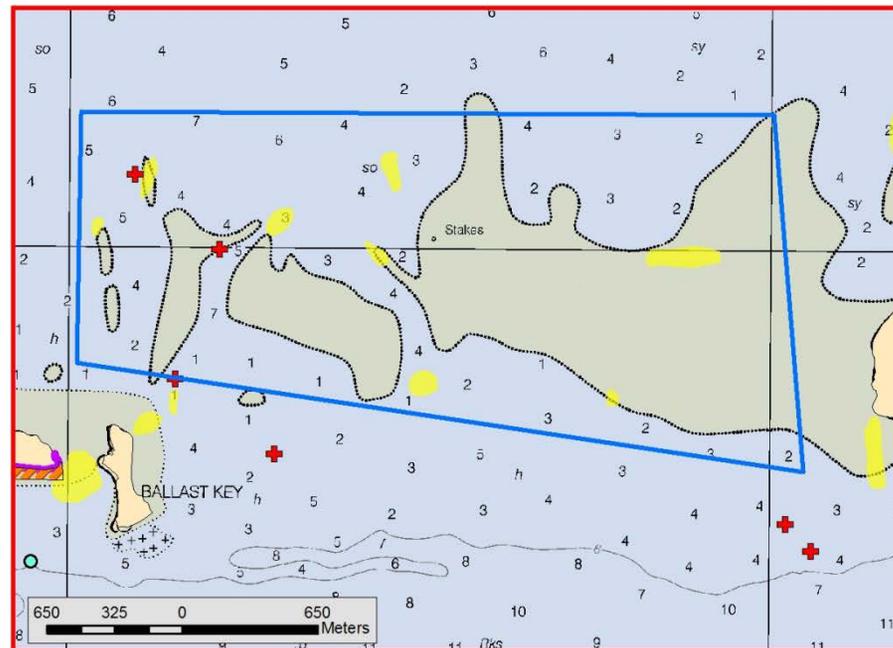
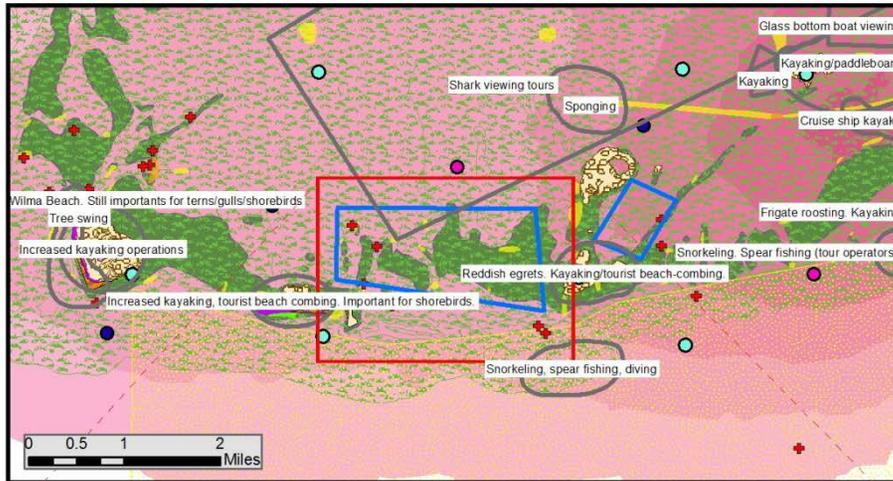
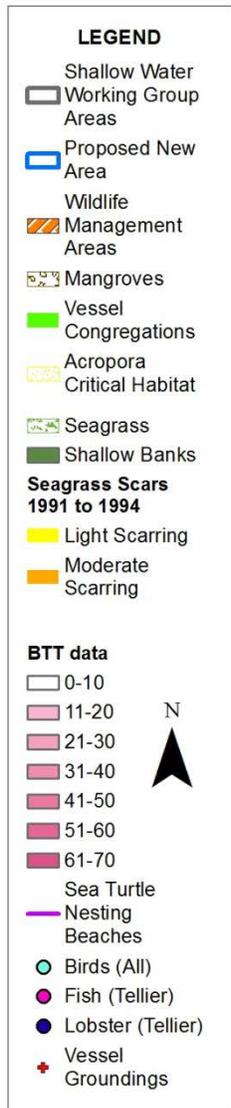
East Barracouta Key Flats (proposed new area)



East Barracouta Key Flats: Reduce disturbance to sea turtles and protect important hard bottom habitat.

Proposed Recommendations: 0.4 square mile Non-extractive, No Anchor Zone southeast of Baracouta Key.

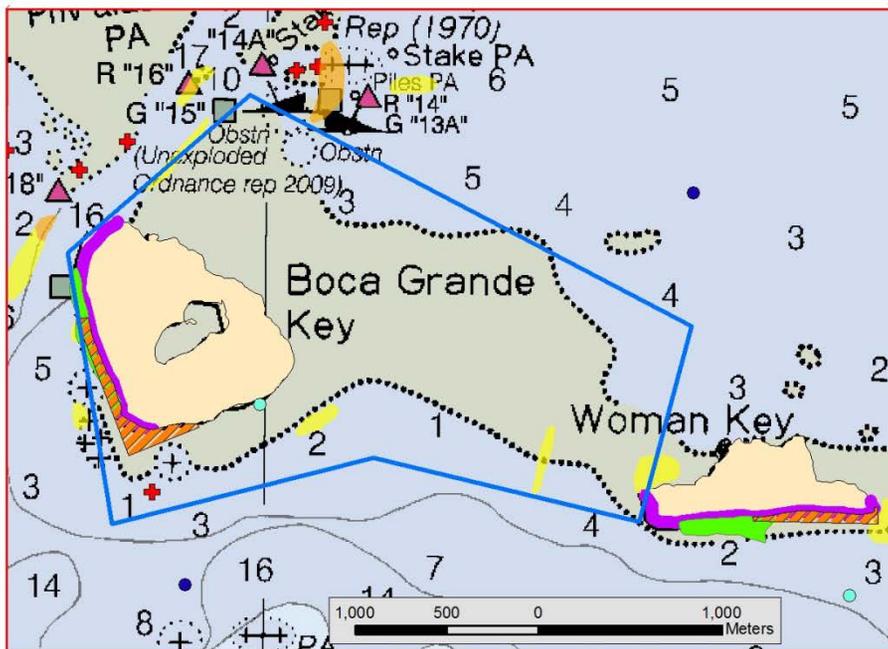
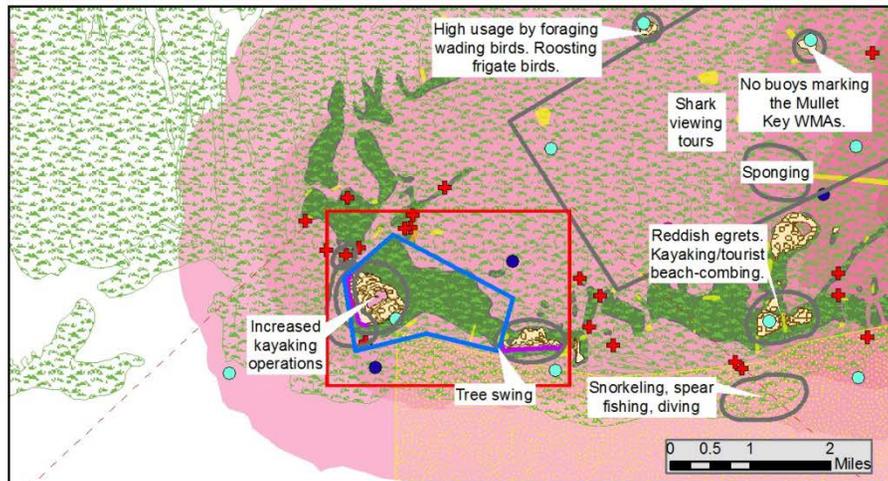
West Barracouta Key Flats (proposed new area)



West Barracouta Key Flats: Reduce disturbance to sea turtles and protect important hard bottom habitat.

Proposed Recommendations:
Establish 2 square mile Non-extractive, No Anchor Zone.

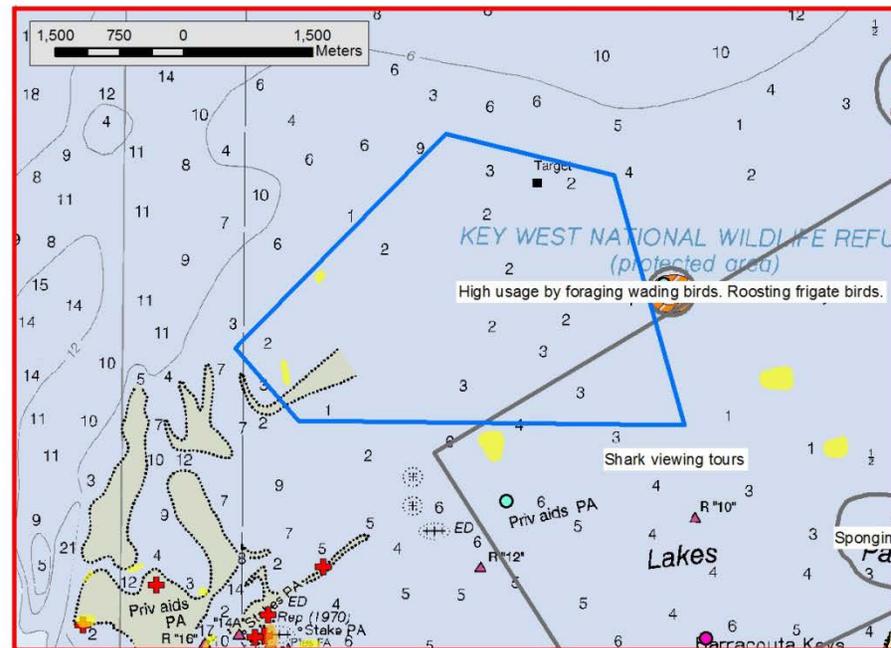
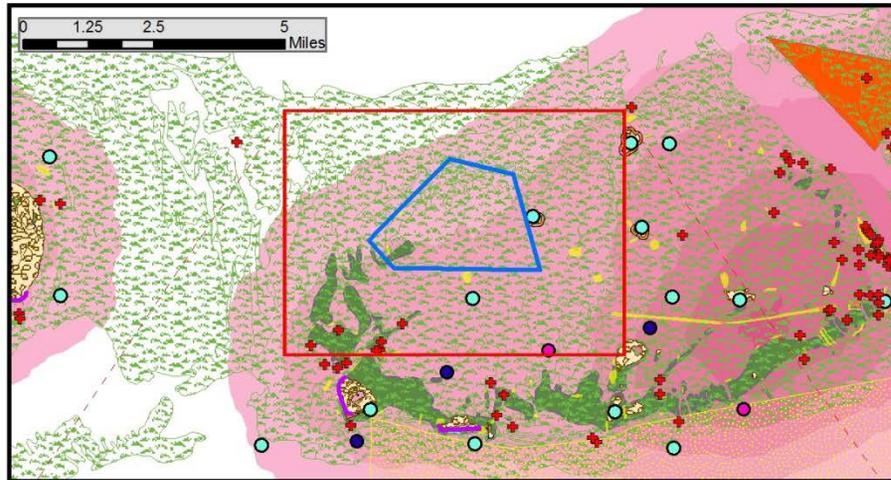
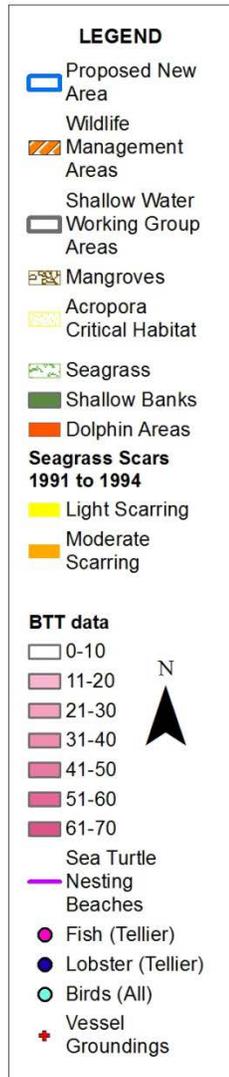
Boca Grande and Woman Key Shallow Bank (proposed new area)



Boca Grande and Woman Key Shallow Bank: Due to their location, the lack of navigational features in, and the poorly drawn charts of the area, the banks are hard to locate and are susceptible to boat groundings. This zone would protect shallow seagrass flats and limit user conflict in a high traffic area.

Proposed Recommendation: Establish temporal Idle Speed/No Wake Zone during bird nesting/roosting seasons or when species of concern are present.

Lakes Area–LaVina Bank (proposed new area)



Lakes Area-LaVina Bank: This zone will protect grass flats/fishing areas from damage by unknowledgeable boaters in what is a poorly marked and poorly mapped area.

Proposed Recommendations: Establish Idle Speed/No Wake Zone with Little Mullet Channel open to normal operation.