



Middle Keys Region





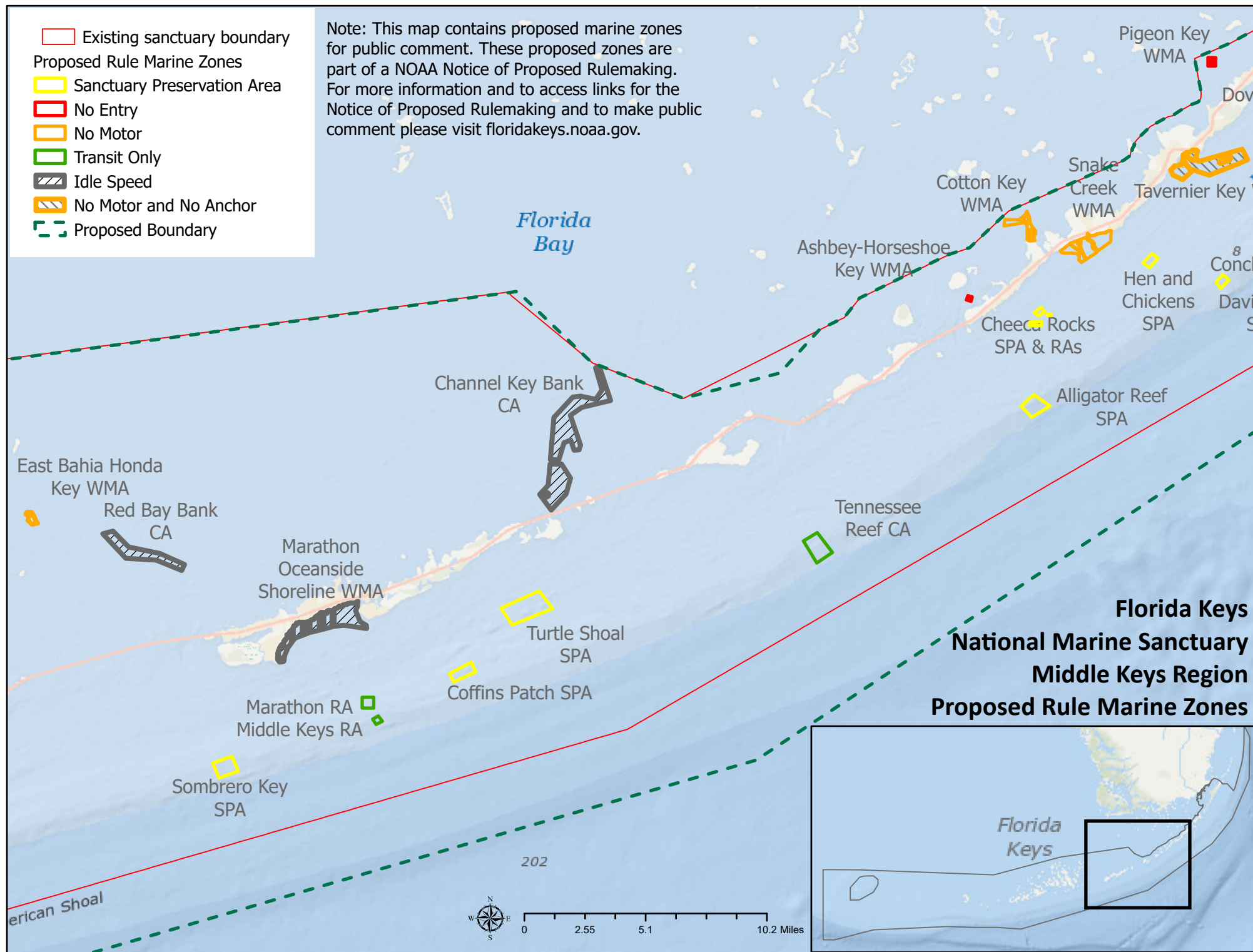
Middle Keys Region: Marine Zones

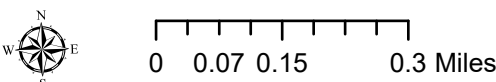
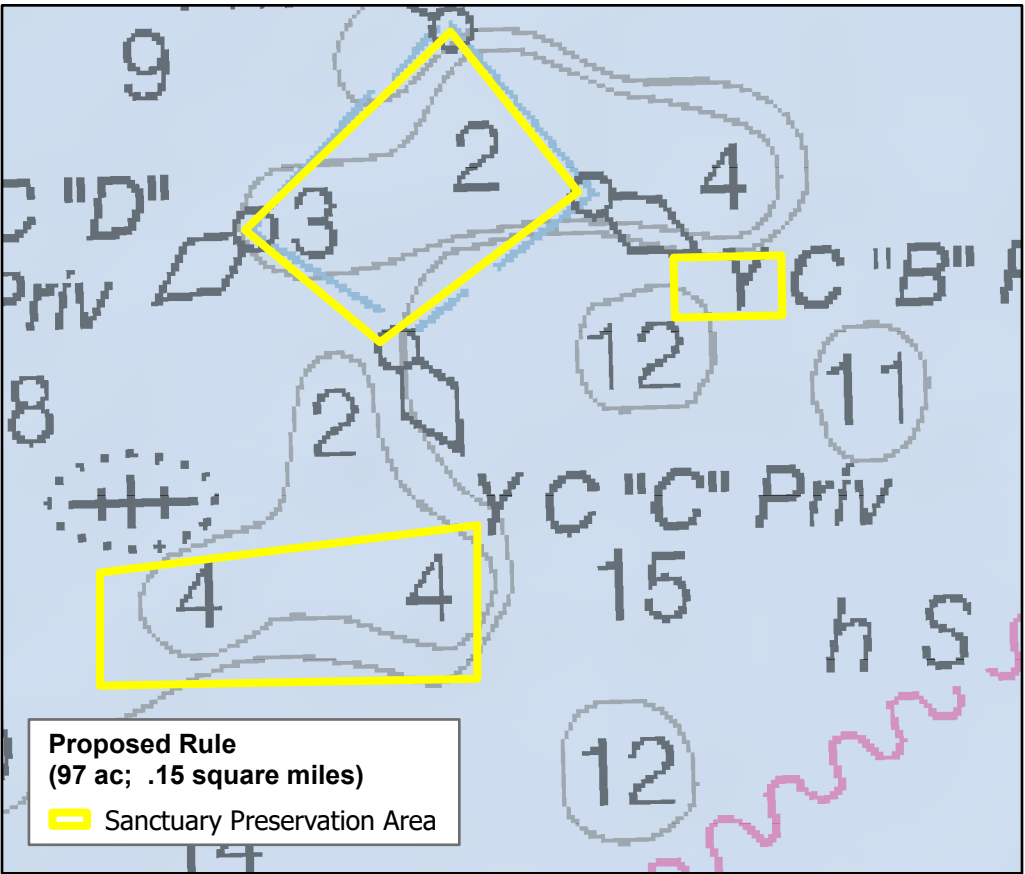
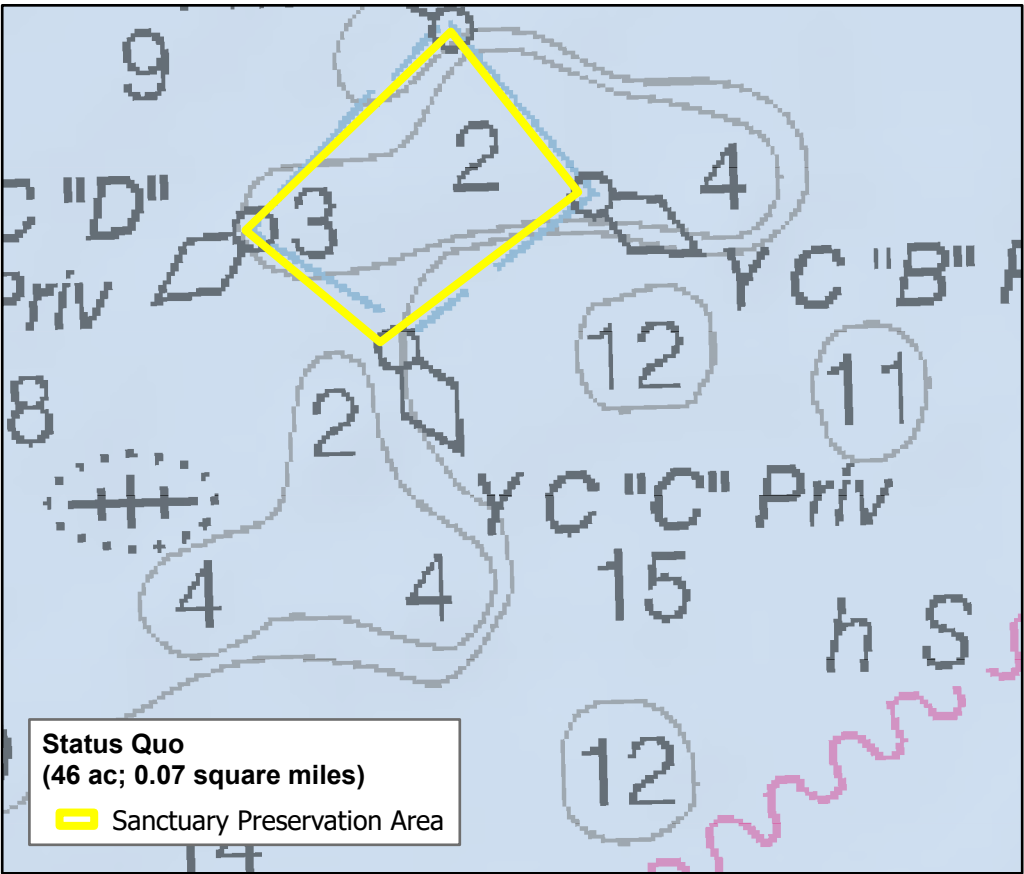
- Middle Keys Regional Map
- Cheeca Rocks Sanctuary Preservation Area and Cheeca Rocks East and Cheeca Rocks South Habitat Restoration Areas
- Alligator Reef Sanctuary Preservation Area
- Tennessee Reef Conservation Area
- Turtle Shoal Sanctuary Preservation Area
- Coffins Patch Sanctuary Preservation Area
- Marathon and Middle Keys Nursery Restoration Areas
- Sombrero Key Sanctuary Preservation Area
- Snake Creek Wildlife Management Area
- Cotton Key Wildlife Management Area
- Ashbey-Horseshoe Key Wildlife Management Area
- Channel Key Banks Wildlife Management Area
- Marathon Oceanside Shoreline Wildlife Management Area
- Red Bay Bank Wildlife Management Area

Cover photo: The iconic Seven Mile Bridge crosses the channel, delineating the Lower and Middle Florida Keys. Photo: Andy Newman/Florida Keys News Bureau

- Existing sanctuary boundary
- Proposed Rule Marine Zones
- Sanctuary Preservation Area
- No Entry
- No Motor
- Transit Only
- Idle Speed
- No Motor and No Anchor
- Proposed Boundary

Note: This map contains proposed marine zones for public comment. These proposed zones are part of a NOAA Notice of Proposed Rulemaking. For more information and to access links for the Notice of Proposed Rulemaking and to make public comment please visit floridakeys.noaa.gov.





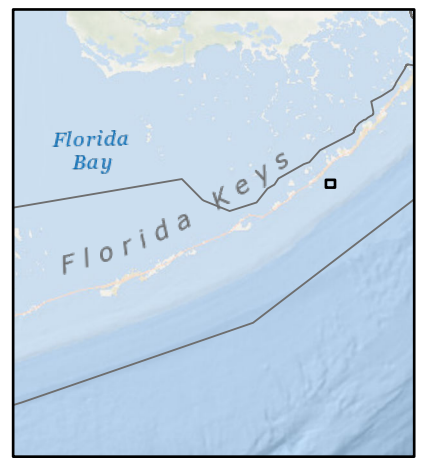
Cheeca Rocks Sanctuary Preservation Area and Cheeca Rocks East and Cheeca Rocks South Habitat Restoration Areas

Cheeca Rocks SPA: Protects highly-resilient aggregate and isolated patch reef habitats dominated by large populations of ESA-listed star corals along with a high diversity of other boulder corals. This is an important site for ongoing climate change studies and an important refugia from cold water events, bleaching and coral disease. This zone was originally designed to limit consumptive activities and separate users engaged in different activities.

Cheeca Rocks East RA: Provide additional protections to an active and long-term restoration site with one of the largest remaining populations of ESA listed star coral (*Orbicella* spp.); Contains intact populations of species susceptible to Stony Coral Tissue Loss Disease and appears more resilient to bleaching and disease.

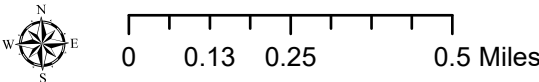
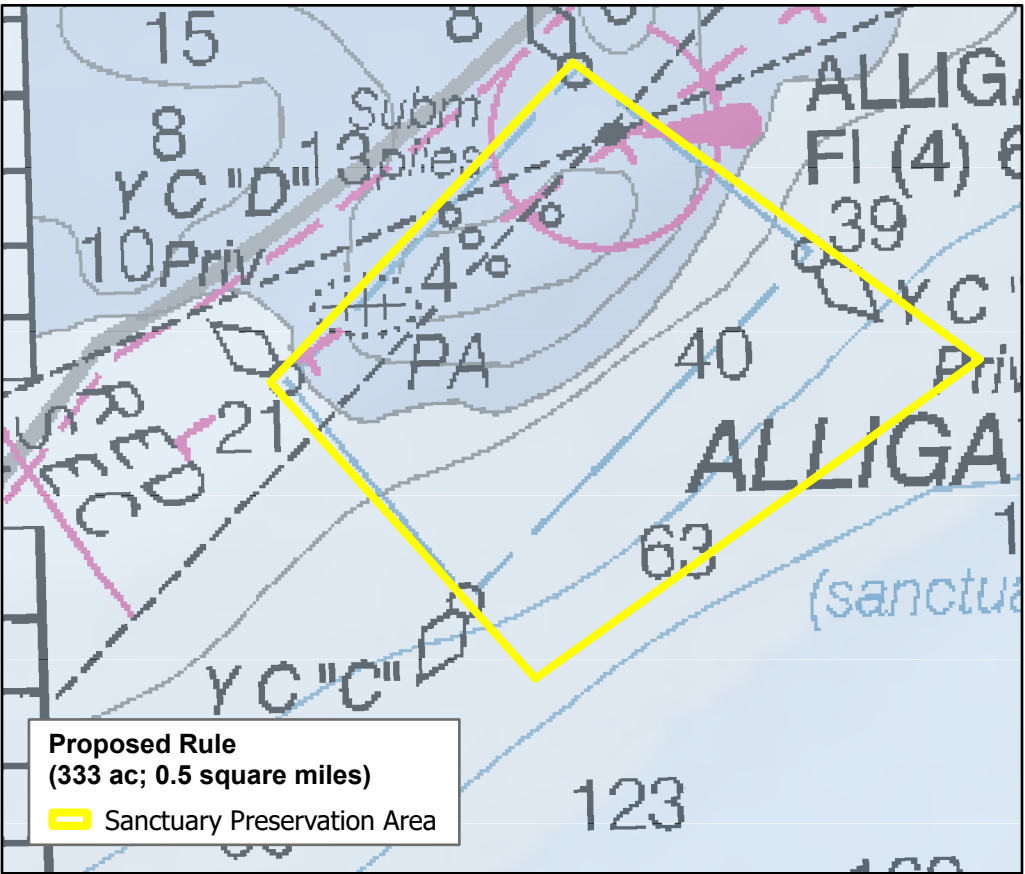
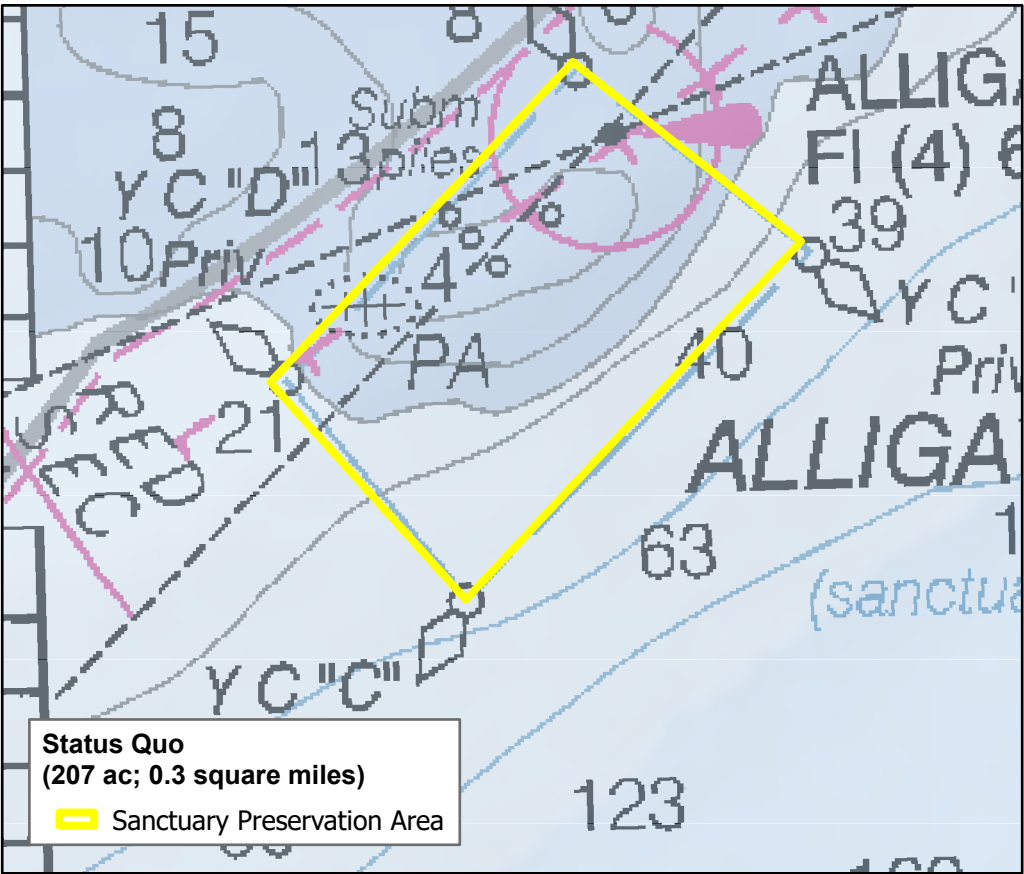
Cheeca Rocks South RA: Provide additional protections to an active and long-term restoration site with one of the largest remaining populations of ESA listed star coral (*Orbicella* spp.), still contains intact populations of species susceptible to Stony Coral Tissue Loss Disease and appears to be a site that is more resilient to bleaching and disease.

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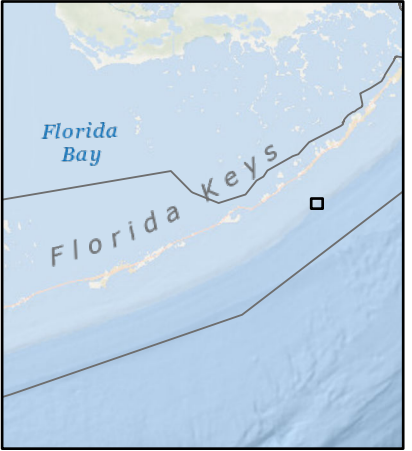
Alligator Reef Sanctuary Preservation Area

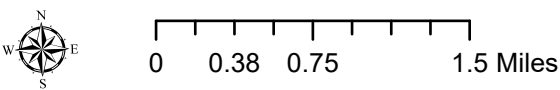
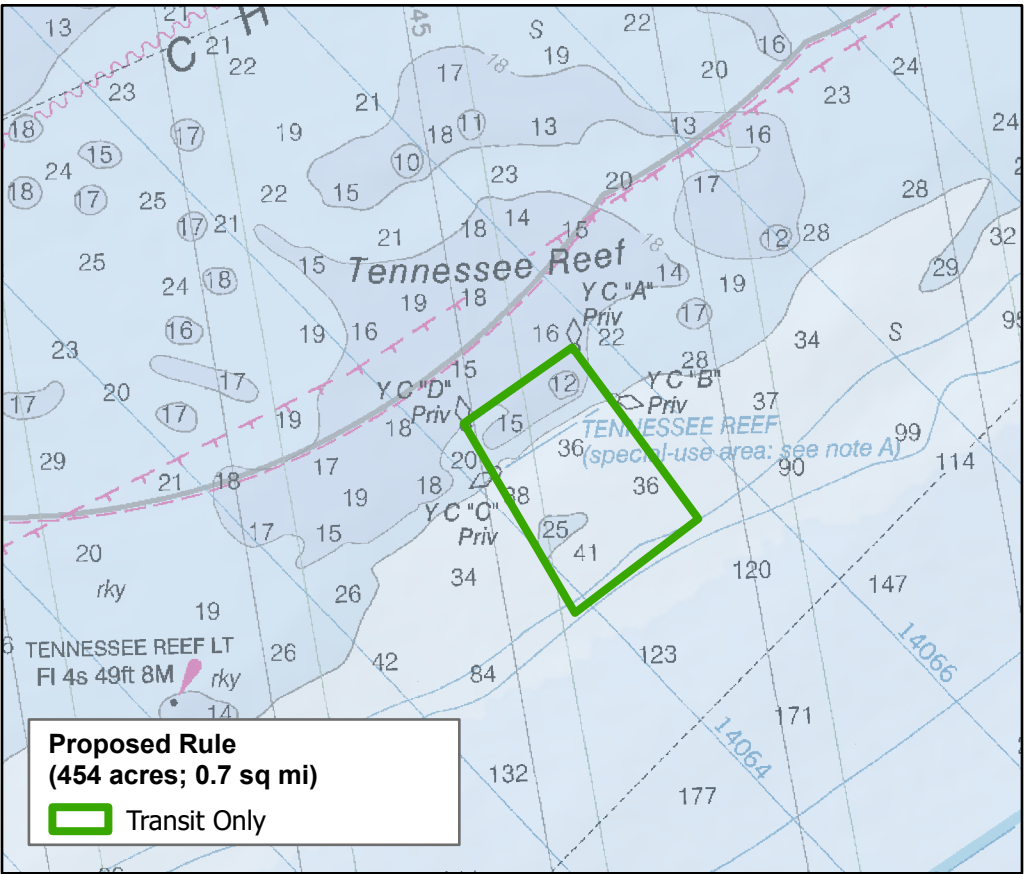
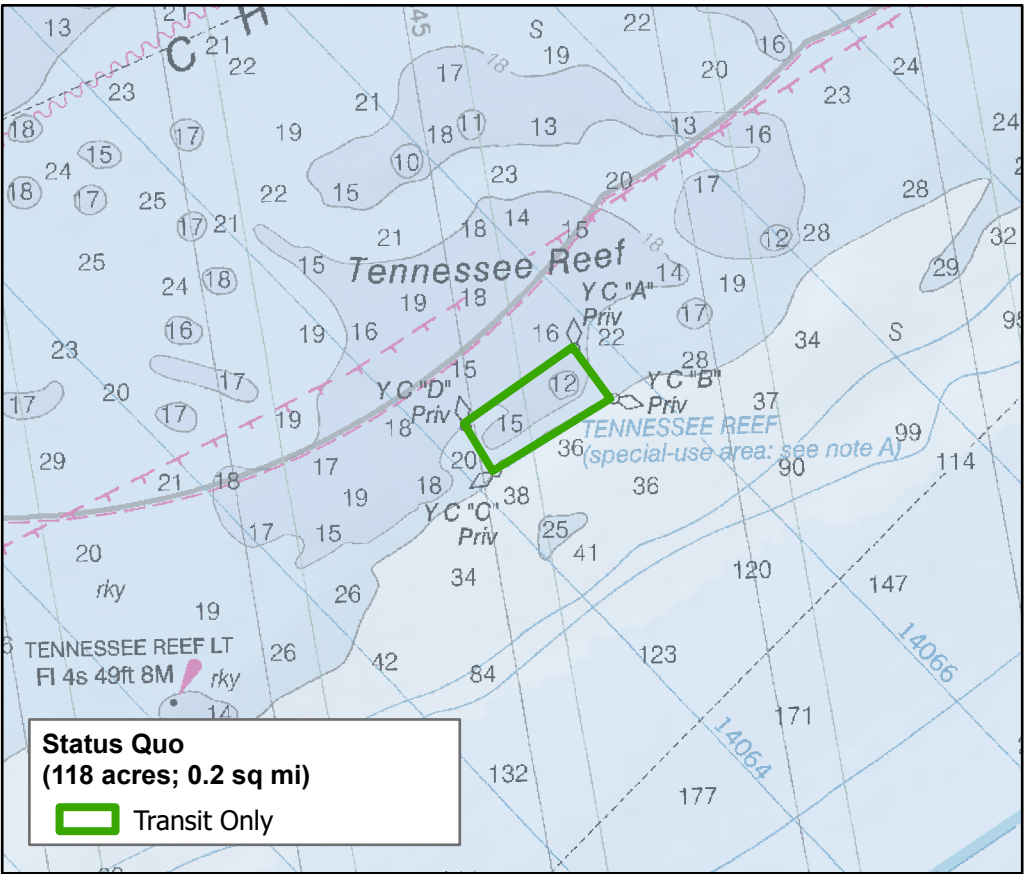
Protects a low-relief, drowned spur-and-groove bank reef system that marks a geological transition between shallow Upper and Middle Keys reefs. Formerly contained extensive thickets of ESA-listed staghorn corals and is now an important restoration site for these corals. The area also supports large queen conch aggregations. The historic Alligator Reef lighthouse is included in this SPA. This zone was originally designed to limit consumptive activities and separate users engaged in different activities.

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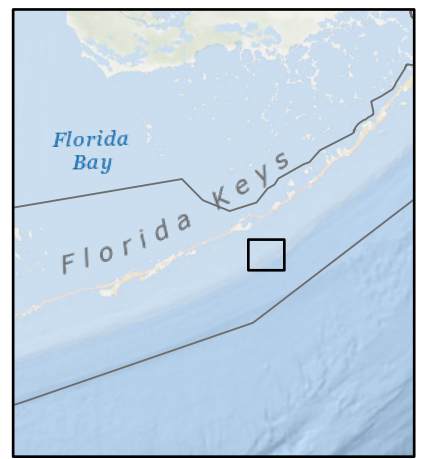
Tennessee Reef Conservation Area

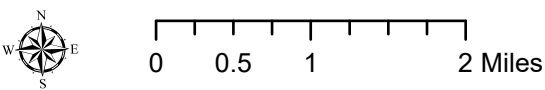
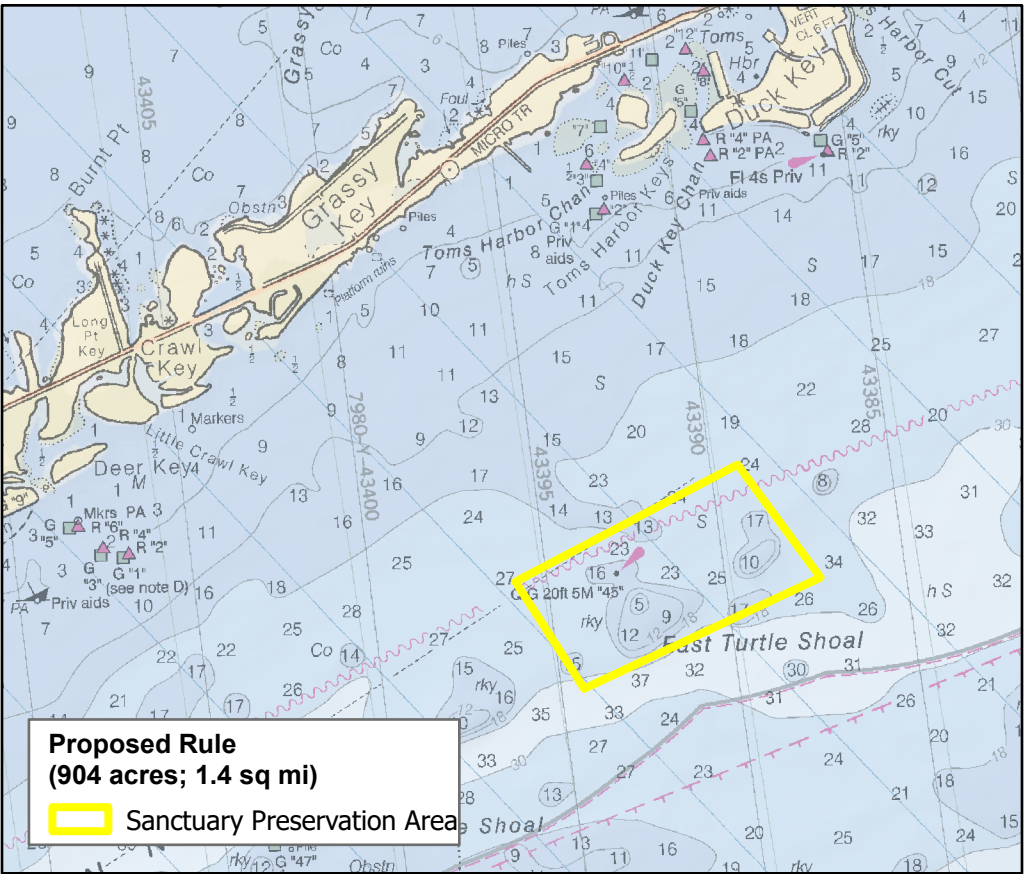
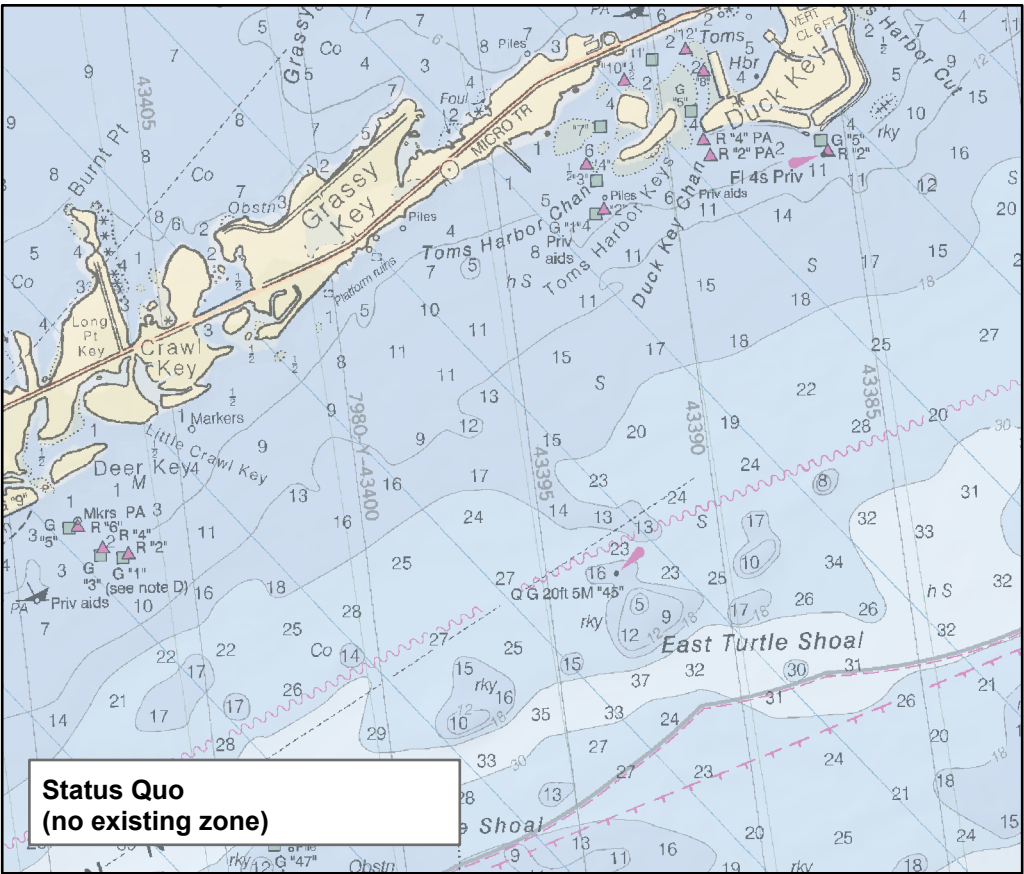
Protects a deep drowned spur-and-groove reef with unique, slow-growing deep water corals and sponges. Historically supported large assemblages of ESA-listed staghorn coral and is currently a target for coral restoration as well as an important research site to evaluate changing environmental conditions and impacts of Florida Bay water masses.

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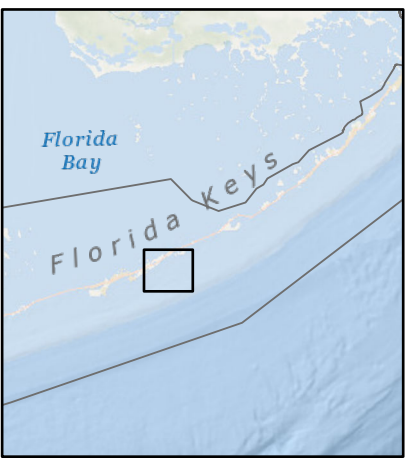
Turtle Shoal Sanctuary Preservation Area

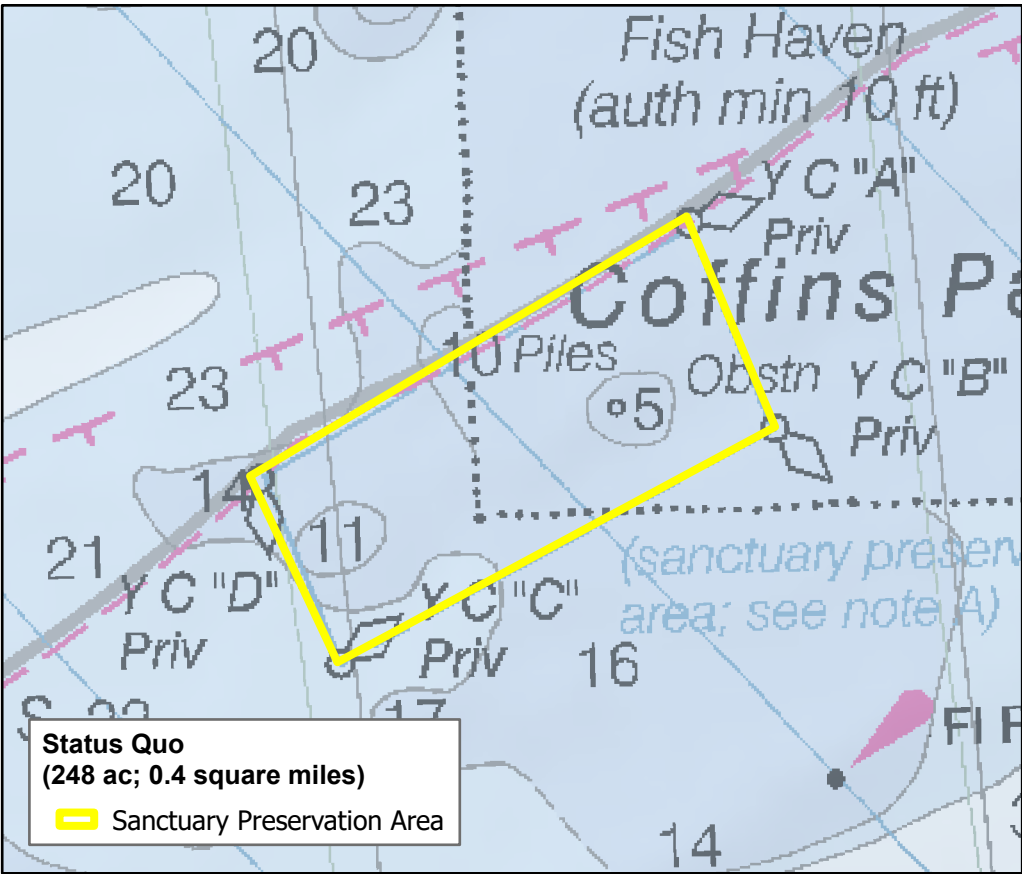
Protects an important complex of mid-channel aggregate and individual patch reefs surrounded by seagrass beds that historically supported large populations of ESA-listed staghorn and pillar corals. This area includes high stony coral cover, resilient reefs, and high fish diversity.

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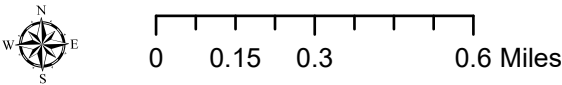
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Draft Rule is the same as status quo



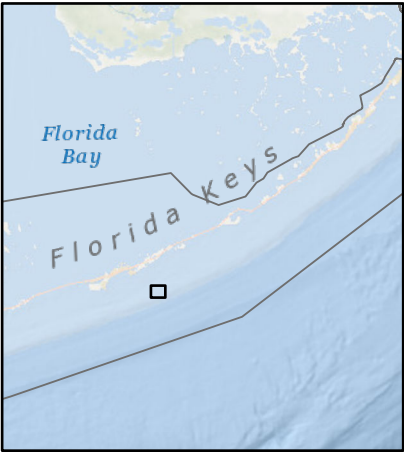
Coffins Patch Sanctuary Preservation Area

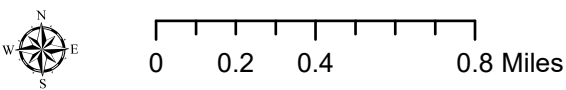
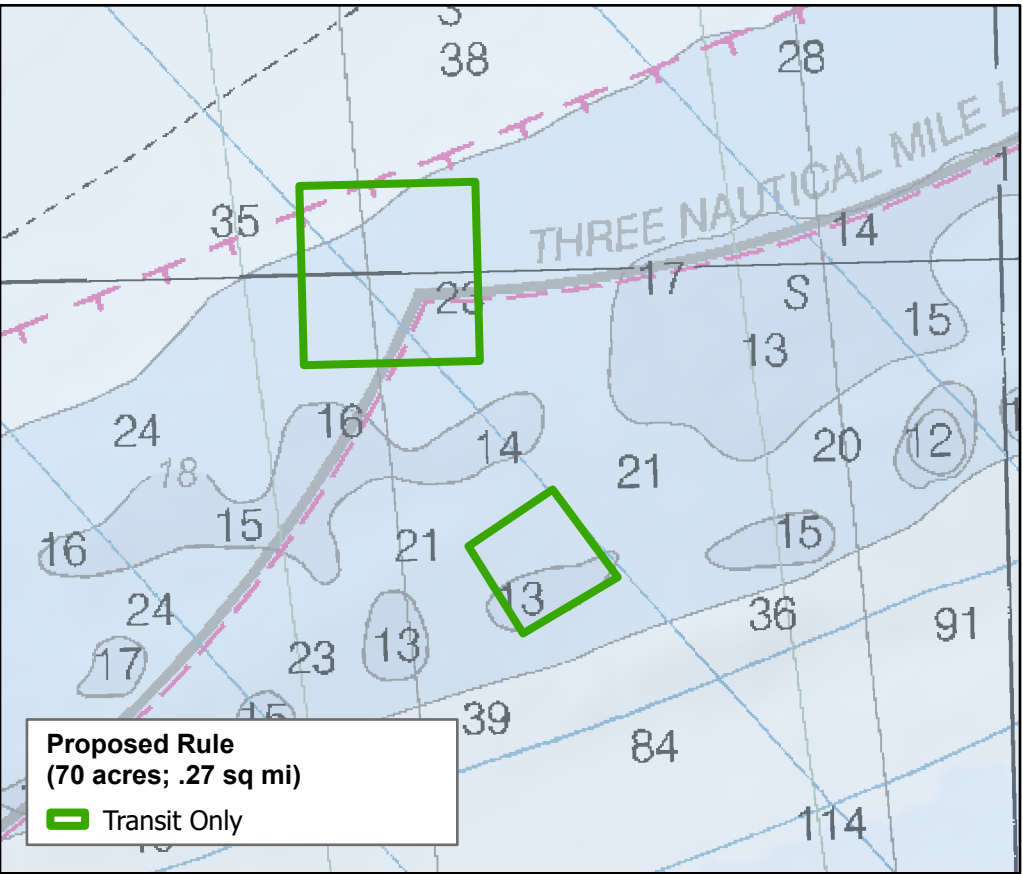
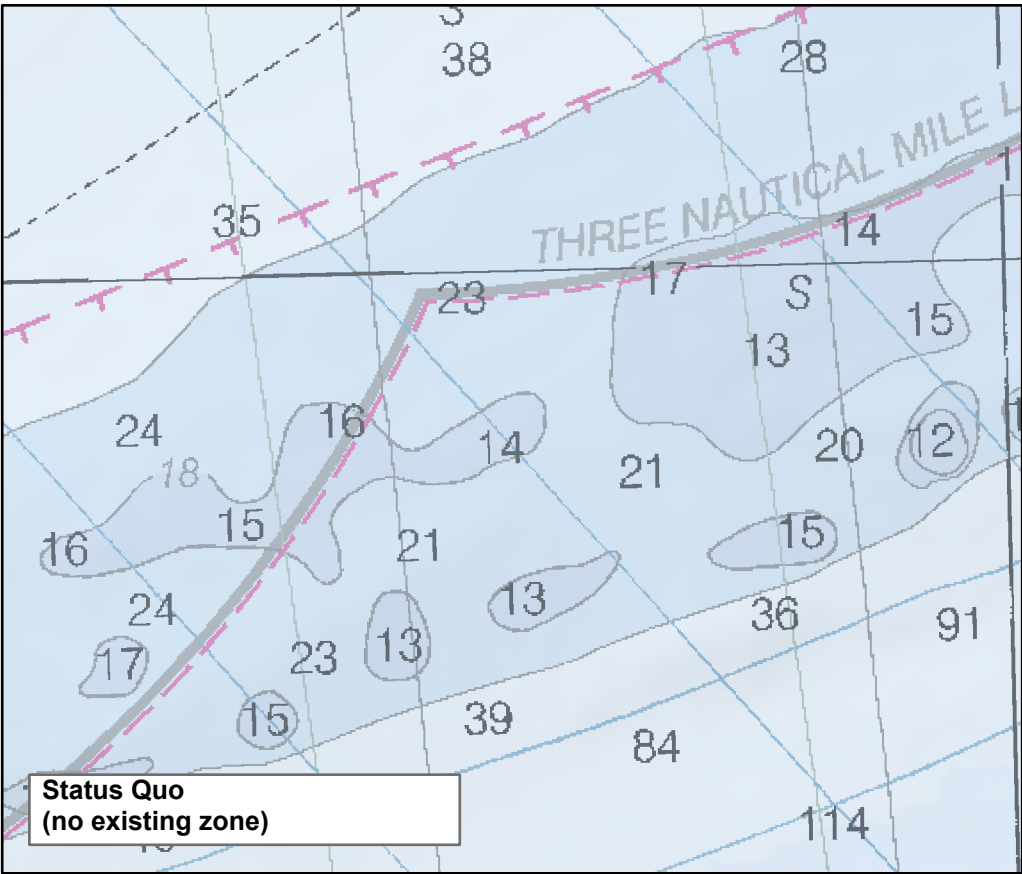
Protects a tiered aggregate reef system with limited spur-and-groove development and one of the most prominent reef wall systems in the Florida Keys with some of the largest historic populations of ESA-listed staghorn, elkhorn and pillar corals. This zone was originally designed to limit consumptive activities and separate users engaged in different activities.

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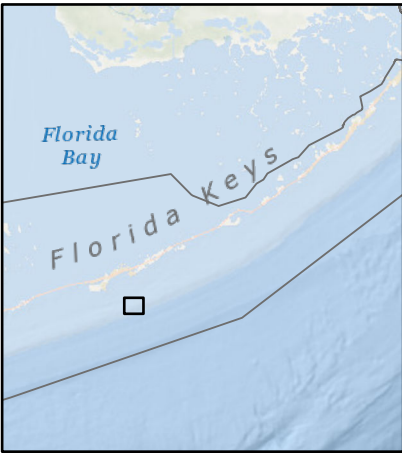




Marathon and Middle Keys Nursery Restoration Areas

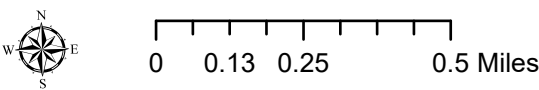
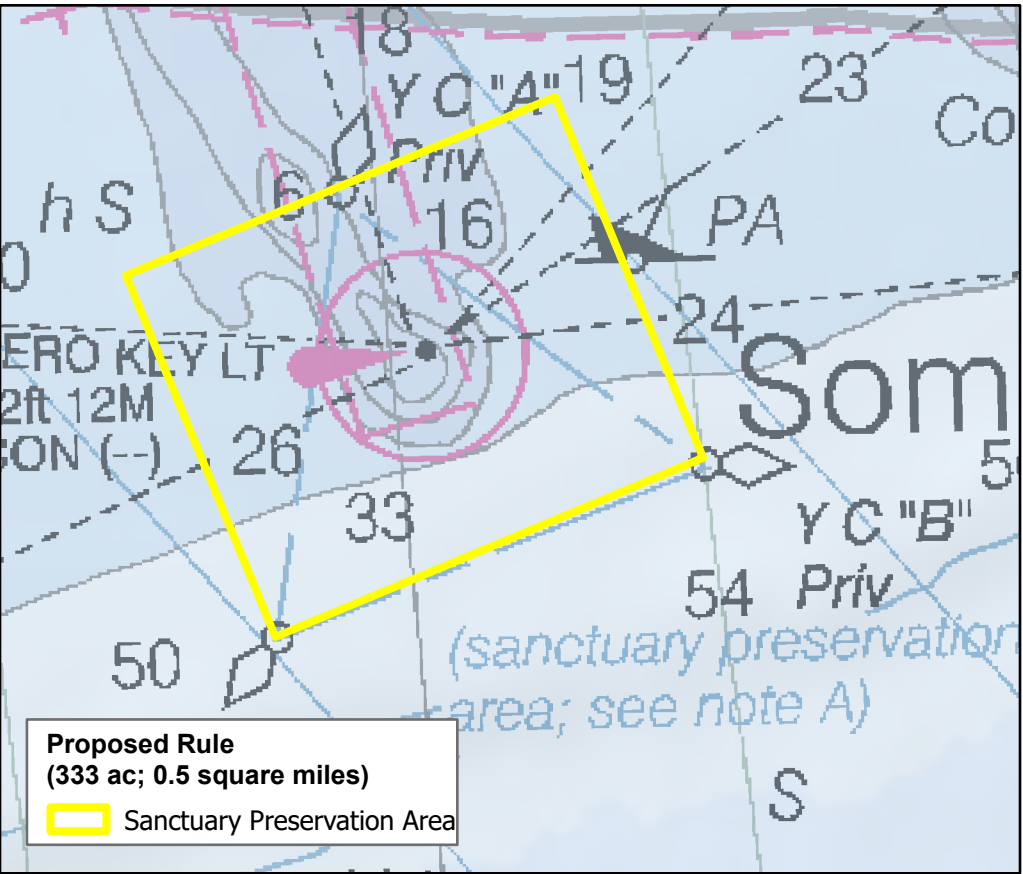
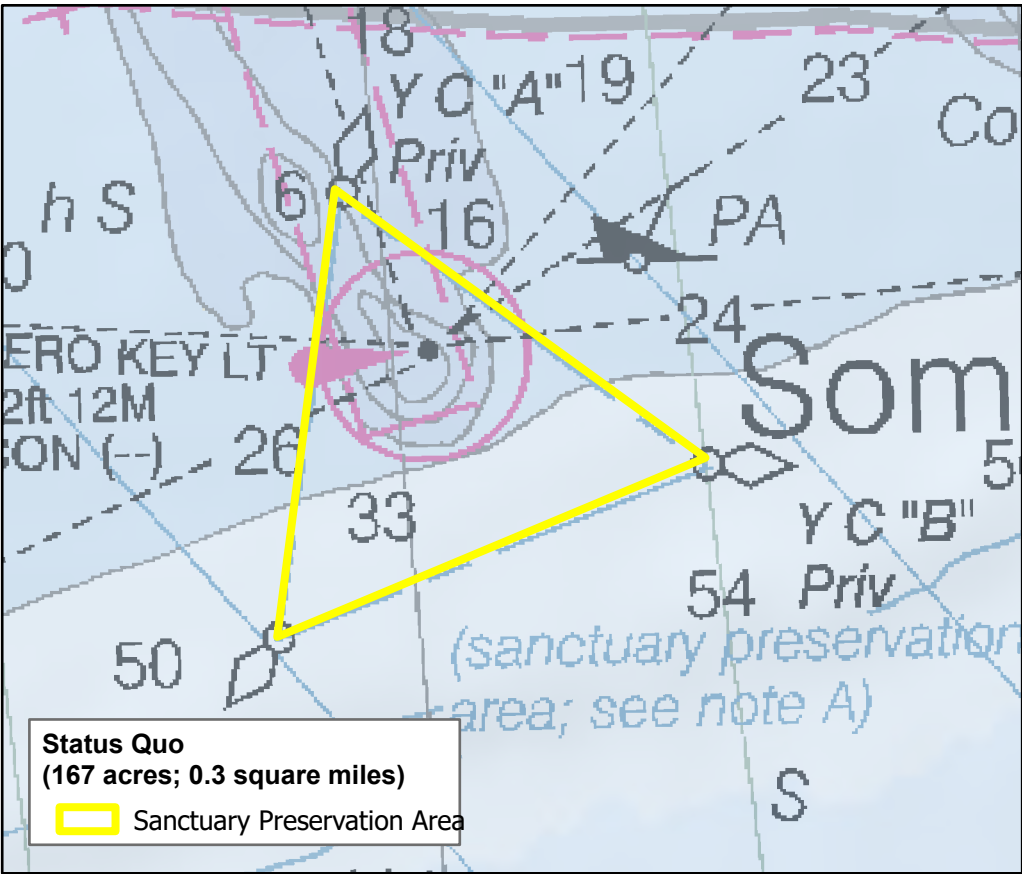
Provide additional protections to an existing, permitted coral nursery site.

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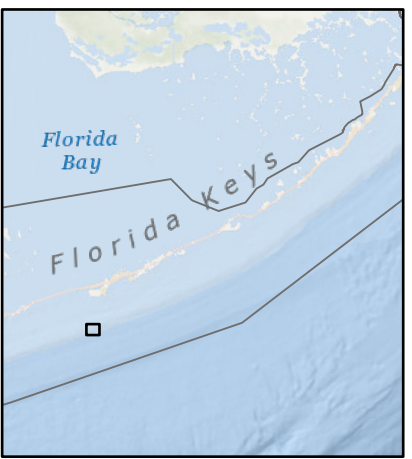
Sombrero Key Sanctuary Preservation Area

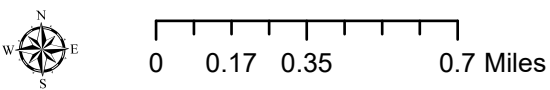
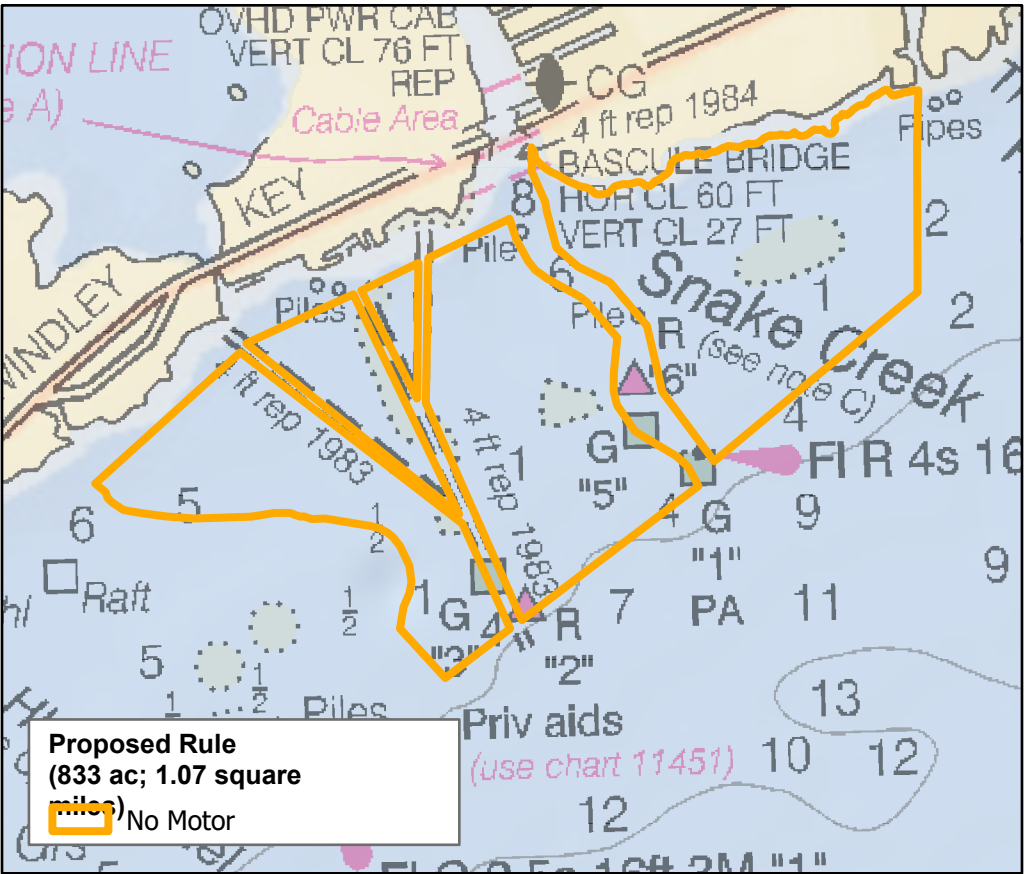
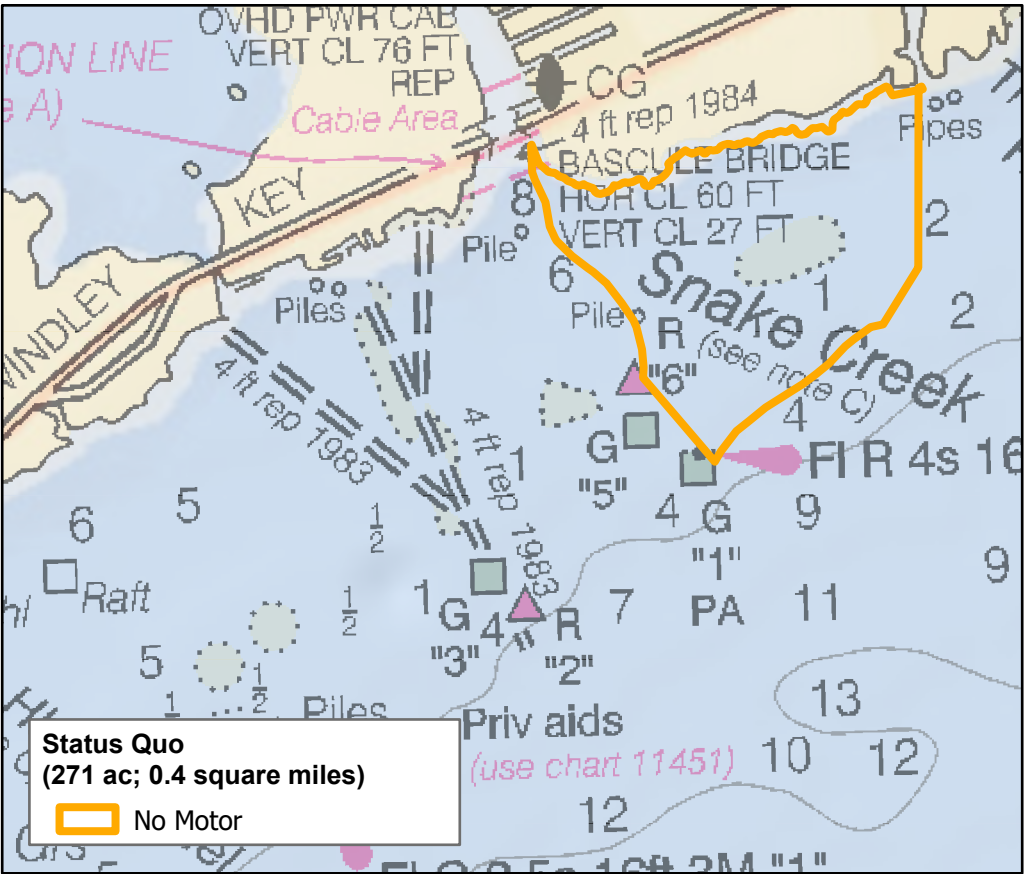
Protects the most extensive spur-and-groove and deep fore reef community within the Middle Keys with a high abundance of ESA-listed star corals and remnant elkhorn coral thickets and is also an important site for other diverse invertebrate assemblages such as brain and other boulder coral species and barrel sponges. The historic Sombrero Key lighthouse is included in this SPA. This zone was originally designed to limit consumptive activities and separate users engaged in different activities.

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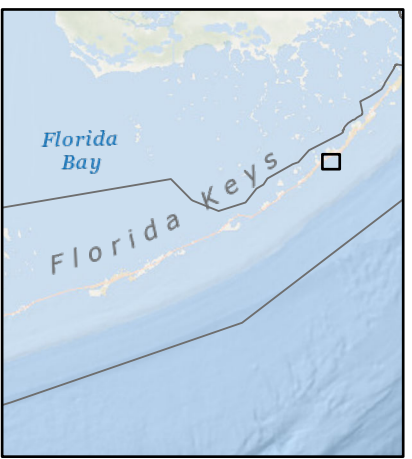
Snake Creek Wildlife Management Area

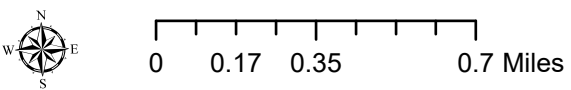
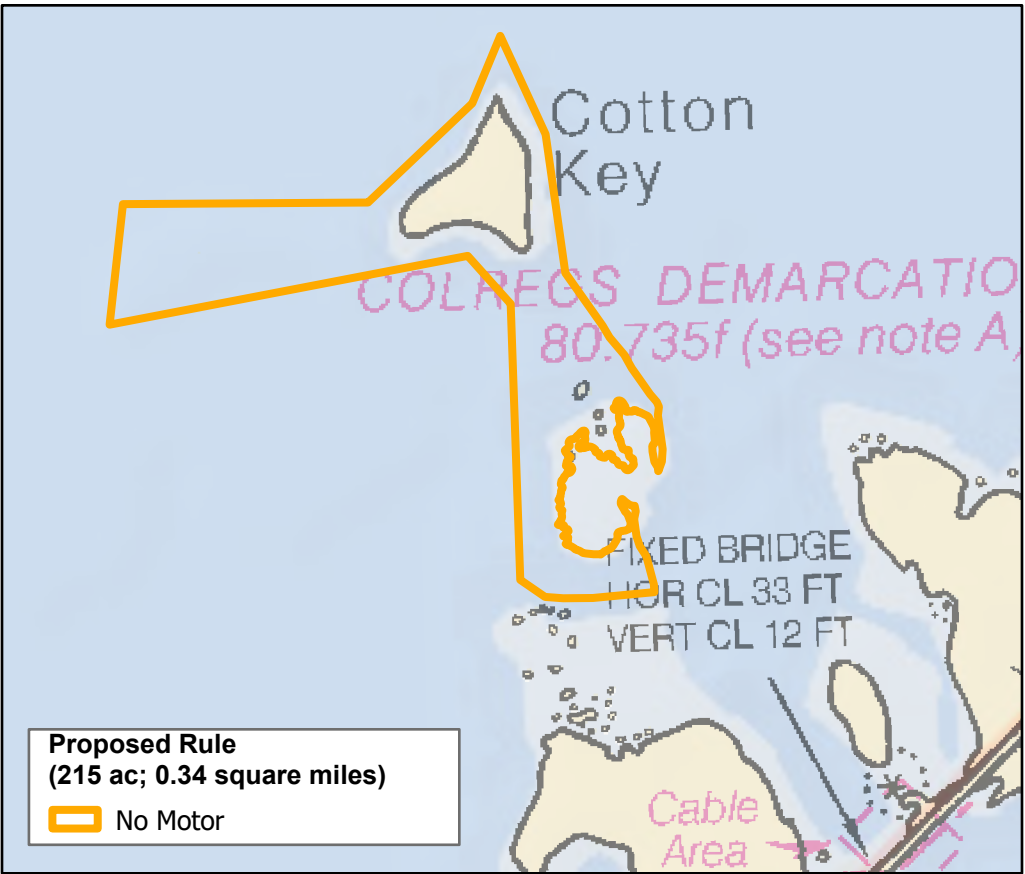
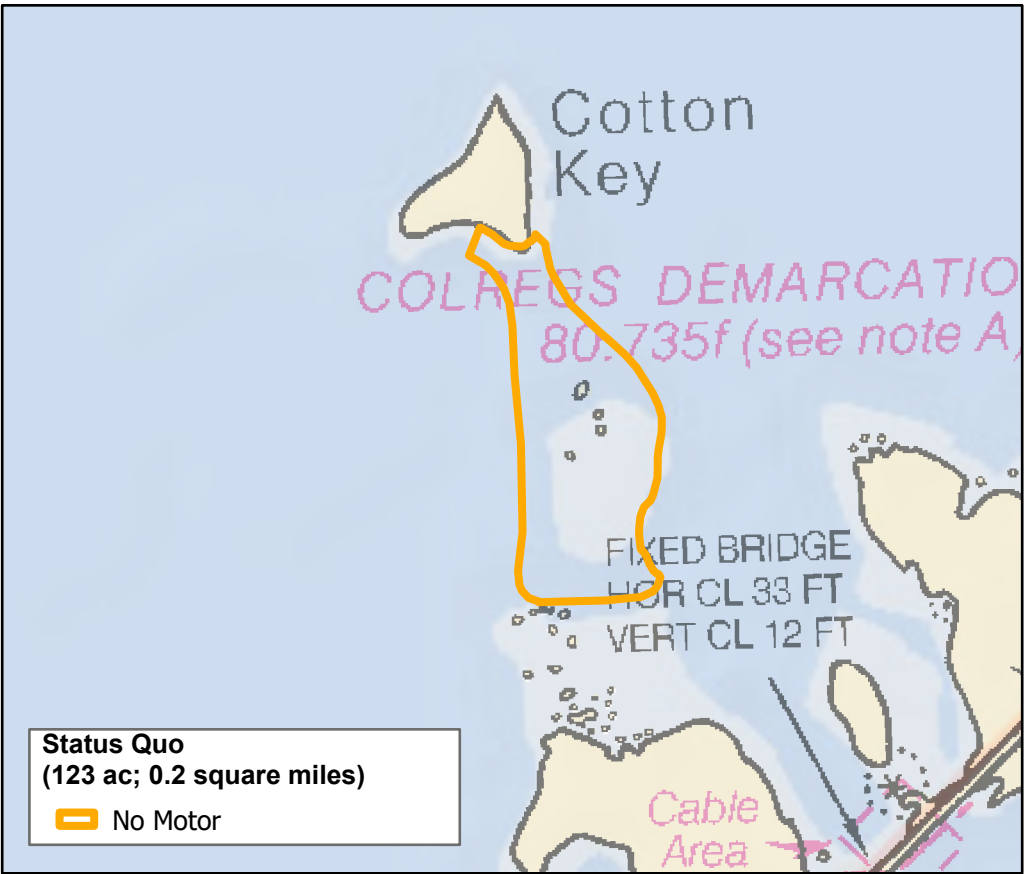
Decrease the disturbance of a variety of birds using the area for nesting, roosting, and foraging. Protect shallow water habitat used by bonefish, permit, tarpon, and other fish species. The shallow seagrass flats have been impacted by vessel groundings and exhibit light-to-severe prop scarring.

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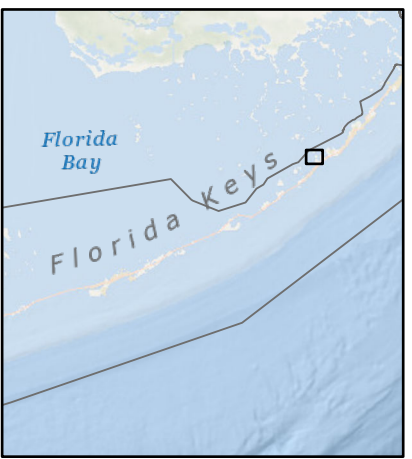




Cotton Key Wildlife Management Area

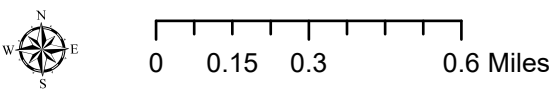
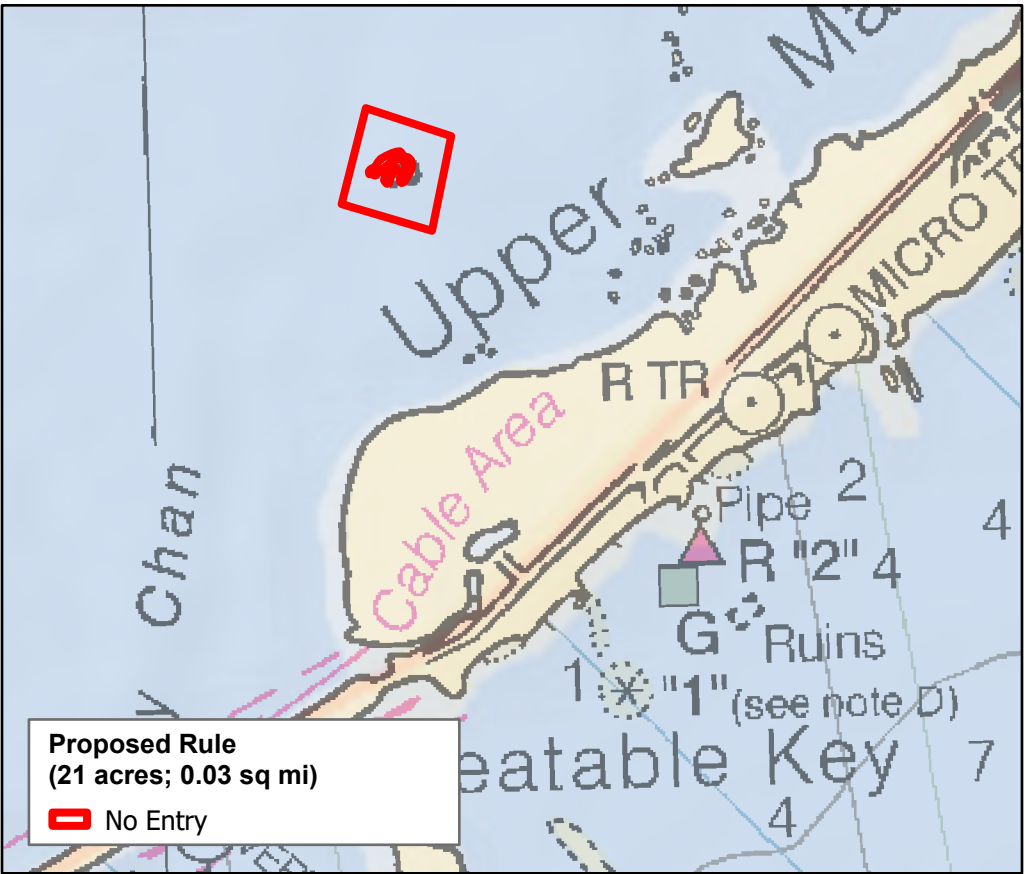
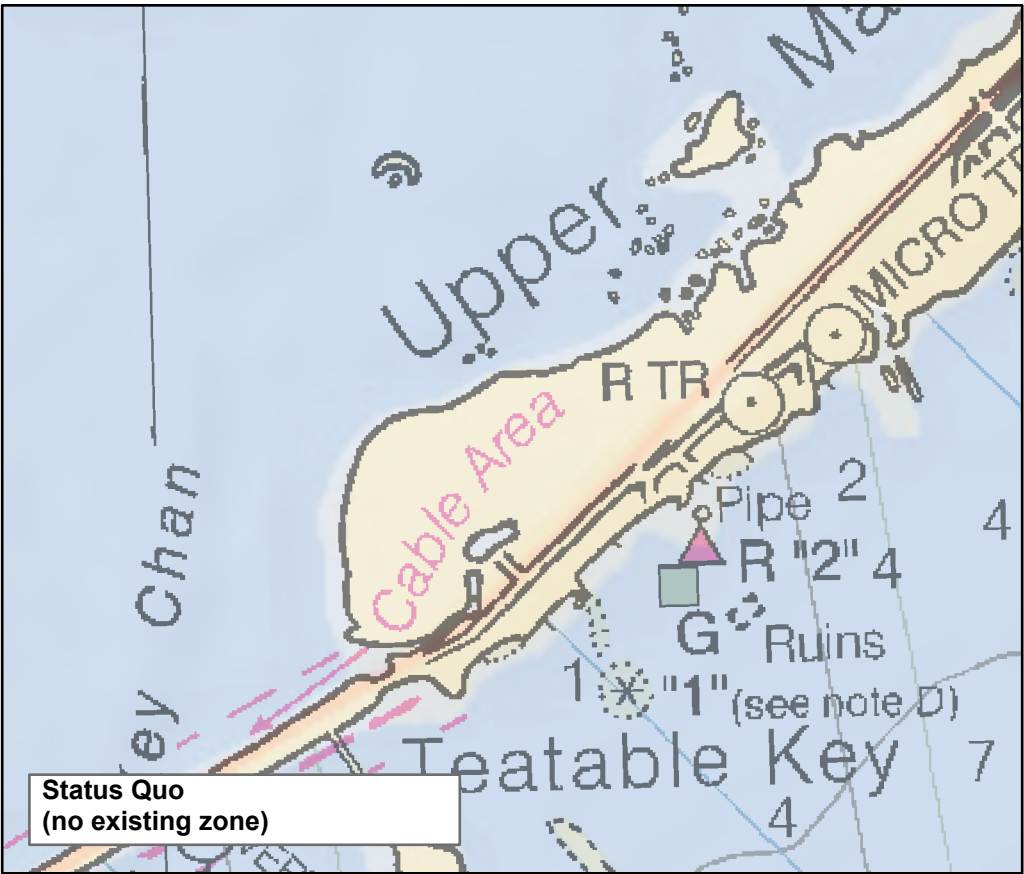
Decrease disturbance of nesting and roosting pelicans, cormorants, several heron species, magnificent frigatebirds, bonefish, and other fish species. The shallow seagrass flats have been impacted by vessel groundings and exhibit light-to-severe prop scarring.

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Ashbey-Horseshoe Key Wildlife Management Area

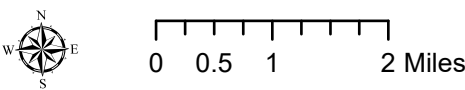
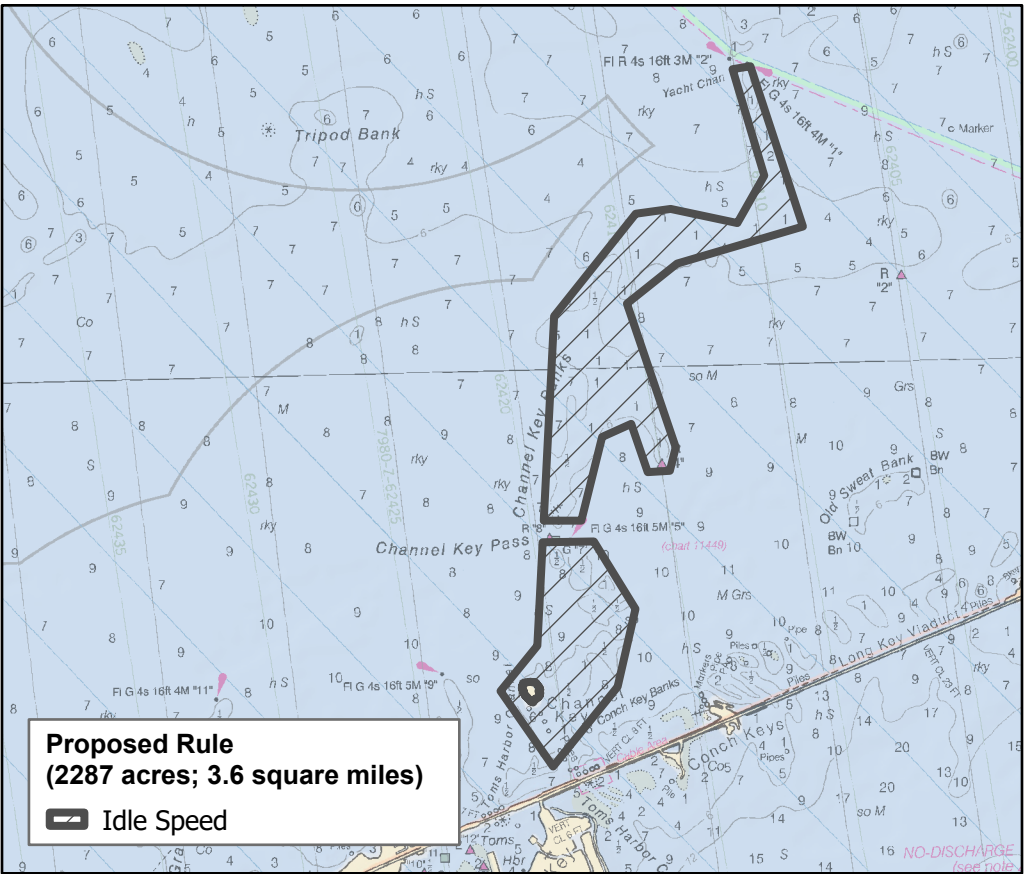
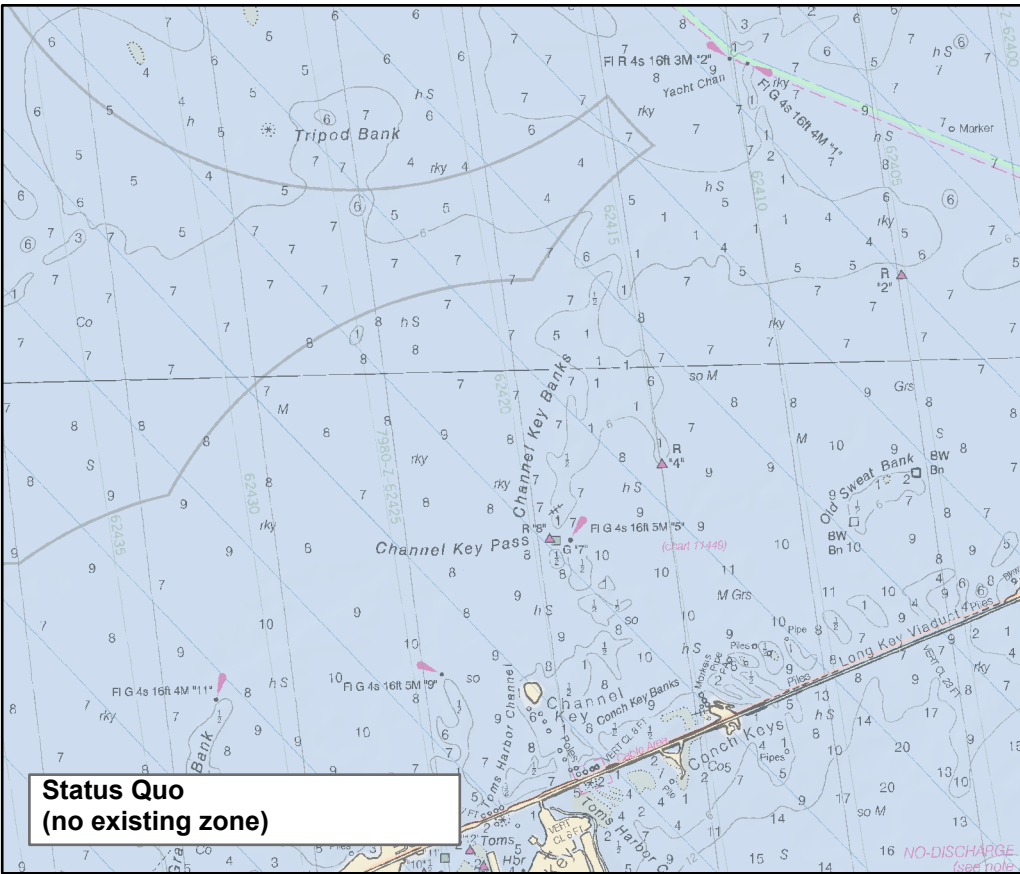
Decreases disturbance of brown pelicans and magnificent frigatebird roosting areas in Lignumvitae Key Aquatic Preserve and Lignumvitae Key Botanical State Park. This area receives high concentration of boating and fishing pressure with impacts to birds from fishing line and hooks. Shallow seagrass flats around the island exhibit light-to-severe prop scarring.

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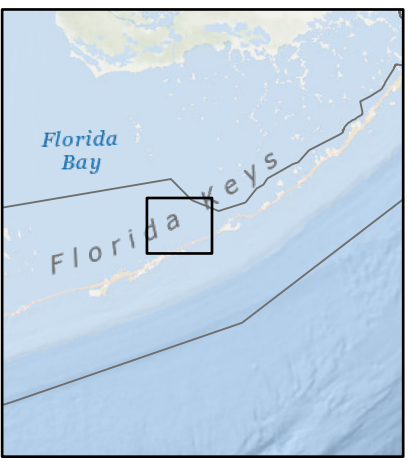
Channel Key Banks Wildlife Management Area

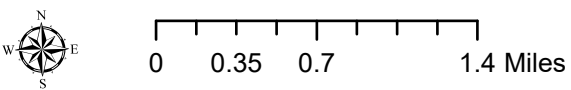
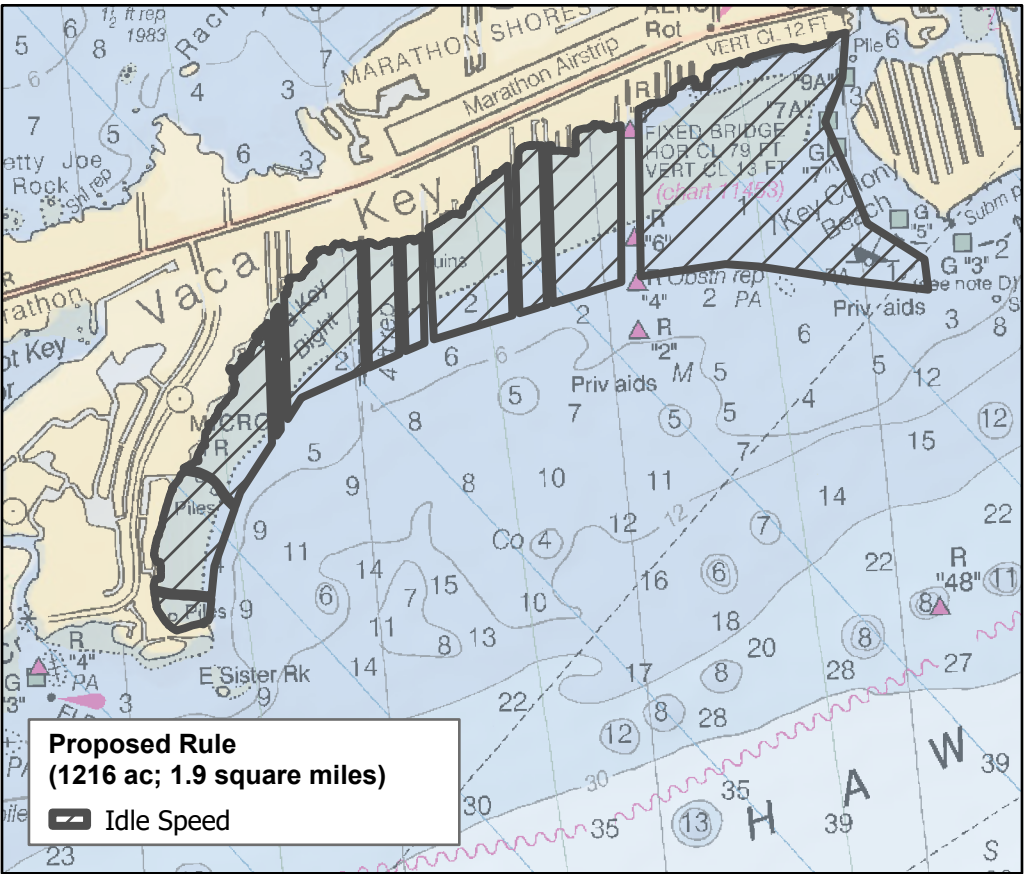
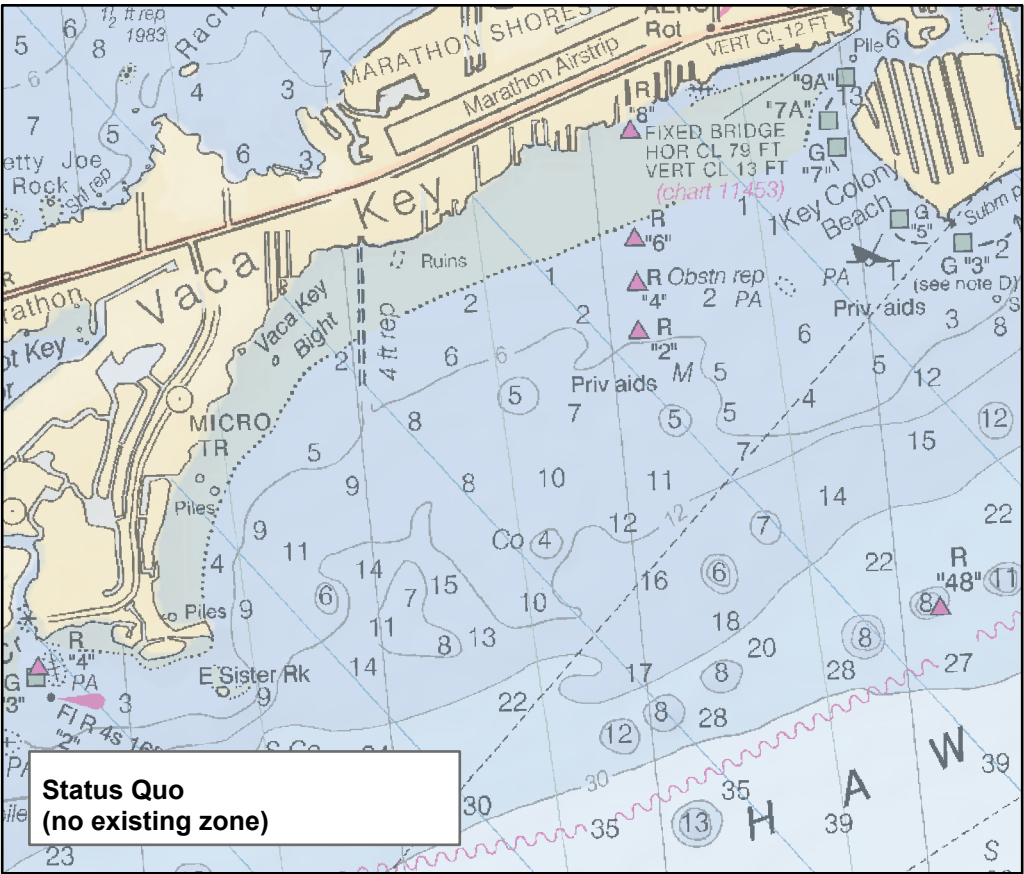
Protect seagrass and hardbottom habitat that support a diverse assemblage of corals, sponges, macroalgae, seagrass, and many juvenile fish species prior to their movement to the coral reefs. This habitat type is not currently well represented in the existing FKNMS marine zones. Decrease disturbance to these benthic habitats from vessel impacts. The banks and associated channels are difficult to locate, are susceptible to boat groundings, and the majority of the banks have light-to-severe prop scarring.

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Marathon Oceanside Shoreline Wildlife Management Area

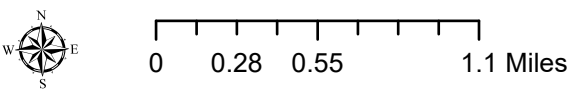
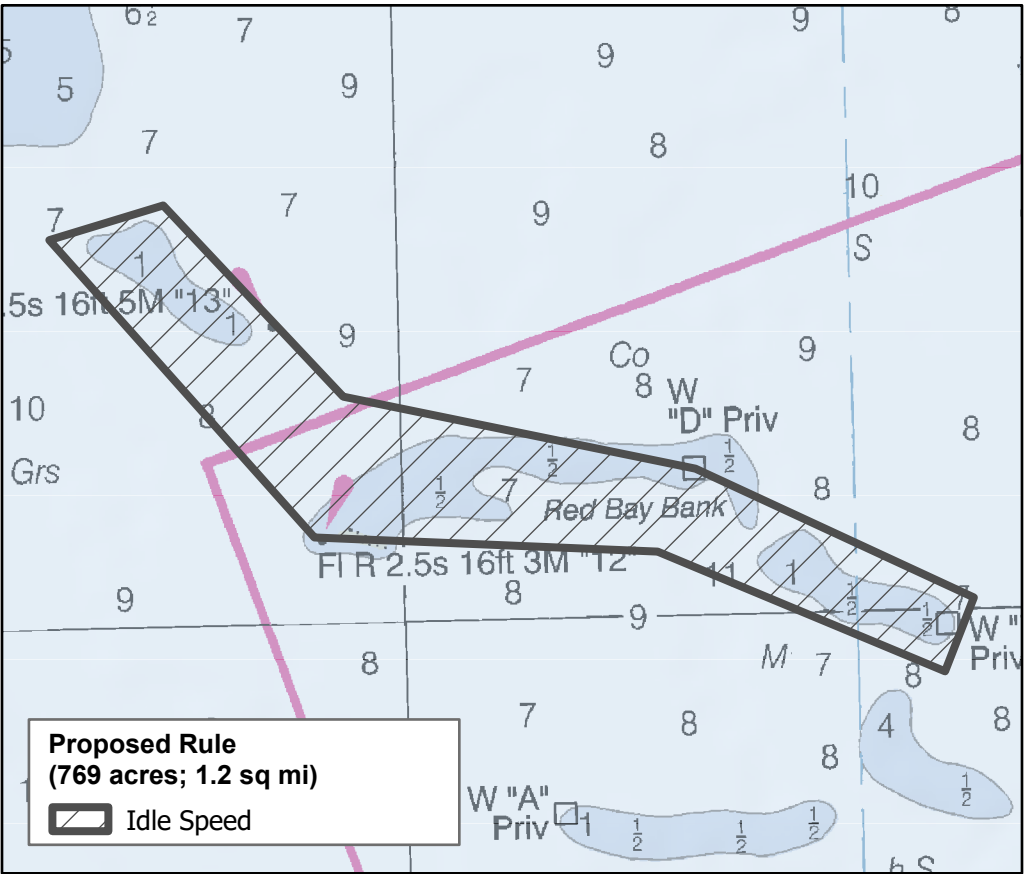
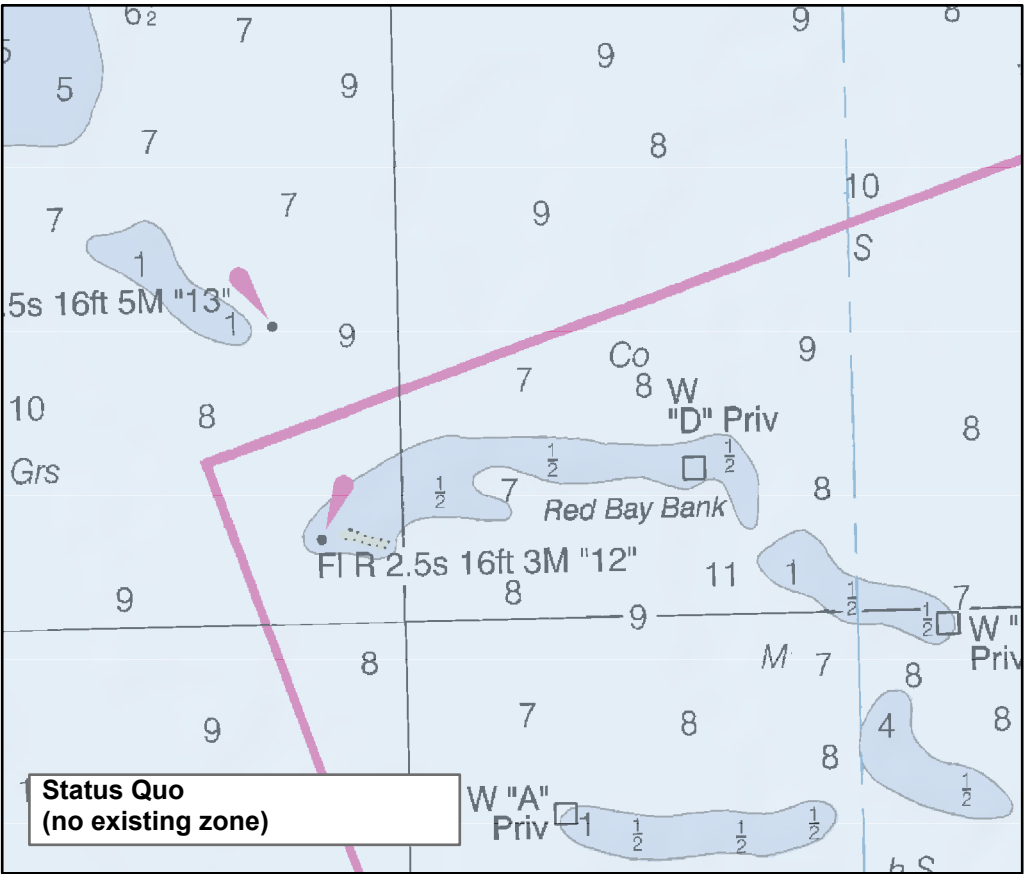
Decrease disturbance to nearshore seagrass and hardbottom habitats from vessel impacts. The area along Vaca Cut is impacted by numerous vessel groundings and has severe prop scarring. The remaining area along the Marathon shoreline has light prop scarring and areas oceanside of Boot Key have light-to-severe prop scarring. Channels maintained for normal operation.

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Red Bay Bank Wildlife Management Area

Protect seagrass and hardbottom habitat that support a diverse assemblage of corals, sponges, macroalgae, seagrass, and many juvenile fish species prior to their movement to the coral reefs. This habitat type is not currently well represented in the existing FKNMS marine zones. Decrease disturbance to these benthic habitats from vessel impacts. The banks and associated channels are difficult to locate, are susceptible to boat groundings, and the majority of the banks have light-to-severe prop scarring.

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NATIONAL MARINE
SANCTUARIES

AMERICA'S UNDERWATER TREASURES