

Lower Keys Region

Ecosystem Protection Working Group concepts presented for potential modifications to marine zones in the Lower Keys region. The below table reflects working group discussion, zone and regulation concepts, issues to note, and status of working group decision. The following are Ecosystem Protection Working Group Lower Keys Region recommendation for the Sanctuary Advisory Council.

Area	Rationale	Zone Concept	Regulation Concept	Consensus
Coupon Bight	Not clear what additional protections this zone provides.	Concept 1: Consider eliminating this managed area.		No action taken, determined outside the scope of this working group charge
Issues to Consider for Coupon Bight and associated Concepts: Analysis requested				
Looe Key	Simplify zone scheme in this area. This area includes the following existing managed areas: Looe Key Existing Management Area, Looe Key Research Only Area, Looe Key Sanctuary Preservation Area, and three Fishery Management Plan Areas Closed to Lobster Trap Gear.	No zone concept.	Concept 1: consider no anchor zone in Looe Key Existing Management Area (includes all zones within the EMA); status quo in Looe Key Sanctuary Preservation Area and Looe Key Research Only Area.	Show of hands for Concept 1: consensus; Show of Hands for Concept 2: 6 out of 14 in favor; Show of hands for Concept 3: 13 out of 14 in favor
	Marine life collection is allowed, with limited entry, in other places. This is an area where marine life collection has not been allowed for many years. There is little evidence that the closure has made a difference for the region. Consider the issue of users and commercial activities allowed in this region.		Concept 2: Consider removing ban on marine life collection in Looe Key Existing Management Area. Concept 3: Consider leaving prohibition on spearfishing in place.	
Issues to Consider for Looe Key and associated Concepts: Maintain no spearfishing regulation in the Looe Key Existing Management Area. Safety issue if allow spearfishing and diving. Consider the status quo concept to allow anchoring in the Looe Key SPA; evaluate this when the Keys-wide idea regarding no anchoring in SPAs and FMP Areas Closed to Lobster Trap Gear apply. Consider the challenge of allowing marine life collection related to commercial vs. recreational use. Note that with Concept 1: this could create issues with access to the area. Consider area as a no-take of fin-fish				
Western Sambo	Will provide an ecological swath that represents all types of ecosystems/habitats (lobster noted); will also capture the Gray Snapper fish spawning aggregation site just to the south.	Concept 1: Consider extending southern boundary to 90' depth contour and include area known as the "bar"	Concept 6: Consider closing area to all uses, transit only.	Show of hands for Concept 1 & 6: 9 of 14 in favor; Show of hands for Concept 2 & 6: 6 of 14 in favor; Show of hands for Concept 4: 5 in favor of 14; Show of hands for Concept 5: 1 in favor of 14
	allow use in near shore areas	Concept 2: Consider a shift in the northern boundary to the south on the western side just past the area known as the "sandbar"		
	Shift to the east would capture a broader range of resources including fish species, coral, and resilient reefs. This shift could also capture the existing Eastern Sambo Research Only Area. This option allows something positive for natural resources without too much economic impact. Area truly set aside that can be monitored.	Concept 3: Consider shifting this area slightly east (see New Eastern Zone below for details)		
		Concept 4: Consider making no changes to existing zone Concept 5: Eliminate Zone		

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Area	Rationale	Zone Concept	Regulation Concept	Consensus
New Eastern Zone (Concept 3 above)	Will provide an ecological swath that represents all types of ecosystems/habitats (lobster noted); to capture a broader range of resources including fish species, coral, and resilient reefs. This shift could also capture the existing Eastern Sambo Research Only Area. This option allows something positive for natural resources without too much economic impact. Consider extending a portion of this area to the deep reef. Recommend that this area be closed to all uses. Area truly set aside that can be monitored.	Concept 1: Consider establishing southern boundary at 90' depth contour or out to outer edge of are known as the "bar"	Concept 3: Consider closing area to all uses, transit only.	Concept 1 & 6: 2 in favor of 14; No show of hands for Concept 2 & 6;
	Leaves beach areas open and allows use in near shore areas	Concept 2: Consider establishing this zone so between the northwestern corner to the right of the area known as the "sandbar" and the northeastern corner to the left of "Rocky Point Beach" area		
<p>Issues to Consider for Western Sambo and associated Concepts:</p> <p>For any potential changes would have to consider socio-economic impacts; for a move to the deeper contour line will need to assess impact to King Fish fishing activity If consider opening near-shore area concern about contiguous habitat and important in-shore area used for juvenile fish. Shifting to the east would move the zone a little farther from use centers of charter and recreational fishing and this would incorporate the research only area, which would then take less area overall</p> <p>If considering closing area to all use/transit only consider: (1) shifting area to the east does not make sense due to the loss of research history, burden of moving zone for not appreciable gain in natural resource. (2) consider heavy use of existing zone by diving and snorkeling from Key West If close all access to this area, need to consider displacement to other areas. Potential support for Concept 1: expansion to 90' contour line, however would be difficult to support if no access is allowed Evaluate options to create a true ecological preserve to serve as a means of assessing affect to environment of closing area to use For the movement of Western Sambo to the east, the boundary at the shoreline should include the mangrove portions and not include the area of the public beach.</p>				
Mid-channel patch reef area in the vicinity of West Washer Woman	coral reef resilience is high, there is high coral cover and richness, and there is medium to high fish species abundance. Protect an area that provides species for the future; apply the precautionary principle for this habitat type.	Concept 1: consider creating a zone in the mid-channel patch reefs of the Lower Keys region.		Show of hands for Wonderland Area: 3 of 13 in favor; Show of hnds for East portion of West Washerwoman: 3 in favor; Show of hands for West portion of West Washerwoman: 1 in favor
<p>Issues to Consider for Mid-Channel Patch Reefs and associated Concepts:</p> <p>Request additional information and analysis from staff to better evaluate areas of mid-channel patch reefs to consider creating zones. Assess value of protecting an area that is currently thriving. Leave the area alone. If mid-channel patch reefs are protected, could serve as pre-emptive protection for potential State counter-part to lobster exclusion zones that were established in Federal waters. Establish as necessary to protect special places If area is established, consider it a no access transit only area; evaluate impact to use if area is closed.</p>				