

Considerations in Management within National Wildlife Refuges

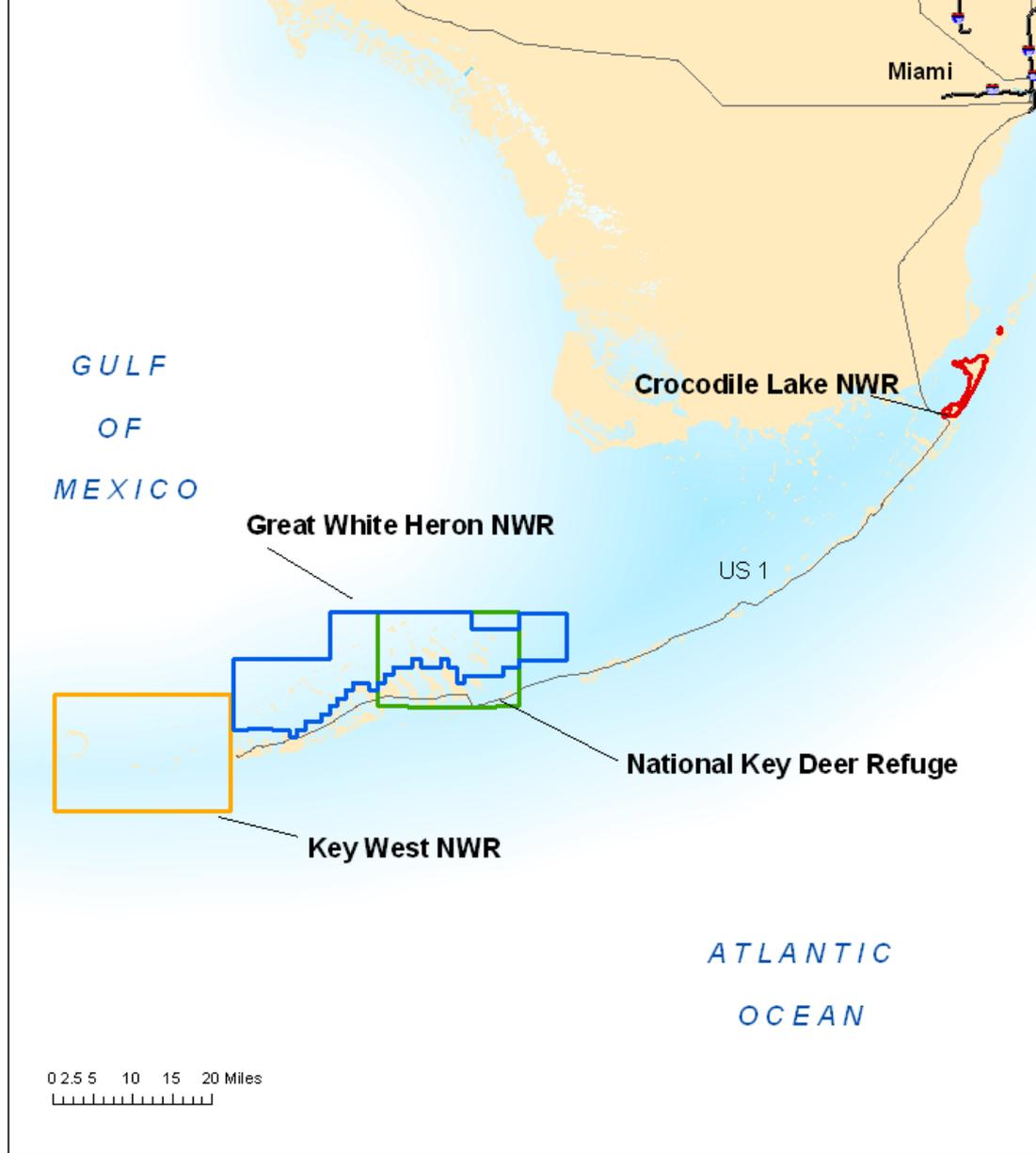
U.S. Fish and Wildlife





National Wildlife Refuges

- Lower Florida Keys - National Key Deer, Great White Heron National Wildlife Refuge (NWR), and Key West NWR - include virtually all of the offshore islands that are not linked by U.S. Highway 1.
- These refuge islands extend for about 60 miles from East Bahia Honda Key west to the Marquesas Keys.

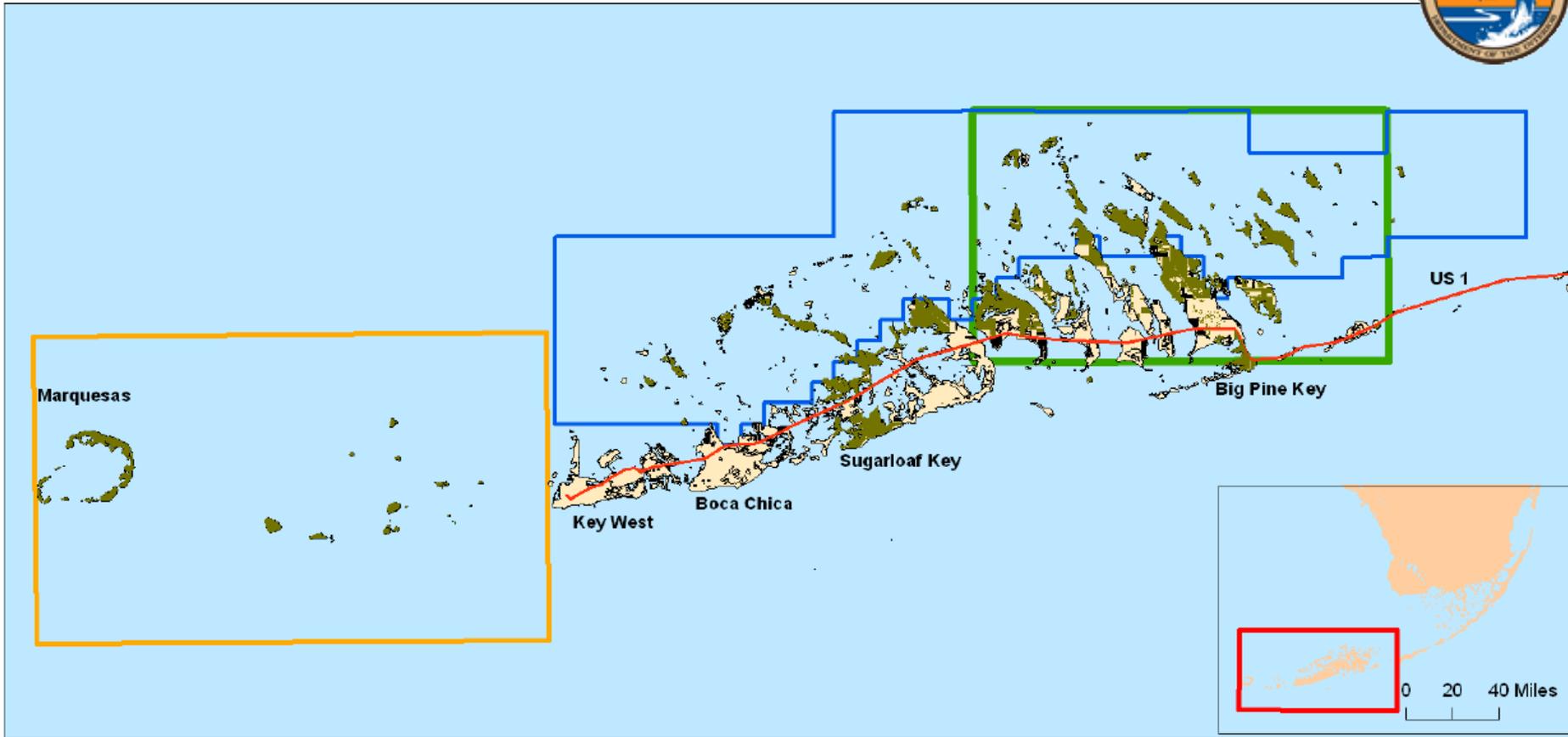


National Key Deer Refuge	Water
Great White Heron NWR	Roads
Crocodile Lake NWR	
Key West NWR	

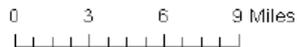
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Florida Keys National Wildlife Refuges

Source: FL Dept. Transportation, 2007; U.S. Census Bureau, 2000



- Refuge Owned Land
- Key West NWR Approved Acquisition Boundary
- Great White Heron NWR Approved Acquisition Boundary
- National Key Deer Refuge Approved Acquisition Boundary
- US Highway 1



Lower Florida Keys Refuges With Approved Acquisition Boundaries



Refuge Purposes

KEY WEST NWR

- “... a preserve and breeding ground for native birds.”
- “... particular value in carrying out the national migratory bird management program.”
- “...so as to provide protection of these areas...and to ensure...the preservation of their wilderness character....”

GREAT WHITE HERON NWR

- “... as a refuge and breeding ground for great white herons, other migratory birds and other wildlife.”
- “... for use as an inviolate sanctuary, or for any other management purpose, for migratory birds.”
- “... to conserve (A) fish or wildlife which are listed as endangered species or threatened species or (B) plants”
- “... suitable for—(1) incidental fish and wildlife-oriented recreational development, (2) the protection of natural resources, (3) the conservation of endangered species or threatened species ...”



Management Responsibilities

- The National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997 states that "compatible wildlife-dependent recreation is a legitimate and appropriate general public use of the System."
 - The Act defines wildlife-dependent recreation as a use of a refuge involving hunting, fishing, wildlife observation and photography, and environmental education and interpretation. (see <http://www.fws.gov/policy/605fw1.html>) - six wildlife-dependent recreational uses
- We are required to consider each proposed use and determine if it is appropriate or compatible at the individual refuge
- Required to review wildlife-dependent recreation programs annually



Appropriateness

- When compatible, the six wildlife-dependent recreational uses are appropriate.
- Refuge managers determine if other proposed uses are appropriate in the Refuge System ([603 FW 1](#)).
- Refuge managers must be able to show that the requested use contributes to fulfilling the refuge purpose(s), the Refuge System mission, or goals or objectives described in an approved management plan before investing additional resources for a compatibility determination.



Compatibility

- To ensure uses remain compatible, refuge managers may establish use limits and/or zones for specific activities, disperse or restrict use, or use other means to minimize or eliminate conflict between uses on refuges.
- We ensure that other recreational uses, if allowed, do not interfere with or diminish the opportunity for, or quality of, compatible wildlife-dependent recreation
- Some refuges cannot support wildlife-dependent recreation or can support only limited wildlife-dependent recreation and that we cannot accommodate every wildlife-dependent recreational use on every refuge.



Compatibility

We develop our wildlife-dependent recreation programs in consultation with State fish and wildlife agencies and stakeholder input based on the following criteria:

- **A.** Promotes safety of participants, other visitors, and facilities;
- **B.** Promotes compliance with applicable laws and regulations and responsible behavior;
- **C.** Minimizes or eliminates conflict with fish and wildlife population or habitat goals or objectives in an approved plan;
- **D.** Minimizes or eliminates conflicts with other compatible wildlife-dependent recreation;
- **E.** Minimizes conflicts with neighboring landowners;
- **F.** Promotes accessibility and availability to a broad spectrum of the American people;
- **G.** Promotes resource stewardship and conservation;
- **H.** Promotes public understanding and increases public appreciation of America's natural resources and our role in managing and conserving these resources;
- **I.** Provides reliable/reasonable opportunities to experience wildlife;
- **J.** Uses facilities that are accessible to people and blend into the natural setting; and
- **K.** Uses visitor satisfaction to help define and evaluate programs.

Shallow Water Workgroup Objectives



- Evaluate existing Wildlife Management Areas for effectiveness in protecting wildlife and their habitats under current as well as emerging public uses and environmental conditions; recommend status quo, modification, and/or new areas.
- Develop recommendations considering existing regulations and zoning – mainly use of vessel restrictions on access, anchoring, speed, and channel marking – to further protect seagrass and critical shallow water habitats in FKNMS.
- Address concentrated uses that diminish and destroy seagrass and shallow water habitats.
- Identify where high impact activities known to occur should be allowed and encouraged for public and private uses.
- Identify seagrass and shallow water habitat areas for exclusion to allow for research control areas.
- Evaluate mangrove habitat protection for bird nesting.
- Reduce damage to natural resources from improper vessel salvage methods.

Shallow Water Workgroup Recommendations



- Encourage the National Wildlife Refuge to take a proactive approach in managing human activity that could negatively impact near-shore and shallow water resources of concern
 - Allow for effective and adequate resource protection:
 - Temporal zoning, buffer zones, specific buoys for zone restrictions that can move for specific resource protection goals
 - Use buffer zones- both temporal and permanent for wildlife protection
 - Proactive in addressing shifting and new high use and high impact activities:
 - Party zones, new islands/ sandbars
 - Consider a balance of areas restricted or closed for certain high use/ high impact activities

Protection of Wildlife Marking System



How FWS Authorities Might Apply

- Consider creation of “intelligent” markers
 - Base markers for closures of areas on active resource concerns (can be temporal and/or spatial)
 - Use same markers and list in the rule the meaning of the marker (e.g., red buoy indicates area closed along a 300 ft buffer around an island).
 - Exact buffer distances will be derived from literature and study data. May have to be conservative because type of use may impact distances (e.g., greater sensitivity to say paddle boards may require added distances)
 - Keep it simple and consistent



Commercial Use

- Wildlife-dependent human activities on wilderness islands – Need to meet Compatibility and Appropriateness standards
- Permit for activities, which occur within a certain distance around islands
- The National Wildlife Refuge System has three different Special Use Permit (SUP) Application forms to enable the public to engage in activities on a national wildlife refuge.



Commercial Use Permits

- *National Wildlife Refuge System Commercial Activities Special Use Application* (FWS Form 3-1383-C) <http://www.fws.gov/forms/3-1383-C.pdf>
 - Commercial activities such as guiding hunters, anglers or other outdoor users
 - Commercial filming (audio, video, and photographic products of a monetary value)



Commercial Use Permits

How FWS Authorities Might Apply

- Make permit system simple and accessible and interchangeable with Marine Sanctuary and Refuge (“one stop shopping”)
- Establish Best Management Practices to ensure protection of fish and wildlife species and have commercial activity and resources co-exist
- Allows for better understanding of what is occurring and how that works in the environment
- Need to address compatibility of use (a requirement of USFWS)

Ecosystem Workgroup Objectives



- Review and evaluate existing reserves designated for protection of coral reef ecosystems.
- Review current exceptions to regulations in Sanctuary Preservation Areas and Ecological Reserves.
- Review and evaluate Sanctuary Preservation Areas reduction of conflicting uses.
- Recommend new or modified ecological reserves to ensure protection of a diversity of resources:
 - Spawning aggregations
 - Full suite of marine flora and fauna (i.e., seabird, marine mammal, turtles, seagrass, soft corals, hard corals)
- Consider temporal zoning to address seasonal impacts associated with intense uses or seasonal ecological activities (i.e., nesting, breeding, spawning).
- Ensure the FKNMS zoning scheme promotes sustainable use of the sanctuary resources and protects areas that represent diverse habitats as well as areas important for maintaining natural resources and ecosystem functions.



Marquesas - How FWS Authorities Might Apply

- Consider designating the Marquesas Keys a Research Natural Area (different parameters than Dry Tortugas).
- Work cooperatively with the State of Florida to prohibit nontraditional commercial uses (i.e., commercial tours not related to fishing within 250 meters of this island chain).
- Would not effect use of area for safe harbor.
- Restrict night access (lighting)

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