

Florida Keys Ecosystem

Climate Change Lands

Monroe County

<i>Year Added to Priority List</i>	1992
<i>Project Acres</i>	13,582
<i>Acquired Acres</i>	8,188
<i>Cost of Acquired Acres</i>	\$95,142,002
<i>Remaining Project Acres</i>	5,394
<i>2023 Assessed Value of Remaining Acres</i>	\$442,770,907

Purpose for State Acquisition

The Florida Keys Ecosystem project will protect all the significant unprotected hardwood hammocks left in the Keys and many rare plants and animals, including the Lower Keys marsh rabbit and Key deer. The unique hardwood hammocks of the Florida Keys and forests of West Indian plants, which provide habitat for several extremely rare animals, are being lost to the rapid development of these islands. The project will also help protect the Outstanding Florida Waters of the Keys, recreational and commercial fisheries, reefs around the islands, and give residents and visitors more natural areas for resource-based outdoor recreation.

General Description

The project includes most of the remaining unprotected rockland hammocks (tropical hardwood hammocks) in the Florida Keys from South Key Largo to Sugarloaf Key. The area is critically important to many rare plants and animals; it consists of 17 sites in the Upper and Middle Keys encompassing the remaining fragments of unprotected tropical hardwood hammock greater than 12.5 acres. The project includes habitat for migratory birds and virtually all remaining Lower Keys marsh rabbits, Key deer and the state-threatened white-crowned pigeon. In all, it provides habitat for at least 34 species of rare vascular plants and 34 rare animals. Many archaeological and historical sites are recorded in the area. All the sites within the project are threatened by incompatible development.



FNAI Element Occurrence Summary

<u>FNAI Elements</u>	<u>Score</u>
<i>semaphore pricklypear</i>	G1/S1
<i>silky bluestem</i>	G1Q/S1
Key deer	G5T1/S1
Lower Keys marsh rabbit	G5T1/S1
Loggerhead sea turtle	G3/S3
<i>Cape Sable thoroughwort</i>	G1/S1
<i>Garber's spurge</i>	G1/S1
<i>tree cactus</i>	G1/S1
Key silverside	G1Q/S1
<i>broom sandmat</i>	G1/S1
<i>Cuban snake-bark</i>	G2G3T1/S1
Key ringneck snake	G5T1/S1

Public Use

The tracts will become botanical sites, parks, and wildlife and environmental areas. Some areas will offer camping, swimming, hiking and boating, while others will be suitable only for nature appreciation.

Acquisition Planning

1983

In 1983, The Nature Conservancy established Lamar Louise Curry Preserve (2.42 acres) on Key Largo, all of which would be inside the project boundary when the project was started.

1985

On December 24, 1985, the Florida Audubon Society acquired 34.5 acres to create Saddlebunch Key Sanctuary, all of which would be inside the project boundary when the project was started.

1989

In 1989, The Nature Conservancy established John J. Pescatello Torchwood Hammock Preserve (243 acres) on Little Torch Key, all of which would be inside the project boundary when the project was started.

1993

On September 20, 1993, the Land Acquisition Advisory Council added 40 acres to the project boundary.

1994

On March 1, 1994, The Nature Conservancy acquired Grassy Key Hammocks (0.5 acres) on Grassy Key, inside the project boundary.

On November 18, 1994, the Land Acquisition Advisory Council added 29 acres to the project boundary.

1995

On December 7, 1995, the Land Acquisition Advisory Council approved combining the Hammocks of the Lower Keys and Tropical Flyways projects into a single project named Florida Keys Ecosystem. The combined project consisted of approximately 4,438 acres; 465 acres were acquired for \$24,324,425 and 3,973 remained with a taxable value of \$9,619,059. Hammocks of the Lower Keys: No phasing is recommended; however, some sites are extremely vulnerable to imminent development. These sites





include Cudjoe Key (Kephart tract); Big Torch Key (Outward Bound/Stelmok tract – acquired); Summerland Key (area around the pond); and Little Torch Key (Torch Key Estates Subdivision – acquired).

Estimated acreage for each site is: Cudjoe Key (38 acres); Big Torch Key (450 acres); Little Torch Key (217 acres); Summerland Key (20 acres); Sugarloaf Key (2,711 acres); Little Knockemdown Key (300 acres); Middle Torch Key (811 acres); Ramrod Key (615 acres); and Wahoo Key (26 acres – acquired).

Tropical Flyways: No phasing is recommended; all 17 sites are being acquired with the Monroe County Land Authority as intermediary. The 17 sites are: North Creek (two large ownerships, remainder subdivided – 16 acres acquired by Monroe County Land Authority); Largo Sound (one major ownership – 68 acres acquired by Monroe County Land Authority); Pennekamp North (one major ownership – acquired by Monroe County Land Authority); Newport (one major ownership, remainder subdivided); Point Charles (one major ownership); Key Largo Narrows (one major ownership – acquired by Monroe County Land Authority); Dove Creek (several large ownerships, remainder subdivided – 187 acres acquired by Monroe County Land Authority); Tavernier Creek (one major ownership); Lake San Pedro (several large ownerships); Snake Creek (one major ownership – acquired by Monroe County Land Authority); Green Turtle (one major ownership); Teatable (one major ownership); Lower Matecumbe (one major ownership); North Layton (several large ownerships); Grassy Key (several large ownerships); Vaca Cut (one major ownership); and Stirrup Key (one ownership).

On June 14, 1995, the Land Acquisition Advisory Council approved the addition of 8 acres to the boundary.

1998

On June 11, 1998, the Land Acquisition and Management Advisory Council approved a fee simple, 53-acre addition (Wilson and Cotton Keys) to the project boundary. It was sponsored by the William Roberts Estate Trustee and had a taxable value of \$115,106. The Land Acquisition and Management Advisory Council also removed 11.32 acres from the project boundary.

On December 31, 1998, approximately 230 acres on the Saddlebunch Keys were donated to The Nature Conservancy.

1999

On February 11, 1999, the Land Acquisition and Management Advisory Council approved a fee-simple, 955-acre addition (Boot Key) to the project boundary. It was sponsored by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission and consisted of one owner, Azurite Corp, LTD Florida, and had a taxable value of \$178,019.

On July 29, 1999, the Land Acquisition and Management Advisory Council approved an owner-requested, 6-acre deletion on Ramrod Key from the project boundary.

2003

In 2003, The Nature Conservancy purchased 593.75 acres, known as Tarpon Basin, in the Newport Hammocks site.

On May 14, 2003, The Nature Conservancy acquired Everglades National Park Expansion (1.62 acres) on Key Largo, approximately 1.5 acres of which are within the project boundary.





On December 5, 2003, the Acquisition and Restoration Council approved a fee-simple, 11.5-acre addition (Channel Key Island) to the project boundary. It was sponsored by the owner, Barbara Trueman, and had a taxable value of \$17,268.

2004

On June 4, 2004, the Acquisition and Restoration Council approved a fee-simple, 3,063-acre addition to the project boundary. It was sponsored by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, consisted of multiple owners and had a taxable value of \$7,400,000. The 910 parcels are located on several offshore islands and six named Keys (Little Torch, Saddlebunch, Ramrod, Summerland, Cudjoe and Upper Sugarloaf). The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission will manage 1,758 acres as an addition to the Florida Keys Wildlife Environmental Area and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will manage the remaining acres as an addition to the Florida Key Deer Refuge.

2005

On February 11, 2005, the Acquisition and Restoration Council approved a fee-simple, 3,695-acre addition to the project boundary. It was sponsored by multiple entities, consisted of multiple owners and had a taxable value of approximately \$31,847,907.

On September 12, 2005, The Nature Conservancy acquired approximately 26.57 acres on Sugarloaf Key in the project boundary.

2006

In July 2006, Islamorada, Village of Islands acquired Green Turtle Hammock Park (10.77 acres) in collaboration with the Florida Communities Trust. Most of the park is within the project boundary.

2007

On October 13, 2007, the Acquisition and Restoration Council approved a fee-simple, 8.6-acre addition to the Sugarloaf Key portion of the project boundary. It was sponsored by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, consisted of two parcels under single ownership (Community Sons of the Divine Will) and had a taxable value of \$6,286,220. The proposed manager, the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, does not consider the parcels essential. The boundary addition was approved with the understanding that the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission would share in the cost of the acquisition.

2008

In June 2008, the 67-acre Camilus House exchange with the University of Miami for other BOT land was completed at no cost to Florida Forever. The following acres (ownerships) were purchased by the Division of State Lands: 0.07 acres (Cameron) of Dove Creek for \$46,250; 1.3 acres (Neff) of Grassy Key for \$382,000; 0.15 acres (Marrerro) in Newport Hammocks for \$235,000; 42.22 acres (MandM Joint Venture, LLP) in Boca Chica Key for \$566,100; and 54.75 acres (Utility Board of the City of Key West) in Cudjoe Key for \$1,938,000. Monroe County will be the manager.

In July 2008, the Division of State Lands acquired 0.11 acres of the Pierce ownership in Charles Hammocks for \$46,250. Monroe County will be the manager.

In September 2008, the Division of State Lands acquired 3.03 acres from the Otha Cox Estate in Cudjoe Key for a total of \$137,500 (\$4. Monroe County will be the manager.





In November 2008, the Division of State Lands acquired 1.01 acres of the Smith ownership for \$37,000. The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission will be the manager.

2009

On February 6, 2009, the Florida Department of Transportation donated 14.18 acres on Sugarloaf Key (0.86 acres within the project boundary) with a total donated value of \$9,265,212. At the June 2009 meeting, the Acquisition and Restoration Council accepted a request by the Retus Group LLC to remove 7 acres of their ownership in Marathon from the project.

On June 8, 2009, Islamorada, Village of Islands acquired Key Tree Cactus Nature Preserve (9.05 acres) in collaboration with the Florida Communities Trust. Most of the preserve is within the project boundary.

2010

On June 24, 2010, Gary Burchfield donated 1.78 acres on Sugarloaf Key (donated value of \$60,000). The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission will be the manager.

On October 15, 2010, the Acquisition and Restoration Council approved requests by property owners to remove 7 acres of their ownership within the project boundary (\$23,832 just value).

On December 10, 2010, the Acquisition and Restoration Council approved an 11.25-acre boundary addition in Boot Key with a tax-assessed just value of \$410,544, to assist with a Coastal and Estuarine Land Conservation Program grant application. The City of Marathon is interested in purchasing all of Boot Key as proposed in the Coastal and Estuarine Land Conservation Program application.

2011

On January 20, 2011, Anne Kirkly donated 7.39 acres (value of \$3,208) in Dove Creek Hammocks to be managed by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission. On June 1, 2011, James D. Hanson, Jr. donated 284.54 acres (Windley Key – value of \$200,000) to be managed by the Division of Recreation and Parks.

On December 9, 2011, the Acquisition and Restoration Council placed the project in the Climate Change Lands category.

2012

On April 20, 2012, the Acquisition and Restoration Council removed 8.6 acres from the project at the landowner's request. On June 15, 2012, the Acquisition and Restoration Council deleted a 3.2-acre property on Plantation Key from the project boundary at the request of the landowner. There may be additional small acreage changes (additions and removals) not captured above.

On August 24, 2012, the City of Layton acquired Peter E. Riley Conservation Area (52.6 acres) as a donation from the former mayor.

2017

In 2017, a total of 138.65 acres in the project were acquired using Florida Forever program funding.





2020

On February 14, 2020, the Acquisition and Restoration Council approved the removal of 1.07 acres in Monroe County from the project boundary.

2021

On June 11, 2021, the Acquisition and Restoration Council approved an addition of 1.3 acres in Monroe County to the project boundary.

In 2021, DEP acquired, in fee simple, 0.34 acres from Stephen and Kathy Rupp and received a donation of 1.01 acres via exchange from Philip Frank and Rowena Garcia. Both parcels will be managed by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission.

2022

In February 2022, the Acquisition and Restoration Council approved the removal of 0.28 acres from the project boundary.

DEP acquired, in fee, six parcels from individual owners (total of 16.22 acres) in North Creek Hammock, Cudjoe Key, Marathon, Grassy Key and Sugarloaf Key areas.

2023

In February 2023, the Acquisition and Restoration Council approved the removal of 0.12 acres from the project boundary.

DEP acquired, in fee, a total of 42.37 acres in Key Largo Narrows, Dove Creek, Grassy Key – Marathon, Little Torch Key and Sugarloaf Key from Monroe County and individual owners.

2024

In February 2024, the Acquisition and Restoration Council approved the addition of 2.1 acres in Monroe County to the project boundary.

Coordination

The Nature Conservancy and the National Audubon Society sponsored the project. The Nature Conservancy, Monroe County Land Authority and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service are participants and have been intermediaries in the acquisition of some of the sites within the project.

Management Policy Statement

The primary goals of management of the project are to conserve and protect environmentally unique and irreplaceable lands that contain native, relatively unaltered flora and fauna representing a natural area unique to, or scarce within, a region of this state or a larger geographic area; conserve and protect lands within areas of critical state concern; conserve and protect habitat for native species or endangered and threatened species; and conserve, protect, manage or restore important ecosystems, landscapes and forests, in order to enhance or protect significant surface water, coastal, recreational, timber, fish or wildlife resources that local or state programs cannot adequately protect.





Manager(s)

The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission is recommended to manage 18 sites: Cudjoe Key; Tavernier Creek; Little Torch Key; Lake San Pedro; Middle Torch; Key Snake Creek; Big Torch Key; Green Turtle; Summerland Key; Vaca Cut; Sugarloaf Key; Stirrup Key; Little Knockemdown Key; Saddlebunch Key; Ramrod Key; Wahoo Key; Dove Creek; and Upper Sugarloaf Key.

The Division of Recreation and Parks is recommended to manage 10 sites: Key Largo Narrows; Grassy Key Site; Point Charles Hammock; Teatable Hammock; Largo Sound Hammock; Pennekamp North; North Creek Hammock; Newport Hammock; Lower Matecumbe Hammock; and North Layton Hammock. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Monroe County, City of Marathon and Islamorada, Village of Islands also manage some properties.

Management Prospectus

Qualifications for State Designation

The unique wildlife, plant and recreational resources of the Florida Keys Ecosystem sites qualify them as wildlife and environmental areas, botanical sites or preserves and state parks.

Conditions Affecting Intensity of Management

The Florida Keys Ecosystem project generally includes high-need tracts because of their small size and proximity to intensive residential and commercial development. They require basic natural areas land management including exotic-species removal, avoidance of actions that further fragment the hammocks, general trash and debris removal, posting and some fencing, and the establishment of some basic visitor amenities at selected sites. Special species may require specific management actions. The project areas are high-need management areas which, because of their location, size and nature, will require a high level of attention to maintain and perpetuate their individual resources.

Management Implementation, Public Access, Site Security and Protection of Infrastructure

Within the first year after acquisition, the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission will give management priority to natural resource inventory and planning. Sites will be surveyed for rare and endangered species and management plans will be prepared. In future years, management will concentrate on implementing the plans with an emphasis on exotic species eradication and maintenance, trash and debris removal, and posting and fencing for security. Long-range management will focus on using the sites to build public awareness and support for natural areas protection and for tropical hardwood hammock preservation. Most tracts will provide passive recreational activities for the public. Longer-range goals would include the development of a detailed management plan focused on the perpetuation and maintenance of natural communities. An in-depth resource inventory would be carried out to identify and map all sensitive areas that warrant special consideration. Visitor amenities will be planned and constructed at appropriate sites within the project and public environmental education programs will be developed. First-year management activities will include site security, natural and cultural resource protection, and efforts toward the development of a plan for long-term public use and resource management.





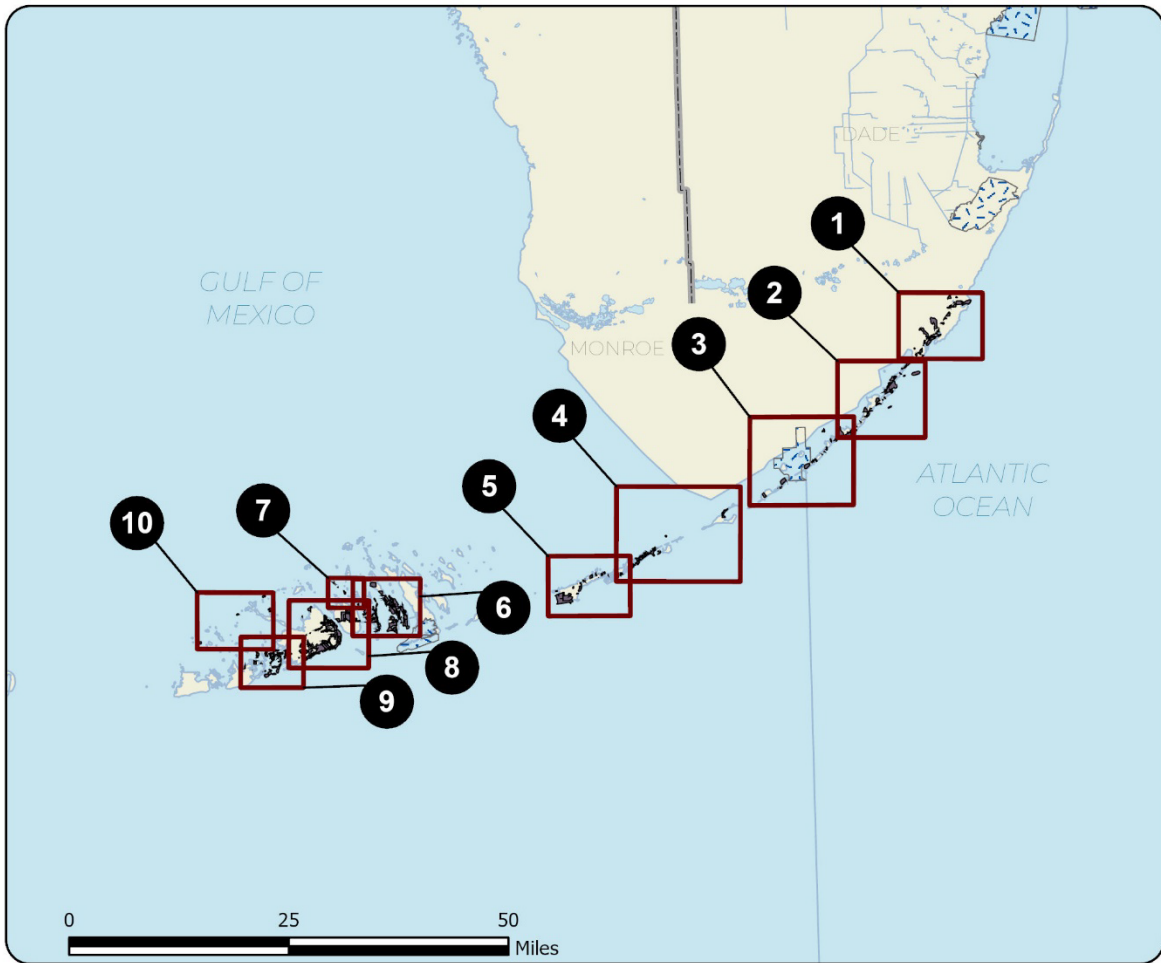
Revenue-generating Potential

Public use of sites managed by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission will be relatively low because no infrastructure will be provided. For the sites managed by the Division of Recreation and Parks, no significant revenue is expected to be generated initially. After acquisition, it will likely be several years before any significant level of public use facilities is developed. The amount of any future revenue generated would depend on the nature and extent of public use and facilities.

Cooperators in Management Activities

The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission will collaborate with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, other state agencies, local government entities and interested parties as appropriate.



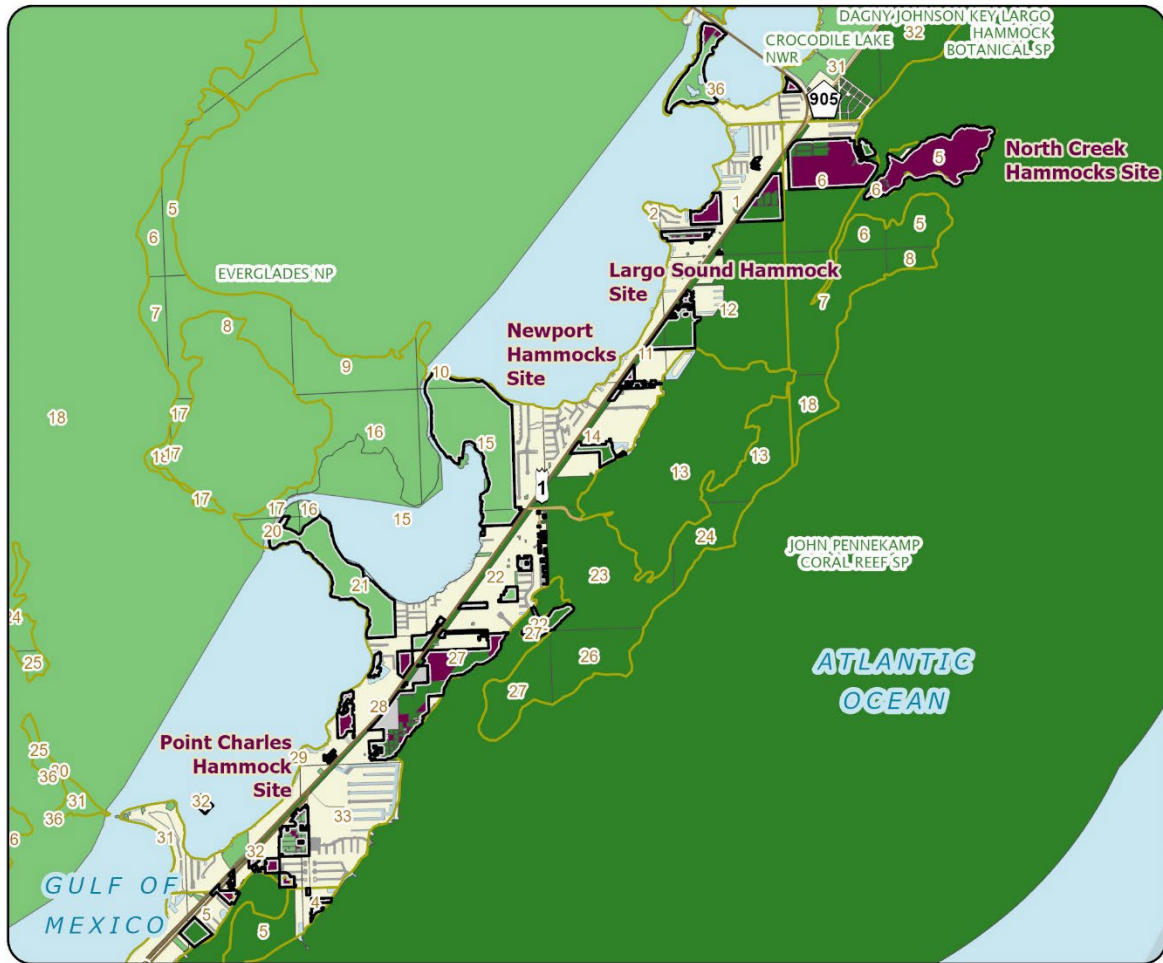


FLORIDA KEYS ECOSYSTEM: OVERVIEW

MONROE COUNTY

- Map 1 Largo Sound Hammock Site
- Map 1 Newport Hammocks Site
- Map 1 North Creek Hammocks Site
- Map 1 Point Charles Hammock Site
- Map 2 Dove Creek Hammocks Site
- Map 2 Islamorada/Plantation Key Site
- Map 2 Key Largo Narrows Hammock Site
- Map 2 Rodriguez Key Site
- Map 2 Tavernier Creek Hammocks Site
- Map 2 Tavernier Key Site
- Map 3 Cotton Key Site
- Map 3 Islamorada/Upper Matecumbe Keys Site
- Map 3 Lower Matecumbe Hammock Site
- Map 3 Wilson Key Site
- Map 3 Windley Key Site
- Map 4 Channel Key Site
- Map 4 Grassy Key Hammocks Site
- Map 4 Marathon/Crawl Key Site
- Map 4 North Layton Hammock Site
- Map 4 Pennekamp North Hammock Site
- Map 4 Tom's Harbor Keys Site
- Map 5 Boot Key Site
- Map 5 Marathon/Fat Deer Key Site
- Map 5 Marathon/Vaca Key Site
- Map 6 Big Torch Key Site
- Map 6 Little Knockemdown Key Site
- Map 6 Little Torch Key Site
- Map 6 Middle Torch Key Site
- Map 6 Ramrod Key Site
- Map 6 Summerland Key Site
- Map 7 Budd Key Site
- Map 7 Knockemdown Key Site
- Map 8 Cudjoe Key Site
- Map 8 Sugarloaf Key Site
- Map 9 Boca Chica Key Site
- Map 9 Saddlebunch Keys Site
- Map 10 Great White Heron Keys Site





FLORIDA KEYS ECOSYSTEM: MAP 1

MONROE COUNTY





FLORIDA KEYS ECOSYSTEM: MAP 2

MONROE COUNTY

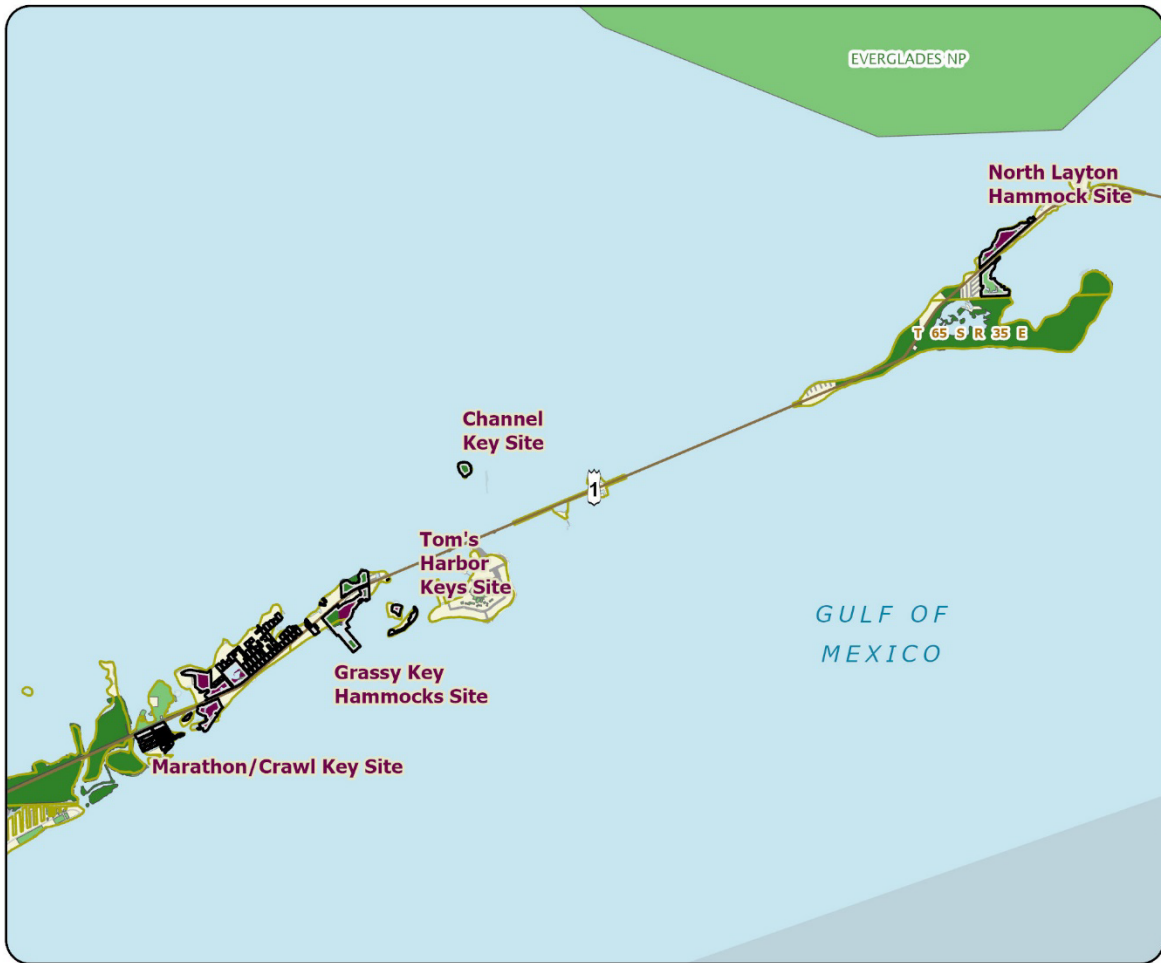




FLORIDA KEYS ECOSYSTEM: MAP 3

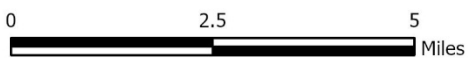
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FLORIDA KEYS ECOSYSTEM: MAP 4

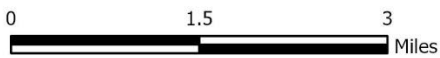
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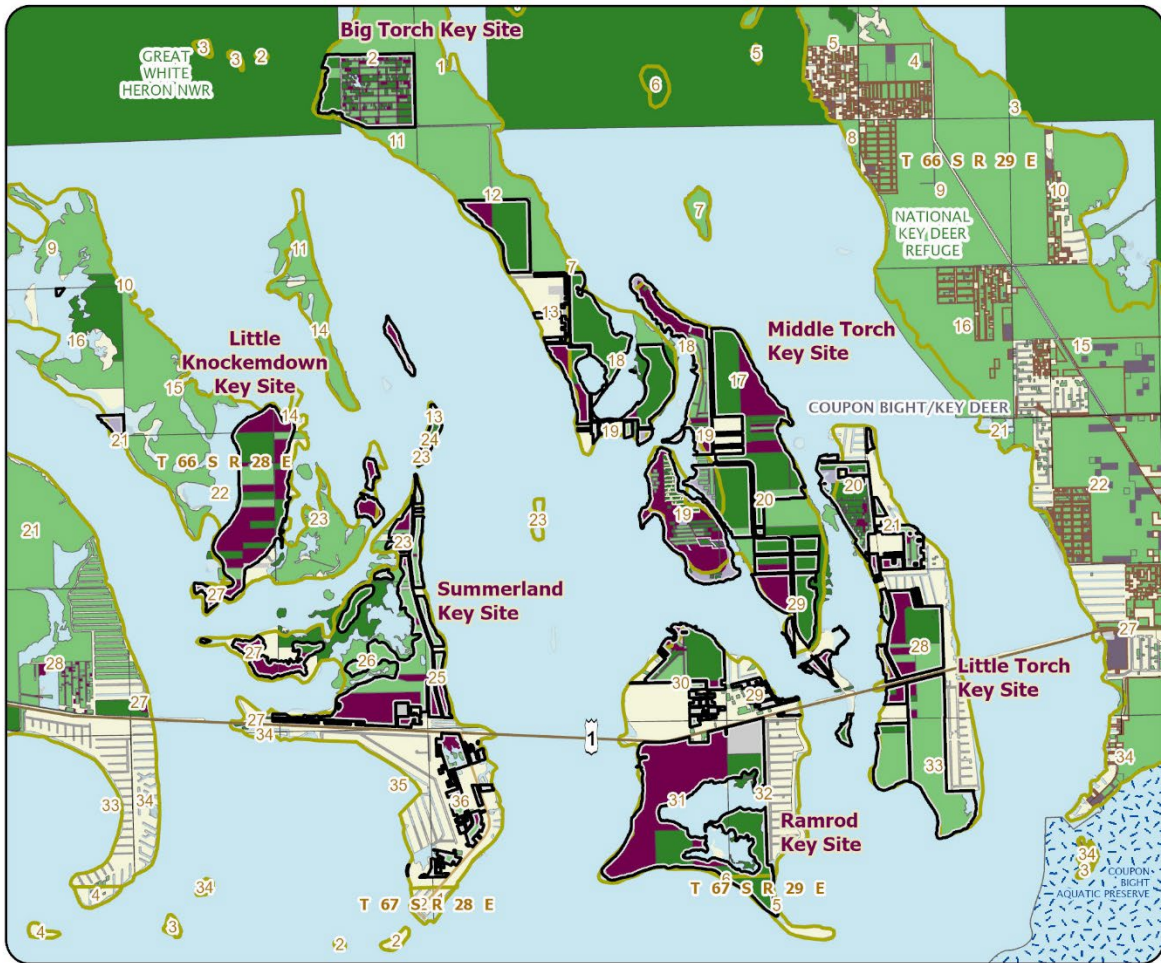




FLORIDA KEYS ECOSYSTEM: MAP 5

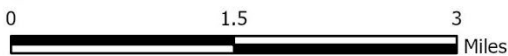
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FLORIDA KEYS ECOSYSTEM: MAP 6

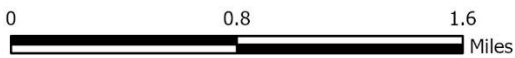
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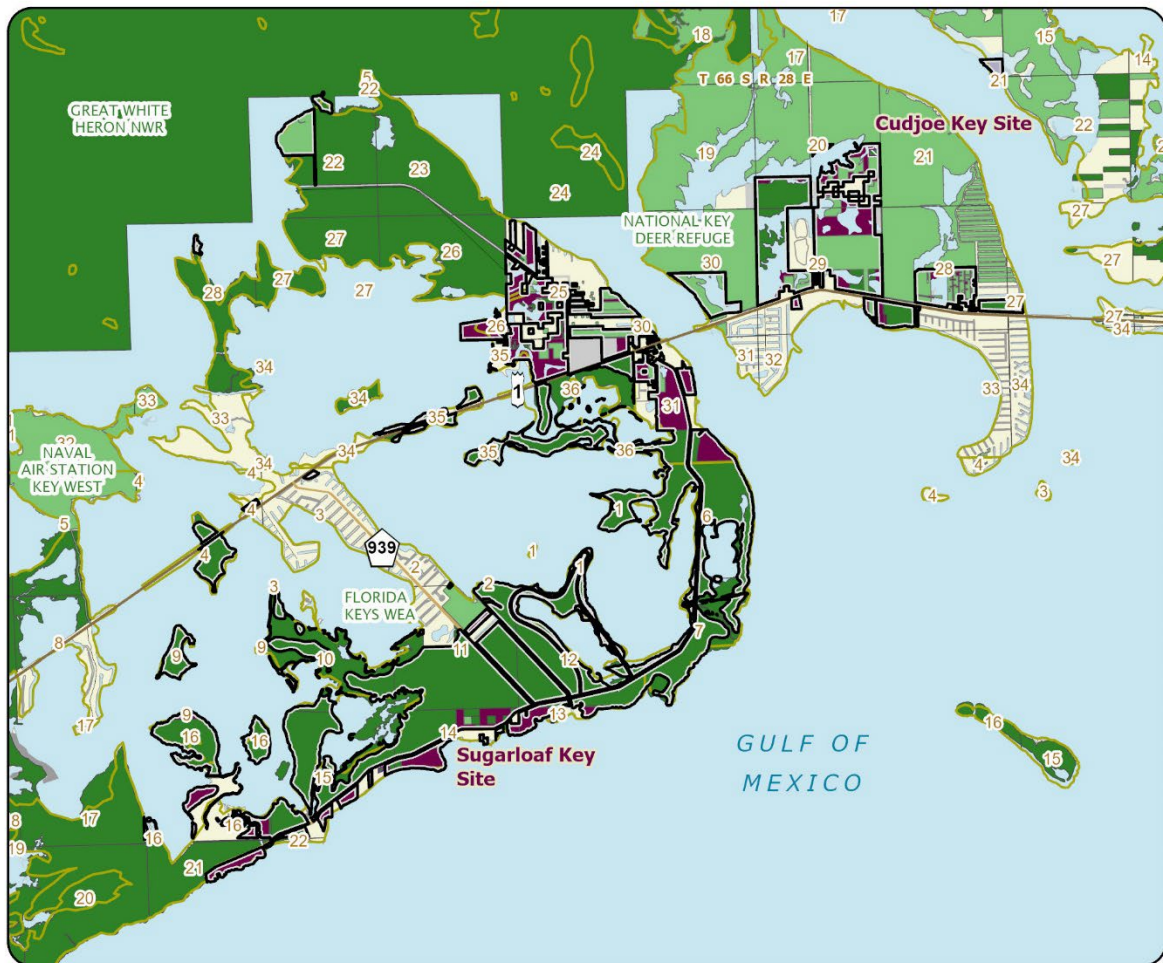




FLORIDA KEYS ECOSYSTEM: MAP 7

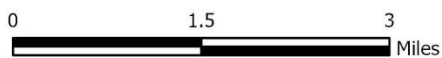
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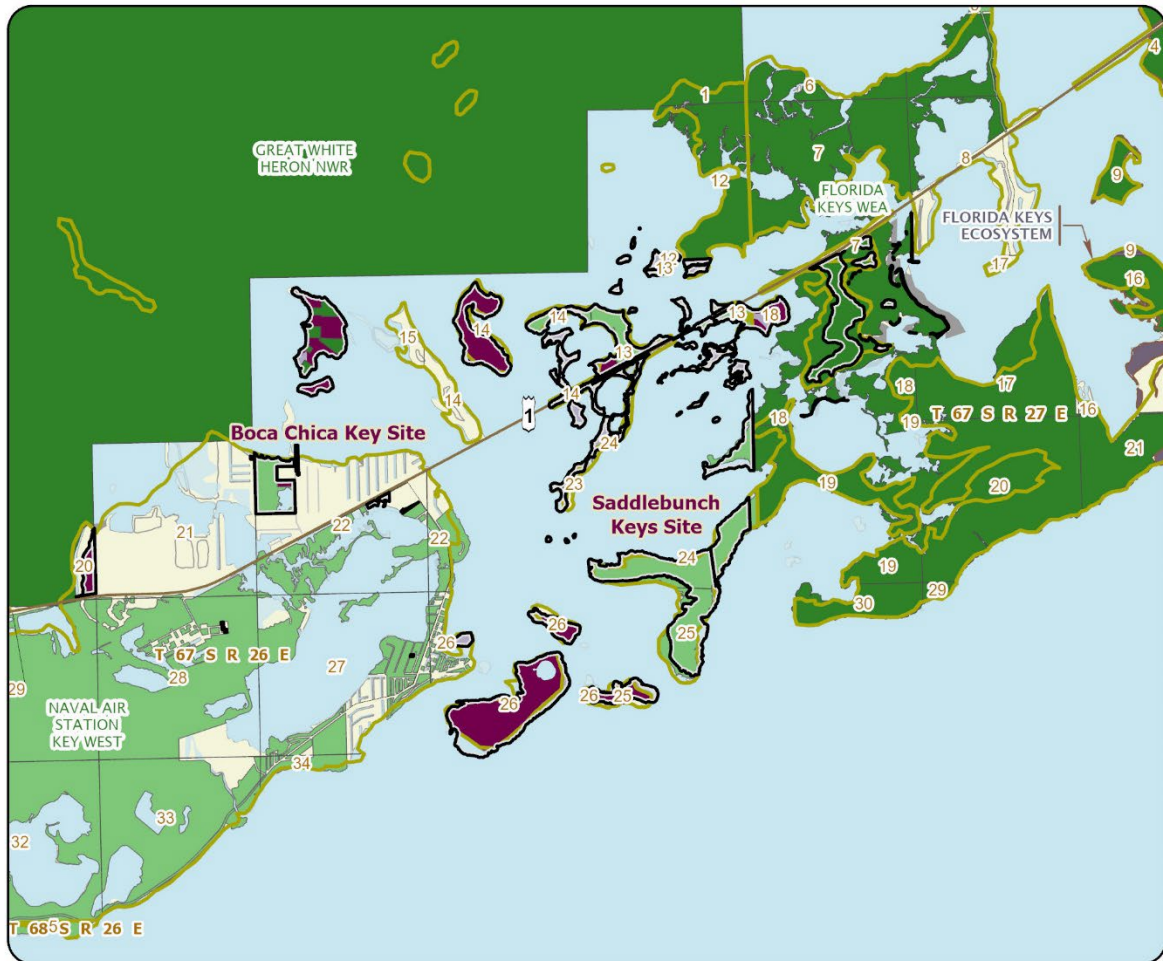




FLORIDA KEYS ECOSYSTEM: MAP 8

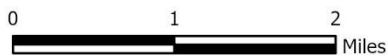
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FLORIDA KEYS ECOSYSTEM: MAP 9

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FLORIDA KEYS ECOSYSTEM: MAP 10

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