



Grant FAF-23-07-Goal: Clean Seas

National Marine Sanctuary Foundation

Final Report

October 2, 2024

Objectives:

1. Improve water quality and aquatic habitat by removing derelict fishing gear and other marine debris from vital habitats in the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary;
2. Engage at least 200 volunteers in at least 20 marine debris removal trips;
3. Continue to educate the local, state, regional, and national community on the benefits of marine debris removal.

Project Narrative:

The aim of this project was to remove marine debris from vital sanctuary zones to improve fish habitats within the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary. The project plan included educating the public on the problem of marine debris through training sessions and hands-on engagement in the marine debris location, removal and disposal process.

During 24 (4 over the projected 20) marine debris removal dives, 76,000 square meters of seafloor was surveyed for debris where 1,456 pounds of derelict fishing traps, anchors, monofilament and other marine debris were successfully removed. Participating dive operators educated and engaged 349 individuals (149 over the projected 200).

Derelict fishing gear removal was the focus of this project due to the level of harm it can cause to coral reefs that local fish populations depend on for resources such as food and shelter. Removal of this debris with the participation of the community and visitors to the sanctuary helped to spread awareness of the damage that marine debris can cause as well as to improve the water quality of Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary thus better supporting fish populations.

At the conclusion of the marine debris removal activities, the Foundation published a blog highlighting the success of the project activities and acknowledging the support of FishAmerica Foundation. The blog can be found [here](#).

Measures of Success:

Total amount of debris removed (in pounds)	1,456
Total area cleaned (in square miles)	.03 (76,000 sq. Meters)
Types of debris encountered	Derelict commercial and recreational fishing gear
Number of volunteers	349
Total number of volunteer hours	970
Number of removal operations	24
Number of traps removed	3
Feet of line removed	6,463