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Tortugas Ecological Reserve to Take Effect

The 518-sq. km Tortugas Ecological Reserve, at the western end of the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary (US), will take full effect on July 1, 2001. Located in two parts (Tortugas North and Tortugas South), the coral-rich reserve will be off-limits to all fishing. Diving will be prohibited in Tortugas South. According to sanctuary officials, the reserve will be the nation's largest permanent no-take marine reserve.

The process to create the ecological reserve involved a wide array of stakeholders, including several federal agencies, state government, divers, fishers, and scientists ([MPA News 1:1](#)). The US Department of the Interior -- which oversees nearby Dry Tortugas National Park and which participated in the reserve-planning process -- is still considering creating a no-take "research natural area" of its own that would abut Tortugas North.

For more information:

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