



Mote Marine Laboratory / Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary

Coral Bleaching Early Warning Network

Current Conditions Report #20260910



Updated September 10, 2026

Summary: Based on climate predictions, current conditions, and field observations, the threat for mass coral bleaching within the FKNMS is currently **ALERT LEVEL 5**.

NOAA Coral Reef Watch Current and 60% Probability Coral Bleaching Alert Outlook September 8, 2026 (experimental)

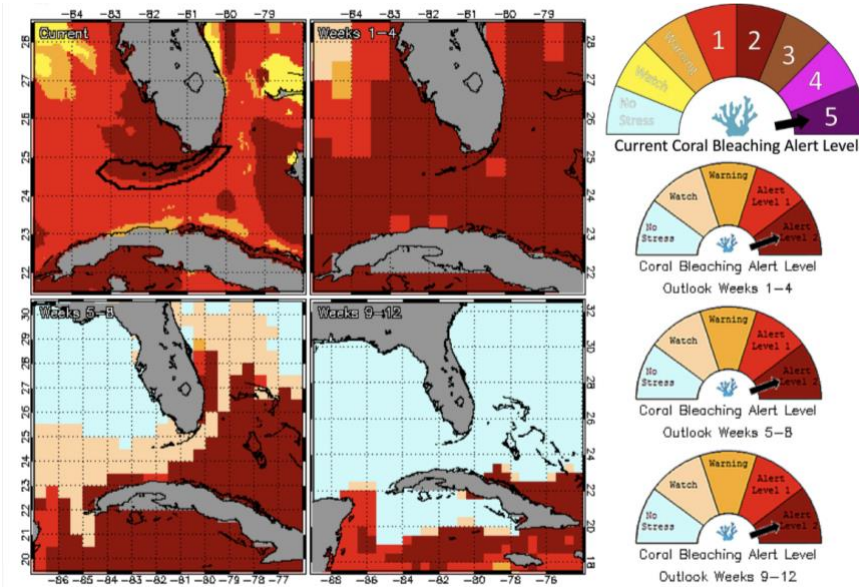


Figure 1. NOAA's 5 km Experimental Current and 60% Probability Coral Bleaching Alert Outlook Areas through November 2026. Updated September 8, 2026.

Weather and Sea Temperatures

According to the current NOAA Coral Reef Watch (CRW) experimental 5-kilometer (km) Satellite Current and 60% Probability Coral Bleaching Alert Area, most areas of the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary are under a “**Bleaching Alert Level 5**”, which means there is a reef-wide risk of bleaching with mortality of heat sensitive corals (Fig. 1).

Recent remote sensing analysis by NOAA's CRW program indicates that all areas of the Florida Keys region are currently experiencing significant thermal stress. NOAA's experimental 5 km Coral Bleaching HotSpot Map (Fig.2), which illustrates current sea surface temperatures compared to the average temperature for the warmest month, shows sea surface temperatures are still elevated above normal in the Florida Keys. Similarly, NOAA's experimental 5-km Degree Heating Weeks (DHW) map (Fig. 3) shows most of the Florida Keys at Alert Level 4, with portions of the backcountry at Alert Level 5. Although these higher heat-stress areas do not extend over the main reef tract, they may influence reef conditions. The Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary (FKNMS) Aqualink, which provides near real time in-situ wind data at Eastern Dry Rocks, as well as Aqualink in-situ temperature data confirm that temperatures remain above historical maximums, with all areas remaining above 30°C and most above 31°C (Fig.4). Mote Marine Laboratory will continue to monitor the NOAA HotSpot maps, DHW maps, and Aqualink sea temperature data from FKNMS monitoring stations on a weekly basis for the remainder of the bleaching season.

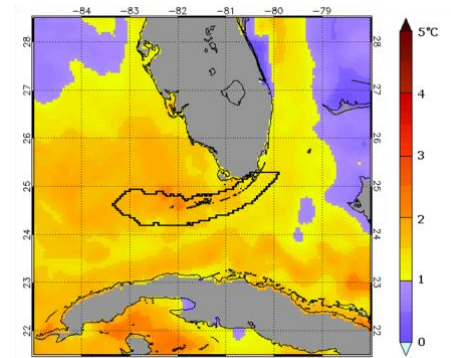


Figure 2. NOAA's Experimental 5km Coral Bleaching HotSpot Map for Florida, September 8, 2026.

[NOAA Coral Reef Watch Website](https://coralreefwatch.noaa.gov/)

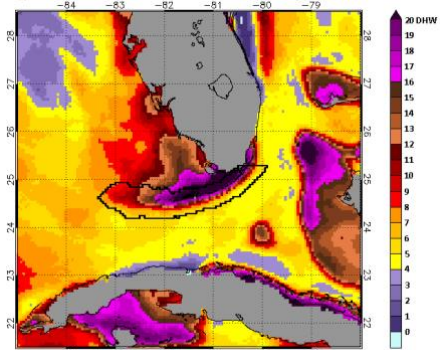


Figure 3. NOAA's Experimental 5km Degree Heating Weeks Map for Florida, September 8, 2026.

[NOAA Coral Reef Watch Website](https://coralreefwatch.noaa.gov/)

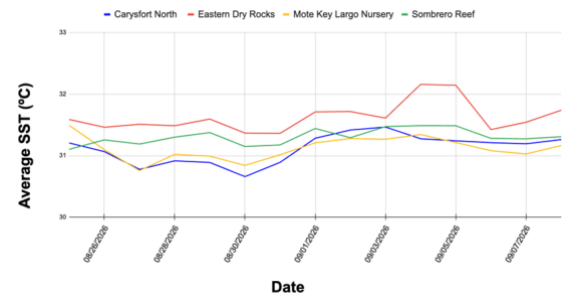


Figure 4. *in-situ* sea temperature from Aqualink monitoring stations (August 25 - September 9, 2026).

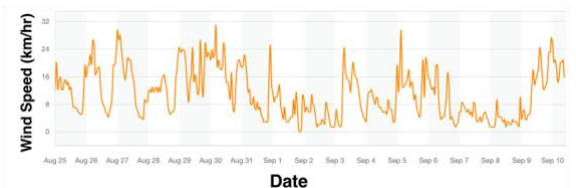


Figure 5. Wind speed data from Aqualink's Eastern Dry Rocks monitoring station (August 25 - September 10, 2026).



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Current Coral Conditions

A total of 39 BleachWatch observer reports have been received since August 26, 2026, 37 of which reported some level of bleaching and 2 which reported no bleaching observed (Fig. 6). At sites with bleaching reported, the overall percentage of corals exhibiting signs of stress was averaging 31-50%, with two reports indicating 76-100% of the live coral cover exhibiting bleaching. Paling/partial bleaching observations were reported for all coral categories, including Staghorn Coral (*Acropora cervicornis*) (Fig. 7) and Boulder Brain Coral (*Colpophyllia natans*) (Fig 8). Other observations included paling and bleaching of *gorgonians*, *fire coral*, and *palythoa*, and 15 reports of tissue loss disease reported on mound/bouldering species, branching species, and leaf/plate/species.



Figure 7. Partially bleached *Acropora cervicornis* (ACER), Rocky Top

As we continue through this bleaching season, BleachWatch observers are encouraged to continue submitting your coral reef observations after every visit to the reef, **even if NO bleaching was observed.**

If you know of anyone interested in becoming an observer, an online training is available year-round on www.mote.org/bleachwatch.



Figure 8. Partially bleached *Colpophyllia natans* (CNAT), Pelican Shoal

BleachWatch reports for August 25 – September 9, 2026



Figure 6. Overview of BleachWatch reports from August 25 – September 9, 2026.

BleachWatch observations are submitted by a range of community reporters, and data quality may vary depending on the observer's level of training, experience, and assessment method. As a result, individual reports may contain discrepancies or inaccuracies in reported bleaching prevalence and should be interpreted with consideration of observer experience and other available observations.

**For more information about the BleachWatch program,
or to submit a bleaching observation, contact:**

Email: bleachwatch@mote.org
<http://www.mote.org/bleachwatch>



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