Mote Marine Laboratory / Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary

Coral Bleaching Early Warning Network

Current Conditions Report #20261013

Updated October 13, 2026

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

NOAA Coral Reef Watch Current and 60% Probability Coral Bleaching Alert Outlook October 11, 2026 (experimental)

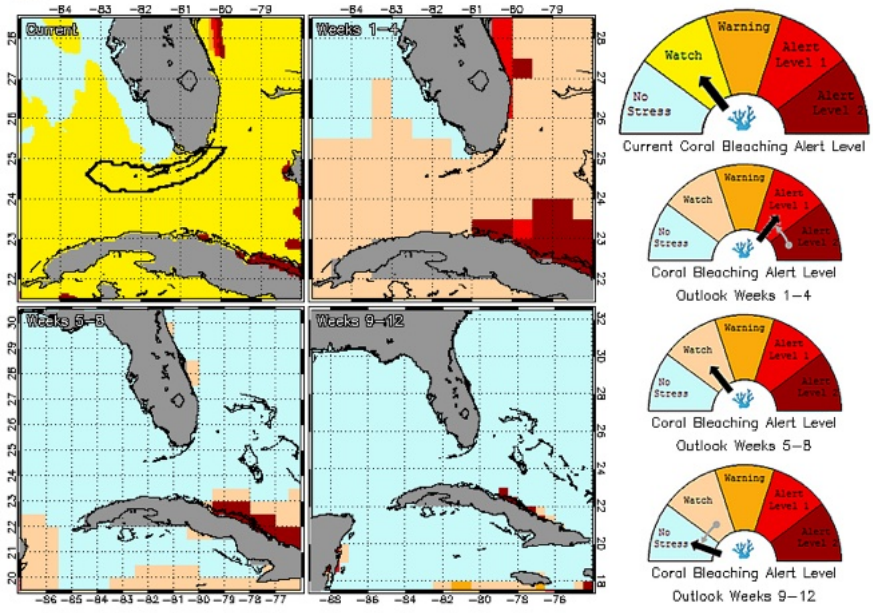


Figure 1. NOAA's 5 km Experimental Current and 60% Probability Coral Bleaching Alert Outlook Areas through January 2027. Updated October 11, 2026.

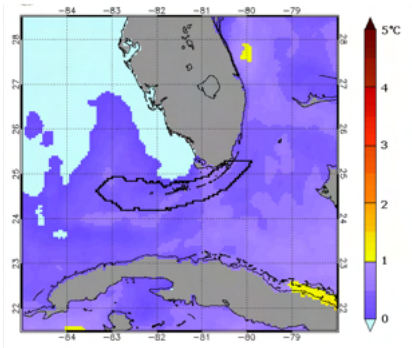


Figure 2. NOAA's Experimental 5km Coral Bleaching HotSpot Map for Florida, October 11, 2026.
NOAA Coral Reef Watch Website

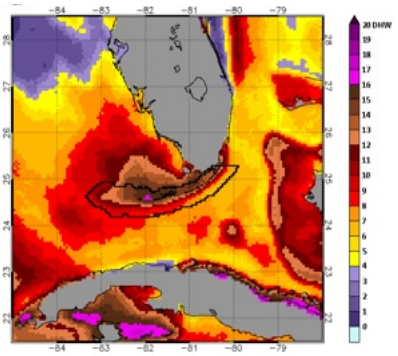


Figure 3. NOAA's Experimental 5km Degree Heating Weeks Map for Florida, October 11, 2026.
NOAA Coral Reef Watch Website

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, all areas of the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary are under a "**Bleaching Watch**", which means the bleaching threat on the reef has significantly decreased but monitoring should continue (Fig. 1).

Recent remote sensing analysis by NOAA's CRW program indicates that all areas of the Florida Keys region are still experiencing thermal stress, but a recent drop in temperature has significantly decreased stress to corals. 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 remain elevated above normal in the Florida Keys, despite the significant temperature drop in the past three weeks. Similarly, NOAA's experimental 5 km Degree Heating Weeks (DHW) map (Fig.3), which illustrates how much heat stress has built up over the past 12 weeks, indicates accumulating temperature stress is still evident in the Florida Keys region. Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary (FKNMS) Aqualink, which provides near real time in-situ wind data at Mote's Sand Key Nursery, as well as Aqualink in-situ temperature data indicate the previously mentioned drop in temperatures at the end of September (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.

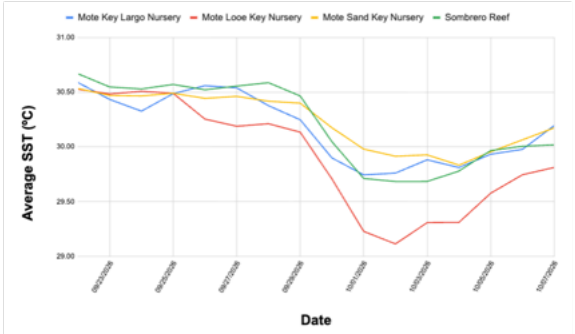


Figure 4. *In-situ* sea surface temperature from Aqualink monitoring stations (September 22 – October 13, 2026).



Figure 5. Wind speed data from Aqualink's Mote Sand Key Nursery monitoring station (September 22 – October 13, 2026).

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Current Coral Conditions

A total of 16 BleachWatch observer reports have been received since September 22nd, 2026, all of which reported some level of bleaching (Fig. 6). Most reports indicated an overall percentage of corals exhibiting signs of stress at 50-75%. Paling/partial bleaching observations were reported for all coral categories, including Yellow Finger Coral *(Madracis auetenra)* (Fig. 7) and Staghorn Coral (*Acropora cervicornis*) (Fig 8). Other observations included paling and bleaching of *gorgonians, fire coral,* and *palythoa,* and 4 reports of disease reported on brain, mound/bouldering species and branching species.

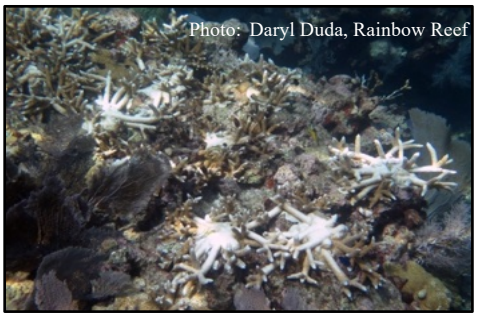


Figure 8. Partially Bleached *Acropora cervicornis* (ACER) outplants, Aquarium Reef



Figure 7. Bleached *Madracis auretenra* (MAUR), American Shoal

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.** Frequent coral condition observations from throughout the Florida Keys are needed for the remainder of the summer season.

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

BleachWatch reports for September 22 – October 13, 2026

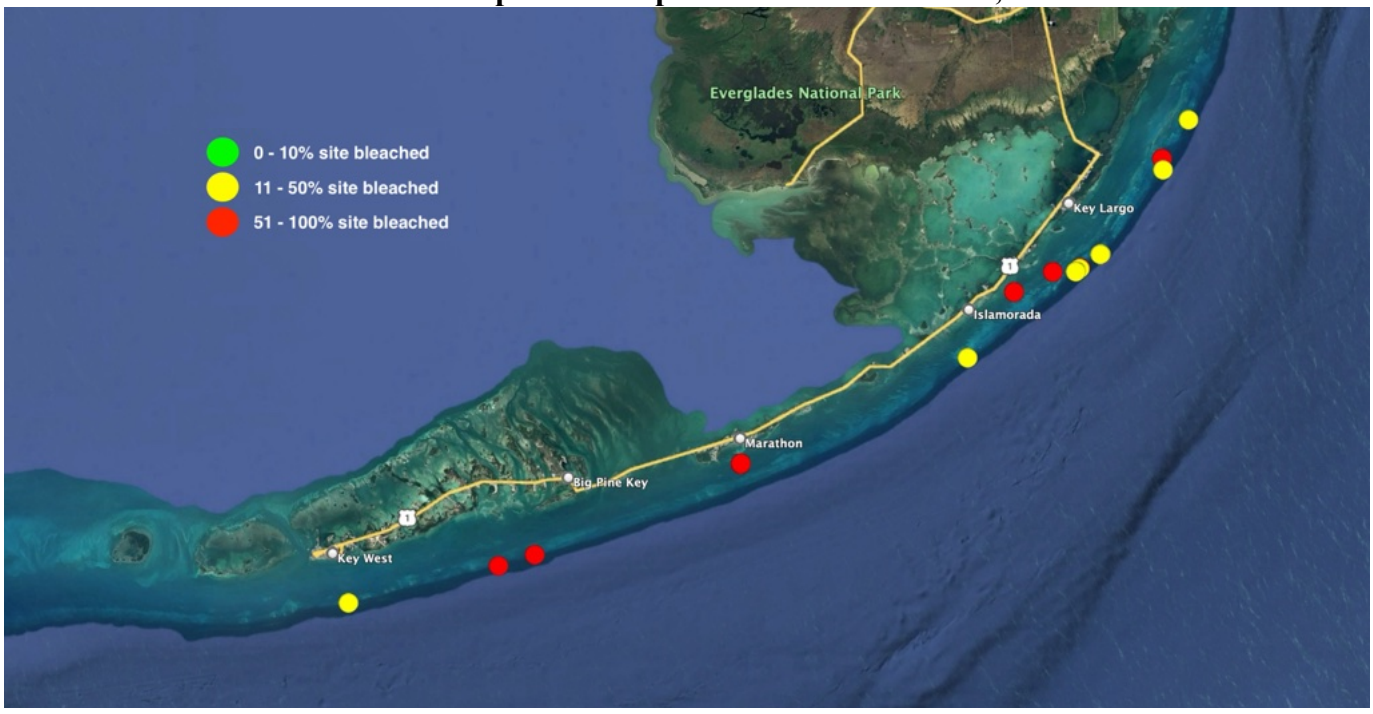


Figure 6. Overview of BleachWatch reports from September 22 – October 13, 2026.

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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