



News Release

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SHEDD AQUARIUM RESCUES RARE CORAL IN FLORIDA KEYS

Shedd Experts Work with US Navy to preserve rare coral from Pier Construction Project

CHICAGO – This week, [Shedd Aquarium](#) helped to rescue rare coral in the Florida Keys before the start of a Navy seawall construction project that would have damaged the coral around a Navy pier.

Working with the Naval Air Station (NAS) Key West, Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary (FKNMS) resource managers and sister institutions, a team of Shedd experts carefully removed native coral from a usual “no-take zone,” an federally protected area prohibiting the removal of any native species from the environment.

The FKNMS permit allowed Shedd to carefully remove 58 pieces of coral from the area to bring to the aquarium for educational and conservation research purposes. A majority of the coral rescued from the site are species that Shedd has not had in the past.

The project, aiming to cause minimal impact to corals in the protected area, allows the Navy to make repairs to a deteriorating bulkhead on the Navy’s Mole Pier in Key West harbor. It also ensures the 1,500 coral colonies and fragments are given a second life in research, restoration and education in the Keys and across the country, including at Shedd Aquarium.

Shedd is one of a few institutions that responded to a call made from the FKNMS to zoos and aquariums they have worked with in the past to participate in the project by removing corals less than six inches in diameter from the seawall, allowing the smallest corals to be showcased in exhibits and used in research at the aquarium.

“Shedd Aquarium is committed to conservation, so we were eager to respond to the FKNMS to get involved,” said Mark Schick, Special Exhibits/Collections Manager. “This team effort with the Navy and our conservation partners allowed us to save coral that might have been lost. Thanks to this rescue mission, we were able to save this coral and aid our ongoing research to understand how to protect coral all over the world, while also giving Shedd guests the opportunity to see coral that are rarely seen.”

Coral preserved by Shedd experts will be seen in exhibits, such as *Seahorses and Seadragons*, as well as examined for ongoing coral research at the aquarium.

In the first phase of the project, Navy staff and contractors, trained by the sanctuary in coral removal and handling, cleared a 425-foot long stretch of seawall of the largest corals, some of which spanned over two-

feet wide. The corals, representing 19 different species, have been placed in the sanctuary's nearby coral nursery and partner nurseries where they will be cared for until they can be placed into beneficial use projects, including the restoration of vessel grounding sites in the Keys and research projects.

Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary protects 2,900 square nautical miles of critical marine habitat, including coral reef, hard bottom, sea grass meadow, mangrove communities and sand flats. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and the State of Florida manage the sanctuary.

For more information about Shedd Aquarium, please call 312-939-2438 or visit www.sheddaquarium.org.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Photos and video are available for download at:
<https://backup.filesanywhere.com/fs/v.aspx?v=8b7267865b6275bdab6a> with the password: corals.

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*Shedd Aquarium is supported by the people of Chicago and the State of Illinois.
Shedd Aquarium is an accredited member of the Association of Zoos & Aquariums (AZA) and the
Alliance of Marine Mammal Parks and Aquariums*

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