



## DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR INFORMATION SERVICE

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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### INTERIOR MOVES TO STOP EXPLOITATION OF CORAL PRESERVE

Approval of regulations protecting the Key Largo Coral Reef Preserve off the Florida Coast was announced today by Acting Secretary of the Interior Elmer F. Bennett.

The regulations will become effective on the tenth day after publication in the Federal Register. This emergency action is necessary because of commercial exploitation of the coral structure in the Preserve, Mr. Bennett said. This exploitation consists of blasting, dredging and otherwise defacing or destroying the underwater scenic beauties of the area, he explained.

The regulation will prohibit the removal or destruction of the natural features or the shells and shellfish, starfish and other marine invertebrates of the Preserve; dredging, filling, excavating, or any building; dumping refuse or otherwise polluting the area; tampering with wrecks or cargoes which might be within the boundaries.

Spear fishing and the use of poisons or electric shocking devices are prohibited but skin diving with camera, for pleasure or observation, is permitted. Scientific specimens may be collected only on permit. No watercraft can be operated in any way that will damage the natural features of the Preserve. Possession or use of firearms, air guns, bows and arrows, slings, spears, harpoons or any other type of weapon is prohibited.

Key Largo Coral Reef Preserve is a natural coral reef lying on the Continental shelf off the southern tip of Florida. It lies partly within and partly without Florida's three-mile limit. It is approximately 21 miles long and about 4 miles wide. It has been made into a preserve by separate but coordinated actions by the State of Florida and the United States. The United States action was taken March 15, 1960 by a proclamation issued by the President. Florida has recently issued regulations similar to those which are now being promulgated by the Department.

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