

CORAL REEF NEWS
Coral Reef Conservation Program
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
October 2004 Volume 2 No. 1



NOAA Coral Reef News is a monthly e-newsletter established to provide current information on the activities of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) Coral Reef Conservation Program (CRCP) and other relevant NOAA programs. The CRCP supports effective management and sound science to preserve, sustain and restore valuable coral reef ecosystems. Back issues are available at <http://www.coralreef.noaa.gov>.

IN THIS ISSUE:

OF SPECIAL NOTE (PAGE 2)

- **U.S. Coral Reef Task Force Meeting Rescheduled.**

ANNOUNCEMENTS (PAGE 2)

- **NOAA Awards \$100,000 to University of Guam to Build Capacity.**
- **"Reefs at Risk in the Caribbean" Report Released.**
- **New NOAA Software Package Will Help Scientists and Managers Monitor Coral Reefs.**
- **New Guidebook on No-Take Marine Reserves.**

UPDATES (PAGE 3)

- **HI'IALAKAI Returns to Port After Five-Week Coral Research Expedition in the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands.**
- **Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species Makes Strides in Marine Species Protection at the 13th Conference of the Parties.**
- **Integrated Surveys Indicate That This Season's Hurricanes Had No Adverse Impacts on Restoration Sites in Tortugas Coral Reefs.**
- **NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service Conducts Status Review of Three Coral Species for Potential Listing Under the Endangered Species Act.**
- **NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service Reacts to Oceana Petition to Protect Deep-Sea Coral and Sponge Habitats.**

CORAL REEFS IN THE NEWS (PAGE 5)

UPCOMING EVENTS (PAGE 7)



OF SPECIAL NOTE

U.S. Coral Reef Task Force (USCRTF) Meeting Rescheduled. The 12th Biannual USCRTF meeting, originally scheduled for September 13-15 in Miami, FL and postponed due to the projected impact of Hurricane Ivan, has been rescheduled for November 30 – December 4 in Miami, FL. The USCRTF will review on-going initiatives and consider several new resolutions to improve conservation of coral reefs during the public meeting. NOAA Deputy Assistant Secretary Tim Keeney and a NOAA National Ocean Service (NOS) representative will make several announcements during the meeting, including approval of a new Memorandum of Agreement between NOS, the State of Florida and Australia's Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority to help reduce threats to the Florida Keys coral reef ecosystem. Visit <http://www.ces.fau.edu/taskforce/> for venue, registration, exhibitor information and a tentative schedule for the meeting. For more information on the USCRTF, visit <http://www.coralreef.gov/>.

Send potential items of Special Note (new discoveries, key events, notable facts, etc.) for future issues to coralreef@noaa.gov.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

NOAA Awards \$100,000 to the University of Guam (UG) to Build Capacity. In an October 6, 2004 press release, NOAA announced that it awarded a \$100,000 grant to UG to help develop solutions that will lead to better management of marine and coastal resources. The grant will fund a Sea Grant project leader at UG who will work with the people of Guam and the wider Western Pacific region to strengthen their ability to address critical issues that affect the marine and coastal environment. The award is an important beginning step in a

process that will enable UG to eventually seek Sea Grant College status. Read the full press release at <http://www.publicaffairs.noaa.gov/releases2004/oct04/noaa04-r999-29.html>.

“Reefs at Risk in the Caribbean” Report Released. The World Resources Institute recently announced the release of *Reefs at Risk in the Caribbean* at the Intergovernmental Meeting of the Cartagena Convention in Montego Bay, Jamaica. The report is a summary of a two-year collaborative effort involving NOAA and over twenty other institutions working in the Caribbean region. It presents threats to Caribbean coral reefs, highlights the value of the goods and services associated with the reefs and gives policy recommendations for reducing threats and preserving these valuable ecosystems. A Spanish version of the report, a data CD and an interactive GIS Web site will all be available later this year. Order a copy of the report at <http://reefsatrisk.wri.org/>.

New NOAA Software Package Will Help Scientists and Managers Monitor Coral Reefs. Scientists and managers frequently use photographic and video methods to monitor coral reefs, and a random point count method is commonly used on frame-grabbed video or still images to estimate the health of the reef ecosystem. The National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science/Center for Sponsored Coastal Ocean Research-sponsored National Coral Reef Institute (NCRI) has developed a windows-based computer program called Coral Point Count with Excel Extensions (CPCe) that automates and facilitates this type of data collection and processing. Underwater photographic frames are overlaid at random points, and the fauna/flora species or substrate are identified and eventually analyzed to give quantitative measurements over the area of interest. CPCe is available free of charge to managers and scientific institutions, for non-

commercial use only. In late October, NCRI researchers presented CPCe to coral researchers at the Florida Fish and Wildlife Research Institute as a possible replacement for the currently methodology. Visit <http://www.nova.edu/ocean/cpce/index.html> to learn more about CPCe.

New Guidebook on No-Take Marine Reserves. *Marine Reserves: A Guide to Science, Design, and Use* is the first guidebook on no-take marine reserves – areas of the sea where all consumptive use of natural resources is prohibited. Authors Jack Sobel and Craig Dahlgren provide a synthesis of information on the underlying science of no-take marine reserves, as well as design and implementation issues. The book describes the need for the reserves and their potential benefits, examines how reserves can be designed to achieve specific objectives, and considers gaps in our knowledge and the research needed to address those gaps. Much of the information and examples presented in the guidebook are drawn from coral reef ecosystems. Visit <http://www.islandpress.org/marinereserves/book.html> to read more about the book.

UPDATES

HI'IALAKAI Returns to Port After Five-Week Coral Research Expedition in the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands (NWHI). The NOAA research ship HI'IALAKAI returned to its Honolulu homeport on October 17, after a 35-day coral reef research expedition through the NWHI Coral Reef Ecosystem Reserve and adjacent waters. The 224-ft. vessel supports coral reef ecosystem research, mapping, monitoring, restoration and outreach needs of NOAA's National Ocean Service, including the CRCP and the National Marine Sanctuary Program. During the cruise, researchers made nearly 500 scuba dives, conducted substantial oceanographic sampling

and deployed oceanographic buoys to allow remote long-term monitoring of oceanographic and environmental conditions affecting NWHI coral reef ecosystems. Coral biologists documented the present condition of some of these reefs since a major coral bleaching event was first detected in 2002. They also monitored a syndrome afflicting coral reefs in the French Frigate Shoals, which was discovered by researchers last year. The same syndrome was found in two additional reefs during this HI'IALAKAI cruise. Results of this cruise will provide valuable characterization of the biology and oceanography of the NWHI that will serve as a foundation for management of the resources under the jurisdictions of the Reserve, the State of Hawai'i and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Read the October 17 press release at <http://www.publicaffairs.noaa.gov/releases2004/oct04/noaa04-r489.html>.

Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) Makes Strides in Marine Species Protection at the 13th Conference of the Parties. The international CITES 13th Conference of the Parties meeting, attended by NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), concluded October 14, 2004 with significant conservation achievements for marine species. As a result of the meeting, international trade in Irrawaddy dolphin (*Orcaella brevirostris*), great white shark (*Carcharodon carcharias*), humphead wrasse (*Cheilinus undulatus*), and European date mussel (*Lithophaga lithophaga*) will now be tracked in Appendix II of CITES. In addition, revised criteria for reviewing species proposals that include specific guidelines for the evaluation of marine fish species were adopted at the meeting. In a ground-breaking move first proposed by NMFS in 1997, the CITES Standing Committee was directed to convene a workshop to consider logistical, legal and technical issues associated with listing marine

fish species in the CITES Appendices. Learn more about CITES at <http://www.cites.org/>.

Integrated Surveys Indicate That This Season's Hurricanes Had No Adverse Impacts on Restoration Sites in Tortugas Coral Reefs. Scientists from the National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science Center for Coastal Fisheries and Habitat Research (CCFHR) helped the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary (FKNMS) examine hurricane impacts on reef restoration efforts in the Tortugas north region of the FKNMS, an area historically used for ship anchoring. CCFHR scientists used the NOAA research vessel Nancy Foster and Geodynamics Inc. to integrate diver surveys, underwater digital video, and multibeam sonar imagery of this ecologically important and highly diverse reef habitat. No physical damage from recent hurricanes Charley and Ivan was evident on restoration sites. Learn more about CCFHR at <http://shrimp.ccfhrb.noaa.gov/> and FKNMS at <http://www.fknms.nos.noaa.gov/>.

NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) Conducts Status Review of Three Coral Species for Potential Listing Under the Endangered Species Act. On March 4, 2004, the Center for Biological Diversity (CBD) petitioned NMFS under the Endangered Species Act. The CBD requested that elkhorn (*Acropora palmata*), staghorn (*Acropora cervicornis*), and fused-staghorn (*Acropora prolifera*) corals be listed as endangered or threatened species, and that critical habitat be designated. On June 23, 2004, NMFS made a positive 90-day finding (69 FR 34995) that CBD had presented substantial information indicating the action may be warranted. NMFS then convened a Biological Review Team, comprised of experts in the field, to develop a status review of the three species. The petition process mandates that upon completion of the status review and within 12 months of receiving the petition (in this case March 4,

2005) NMFS must determine if each species is endangered or threatened. If the finding is that the species are neither, then they can be maintained on the Species of Concern list and their status re-evaluated at some time in the future. If they are found to be endangered or threatened, a proposed rule will be developed to heighten protection of the corals. Learn more about the petition at <http://www.epa.gov/fedrgstr/EPA-SPECIES/2004/June/Day-23/e14244.htm>.

NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) Reacts to Oceana Petition to Protect Deep-Sea Coral and Sponge Habitats. In March 2004, Oceana, a non-governmental organization concerned with the environmental health of the oceans, petitioned the U.S. Department of Commerce to promulgate immediate rulemaking to protect deep-sea coral and sponge habitats in the United States' Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). The petition asserts that deep-sea coral and sponge communities are not adequately protected under existing fishery management plans and outlines eight measures needed to sufficiently protect these resources. During two public comment periods, over 33,000 public comments were received. Once all comments have been reviewed and analyzed, NMFS Office of Habitat Conservation will develop, in collaboration with NMFS Office of Sustainable Fisheries and NMFS General Council, a response to the petition to be published in the *Federal Register*. Learn more about Oceana at <http://northamerica.oceana.org/index.cfm>.

CORAL REEFS IN THE NEWS

“Whalers' wreckage could be from 1822” – September 30, 2004 (*Honolulu Advertiser*).

“Divers have found wreckage believed to be the British whaling vessels Pearl and Hermes, lost in the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands in 1822. If scientists can confirm the debris is from one or both of the whaling ships, it would be the oldest shipwreck of a western vessel in the Hawaiian Islands. The wreckage, discovered last week by divers with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, was spread across almost 700 yards of reef and ocean floor.”

<http://the.honoluluadvertiser.com/article/2004/Sep/30/ln/ln05a.html>

See also **“Wreckage of British whaling ships believed found” – September 30, 2004 (*Associated Press, in Fort Wayne Journal Gazette, IN and approx. 45 other publications*).**

<http://www.fortwayne.com/mld/journalgazette/9802314.htm>

“Kaua‘i, Ni‘ihau reefs show few signs of black coral threat” – October 1, 2004 (*Lihue Garden Island, HI*).

“A Hawai‘i Undersea Research Laboratory ocean probe into the spread of an introduced coral species that threatens Hawai‘i's \$30-million-a-year black coral industry bodes well for Kaua‘i and areas by Ni‘ihau, but not for Maui.”

<http://www.kauaiworld.com/articles/2004/10/01/news/news01.txt>

“SA has vital role for coral reef protection” – October 5, 2004 (*Independent Online, South Africa*).

“Cape Town - South Africa is set to play a leading role in developing a continent-wide plan to improve the protection of coral reefs, the most complex ecosystems in the oceans.”

http://www.iol.co.za/index.php?set_id=14&click_id=143&art_id=qw1096976160350B264

“Deep-Sea Trawling’s Great Harm” –

October 6, 2004 (*BBC News*). “A coalition of leading environmental and conservation groups has called for a ban on the damaging fishing practice known as bottom-trawling.”

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/sci/tech/3719590.stm>

“Shock treatment for coral restoration” –

October 8, 2004 (*BBC News*). “Coral reefs around the world are disappearing. In many places, more than 90% of corals have bleached or died. But an effort is under way to re-grow corals by giving them a bit of electro-shock therapy.”

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/technology/3717168.stm>

“Plan OKs limited fishing in haven” –

October 8, 2004 (*Honolulu Advertiser*). “A federal proposal for a marine sanctuary in the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands would ban all longline and coral reef fishing, but permit a variety of other commercial and recreational activity throughout the area. The proposal from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration is designed to protect the delicate ecological balance around the islands while allowing activities that do not threaten them, according to details presented to a local advisory board in Waimanalo yesterday.”

<http://the.honoluluadvertiser.com/article/2004/Oct/08/ln/ln28p.html>

“Ocean Exploitation Surfaces as Crisis; Widespread Pollution, Overfishing Spur Presidential Panel to Urge New Rules” – October 9, 2004 (*The Washington Post*).

“KEY WEST, Fla. -- Every year in late July, about 30,000 boats descend on this tourist mecca carrying tens of thousands of scuba divers who scour the coral reefs in search of tasty spiny lobsters to catch and eat.”

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A18656-2004Oct8.html>

“Grounded freighter leveled hunk of coral reef off Fort Lauderdale” – October 13, 2004 (*South Florida Sun-Sentinel* at

www.tcpalm.com). “Divers found extensive damage Tuesday to a coral reef at the site of last week's grounding of the freighter Federal Pescadores off Fort Lauderdale, with thousands of square feet of reef ‘bulldozed over and flattened.’”

http://www.tcpalm.com/tcp/cda/article_print/0,1983,TCP_1020_3250869_ARTICLE-DETAIL-PRINT,00.html

“Damsel fish Study May Help Improve Marine Reserves” – October 13, 2004

(*National Geographic News*). “In recent years scientific studies have shown that marine environments made off-limits to fishing fleets are a boon to the fish that swim there. The question is: What parts of the ocean are the best to close for the benefit of the fish and those who eat them?”

http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2004/10/1013_041013_damsel fish.html

“Limits of Ocean Preservation Being Tested” – October 17, 2004 (*Washington Post*).

“BISCAYNE NATIONAL PARK, Fla. - Richard Curry remembers when the waters in this 173,000-acre preserve were teeming with fish and vibrant corals.”

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A40569-2004Oct17.html>

“Researchers Study the Coral Reefs of the Northwest Hawaiian Islands” – October 18, 2004 (*Honolulu Star-Bulletin*).

“Scientists who just returned from a 34-day research mission to the Northwest Hawaiian Islands are already hoping to go back. The maiden voyage of the 224-foot Hi'ialakai to survey nearly pristine coral reefs went ‘spectacularly well,’ said the ship's chief scientist, Randy Kosaki.”

<http://starbulletin.com/2004/10/18/news/story1.html>

“Large-Scale Forces Shape Local Ocean Life, Global Study Shows” – October 20, 2004 (*Brown University Press Release*). “In a groundbreaking, globetrotting study of sea life in shallow waters, a research team led by a Brown University marine ecologist has found that the richness of species diversity in a small patch of ocean is powerfully shaped by far-away forces.... Governments or non-profits interested in maintaining biodiversity in the ocean – or on land – shouldn't simply create single preserves or parks. Instead, Witman said, they should create as many as possible across a broad area.”

http://www.brown.edu/Administration/News_Bureau/2004-05/04-043.html

“Ran Trao, first locally-managed marine reserve in Viet Nam” – October 21, 2004

(*Viet Nam News Agency*). “Ha Noi (VNA) – Ran Tao marine reserve in Van Hung commune, Van Ninh district, 60 km from Nha Trang township of Khanh Hoa province, is the first marine reserve under the management of a local community in Viet Nam.”

http://www.vnagency.com.vn/NewsA.asp?LANGUAGE_ID=2&CATEGORY_ID=30&NEWS_ID=123292

“Remote reefs not immune to problems: Disease takes its toll on coral” – October 23, 2004 (*The News-Press, FL*).

“DRY TORTUGAS – Out here, far from the Keys' sewage outfall and hordes of divers, the reefs look great – at first glance. Tall fish-covered pinnacles rising from the sea floor seem painted with healthy coral. Tortugas reefs have the most coral cover in the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary – coral cover is the percent of a reef that has coral growing on it, and, while much of the sanctuary has 10 percent coral cover, parts of the Tortugas have 40 percent. Even out here, though, diseases and bleaching are killing corals.” <http://www.news-press.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20041023/NEWS0105/410230451/1075>

UPCOMING EVENTS

If you have events you would like listed in future newsletters please contact coralreef@noaa.gov.

November 2004

2 – 4: **Third Scientific Symposium on Resource Investigations in the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands.** Registration still available. Honolulu, HI. <http://hawaiianatolls.org/sym3/>.

5: **UK Coral Reef Stakeholder Meeting.** London, England.

<http://www.icriforum.org/router.cfm?show=calendar.cfm>.

17 – 25: **3rd IUCN World Conservation Congress.** Bangkok, Thailand.

<http://www.iucn.org/congress>.

30 – Dec 4: **12th U.S. Coral Reef Task Force Meeting.** Miami, FL.

<http://www.ces.fau.edu/taskforce/>.

December 2004

6: **Press Conference to Release the New Report “State of Coral Reefs of the World: 2004.”**

Washington, DC, World Wildlife Fund, 1250 24th Street, NW, 11:00-12:00pm.

13 – 17: **American Geophysical Union Annual Meeting.** San Francisco, CA.

<http://www.agu.org/meetings/fm04>.

January 2005

25-28: V Congress on Caribbean Biodiversity. Abstracts due November 15, 2004. Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic. Contact carlos_riguez96@yahoo.com for details.

TO SUBSCRIBE: Send an e-mail to requests@willamette.nos.noaa.gov with "Subscribe coralreefnews" in the subject line.

TO UNSUBSCRIBE: Send an e-mail to requests@willamette.nos.noaa.gov with "Unsubscribe coralreefnews" in the subject line.

Questions, comments?

Contact coralreef@noaa.gov, NOAA Coral Reef Conservation Program.

Access to NOAA's coral reef data and information is provided through NOAA's Coral Reef Information System at <http://www.coris.noaa.gov>. Current news on NOAA's coral reef activities can be found on the NOAA Coral Reef Conservation Program Web site, <http://www.coralreef.noaa.gov>.

