

- Congressional Policy Brief -
International Year of the Reef 2008
and
International Coral Reef Initiative



International Year of the Reef 2008



Colorful reef fish - Pennantfish, Pyramid and Milletseed butterflyfish - school in great numbers at Rapture Reef, French Frigate Shoals. Photo: James Watt

What is IYOR 2008?

The International Coral Reef Initiative (ICRI) has designated this year as IYOR 2008, or the International Year of the Reef. IYOR 2008 is a worldwide campaign to raise awareness about the value and importance of coral reefs, threats to their sustainability, and to motivate people to take action to protect them.

Who is organizing the campaign?

ICRI will provide overall leadership and direction for the campaign, but the IYOR 2008 activities in each region and country are decided upon and organized at national and local levels.

In the United States, IYOR 2008 activities are being coordinated through the U.S. Coral Reef Task Force, of which NOAA serves as Co-Chair.

What are the goals for IYOR 2008?

- Strengthen awareness about ecological, economic, social, and cultural value of coral reefs and associated ecosystems.
- Improve understanding of the critical threats to reefs and generate both practical and innovative solutions to reduce these threats.
- Generate urgent action to develop and implement effective management strategies for conservation and sustainable use of these ecosystems.

How can Congress help coral reef conservation?

- Support reauthorization of the *Coral Reef Conservation Act*, which provides NOAA the authority to undertake a number of activities to understand, manage, and protect coral reef ecosystems.
- Support the U.S. Coral Reef Task Force whose mission is to lead, coordinate, and strengthen U.S. government actions to conserve both domestic and international coral reef ecosystems.
- Support NOAA's educational outreach efforts during IYOR 2008.





Elkhorn coral. Photo: Paige Gill Credit:
Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary

What will happen during the IYOR 2008 campaign?

The campaign will consist of a wide range of events and activities that will take place throughout the year and around the world. Activities range from science workshops and report publications, to beach clean-ups and art exhibits.

The IYOR 2008 will be launched January 25, 2008 in Washington, D.C. during the ICRI General Meeting. A complete list of IYOR 2008 events, and other related information, can be found at <http://www.iyor.org>.



International Coral Reef Initiative (ICRI)

In 1994, the United States was one of the founding governments of the International Coral Reef Initiative (ICRI). Currently, the United States and Mexico serve as the joint Secretariat for ICRI.

The ICRI is a unique environmental partnership that brings all the stakeholders together with the objective of sustainable use and conservation of coral reefs for future generations. The ICRI is an informal mechanism that allows representatives of over 80 developing countries with coral reefs to sit in equal partnership with major donor countries and development banks, international environmental and development agencies, scientific associations, the private sector and non-governmental organizations to decide on the best strategies to conserve the world's coral reef resources.

The ICRI is not a permanent structure or organization, but an informal network that aims to catalyze the best strategies to conserve coral reefs and related coastal resources. Thus, the ICRI is unique and its strength lies in the fact that it is a voluntary body with basic operational objectives. The ICRI voluntary partnership is linked by the global Secretariat, run and funded by the government of one country, but often with assistance of others.

For more information, please visit <http://www.icriforum.org>.



Red pencil urchin. Photo: James Watt



Hawaiian squirrelfish at French Frigate Shoals. Photo: James Watt

Resource Links

To learn more about coral reefs, and their importance to the United States as vital ecosystems, please visit:

- The United States Coral Reef Task Force - <http://www.coralreef.gov>
- NOAA's Coral Reef Conservation Program - <http://coralreef.noaa.gov>

NOAA's Office of Legislative Affairs
Tel: 202-482-4981 <http://www.legislative.noaa.gov>

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