

NOAA's Coral Reef Valuation Study

Understanding public preferences and values for coral reef ecosystems

Very little information exists on how the public values coral reef ecosystems. Coral reef managers need to understand the public values to aid in their decision-making on this unique environment. A NOAA study will help fill this information gap by examining at a national level how U.S. households value recreational, and conservation services of coral reef ecosystems under alternative management approaches.

But how does the U.S. population value—in terms of recreational, and conservation services—Hawaiian coral reefs? Does the population across the country understand the ecological and economic importance of effectively managing coral reef ecosystems?

About the study

Both national and local level studies are needed to answer these management questions. NOAA's Coral Reef Valuation Study will address the national level perspective and complement recent and ongoing local-level valuation studies. The Coral Reef Valuation Study will provide resource managers with a national level perspective on the total, non-market economic value (i.e. recreational, and conservation values) of Hawaiian coral reef ecosystems.

The study will contribute to five major goals in the National Action Plan to Conserve Coral Reefs. The Action Plan is the nation's blueprint for protecting and restoring coral reefs. Those five goals are:

- Conduct strategic research,
- Understand social and economic factors that may affect coral reef ecosystems,
- Improve the use of marine protected areas,
- Restore damaged reefs, and
- Improve outreach and education about coral reef ecosystems.

The study entails developing and implementing a questionnaire for randomly selected respondents across the United States. Questions posed will explore respondents' uses of Hawaii's reefs and preferences for alternative management approaches, as well as their knowledge of coral reef ecosystems and the recreational, and conservation values of these ecosystems.

Topics this research effort will address include:

- Estimating non-market values provided by coral reefs,

- Valuing coral reef protection in high use versus low use areas, and
- Estimating the value of repairing injuries to coral reef ecosystems from ship groundings.

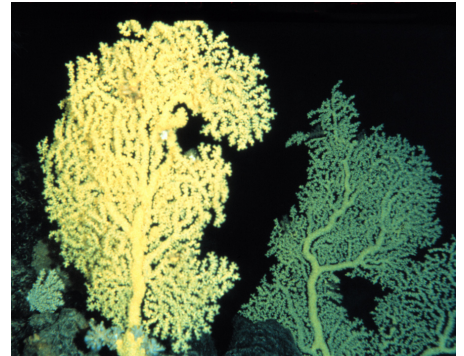
Technical input and outreach

NOAA has sought technical input on the study from a number of coral reef and survey research experts around the country, including individuals from the Hawaii Department of Land and Natural Resources. NOAA has also approached representatives from local, regional, and national organizations and agencies who may be interested in learning more about this research effort. Once the study is completed, it is anticipated that NOAA will hold meetings and conduct presentations to explain the results to interested groups and individuals.

Management benefits

Developing a clearer picture of how citizens at the national level value the conservation and recreational aspects of coral reef ecosystems will help coral reef managers:

- Develop effective management plans that address the values and needs of citizens,
- Allocate limited funding to yield the greatest benefit for both the reef resource and users,
- Better understand the costs of damage to coral reef resources from human impacts, and
- Develop educational and outreach materials that target citizen values.



The research will also benefit national coral reef conservation efforts by providing much needed information to guide federal investment in coral management activities.

To learn more about the National Coral Reef Valuation Study, please contact:

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