

In 2002, the U.S. Coral Reef Task Force identified the need for action at the local level to reduce key threats to coral reefs and called for the development of Local Action Strategies (LAS) in each of the seven states and territories which possess significant coral reef resources.

FLORIDA Local Action Strategy

With guidance from the USCRTE, the Florida Department of Environmental Protection and the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission coordinated the formation of an interagency team of marine resource professionals (state, regional, local, and federal) and scientists. This team, named the Southeast Florida Action Strategy Team (SEFAST), gathered to develop local action strategies in May 2003 and is targeting coral reefs from the southern Miami-Dade County line to Hobe Sound (Martin County). This region was chosen because the coral ecosystems are close to shore and co-exist with intensely urbanized areas that lack a coordinated development plan (like that of the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary). Thus far, numerous stakeholders have been involved in developing a working draft LAS of issue statements, goals, objectives, and projects, using a facilitated process including public review and input. Refinements of the strategies and identification of priority projects are underway.

AWARENESS AND APPRECIATION...

Lack of awareness and appreciation of the southeast Florida coral reef ecosystem is a significant source of the continued degradation of this ecosystem. Impacts from activities conducted by users unaware of the presence and vulnerability of the reef could be reduced through a combination of strategies to increase awareness and refine some use practices. The aim of the projects in the LAS for this focus area is to encourage positive behaviors and decisions that benefit coral reefs among citizens and visitors in southeast Florida.

Goals and Objectives

- Increase effectiveness and decrease duplication of coral reef education and outreach efforts in southeast Florida
- Increase awareness and appreciation of the coral reef ecosystem in citizens and visitors of southeast Florida

Project Examples

- Inventory existing educational products and programs; synthesize and analyze data
- Develop informative products for hotel guest rooms, e.g., tent cards, door hangers, etc.
- Conduct dive operator training sessions

Anticipated Outcomes

- Better coordinated and targeted coral reef ecosystem outreach and education effort in southeast Florida
- Increased positive behaviors and decisions that benefit coral reefs
- A well-educated media and dive industry that will communicate important reef conservation messages

FISHING, DIVING, AND OTHER USES...

Coral reef-related recreation and commercial uses are very important aspects of southeast Florida's economy. The activities associated with these uses, if not properly managed, can have serious detrimental impacts on coral reef health. The LAS for this focus area specifically targets fishing and diving, both of which are significant reef-based activities in this region.

Goals and Objectives

- Develop a comprehensive strategy that effectively emphasizes balance between resource use and protection
- Increase compliance with Florida fishing regulations regarding seasonal closures, size and catch limits, gear restrictions, and protected marine life
- Minimize indirect impacts to reefs from recreational and commercial activities

ESTIMATED YEAR-1 LAS PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION COSTS

Awareness and Appreciation
\$107,000

Fishing, Diving, and Other Uses
\$85,000

Land-based Sources of Pollution
\$1,032,000

Maritime Industry and Coastal Construction Impacts
\$85,000

Estimated costs derived from year-1 projects for which cost information is presently available



STAKEHOLDERS

Broward, Palm Beach,
Miami-Dade, and Martin
Counties

Cry of the Water

Dive associations

DOI, National Park Service

Environmental Defense

Fish and Wildlife
Research Institute

Florida Department of
Environmental Protection

Florida Fish and Wildlife
Conservation Commission

Florida Sea Grant and
various universities

International Game Fish
Association and other
fishing associations

National Coral Reef Institute

NOAA

Ocean Watch Foundation

PADI Project Aware

South Florida Regional
Planning Council

South Florida Water
Management District

The Nature Conservancy

The Ocean Conservancy

Tropical Audubon Society

U.S. Army Corps of
Engineers

USDA

USEPA

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Project Examples

- *Coordinate various law enforcement agencies with adjacent or overlapping jurisdictions*
- *Conduct social and economic evaluation of reef-related fishing and recreational activities*

Anticipated Outcomes

- *Increased and optimized law enforcement effectiveness in geographic focus area*

LAND-BASED SOURCES OF POLLUTION...

Coral reefs and their associated habitats are important biological and economic resources for south-east Florida. However, there is a lack of qualitative and quantitative information concerning the extent, nature, and overall condition of this fragile ecosystem. The LAS for this focus area addresses impacts to corals resulting from upland activities — many of them resulting in unintentional but very real stresses on coral reef ecosystem health.

Goals and Objectives

- *Characterize existing condition of the coral reef ecosystem*
- *Quantify, characterize, and prioritize the land-based sources of pollution that need to be addressed based on identified impacts to the reefs*

Project Examples

- *Generate maps of benthic habitats*
- *Quantify and characterize sources of pollution*
- *Conduct literature search to identify links between pollution and reefs*

Anticipated Outcomes

- *Benthic habitat maps of Broward, Miami-Dade, Palm Beach, and Martin counties*
- *Characterized sources of pollution and identified relative contributions of point and non-point source pollution*

MARITIME INDUSTRY AND COASTAL CONSTRUCTION IMPACTS...

Coral systems in southeast Florida can be adversely affected by projects and activities such as anchoring, groundings, infrastructure installation (cables, pipelines, outfalls), beach renourishment, and dredge and fill operations in and around the reef areas. The LAS for this focus area concentrates on developing solutions to minimize or alleviate the physically damaging impacts of these coastal activities.

Goals and Objectives

- *Protect coral systems from impacts associated with projects and activities in and around reef tracts*
- *Ensure compliance with regulatory requirements*

Project Examples

- *Identify and evaluate state and federal rules for relevance, effectiveness, and level of compliance and effort*
- *Develop regional standard operating procedures for rapid response and training for salvage of impacted corals*
- *Identify innovative technologies, construction practices, and procedures to minimize coral reef impacts*

Anticipated Outcomes

- *Coordinated and consistent mechanisms for improved information transfer for protection of coral reefs*
- *Reviewed, revised, and implemented existing regulations which protect coral reefs*

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