

*5th Coral Reef Task Force Meeting
August 5-7, 2000
Pago Pago, American Samoa*

Resolution 5-1 - Grounded Vessel Removal

Whereas vessel groundings on coral reefs can cause extensive environmental degradation from the spilling of oil to the grinding and scarring of coral reef habitat; and

Whereas the current Oil Pollution Act of 1990 sets up a response for oil and hazardous material removal but does not fund the removal of the vessel from the reef; and

Whereas studies have shown that leaving the wreck on the reef has the potential to cause further degradation of the reef ecosystem; and

Whereas it has been difficult to collect money from the vessel owners to assist in the wreck removal, therefore vessels are left to break apart and scatter wreckage across the reef; and

Whereas the recent cooperative efforts between the federal agencies and the states and territories to deal with vessel removals in American Samoa and Hawaii has set an important precedent for dealing with future groundings;

Be it therefore resolved:

That the U.S. Coral Reef Task Force recommends the following actions:

Require a bond or surety for all fishing vessels entering U.S. territorial waters for the purposes of conducting business at U.S. ports adjacent to coral reefs, as appropriate;
Make recommendations for additional legislation and a funding mechanism in addition to the Oil Pollution Act to broaden the ability to remove grounded vessels as needed;
Establish national legislation for coral reef damage assessment, including cultural losses, to serve as a guideline for both fines and restoration costs; and
Develop federal assistance protocols to augment the Islands' ability to initiate rapid response for vessel damage assessment and removal including training, prearranged access to DOI, DOC, DOT and DOD assistance in the event of immediate and critical environmental damage.