

Oral Comments by Dave Raney, Sierra Club, before the USCRTF 10/24/06

Good afternoon. My name is Dave Raney, presenting Sierra Club comments. I live in Hawai'i, but am a former resident of South Florida. I can remember snorkeling among large Elkhorn coral colonies a short distance from the beach as Lauderdale by the Sea some fifty years ago.

My generation failed to protect those reefs – largely from ignorance. Today we can no longer claim ignorance if we fail to do what must be done to protect coral reefs.

We now need political will and public pressure for decisionmakers to take necessary actions. The document I am holding is a timely example of how a group of NGO's, large and small, has responded to this need by bringing key issues to the attention of Florida political candidates. The document is titled “**Florida’s Coastal and Ocean Future – A Blueprint for Economic and Environmental Leadership.**” Among those issues are the need to curb unwise coastal development, control water pollution, and reduce global warming.

Similar issues were raised by the NGO organization CORALations, based on the island of Culebra in Puerto Rico, in their public comments. Regarding water quality issues related to sewage treatment plants, I direct your attention to our written comments, and those of CORALations, regarding the need to strengthen the Consent Decree for the Puerto Rico Aqueduct and Sewer Authority before the Decree is finalized.

Regarding global warming, Page 9 of “The Reef Manager’s Guide to Coral Reef Bleaching” states that the future condition of coral reefs will largely be influenced by two factors: (1) the rate of increased temperature stress and (2) the resilience of coral reef ecosystems. The manual states that Factor 1 is largely a matter for national and international policy and lies beyond the scope of the manual.

Yet, how we deal with Factor 1 in the year 2006, as a nation and as an interconnected planet, is crucial to the success of the resilience strategies in this ambitious and hopeful manual.

Action Item 1 of the ITMEMS 3 Statement on Climate Change calls for limiting climate change to ensure that further increases in sea temperature are limited to 2 degrees Centigrade above pre-industrial levels. It also sets a target on CO2 levels in ocean waters.

One of the goals of the Manager’s Guide is “to engage the public.” Well, we are engaged, and we seek action by decisionmakers, including the Task Force, to address the root causes of climate change as well as dealing with the effects. One way to do this would be to amend Objective 5 of Goal 11 of the National Coral Reef Action Strategy as follows. To the current language, which states “**Address the impact of global change, coral bleaching, and reef health on reefs and people,**” add the words -- **and support efforts at the local, state, national, and global levels to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases.**”

We urge the Task Force to adopt this or similar language so as to directly address the need for actions required to limit future increases in sea temperature and CO2 levels – and give the Manual a maximum chance for success.

Thank you.