

12th Coral Reef Task Force Meeting
December 1-4, 2004
Miami, Florida

Resolution 12-1: Recommendations to Help Protect Coral Spawning and Recruitment Events

Whereas,

- corals are primary builders of coral reefs that provide habitats for countless species of plant and animal life, and produce one of the world's most diverse and productive ecosystems, and;
- the economies, values, cultures, social framework and other aspects of many current and future human communities, including U.S. flag islands and the Freely Associated States, benefit from and often rely on the products and services of healthy coral reef ecosystems, and;
- the structure and function of coral reefs depends on successful reproduction and survival of corals, the fundamental building blocks of coral reefs, and;
- many corals reproduce through the release of egg and sperm or larvae into the water column during spawning at certain times of the year, and the subsequent recruitment of juveniles from the water column onto benthic substrates, and;
- the eggs, sperm and juvenile forms of many reef-building coral species are sensitive to nutrients, chemicals, sediments and other materials in the water and on the bethos, making coral reproduction and recruitment highly vulnerable to impacts from activities that introduce these materials into the coastal environment;
- many human activities can result in the addition of significant amounts of nutrients, suspended particulates and dissolved products in the waters that can interfere with successful reproduction and recruitment of corals, and;
- the timing and extent of spawning periods is currently known for many coral species and has been accurately predicted into the future in some areas (where this information is currently lacking it could be obtained and made available), and;
- providing advance information on the timing, spatial extent and other characteristics of coral spawning events (e.g., coral spawning forecasts) could be used by government and non-governmental entities during planning and implementation of human activities to reduce and/or eliminate potential impacts to coral reproduction and recruitment;

The U.S. Coral Reef Task Force (CRTF) therefore resolves the following:

1. The CRTF recommends that all member agencies which are involved in the authorization, consultation, review and/or implementation of activities in the coastal zones or waters on or closely adjacent to coral reefs:
 - a. Use all available information on coral reproduction, recruitment and survival to assess the impacts of activities on coral reproduction and recruitment events during the life of the activity, and;
 - b. Include in the terms of any such authorizations to conduct activities (e.g., permits, licenses, funding etc) requirements or recommendations to avoid any adverse effects to the reproduction, recruitment and survival of corals and other coral reef species to the maximum extent practicable, consistent with all applicable laws, regulations or other mandates.
2. The Task Force will establish an Interagency Working Group consisting of representatives from NOAA, the Department of the Interior, the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers and other interested Task Force members to assess existing capabilities and needs to be able to provide advance information on coral reproduction and recruitment events to help reduce and/or eliminate potential impacts from human activities. Task Force members are requested to identify representatives to the Interagency Working Group by January 15, 2005.
3. The Task Force charges the Interagency Working Group with the following:
 - a. Assess the current availability, delivery and use of information and forecasts related to coral reproduction and recruitment events (such as coral spawning) by government and non-governmental entities during planning, review, approval and implementation of human activities that may impact such events;
 - b. Make recommendations on how to improve availability, delivery and use of information on coral reproduction and recruitment through additional forecasts, tools or information and specify lead agencies for notification that would assist government and non-governmental entities during planning, review, approval and implementation of human activities to reduce and/or eliminate impacts to coral reproduction and recruitment.
 - c. Make recommendations on how to design and implement management actions related to forecasts of coral spawning events in U.S. regions, and to identify the key activities including, but not limited to, dredging, storm water runoff, large development projects and agricultural activities that can interfere with coral reef regeneration.

- d. Provide a progress report of its findings to the Task Force within 6 months and a final report within 1 year.