

October 16, 2009

Ms. Sarah Bobbe
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
United State Coral Reef Task Force

Dear Ms. Bobbe:

I offer the following comment for consideration at the upcoming USCRTF meeting. The economic and environmental value of Broward County's reef system is undisputed. The economic benefit to Broward County alone from reef-related scuba diving and recreational fishing exceeds \$2 billion per year. The reef system also helps to protect our shores from storm events while providing critical habitat to juvenile fisheries.

Yet, this critical ecosystem is in peril from anthropogenic sources, the biggest threat being dredge and fill operations intended to renourish beaches to protect property. The environmental impact of dredge and fill on the reef tract in Florida is well documented – including acres of buried and damaged corals. These projects are undertaken by dredging companies with inadequate governmental oversight to ensure compliance to turbidity standards and other environmental permit requirements. Moreover, offshore beach quality sand is no longer available in Florida. This practice is simply unsustainable.

Unfortunately, many municipalities view dredge and fill as a quick fix and don't implement best management practices to maintain their current beaches against erosion. Such practices should include eliminating storm water runoff on our beaches, requiring dune vegetation, and creating sand bypasses.

I've enjoyed diving Broward County reefs for almost 20 years. I hope that future generations of Floridians, and tourist, will have an opportunity to enjoy our reefs. That's contingent on developing practices that help preserve this unique resource. I believe that the single and most immediate relief we can provide to the reef system is to find alternatives to beach dredge and fill operations.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'George Cavros', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

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