

I am:

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To the Task Force members:

I have been a scuba diver for 57 years and a local scientist for 44 years during which time I have seen the gradual deterioration of our coral and sponge and soft coral reefs. I am appalled that our concern has only been getting governmental attention in recent years. Man's activities still impact our reefs in a major fashion. Anchors still drag, and worse yet, every Fourth of July most coastal cities on the East Coast of Florida have a fireworks display watched by hundreds of anchored boats along our reef system. Dredging for beach renourishment and for deepening and widening our ports do damage by cutting into reefs and by stirring up sediment which deposits on live reef areas. Not infrequently tow cables from barges (including dredges) to tug boats, usually if steel and negatively buoyant, settle to the bottom and drag over live reef acting like a giant chain saw, overturning corals, cutting soft corals and sponges off. And sometimes uprooting large coral heads. Ships waiting to enter port anchor (minimally in many cases) and drag onto the near shore corals when a sudden storm pushes them as has happened so many times at Port Everglades entrance area. Beach nourishment deposits sand on live reef areas, of which there are fewer every year. Fresh water from beach condo air conditioners runs into the beach areas, sometimes cutting channels across the beach. Nutrients from commercial farms and homeowners along our canal systems run onto our near shore reefs and fertilize the algae that do enormous damage, augmented by nutrients in our sewage discharges in 90 to 150 feet of water, carried toward shore by coastal eddies.

I am not sure what draconian measures would have to be taken to stop all this but some of it must be included in your deliberations to save what remains of our reef systems, so valuable as wave breakers in storms and for the food and recreational use it provides. And that does not consider the enormous diversity of like forms making up a reef many values of which we still do not know.

Please try and do a good job free of POLITICAL considerations which hamstring most laws and regulations.
Good luck. I will not be holding my breath!
Ray McAllister
