



NOAA

NATIONAL OCEANIC AND
ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE



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NOAA Celebrates Earth Week at Recovery Act Project to Restore Coral in the Florida Keys

NOAA joined local partners today in the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary to celebrate Earth Week at an American Recovery and Reinvestment Act project that is putting Florida Keys residents to work restoring 34 degraded coral reefs in eight distinct areas in the Florida Keys and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

"It's great to see the Recovery Act making a difference for the environment and the economy here in the Keys," said Jane Lubchenco, Ph.D., under secretary of commerce for oceans and atmosphere and NOAA administrator. "This project is creating immediate blue and green jobs and also making a long-term investment in healthier coral reefs, which provide habitat for the fish populations that are so valuable to commercial and recreational fishing, tourism and the local economy."

NOAA provided \$3.3 million in Recovery Act funding to The Nature Conservancy to recover threatened *Acropora* coral species by transplanting nursery-grown coral fragments to 34,000 square meters of reef that were damaged by grounded ships.

"Coral restoration is one of The Nature Conservancy's U.S. marine priorities, and we are thrilled to have Dr. Lubchenco and NOAA here today to highlight our coral restoration project for Earth Week," said Mark Tercek, CEO and president of The Nature Conservancy. "This is a great example of where conservation and the economy are working hand-in-hand."

Over time, restoration of these coral reefs will not only help recover the threatened *Acropora* coral species, but will also lead to increased fish populations that use the reefs for shelter, food, and breeding sites. Recreational and commercial fishing annually bring billions of dollars to Florida. In addition, coral reefs act as natural breakwaters, protecting shorelines from erosion and storm damage. Restoring coral reefs is even more important since so many are severely threatened by climate change, the effects of overfishing, and land-based sources of pollution.

Through the Recovery Act, NOAA was provided \$167 million for marine and coastal habitat restoration. The Florida Keys Threatened Coral Recovery and Restoration project is one of 50 habitat restoration projects selected by NOAA for this funding.

More than 30 projects have broken ground, with the rest preparing to start throughout the next year and a half. The 50 projects are supporting thousands of short-term and long-term jobs. They support the equivalent of more than 250 full-time jobs and are expected to support the equivalent of an additional 1,000 full-time jobs before they are completed.

When all the planned projects are complete, 8,900 acres of habitat will be restored, and fish will gain access to 700 stream miles that had been blocked by obsolete and unsafe dams. The projects also will remove more than 850 metric tons of abandoned fishing gear and other marine trash, rebuild oyster and other shellfish habitat, and reduce threats to 11,750 acres of coral reef habitat.

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On the Web

NOAA Recovery Act: www.noaa.gov/recovery

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