

Southeast Florida



NOAA CORAL REEF CONSERVATION PROGRAM

Coral Reef Management Capacity Challenges and Recommendations



The Florida reef tract runs over 300 miles from the Dry Tortugas on through the Florida Keys to St. Lucie Inlet in Martin County. The reefs adjacent to Miami-Dade, Broward, Palm Beach, and Martin counties represent the northern third of the system and are managed by the State of Florida. This is a highly urbanized area

containing approximately one third of Florida's population and three large ports.

The Florida Department of Environmental Protection and Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission are the state agencies with jurisdiction over coral reef resources. Florida is the only jurisdiction of the seven U.S. coral reef jurisdictions that has a formalized coral reef program solely dedicated to the conservation of coral reef ecosystems, the Florida Department of Environmental Protection Coral Reef Conservation Program.

A team of experts supported by the NOAA Coral Reef Conservation Program conducted an assessment of the programs working to manage and conserve coral reefs in southeast Florida. The resulting report, *An Analysis of Issues Affecting the Management of Coral Reefs and the Associated Capacity Building Needs in Florida*, is available on the coral program's website at www.coralreef.noaa.gov. Some of the findings are summarized below.

As part of a capacity-assessment process, a team of specialists identified challenges common to all seven U.S. coral reef jurisdictions and provided recommendations to overcome them. These findings are summarized below.

NATIONAL CHALLENGES

- A lack of political will and formal commitment for increased coral reef management
- A lack of long-term and sustainable financing
- A lack of supportive and informed constituencies
- A need to move from planning to implementation
- A need for improved enforcement and compliance
- A need for increased support for the effective function and structure of management agencies

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Support for a collaborative approach for the reauthorization of the Coral Reef Conservation Act of 2000
- The expansion and institutionalization of staff capacity-building programs in the jurisdictions
- Establishment of a working group of the U.S. Coral Reef Task Force focused on improving the enforcement of laws that safeguard coral reefs
- Strategic engagement of governors to champion coral reef conservation and management
- Facilitation of peer-to-peer learning exchanges among the jurisdictions

Read the full report, *A Synthesis of Issues Affecting the Management of Coral Reefs and Recommendations for Long-term Capacity Building in U.S. Jurisdictions*, at www.coralreef.noaa.gov.

Southeast Florida

CHALLENGES

Political will and a formal commitment to increase capacity for coral reef management:

The passage of Florida's Coral Reef Protection Act in 2009 represents a commitment by the Florida legislature, but this commitment needs to grow to include leaders of private industries and organizations. The strength of private industry's influence (recreational fishing is an example) over decision makers in state government can be problematic. Coral reef conservation does not seem to receive a great deal of attention in comparison to other pressing economic issues.

Sustainable financing of coral reef management:

The state's annual funding allocation does not meet growing programmatic needs. Even when funding is secured, there are a wide range of challenges associated with procurement of goods and services for coral reef management. Staff member turnover and pay scales seem to be a chronic issue.

Grow a supportive and informed constituency for effective coral reef management:

At almost six million people, the population of southeast Florida is larger than that of 30 individual states. Resource users who are supportive and informed of coral reef management strategies exist but are limited.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Build management capacity within the Florida Department of Environmental Protection and

the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation

Commission: An increased presence and improved procurement processes are needed. To do this, the Florida legislature would have to approve a legislative budget request that provides sustained and appropriate funding. A routine desk audit could illuminate issues of workload and compensation, as well as staff member retention.

Valuing ecosystem services and building a business case for improved coral reef management:

Given that a common metric is return on investment, it is recommended that the agencies make a clear and concise business case for coral reef management targeted to upper level leadership and useful for a variety of audiences. Data should include new socioeconomic studies of coral reef valuations across sectors, including noncommercial reef recreation. Updated valuation studies also should include the ecosystem goods and services provided by well-managed coral reefs (such as fisheries, wave attenuation, and other benefits).

Establish a coral reef resources education and outreach network for southeast Florida:

This network should build on the outstanding education and outreach work conducted by the Coral Reef Conservation Program. A wider network could foster worthwhile relationships and idea exchanges among agencies, constituencies, and resource user groups.

MORE INFORMATION



NOAA
CORAL REEF
CONSERVATION PROGRAM

This capacity assessment was conducted by Sustainamatrix under contract to the NOAA Coral Reef Conservation Program. We would like to thank the many partners who participated in this process. The assessments are available online at www.coralreef.noaa.gov/aboutcrctp/strategy/reprioritization/capacityassessments.

Dana Wusinich-Mendez | Coral Reef Management Liaison
Dana.Wusinich-Mendez@noaa.gov

Kurtis Gregg | Fisheries Liaison
Kurtis.Gregg@noaa.gov