



Fall 2020

Dear Reader,

Thank you for your interest in the NOAA Coral Reef Conservation Program (CRCP) National Status Report for U.S. Coral Reefs. The report highlights three main messages: 1) Overall, U.S. coral reefs are in fair condition, but declining and vulnerable, 2) impacts from climate change are the greatest threat to coral reefs globally, and 3) coral reefs adjacent to highly populated areas are more degraded than coral reefs adjacent to remote areas. The report provides a high-level overview—capturing the time period from 2012-2018—of coral reef health for all of the U.S. coral reef jurisdictions in the Pacific, Atlantic, Caribbean, and Gulf of Mexico, and is meant to contextualize the nine previously-released jurisdictional status reports into one synthesized national status report. This report is intended to be used as a communication, education, and outreach tool, and is not intended to directly inform program activities or assess management actions. The National Coral Reef Status Report may help readers visualize the range of coral reef conditions and offers some good news—there are U.S. coral reefs with a “Good” score. Most U.S. coral reefs received a “Fair” score, and where there is an “Impaired” score, CRCP and our partners have initiatives in place to help change the trajectory of coral reef health, such as restoring coral populations and reducing land-based sources of pollution.

This report is the culmination of a five-year collaboration between CRCP, the University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science’s Integration and Application Network, and numerous partners in every jurisdiction from state and territorial governments, academia, and non-governmental organizations. We have synthesized data from 2012-2018 in four theme areas: corals and algae, fish, climate, and human connections across all U.S. coral reef areas. Synthesizing six years of monitoring data in each of these four theme areas in all nine jurisdictions is an enormous amount of work, and CRCP is proud to release a product like this for the first time. We broke ground in terms of identifying historical baselines for each of our indicators in each theme in each jurisdiction—a scientific analysis that may be the first of its kind at a national scale.

We hope this report informs continued discussion about the status of U.S. coral reefs, and we encourage you to contact CRCP if you have any questions about the report.

Sincerely,

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