

Spring 2020



Dear Reader,

Thank you for your interest in the NOAA Coral Reef Conservation Program (CRCP) status report for Puerto Rico. This document is the product of collaboration between the NOAA Coral Program and numerous partners, including University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science's Integration and Application Network, the Puerto Rico Department of Natural and Environmental Resources, University of Puerto Rico, Pew Charitable Trusts, HJR Reefscaping, and Coastal Survey Solutions.

This report is meant to help start a conversation about Puerto Rico's coral reefs, is available in both English and Spanish, and represents a snapshot in time from 2014-2017. This report is not an assessment of management or restoration efforts, and is not intended for the management of resources. Data used for this product came from NOAA's National Coral Reef Monitoring Program (NCRMP).

The scores on this product for corals and algae, fish, and climate indicators were derived from comparing data from 2014-2017 to the best available historical data. The human connections indicators were compared to goals set by experts because the goals are subjective to jurisdictional needs and there are no historical data to compare to. It is important to note that for some indicators the best available data were post-1990s, and therefore may already be reflective of declined ecosystem health compared to pre-industrial times. Unfortunately, reliable and verifiable historical reference data are not always readily available. As a result, the scores may be elevated given that they are compared to an already-affected reference point. Additionally, data from the 2019 NCRMP field season were not yet available at the time this report was created. The overall score is "Fair (70%)", suggesting that some indicators meet reference values, and others have declined moderately. However, it is important to note that this score is on the cusp of being considered "Impaired."

The report suggests that resident survey respondents' self-reported engagement in pro-environmental behaviors was critical in Puerto Rico. Reef fish diversity was also critical, suggesting that this indicator is severely impacted and/or has declined substantially. However, during the reporting period, there were no severe thermal stress events that caused coral bleaching so temperature stress was scored as "good". Additionally, resident survey respondents' self-reported support for management actions was very good. We hope this report will foster continued discussion about Puerto Rico's coral reefs, and encourage you to contact the NOAA Coral Reef Conservation Program if you have any questions about anything in the report.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Koss, Director, Coral Reef Conservation Program  
Erica K. Towle, National Coral Reef Monitoring Program Coordinator