



## SOUTHEAST FLORIDA REEF REVIEW

December 2019

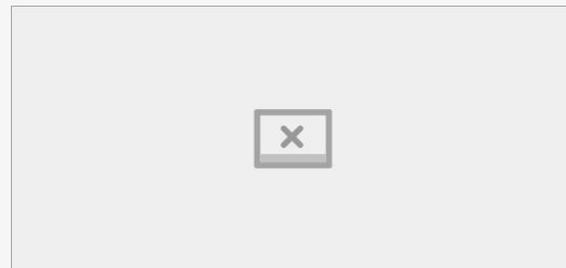
*Keeping you up-to-date on the Coral Reef Conservation Program!*

### DEP Staff Represent Florida Governor at the 42nd U.S. Coral Reef Task Force Meeting in Palau

The U.S. Coral Reef Task Force (USCRTF) was established in 1998 by an Executive Order to lead U.S. efforts to preserve and protect coral reefs. The USCRTF is made up of leadership representatives from 12 federal agencies, seven U.S. coral reef jurisdictions (Florida, Hawaii, U.S. Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico, Guam, American Samoa, Northern Mariana Islands) and three freely associated states (Federated States of Micronesia, the Marshall Islands and Palau). The USCRTF meetings serve as an incredible platform for sharing information and lessons learned. These meetings also are crucial for improving resource management coordination and aligning priorities. Reports of the Stony Coral Tissue Loss Disease outbreak spreading throughout Florida and the wider Caribbean are worrying Task Force members in the Pacific. They fear the disease could spread to their reefs, especially if ballast water is a vector. The EPA, NOAA and the U.S. Coast Guard are committed to working toward a resolution for ballast water treatment and it will continue to be a priority of the USCRTF.

### Update on Stony Coral Tissue Loss Disease in Florida

Florida's reefs have been experiencing a Stony Coral Tissue Loss Disease outbreak since 2014. The Florida Department of Environmental Protection is working with dozens of partners from federal, state and local agencies, nongovernmental organizations, universities, and members of the community to investigate and



**Watch researchers from FWC, The Florida Aquarium, and University of Miami rescue corals from the**

solve this problem. [Look here for up-to-date information on the disease in Florida.](#)

**Dry Tortugas in October 2019.**

In September, healthy corals were rescued from the Marquesas and brought to Nova Southeastern University, where they will be housed to maintain genetic diversity for future reef restoration efforts. [Look here for information on the disease response effort in Florida.](#)

Ocean Alchemists is working to supply intervention partners in Florida and beyond with materials to deliver various disease treatments directly to infected coral colonies.

## Southeast Florida Action Network SEAFAN

SEAFAN is a community-based reporting and response program managed by DEP's Coral Reef Conservation Program. SEAFAN aims to improve the protection and management of southeast Florida's coral reefs by providing a platform for anyone to report marine incidents observed in Miami-Dade, Broward, Palm Beach and Martin counties. So far in 2019, we have received 73 marine incident reports. Recent reports indicate the presence of a condition affecting up to 70% of giant barrel sponges in Palm Beach County. This condition is thought to be sponge orange band disease. To determine the extent and severity of this condition, and to verify whether an outbreak of sponge orange band disease is occurring, we encourage more people to submit to SEAFAN any observations of sponge conditions in southeast Florida.



[Submit a marine incident report](#)

## BleachWatch



[Watch a BleachWatch survey conducted underwater!](#)

BleachWatch is a specialized branch of SEAFAN, specifically aimed to detect and monitor coral bleaching and coral disease events in southeast Florida. This program seeks to create an observer network

of trained recreational, commercial and scientific divers to help identify when and where coral bleaching and coral disease are taking place. We want to thank Friends of Our Florida Reefs, our citizen support organization, for continuing to support the BleachWatch program. With their assistance, we have now trained more than 25 BleachWatch instructors to provide comprehensive BleachWatch trainings to divers and other reef explorers throughout southeast Florida. Although coral disease is still spreading throughout and affecting the Florida Reef Tract, bleaching conditions have been minimal this year. So far, we have received 26 BleachWatch reports in 2019. [Learn more about SEAFAN and BleachWatch here.](#)

## Friends of Our Florida Reefs

**Friends of Our Florida Reefs (FOFR) is a registered 501(c)(3) nonprofit citizen support organization dedicated to conserving and protecting more than 100 miles of vital coral reefs by enhancing and complementing the critical efforts, programs and activities of the DEP Coral Reef Conservation Program.**



In summer 2019, FOFR continued supporting BleachWatch trainings and was thrilled to meet the rapid-response request to assist the Halmos College of Natural Sciences and Oceanography at Nova Southeastern University with their vanguard coral nursery and laboratory work on the region-wide coral rescue project underway. This major financial contribution will assist with critical coral restoration efforts for years to come. FOFR continues to work year-round on outreach/education, various and challenging needs, and exciting long-term projects – THANK YOU to everyone who helps achieve the FOFR mission in all ways! If you are interested in volunteering or becoming more involved, reach out to [info@floridareef.org](mailto:info@floridareef.org).



### Southeast Florida Coral Reef Initiative

*Acting above to protect what's below.*

*The Southeast Florida Coral Reef Initiative is a local action strategy for collaborative action among government and non-governmental partners to identify and implement priority actions needed to reduce key threats to coral reef resources in southeast Florida, which includes Miami-Dade, Broward, Palm Beach and Martin counties.*

*The Southeast Florida Coral Reef Initiative was developed through the collaborative effort of many government agencies, non-governmental organizations, universities and private partners and is coordinated by the DEP Coral Reef Conservation Program.*

