

Public Comment



**Palm Beach County
Reef Rescue**

US Coral Reef Task Force
October 21, 2011

Reef Rescue

an all volunteer, grassroots, nonprofit, 501(c)3 organization.

Formed by a group of recreational divers to address a lack of effective resource management at the local level.

Our ranks now spread worldwide and include divers and non-divers alike concerned with protecting the threatened coastal ecosystem of south Florida.

Reefs north of Key Biscayne suffer from a lack of adequate resource management & protection



The southeast FL reef tract is home to the same threatened & endangered species as the Keys.



In fact, Palm Beach County reefs also have unique features; such as annual August/September Goliath Grouper spawning aggregations.



The 2011 event was the largest to date, with as many as 100 adults gathered on a single wreck.

In many respects the SE FL reefs are in better condition than the Keys



but lack of resource management has caused significant habitat degradation which largely goes unnoticed.



Southeast Florida Reefs are threatened by:

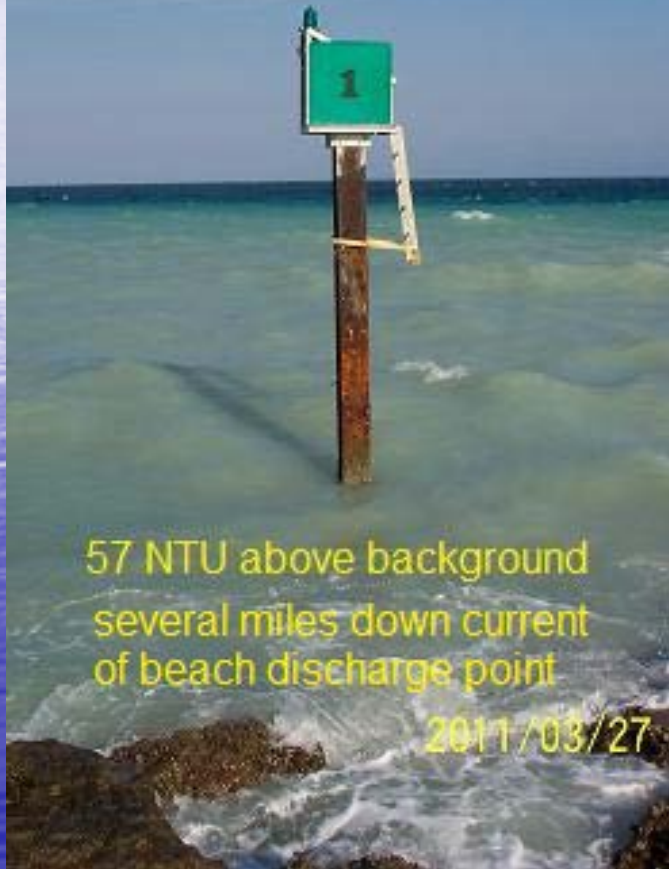


Nutrient pollution, pharmaceutical waste and pathogens from outfalls and surface water discharges.

Siltation and reef burial from beach projects



Boca Raton Inlet



57 NTU above background
several miles down current
of beach discharge point

2011/03/27

Hillsboro Beach Renourishment Project March 2011



Deerfield Beach Pier
244 NTU above background

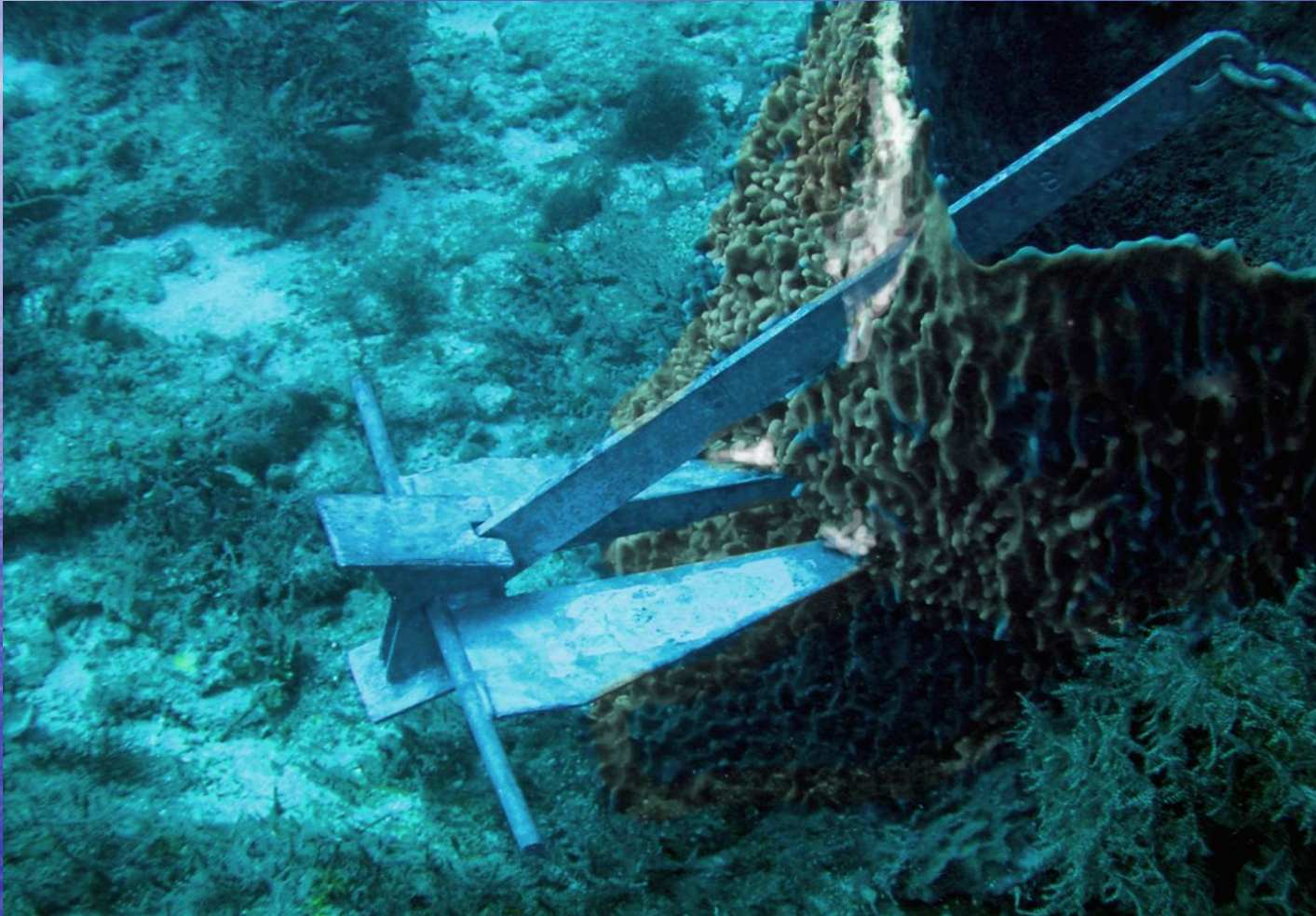
1.5 miles from sand placement area

2011/03/27

Habitat destruction loss of mangroves



Anchor damage

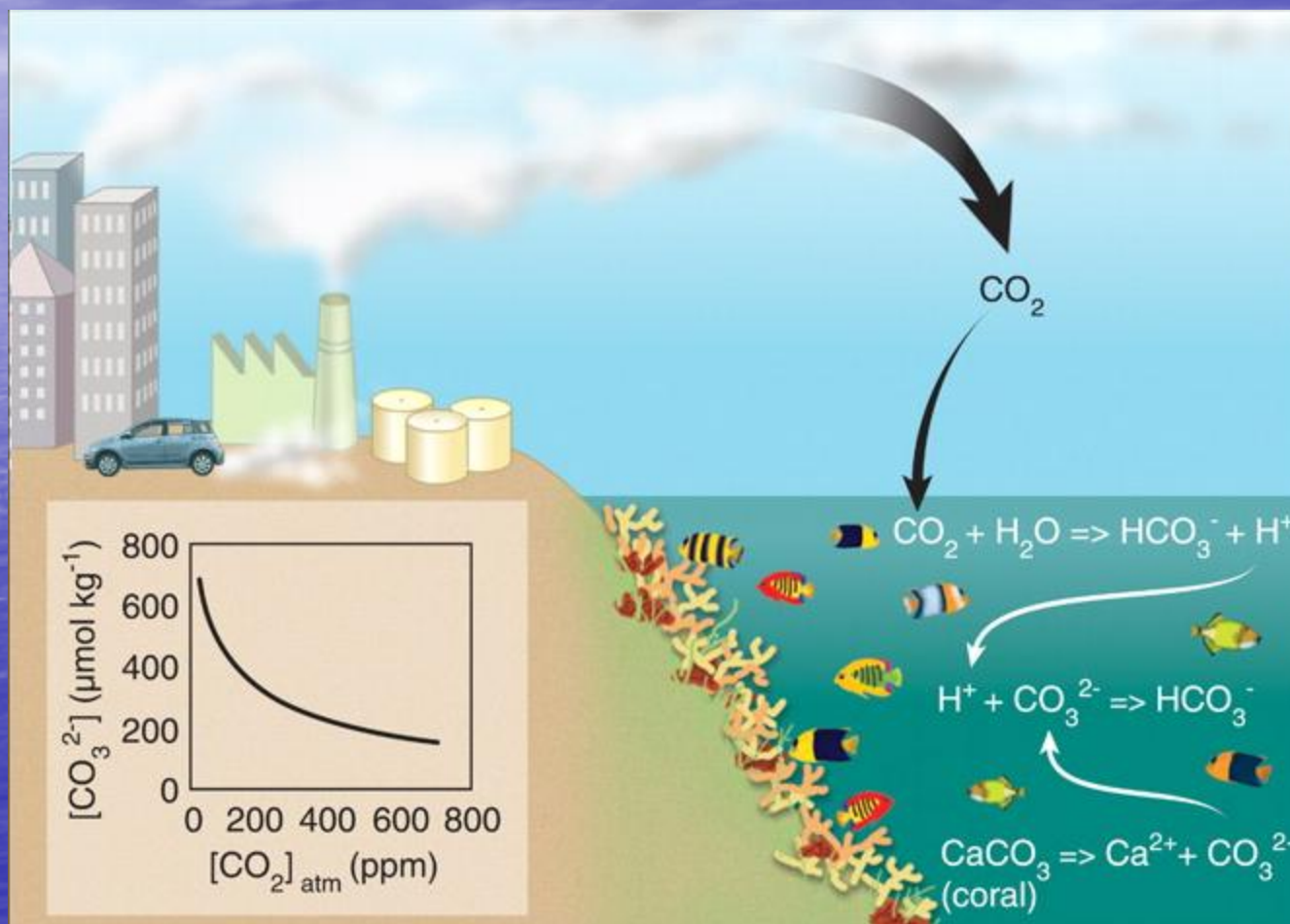


Coral disease



Photo credit Cry-of-the-Water

Ocean Acidification



The United States Coral Reef Task Force was established in 1998 by Presidential Executive Order 13089.

The order mandates federal agencies utilize their programs and authorities to protect and enhance the conditions of U.S. coral reef ecosystems.

In Florida, at the state, county and local levels officials are working to roll back protections essential for the survival of the coastal ecosystem. From port projects, to undoing outfall legislation, refusal to accept numerical nutrient water quality criteria and even their unwillingness to acknowledge scientific evidence of climate change and ocean acidification; our reefs have little hope for survival.

Florida's coral reefs are not faced with an uncertain future. Sadly, their future demise is guaranteed if we continue on the path that has resulted in their present condition.

We've watched Florida's reefs decline for decades. They have been literally studied to death. There is general agreement in the scientific community of what needs to be done to help save this resource. But, for the most part, researchers can't or are unwilling to jump into the political arena. And in the current political atmosphere State of Florida agency personnel are more focused on saving their jobs than on saving the reefs.

Inaction is killing our reefs.

Only federal agencies have the power and the political will necessary to initiate measures to save Florida's coral reefs.

This is why we look to the Task Force for help and ask them to fulfill their mandate to protect Florida's coral reef ecosystems; no one else can or will.

Time has run out for Florida's reefs.

We ask the Task Force to exert their authority and immediately take all necessary actions to help preserve what is left of the Florida Coral Reef Tract.

We've run out of time.

