



# SEAFAN BleachWatch Program

## CURRENT CONDITIONS REPORT

### AUGUST 2024



**Summary: Based on climate predictions, current conditions and field observations, the ongoing threat for thermal stress that causes coral bleaching, in the Kristin Jacobs Coral Reef Ecosystem Conservation Area (Coral ECA), from Miami-Dade to Martin counties, is HIGH.**

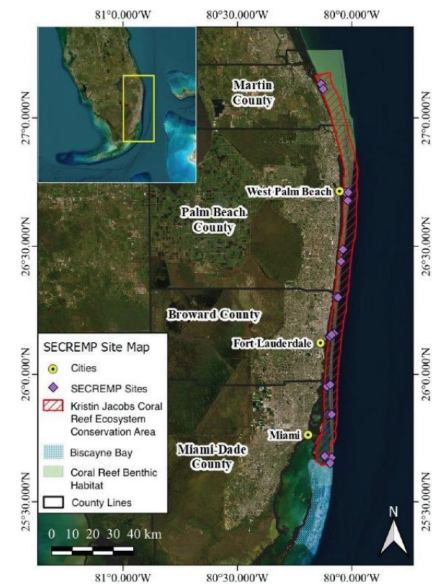
## ENVIRONMENTAL MONITORING

The Southeast Florida Coral Reef Evaluation and Monitoring Project (SECREMP) was established in 2003 as an expansion of the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) - managed Coral Reef Evaluation and Monitoring Project (CREMP) in the Florida Keys. SECREMP provides local, state and federal resource managers with annual reports on the status and condition within the Kristin Jacobs Coral Reef Ecosystem Conservation Area (Coral ECA), as well as information on temporal changes in resource conditions. SECREMP

is a partnership between DEP, FWC and Nova Southeastern University that facilitates collaboration and knowledge sharing, benefiting coral reef ecosystems nationwide.

Between 2015 and 2018, the Coral ECA experienced significant stony coral assemblage declines, largely as a result of the stony coral tissue loss disease (SCTLD) outbreak that began in 2014. Significant losses were observed across all stony coral metrics examined: percentage of benthic cover, live tissue area (LTA) and density. Regional disease prevalence has remained below 1% every year since 2018; thus, the total loss from this event can be quantified and indicators of recovery can begin to be addressed. Live tissue area has been reduced to less than half of what it was prior to the outbreak, primarily through the loss of SCTLD-susceptible species.

Despite this loss, adult stony coral density has steadily increased annually since 2016 and density in 2023 was higher than all previous years. The increase in adult coral density is due to an influx of coral juveniles, which then grow into adults – a promising sign indicating that corals are successfully reproducing, and that recovery may be occurring.



**Figure 1.** Map of the 22 SECREMP Sites.

For more information on SECREMP, read the Project Year 21 Executive Summary, along with other past SECREMP reports [here](#).





# OBSERVER NETWORK

Since July 1, 2024, BleachWatch received 21 reports indicating coral colonies are exhibiting signs of paling, partial bleaching or full bleaching. Geographically, there were two reports from Palm Beach County, five reports from Broward County and 11 reports from Miami-Dade County. Three reports were submitted from Monroe County and referred to Mote Marine Laboratory's [Florida Keys BleachWatch Program](#). At those sites in the Coral ECA where paling/partial/full bleaching was observed, the overall percentage of coral exhibiting signs of thermal stress was 1% to 10%. Coral bleaching was observed primarily on brain, branching and boulder coral colonies.

Coral disease continues to occur along Florida's Coral Reef. Of the 24 reports received, seven reports noted observations of coral disease. More specifically, there was one report from Palm Beach County, two reports from Broward County and four reports from Miami-Dade County. At those sites where disease was observed, the overall percentage of coral exhibiting signs of disease was 1% to 10%. Tissue loss was observed on brain, branching and boulder coral colonies.

The next Current Conditions Report will be issued later this month. Given the increasing temperatures, SEAFAN encourages the BleachWatch network to [submit reports](#) on coral bleaching and disease after every dive on the reef. This includes reports of "No Bleaching" and "No Disease." **Frequent observer reports will be critical for determining where coral bleaching is taking place this warm season.**

For information about NOAA satellite heat stress products, please visit [NOAA Coral Reef Watch](#) or email [CoralReefWatch@NOAA.gov](mailto:CoralReefWatch@NOAA.gov). For information about [SEAFAN BleachWatch](#), please email [Coral@FloridaDEP.gov](mailto:Coral@FloridaDEP.gov).



**Figure 2.** BleachWatch Observer, Gary Hardin-Peach, identified a paling symmetrical brain coral in Broward County.





**Figure 2.** BleachWatch Observer, Matthew Ringstad, identified a healthy boulder brain coral in Broward County.

Offer your feedback on the BleachWatch Program through our [survey](#).

[Learn more about the current conditions on coral reefs in the Florida Keys.](#)

## Program Partners

