

MEDIA FACT SHEET



About the Community Planning Process

- **OUR FLORIDA REEFS** is a community planning process hosted by the Southeast Florida Coral Reef Initiative (SEFCRI).
- The planning process region includes the 105-mile long coral reef ecosystem located between the northern boundary of Biscayne National Park in Miami-Dade County and the St. Lucie Inlet in Martin County.
- The **OUR FLORIDA REEFS** process begins with a series of community meetings in June 2013 to introduce the process and southeast Florida coral reef knowledge to the public. Next, Community Working Groups will meet from October 2013 through 2014, and those community representatives craft recommendations using the best available science to balance use and protection of southeast Florida's coral reefs. The collected recommendations will be reviewed at a series of public meetings tentatively scheduled for Spring 2015. Finally, the appropriate agencies will work to approve and implement the community-based recommendations. The earliest any community-recommended management actions would take effect would be 2016.
- The planning process brings together local residents, business owners, visitors, and the broader public in Miami-Dade, Broward, Palm Beach, and Martin counties to discuss the future of coral reefs in this area. The goal is to develop recommendations for a comprehensive management strategy for the region that balances the diverse interests of all ocean users.

About Southeast Florida's Coral Reefs

- Southeast Florida's reefs account for \$5.7 billion in sales and income annually and 61,000 jobs for the local economy.^{1,2}
- Southeast Florida's coral reef habitat spans more than 100 miles in length and 200 square miles in area, making it larger than most tropical reefs.³
- Southeast Florida has more than 45 species of hard (stony) corals and 37 species of soft corals along its reefs. Hard corals build the reef's limestone structure.
- Two of the world's threatened corals, staghorn and elkhorn coral, are found on southeast Florida's reefs. These were listed under the U.S. Endangered Species Act in 2006.
- A third species in Florida, pillar coral, is state-designated as Endangered. NOAA has proposed this coral species among the 68 being considered for listing in 2013 under the Endangered Species Act.
- Total annual reef fish landings in southeast Florida between 1990 and 2000 averaged 4.8 million pounds, 68% of which were landed by recreational, 27% by commercial, and 5% by head-boat fishers.⁴

About Florida's Reef System

- Florida's coral reefs, called the Florida Reef Tract, extend more than 350 miles from the Dry Tortugas along the Florida Keys and up the southeast coast of Florida to the St. Lucie Inlet in Martin County.
- Florida's coral reefs are an important natural ecosystem that supports more than 6,000 types of marine life, including many of our locally important fisheries species.⁵

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**OUR FLORIDA
REEFS**
YOUR VOICE, OUR FUTURE

- Florida's coral reef, one of the largest in the Caribbean/Atlantic, protects hundreds of miles of beaches and shoreline by reducing wave action and the impact of hurricanes and tropical storms.
- Florida's coral reefs are ancient and began forming about 7,000 years ago, when sea levels rose following the last Ice Age.

About SEFCRI

- Since 2004, the Southeast Florida Coral Reef Initiative (SEFCRI) has been coordinating scientific studies of corals, fish, and other components of southeast Florida's marine ecosystem to better understand the state of our region's natural coral reefs.
- SEFCRI is a collaborative, local effort of individuals and partner organizations from the private and public sectors working together to identify and implement actions to reduce threats to coral reefs so that future generations can enjoy them.
- SEFCRI is coordinated by the Florida Department of Environmental Protection's Coral Reef Conservation Program.

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**For more information and to provide your input on the future of southeast Florida's reefs,
please visit: www.OurFloridaReefs.org**



***OUR FLORIDA REEFS** is a community planning process of the Southeast Florida Coral Reef Initiative (SEFCRI), a collaborative, local effort started in 2004 to understand and protect our coral reefs for the benefit of all. SEFCRI is coordinated by the Florida Department of Environmental Protection's Coral Reef Conservation Program.*

1 Johns, G. M. et al. 2001. Socioeconomic Study of Reefs in Southeast Florida. Hazen and Sawyer Environmental Engineers & Scientists.

2 Johns, G. M. et al. 2004. Socioeconomic Study of Reefs in Martin County, FL. Hazen and Sawyer Environmental Engineers & Scientists.

3 Walker, B.K. .2012. Spatial analyses of benthic habitats to define coral reef ecosystem regions and potential biogeographic boundaries along a latitudinal gradient. PLoS ONE 7(1).

4 Johnson, D.R., D.E. Harper, G.T. Kellison, and J.A. Bohnsack. 2007. Description and discussion of Southeast Florida fishery landings, 1990-2000. NOAA Tech. Memo. NMFS-SEFSC-550. 64 p.

5 NOAA. 2007. Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary Revised Management Plan.

