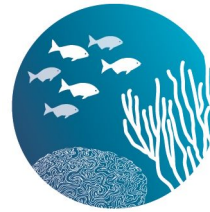


# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQ)



**OUR FLORIDA  
REEFS**

**YOUR VOICE, OUR FUTURE**

## **What is "OUR FLORIDA REEFS"?**

**OUR FLORIDA REEFS** is a community planning process for southeast Florida's coral reefs. The effort brings together the community of local residents, reef users, 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 region.

## **What is the goal of OUR FLORIDA REEFS?**

The primary goal of this process is to bring together the southeast Florida community to develop recommendations that can become part of a comprehensive management strategy that balances use and protection of coral reefs. With such recommendations, the strategy can reflect the diverse interests of all communities and ocean users in the region, while ensuring healthy coral reefs now and into the future.

## **Why do we need a planning process for southeast Florida's coral reefs?**

No management plan covers the entire region of southeast Florida's coral reefs. Southeast Florida's population and popularity keeps growing, so planning is essential to ensure future enjoyment of our reefs by all people.

## **Who can participate in this process?**

Everyone who visits the beach, enjoys our ocean, or has an interest in coral reefs is welcome to participate in a variety of ways. There is no restriction or minimum requirement to participate, and all opportunities are free and open to the public. Your personal knowledge about our reefs is very important to this process.

## **How can I get involved in OUR FLORIDA REEFS?**

You can get involved in a variety of ways during this multi-year process. You are invited to attend community meetings, participate in a Community Working Group, and provide updates to your community group or club as a Reef Champion. You can also participate online by joining the community at [www.OurFloridaReefs.org](http://www.OurFloridaReefs.org) to submit comments, connect with other community members, explore data, and to add your personal knowledge about our reefs using our online mapping tool. The online mapping tool provides a direct way for you to contribute your local knowledge about our reefs.

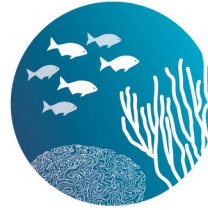
## **What are the main steps and timeline for this process?**

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.

## **Why does OUR FLORIDA REEFS focus on a four-county region, without including the Florida Keys?**

Although the reefs of Florida are one connected ecosystem, they have not been managed that way. The northern one-third of Florida's reef system, stretching across a four-county region, has no comprehensive management plan. The southern two-thirds of Florida's reefs are managed within: Dry Tortugas National

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Park, the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary, John Pennekamp Coral Reef State Park, and Biscayne National Park. The reefs north of Biscayne National Park in Miami-Dade County continue along the coastline for 105 miles to the St. Lucie Inlet in Martin County. Even though many more people live nearby, this northern coral reef region has not received the same kind of attention as the southern region.

## How can I participate in a Community Working Group?

Members of the public can participate in Community Working Groups in two ways – as a Community Working Group representative or as a community observer. Working Group representatives will represent a wide range of different interests who each have a stake in the wellbeing of our coral reef ecosystem. The number of groups may vary; each group will consist of 20-25 members. Interested community members may visit the website, [www.OurFloridaReefs.org](http://www.OurFloridaReefs.org), to learn more about how to apply to a Working Group. Observers are invited to attend all Community Working Group meetings, and they will have the opportunity to provide feedback to their Working Group representative. They are also invited to share information within their communities and to join the online discussion at: [www.OurFloridaReefs.org](http://www.OurFloridaReefs.org).

## Who is coordinating OUR FLORIDA REEFS?

**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 (FDEP) Coral Reef Conservation Program (CRCP). You are welcome to ask questions and discuss the planning process with any SEFCRI partner or FDEP staff member. **OUR FLORIDA REEFS** is funded by a state and federal partnership through a cooperative agreement between the Coral Reef Conservation Programs of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and FDEP. Additional support is provided by a FDEP Coastal Zone Management Grant and in-kind support from SEFCRI partners.

## I have more questions. Who can I contact?

Send us an email at [coral@dep.state.fl.us](mailto:coral@dep.state.fl.us).

For more information and to provide your input on the future of southeast Florida's reefs, please visit: [www.OurFloridaReefs.org](http://www.OurFloridaReefs.org)



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