



Southeast
Florida
Coral Reef
Initiative



Southeast Florida Coral Reef Initiative (SEFCRI) and Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) Team Meeting

Wednesday, November 14, 2025
9:00 AM – 11:15 AM
Virtual Meeting: Zoom

Meeting Objectives:

- Update on Kristin Jacobs Coral Aquatic Preserve (Coral AP) Management Plan.
- Regional (KJCAP) Bleaching Update (CRCP).
- Tier 2 Restoration Strategy, Site Selection Criteria and FCR3 Update (CPR, TNC, NSU).
- LAS Project updates from DEP Coral Reef Conservation Program (CRCP).
- Update on SEFCRI and TAC Recommitment Process (CRCP).

Attendees:

DEP Staff: Allie Shatters, Mollie Cordo, Taylor Tucker, Lara Bracci, Maya Bhalla-Ladd, Stephanie Stinson, Mo Morrow, Megan Miller, Kimberly Platt, Elena Kampian, Amanda Lewan, Maurizio Martinelli

SEFCRI Team Members: Alastair Harborne, Amanda Montgomery, Andrew Bauman, Angela Smith, Archie Ammons, Cristin Crasco, Joana Figueiredo, Katelyn Armstrong, Leneita Fix, Mike Dixon, Valerie Tovar, April Price, Jennifer Baez, Troy Craig, Gary Jennings, Griffin Alexander, Abigail Davis, Jessica Miles, Jessica Ganim, Lauren Theis, Laura Eldredge, Zach Boudreau

SEFCRI Team Alternates: Derek Cox, Joanna Walczak, Lisa Gregg, Jena McNeal, Kirk Kliffoyle, Jessica Garland

TAC Team Members: Richard Dodge, Caitlin Lustic, David Gilliam, Jay Grove, Dana Wusinich-Mendez, Brian Walker, John Fauth, Joshua Voss, Erick Ault, Ken Banks, Don Behringer, Xaymara Serrano, Manoj Shivlani, Jack Stamates, Piero Gardinali

Public Observers: Calvin Gilmartin, Churley, Jim Rigolo, Nick Jones, Pepper Uchino, Shannan Mcaskill

**8:30 - 9:00 Registration, Sign-In, and Activate Audio in
Zoom platform is open.**

9:00 – 9:10 Welcome, Meeting Overview, and Introductions
Taylor Tucker, DEP CRCP

Taylor welcomes everyone to the combined SEFCRI Team and TAC Meeting and acknowledges new SEFCRI Team members (Rachel Taub from Force-E filled a vacancy in the Diving Stakeholder Group; Nicole Merck from FWC joined the Local Agency Stakeholder Group; Jessica Ganim from Miami Waterkeeper joined the NGO stakeholder Group).

She provides an overview of the Zoom platform and reviews the meeting ground rules in addition to the agenda.

Lara Bracci, DEP CRCP

Introduces herself as Technical Support and the TAC contact.

Amanda Lewan [chat]: <https://www.surveygizmo.com/s3/5614401/Public-Comment-Submissions>

9:10 – 9:25 Update on Kristin Jacobs Coral Aquatic Preserve (Coral AP) Management Plan
Alycia Shatters, DEP CRCP

Alycia provides a review of Florida's Coral Reef with a regional map to orient participants to the various managed regions along the reef tract. She then discusses the Coral AP Management Plan Timeline. Reefs north of the Florida Keys were not even mapped until the early 2000s, and unlike the Keys, which had more information and coordinated management, the region lacked a unified framework until SEFCRI helped build a knowledge base and spur broader, more formalized management efforts. Alycia explains that SEFCRI's goal was to prioritize actions to preserve and protect reef and associated resources while emphasizing the balance between resource use and protection, in cooperation with all interested parties.

Over time, as most SEFCRI LAS projects were completed or ongoing, partners worked with the University of Miami to consolidate existing recommendations into a flexible Action Plan. After the designation of the aquatic preserve, the Action Plan was turned into a formalized management plan for the region which recently underwent an advisory committee review and will go through a public process in early 2026 with implementation of feedback by the CRCP team.

Alycia reviews the history and processes of SEFCRI Focus Areas, recommended management actions from Our Florida Reefs from 2013-2016 and the Fisheries Stakeholder Committee recommendations from 2023.

She acknowledges previous team engagement with the management plan and calls for continued involvement in reviewing the new draft management plan. She highlights the goal of ensuring all groups feel heard and have equal opportunity to contribute.

She then reviews next steps for the management plan including submission to Acquisition and Restoration Council (ARC) and the public process in early 2026 which will include two in-person meetings and one virtual meeting. She invites SEFCRI and TAC to join the public meetings and asks them to share the events with their community network. She highlights Sam Cooke's involvement in public review process and her continued involvement in future facilitation.

Alycia then provides an overview of the [management plan](#) contents including each chapter and appendices (Introduction, DEP's Office of Resilience and Coastal Protection, Kristin Jacob Coral Aquatic Preserve, Management Issues, Administrative Plan, Facilities Plan).

9:25 – 9:45 AM Regional (KJCAP) Bleaching Update

Taylor Tucker, DEP CRCP

Taylor reviews the biological process of coral bleaching, the NOAA Coral Reef Watch program, BleachWatch program and explains the degree heating weeks metric.

She shares:

- The development of management tools such as [NOAA's Coral Reef Watch](#) used to predict thermal stress and the formation of the [BleachWatch](#) program.
- Graphs showing yearly Bleaching Alert Level data from NOAA Coral Reef Watch from 1985-2025.
- 2025 Bleaching Alert Levels for Florida from June to September.
- [Current bleaching alert level: no stress.](#)
- BleachWatch Network overview, goals, photos from citizen scientists reporters, environmental and reporter data summaries, and where to view [Current Conditions Reports](#).
- [Florida Coral Bleaching Response Plan](#).
- How to stay involved through [SEAFAN](#) and BleachWatch.

She wraps by thanking the partners that made the presentation possible including NOAA Coral Reef Watch, the National Weather Service, Florida's Coral Reef Resilience Program and BleachWatch reporters.

Questions:

Jessica Miles[chat]: Are you observing increased participation in Bleach watch year over year?

Taylor Tucker: Yes, currently we have 1,300 observers and 27 instructors.

9:45 – 10:30 AM Tier 2 Restoration Strategy, Site Selection Criteria and FCR3 Update

Caitlin Lustic, TNC, Nick Jones, NSU, Maurizio Martinelli, DEP CPR

Nick Jones introduces himself and Caitlin and the work they performed for DEP and Florida's Coral Reef Restoration & Recovery (FCR3) initiative to identify five to ten priority reefs for restoration activities.

Maurizio Martinelli reviews FCR3 initiative and goal to restore 25 percent of the reef.

Nick Jones shares the project goals and partnership with The Nature Conservancy.

Caitlin Lustic reviews the Tier 1 process and provides overview of Tier 2. Shares where to find reports ([Tier 1](#), [TNC website](#)).

Nick Jones:

- Shares how they use data from 14 metrics to rank and locate restoration sites by county for Tier 2.
- Describes the process for ground truthing selected sites for coral restoration through roving diver surveys and metric data collected.
- Shares the people and agencies involved in the project including: FDEP, NOAA CRCP, CREMP, SECREMP and DRM.

Maurizio Martinelli:

- Shares they are trying to model Tier 3 site plans after Mission Iconic Reefs.

Questions:

Brian Walker [chat]: Why deviate the benthic assessments from the NCRMP protocol? Does this make them incomparable?

Nick Jones [chat]: Do you mean in terms of area covered? 15m vs 30m here?

Jessica Miles [chat]: Are you doing any transect video capture?

Nick Jones: No video transect capture due to amount of time in water or post processing.

Joshua Voss [chat]: Any consideration for future “adding” areas as climate change/ temp/ sea level rise might make previously unfavorable areas more favorable?

Nick Jones: That’s perhaps more a question for DEP. The inclusion of some of the temperature-based data for long term SST trend, we considered a negative effect because warmer temperatures were downgraded in site selection process.

Andrew Bauman [chat]: Couple of new preprints out that may be useful for your work: Madin et al 2025 (Demographic insights for coral restoration, Gonzalez-Rivero et al 2025).

Maurizio Martinelli: We’ve been talking about it, and it is something we are open to if there’s data out there to support it. We don’t quite know what it’s going to look like. Something to consider and we’ve talked about, but we don’t currently have data to say where we should put coral in 50 years.

Josh Voss: I wonder due to lack of larval supply if data evidence won’t be available unless we supply it. Trial restoration to see if those sites will be better.

Maurizio Martinelli: The FCR3 initiative isn’t intended to be experimental. We have other funding sources for those opportunities but not specifically with this initiative’s funding.

Lisa Gregg: My only concern with identifying sources and sinks is that in this whole process of identifying these areas for restoration, they didn’t incorporate larval movement up and down in the water column. We have seen in land based that larval sink to the bottom for five days and have moved after that. What are we doing to get information to plug in population?

Caitlin Lustic: That was included, Joanna F. did that research in the lab, and the data was included for site selection. There was DEP funding for Joanna to study seven different species.

Joana Figueiredo: Paper is currently under review for dynamics of larvae with the assumption that larvae are buoyant from embryo to larval state.

Benjamin Limer: PhD student conducted larval settlement behavior research, and he matches that and is a good proxy. Models are not perfect, but they are the best information we have now.

Lisa Gregg: Was the research included in the FCR3 site determination?

Joana Figueiredo: Yes.

Leneita Fix: Broward has been looked at from a practical perspective; how will you engage local practitioners specific to Palm Beach County?

Maurizio Martinelli: We haven't planned these yet, but our intention is to go to counties and expand to folks who have local knowledge by the time we are done with ground truthing. It's not always apple to apple so when we get to site specific, going to local knowledge and being as inclusive as we can, will be important.

Leneita Fix: We were able to outplant once with the county but have been outplanting consistently. We have three sites and 15 plots. Is this the type of thing you want in your surveys?

Katelyn Armstrong [chat]: We have been a part of two outplanting efforts with TRI. One was at a site selected by FWC, and one that we identified ourselves (Palm Beach County) just north of the first site.

Katelyn Armstrong: Performed a desktop analysis and ground-truthed different sites and identified 12 sites okay for outplanting that were similar to the results of this work.

Nick Jones: Leneita, if you have data for successful restoration work, we would like to compare it to our selected sites.

Lisa Gregg: Have you considered coastal construction in site selection? Have you encouraged counties to go in this direction?

Caitlin Lustic: We went to counties to identify in Tier 1 where they know sites won't be good for restoration (e.g., around ports, coastal construction, anchorage areas). If it changes in the future, it can be updated but we did have a comprehensive list we worked with counties to develop.

Nick Jones: I can reach out again to technical committee from a construction standpoint to rule out potential locations.

Lisa Gregg: I spoke to Linda Sunderland in Broward, and they were not aware of this process. It was a surprise to them that they haven't been able to include their input.

Caitlin Lustic: We have been working with Angela Delaney in Broward throughout the Tier 2 process.

Taylor Tucker announces a five-minute break.

10:30 – 10:35 PM BREAK (5 Minutes)

Amanda Lewman [chat]: checks for online submissions + shares link in chat:
<https://www.surveygizmo.com/s3/5614401/Public-Comment-Submissions>

10:35 – 11:00 AM LAS Project updates from DEP Coral Reef Conservation Program DEP CRCP staff

Taylor Tucker introduces the CRCP team and the focus area of each team member.

Awareness & Appreciation (AA)

Maya Bhalla-Ladd, DEP CRCP

Maya shares that 2025 is the 50th Anniversary of the Florida Aquatic Preserve (AP) Act. She also shares:

- Materials created including the new [KJCAP website](#).
- Past community events including: LagoonFest, Fort Lauderdale Boat Show, Annual Southeast Florida Reef Cleanup, Frost Science Museum's World Ocean Day and upcoming events including the ReeFlorida Symposium.

Fishing, Diving, and Other Uses (FDOU)

Stephanie Stinson, DEP CRCP

Stephanie discusses the behind-the-scenes logistics and administrative tasks required to conduct the advisory committee and series of public meetings, both statutory requirements as CRCP works towards the finalization and adoption by the ARC of the KJCAP management plan (FDOU 55.) She tells participants to stay tuned for announcements for upcoming public meetings and asks them to share with their community.

Stephanie also highlights her role in overseeing contract management for SECREMP as DEP representative.

Reef Resilience (RR) & BleachWatch

Taylor Tucker, DEP CRCP

Provides updates for the BleachWatch Program this year:

- Completion of 15 BleachWatch classes and three BleachWatch instructor workshops
- 127 new observers and nine new instructors.
- Received over 90 reports on coral health.

Taylor says thank you to the partners involved (Martin County, Diver's Paradise, the University of Miami Rescue a Reef Lab, Gold Coast Scuba, Pura Vida Divers, and Pinnacle Ecological) and shares coral photos taken by observers.

Southeast Florida Action Network (SEAFAN) & Marine Debris

Mo Morrow, DEP CRCP

Provides updates on the SEAFAN program including:

- 62 reports so far this year.
- Marine Debris is the most reported incident in 2025.
- Palm Beach is the county with the most reported marine incidents.

Mo provides overview of the 14th Annual Southeast Florida Reef Cleanup, number of participants (87), amount of marine debris collected (136 lbs.) and that DEP is planning another cleanup in 2026.

Land-Based Sources of Pollution (LBSP)

Lara Bracci, DEP CRCP

Lara provides an update on LBSP by sharing Florida's Coral Reef Water Quality Data Compilation

(Year 6) has expanded its Scope of Work to include seasonal trend analyses for chlorophyll-a, total nitrogen, and total suspended solids, comparing wet and dry seasons using data from the monitoring program. To support timely management decisions, FWRI will develop a modular trend analysis tool using R scripts and R Markdown. The program now includes six months of YSI-collected data for salinity, pH, dissolved oxygen, specific conductance, and temperature, with long-term salinity data newly accessible through the Watershed Information Network (WIN).

Knowledge gained from SEACAR's ABT training will be shared through a community poster presentation at Mote SEA's Science Stories seminar in December. The project continues to provide data for management and research uses, including FWRI mapping products, hydrographic modeling, coral bleaching and SCTLD studies, flow comparisons, management plans, and state TMDL determinations.

Maritime Industry & Coastal Construction Impacts (MICCI)

Elena Kampian, DEP CRCP

Shares progress on the Osborne Tire Reef Restoration Plan including these updates:

- Number of tires removed by Industrial Tires Corp. is ~500,000.
- Worked with NSU to salvage 1,656 corals to date.
- Working to finalize and execute a contract with Coastal Eco-Group.
- The new contractor, Schlueter Vessel Management to notify NSU and Coastal Eco-Group when corals are present on tires.

Overview of current turbidity project, led by NOAA, which is an experimental system set up to test turbidity and toxin effects on corals.

Overview of sedimentation projects, current sediment trials by FIU, UM and NOAA to study coral settlement and survival.

Reef Injury Prevention & Response (RIPR)

Megan Miller, DEP CRCP

Introduces herself as the RIPR coordinator and introduces Kimberly Platt and Amanda Lewan.

The team shares that there are eight current open cases of vessel damage. They also noted the following updates:

- New ROV work will be incorporated to produce photomosaics.
- A summary of 10 outreach events attended, along with planned future presentations at the ReeFlorida Symposium.
- Continued emphasis on partnerships with law enforcement, the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary, and Port Everglades Harbormasters to distribute educational materials.
- Development of educational materials to increase awareness of mooring buoy use, with Broward County set to receive mooring buoy supplies through a grant.

Questions:

Brian Walker [chat]: Lara (or anyone else), do you know if/how we could get flow data from the outfalls?

Alycia Shatters [chat]: Hey Brian, all the data is on WIN, or we would be happy to send it if you could email us with what you are looking for.

Brian Walker [chat]: We have the nutrient data. If we had outfall flow data, we could include the outfall data in our hydrographic models.

Josh Voss [chat]: If you haven't installed already, simple lasers for scaling and consistent altitude can help with your mosaics from ROV.

Megan Miller: Yes, we have a laser scaler in machine.

Jack Speridon [chat]: The utilities do have flow data.

Jack Speridon [chat]: Dade County is claiming that the outfalls will stop. They are actively building deep injection wells.

Piero Gardinali [chat]: As Jack pointed out, the utilities should have the flow out of the facility. Assuming an intact system that could be used at the end of the pipe. Modeling the dispersion at the outfall will also be needed to understand the loadings. Doable, yes.

11:00 – 11:15 Update on SEFCRI and TAC Recommitment Process

Alycia Shatters CRCP DEP

Alycia discusses the recommitment process for the SEFCRI Team and the TAC. The SEFCRI Team application process for the next four year term will start early 2026, and the goal of this new term will be to support the priorities in the management plan. The TAC will also undergo a recommitment process later in the 2026 and may expand to include other members with specific experience related to some of the new priorities in the management plan (e.g. coral restoration).

11:15 Wrap up and Adjourn

Taylor Tucker announces that no one submitted public comment and invites participants or anyone who wants to come off mute to comment.

No public comments were made.