

How Are Humans Impacting Coral Reefs?

Coral reef ecosystems have survived millions of years of natural disturbances such as tropical storms, climate change and disease. Today these natural stresses are compounded by impacts from human activities, causing a rapid decline in coral reef ecosystem health.

Approximately 11% of the world's coral reefs have been destroyed, and an additional 16% have severe damage. Without major action to reduce or eliminate human impacts, experts estimate that 60% of the world's coral reefs could be lost by 2030.

Much of the deterioration, degradation, or death of coral reefs is due to human activities such as the following:

- over-fishing and over-collecting of shells
- using destructive fishing methods
- anchor damage, boat groundings and reef walking
- shoreline development
- mineral and sand mining
- dredge and fill
- agricultural runoff - the use of pesticides, herbicides, insecticides
- sedimentation and siltation
- marine debris – paper, plastic, tin, glass, styrofoam
- sewage discharges
- oil spills
- toxic and hazardous chemicals
- radioactive and nuclear wastes
- global climatic changes



Boat Grounding

What Can We Do To Save The Coral Reefs?

- become aware of marine environmental issues on a local, national, regional and international level
- do not over-fish or over-collect, take only what you need
- when snorkeling or diving do not touch, break or trample over corals, they are fragile and can become diseased or die
- do not drop anchors on coral, use mooring buoys, if you must use an anchor, drop it over sand only
- obey laws and regulations set up by the government to ensure the protection of the coral reefs
- monitor the health of nearby coral reefs
- organize community projects and encourage active participation
- educate others about the importance of coral reef conservation
- join a non-governmental marine conservation organization
- do not litter on the beach, pick up all rubbish especially bottles, tins, plastics, fishing nets, lines and hooks, or any other non-biodegradable products
- do not use explosives or dynamite reefs at any time or for any reason
- never use poisons or chemicals to capture reef fish
- do not discard anything in the ocean, especially sewage, toxic chemicals, pesticides, oil, industrial and mining wastes or radioactive wastes
- avoid dredging activities in or around coral reefs
- be cautious and carry out environmental impact assessments when building along the shoreline
- request government officials to establish marine parks, marine reserves or sanctuaries

For more information please contact:

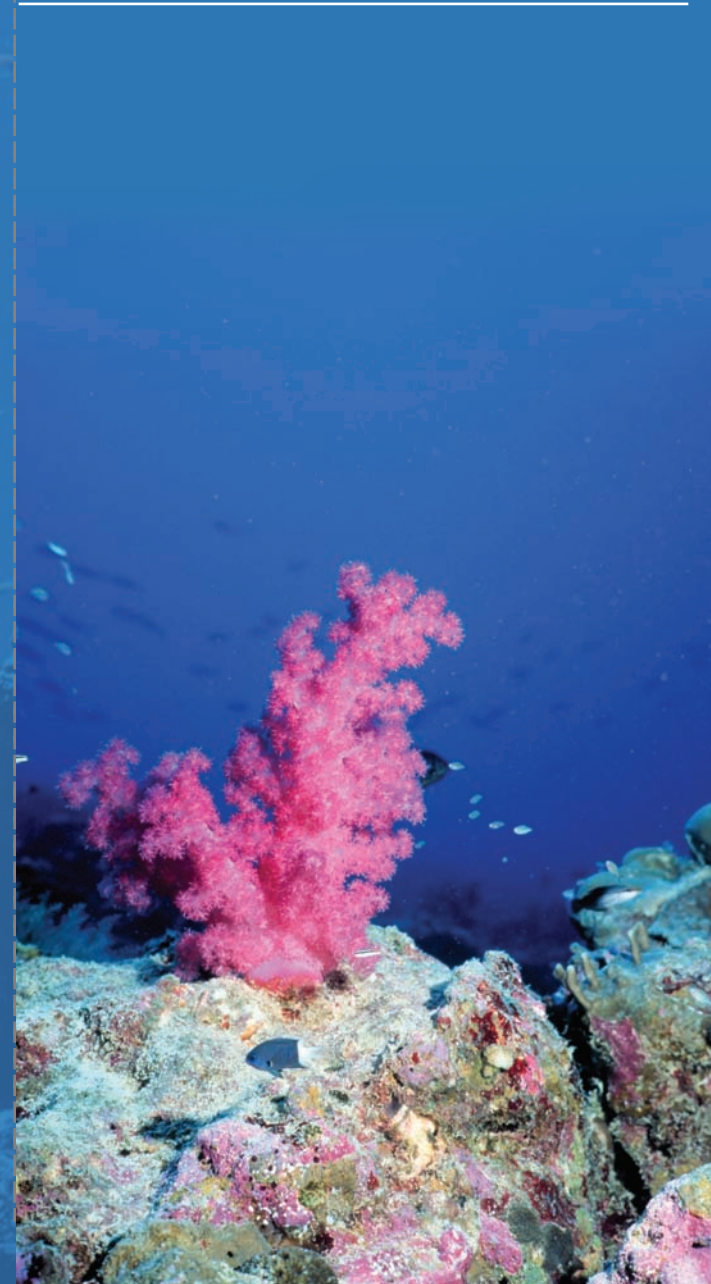
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Coral Reefs of the CNMI



Why Should We Value Coral Reefs?

Coral reefs have tremendous value because...



of their intrinsic beauty



they provide nursery grounds for reef organisms



they provide shelter and habitat for reef plants and animals



they are an important source of food for islanders



of their traditional and cultural values



they protect nearby shores and harbors from erosion and wave action



they contribute to the economy through ecotourism activities

Did You Know?

Coral reefs have tremendous medicinal value – they are considered to be one of the primary sources of new medicines and biochemicals in the 21st century. Examples include many pharmaceuticals now being developed as possible cures for cancer, arthritis, viruses, and other diseases.