

CORAL REEF COALITION LETTER ON THE PENDING
REAUTHORIZATION OF THE UNITED STATES' CORAL REEF CONSERVATION ACT

The Honorable John D. Rockefeller IV
Chairman
Senate Committee on Commerce,
Science and Transportation

The Honorable Kay Bailey Hutchinson
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Commerce,
Science and Transportation

The Honorable Maria Cantwell
Chairwoman
Senate Subcommittee on Oceans,
Atmosphere, Fisheries, and Coast Guard

The Honorable Olympia J. Snowe
Ranking Member
Senate Subcommittee on Oceans,
Atmosphere, Fisheries, and Coast Guard

September 3, 2010

Dear Chairpersons and Ranking Members:

As organizations and stakeholders involved with coral reef conservation, we are profoundly alarmed about the threats these unique and invaluable ecosystems face in the United States and around the world. We urge your support for a strong conservation-minded reauthorization of the United States Coral Reef Conservation Act.

Coral reefs provide many important services; they protect coastlines from the damaging effects of storms, and are vital to the economies of many coastal communities in the U.S. and around the world, through revenues generated in tourism and fisheries. The diversity of life they support establishes them as treasure troves of discovery for applications in medicine and industry.

However coral reefs are declining at an alarming rate. Almost 20% of the world's coral reefs have been lost and an additional 35% are threatened according to the expert opinion of 372 coral reef scientists and managers from 96 countries who contributed to the Status of the Coral Reefs of the World: 2008 report. The major threats to coral reefs include coastal runoff, overfishing and overharvesting, vessel impacts, invasive species, and coral bleaching, disease, and ocean acidification caused by unregulated greenhouse gas pollution.

These valuable and fascinating ecosystems are disappearing within our lifetimes, and their loss will have significant social, economic, and environmental consequences in the United States and worldwide.

We commend the positive steps taken in the reauthorization of the Coral Reef Conservation Act by the Senate. We respectfully ask you to adopt the strongest possible language for the conservation and protection of coral reef ecosystems in the reauthorization of this important legislation. Measures we support include provisions to:

- Increase the status of protection for corals in all U.S. waters;
- Support community-based approaches to coral reef stewardship;
- Enable management to effectively address the threat of vessel groundings and seek appropriate liability for such incidents (with narrowly defined exceptions);
- Support cooperative relationships with universities and other academic bodies, and non-governmental organizations in promotion of coral reef conservation;
- Enable all relevant federal agencies to effectively participate in coral reef conservation;
- Provide additional accountability for federal funds used for coral reef conservation efforts;
- Provide support to better understand and manage the trade in coral reef wildlife;
- Strengthen U.S. international coral reef conservation efforts; and
- Authorize increased funding to protect these extraordinary habitats.

Please join the effort to conserve our coral reefs by supporting the reauthorization of the Coral Reef Conservation Act.

Sincerely yours, (signed by the following thirty-five organizations and stakeholders)

Blue Climate Solutions - Steven J. Lutz, Executive Director, Miami, FL

Center for Biological Diversity - Andrea A. Treece, Senior Attorney, Oceans Program, San Francisco, CA

Coastal States Organization - Kristen Fletcher, Executive Director, Washington, DC

Coral Reef Alliance (CORAL) - Rick MacPherson, Director, Conservation Programs, San Francisco, CA

EarthEcho International - Philippe Cousteau, CEO and co-founder, Washington, DC

Environmental Defense Fund - Cara Cooper, Coral Specialist, Saint Petersburg, FL

Fauna & Flora International - Katie Frohardt, Executive Director, Washington, DC

Friends of the Mariana Trench Monument - Ignacio V. Cabrera, Chairman, Saipan, CNMI

Greenpeace USA - Phil Kline, Senior Ocean Campaigner, Washington, DC

International Society for Reef Studies (ICRS) - Richard Aronson, Ph.D., President, International Society for Reef Studies (ISRS), Melbourne, FL

Natural Resources Defense Council - Lisa Suatoni, Senior Scientist, Oceans Program, New York, NY

NAUI Worldwide - Jed Livingstone, Vice President, Riverview, FL

Nova Southeastern University National Coral Reef Institute (NCRI) - Richard E Dodge, Dean, Wendy Wood-Derrler, Assistant Director of Development, Ft. Lauderdale, FL

Ocean Conservation Research - Michael Stocker, Director, Lagunitas, CA

Ocean Defenders Alliance - Kurt Lieber, Founder and President, Scott Sheckman, Acting Executive Director, Huntington Beach, CA

Oceanic Defense - "Educate. Activate" - Samantha Whitcraft, Director, Conservation Biology, Miami, FL

Palm Beach County Reef Rescue - Ed Tichenor, Director, Boynton Beach, FL

Project AWARE Foundation - Jenny Miller Garmendia Director, Rancho Santa Margarita, CA

Reef Check Foundation - Gregor Hodgson, Ph.D., Executive Director, Reef Check Foundation, Pacific Palisades, CA

Sailors for the Sea - Dan Pingaro, CEO, Newport, RI

Save Our Seas - Capt. Paul Clark, President, Hanalei, HI

Sea Turtle Conservancy (formerly the Caribbean Conservation Corporation) - David Godfrey, Executive Director, Gainesville, FL

SeaWeb - Dawn M. Martin, President, Silver Spring, MD

Sierra Club - Bruce Hamilton, Conservation Director, San Francisco, CA

South Carolina Coastal Conservation League - Dana Beach, Charleston, SC

Surfrider Foundation - Chad Nelsen, Environmental Director, San Clemente, CA

The Humane Society of the United States / Humane Society International - Teresa M. Telecky, Ph.D.,
Director of Wildlife, Washington, DC

The Interfaith Council for the Protection of Animals and Nature - Lewis Regenstein, President,
Atlanta, GA

The Ocean Foundation - Mark J. Spalding, Ph.D., President, Washington, DC

The Ocean Project - Bill Mott, Director, Providence, RI

The Snorkel Bob Foundation - Robert Wintner, Executive Director, Kihei, HI

Urban Environment League - Fran Bohnsack, President, Miami, FL

Urban Paradise Guild - Sam Van Leer, Executive Director & Founder, North Miami, FL

WIDECAST (Wider Caribbean Sea Turtle Conservation Network) - Karen Eckert, Ph.D., Executive
Director, Beaufort, NC

World Wildlife Fund - Roberta Elias, Senior Program Officer, Marine and Fisheries Policy,
Washington, DC

Copied to: Members of the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation
 Members of the Senate Subcommittee on Oceans, Atmosphere, Fisheries, and Coast Guard