

Southeast Florida Coastal Ocean Task Force

Recommendations

July 21, 2014

- The Task Force shall consider formally **endorsing the goals and objectives of the Our Florida Reefs**, in total or in part, to enhance the efforts, communications, and benefits of the OFR toward protection and management of our economically and ecologically valuable coral reefs. Additionally, members of the OFR Working Groups are encouraged to attend the COTF meetings and provide input.
- The Task Force will provide a list of management considerations/recommendation to the OFR's Community Working Groups for their consideration during development of potential management options by November 2014 and will receive and review the final recommendations from OFR for endorsement. The endorsed recommendations will be used by the Task Force as the basis for further specific management considerations.

These 2 recommendations (above) should be adopted at the next Task Force Meeting. The OFR should have the support of the Task Force and an established flow of recommendations

1. Address issues concerning water quality impacts to the reef by developing regional initiatives to reduce nutrient loading from all human sources and pathways, including surface water management (CERP and Central Everglades Planning Project), septic systems and ocean outfall discharges (e.g. Advanced Treatment), to improve conditions for estuarine and marine habitats. Specifically support implementation of numeric nutrient water quality criteria for nitrogen and phosphorus that are in the process of being developed by the state of Florida.
2. Address issues concerning water supply by working collectively to advocate for construction of additional water storage reservoirs, stormwater treatment areas, flow equalization basins, and use of appropriate technologies to reduce nutrient levels before release of water to southeast Florida estuaries and to modulate salinity changes in those estuaries.
3. To document impacts to the North Florida Reef Tract ecosystem from current water management procedures, the scientific community should develop and standardize a water quality monitoring protocol on the reefs, while also monitoring the health of the ecosystem, to better understand impacts and thresholds.

4. Address concerns focusing on direct impacts to coral reefs by creating a regional oversight committee to work with state and federal agencies to ensure that marine/coastal construction projects such as beach nourishment activities, cable crossings, sea wall construction and the like utilize state of the art best management practices. This committee could engage stakeholders in regular review of construction techniques and monitoring protocol to minimize coral reef stress from direct impacts (destruction) of reefs, sedimentation on reefs and turbidity that limits light transmission to the reef resources and ensure all stakeholders are educated on the importance and value of the resource. Participation in this (annual) review and education could “certify” contractors as “reef aware”.
5. Members of the Task Force shall work collaboratively to identify and target all possible funding sources to support work necessary to document the value of the Southeast Florida marine ecosystem, based on socioeconomic and use pattern studies, and use that information in a public awareness campaign to 1) increase public support for marine protection, 2) change individual behavior/reduce impacts, 3) inform state, local and federal project planning 4) provide a real basis for impact assessment and 5) provide information to leverage county, state and federal organizations for increased funding. (A COTF website would be a good start)
6. The Task Force will establish a committee to coordinate actions and activities within and between their members, respective entities, and agencies that will further the implementation of the management actions endorsed by the Task Force.
7. Appoint a North Florida Reef Tract diver education committee to develop a “Blue Star” like program with a dive shop certification in the 4 county area.

26. Establish one or more marine protected area in the SEFCRI region. These should be no take, and there should be supported assessment monitoring over time (e.g., 7 years) to evaluate recovery of reef organisms, including reef fish, coral and related species, together with the spill-over beneficial effects to areas outside the protected areas. (Vice Mayor Stuart Dodd and Dr. Richard Dodge)