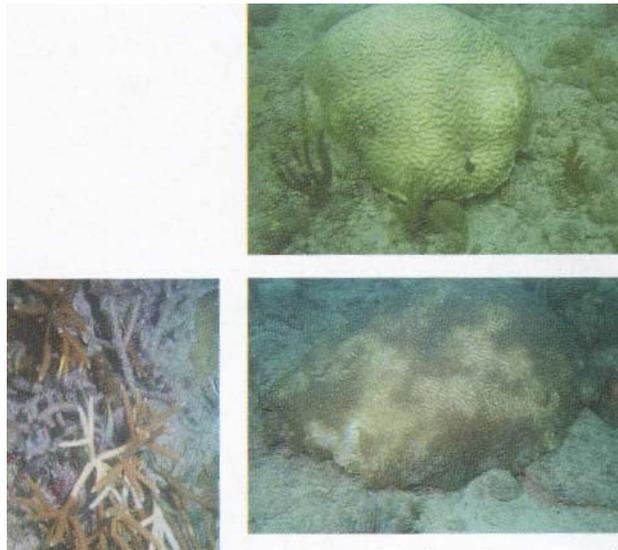


Florida site under threat from dredge-dump projects

New outbreaks of coral bleaching and disease affecting a major Florida coral reef in the waters off Broward County have been identified by a recent study. Surveys evaluating the health of over 450 coral colonies in two separate areas were conducted by Cry of the Water and Global Coral Reef Alliance.

The mid-September studies found 61.5% of all branching Staghorn coral colonies were adversely affected by white band diseases (range 55-68%), and 48% of all massive corals were bleached (range 39-57%). According to the researchers, high water temperatures (85°F/30°C) are the likely cause of bleaching. In addition to several other coral diseases, the researchers report that Broward County reefs are overgrown by the slimy cyanobacterial mats typically found around sewage outfalls in South



Florida, and this algae growth appears to be expanding.

The Global Coral Reef Alliance said that the Broward reefs are known to have the largest living stands of the once common Staghorn coral remaining in the Caribbean region as well as the highest density of ancient corals in North America.

These reefs have never been officially designated as a coral reef

habitat and are legally unprotected. Their main current threat is from a local government plan to allow the adjacent beach to be dump-filled with sand. This is due to start immediately after impact assessments on corals at beach dredge-dump projects in Hollywood and Dania are completed.

Dr Thomas Goreau, president of the Global Coral Reef Alliance, said that: 'Almost all the bleaching we saw was mild or partial bleaching. The area affected had warm waters, but this was confined to nearshore reefs and was too small to show up in satellite temperature images. We have used this technique to predict coral bleaching location, timing, and intensity worldwide since 1990. NOAA has identified a few locations worldwide where bleaching has taken place this year, and I have identified and notified several other areas where large scale bleaching is certainly taking place, although field confirmation is still lacking.'

For more information see:

<http://globalcoral.org> or
<http://www.cryofthewater.org/>

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