

# Ecosurf: Saving the Coral Reefs

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Next summer, two Halifax students will be embarking on an around-the-world sailing and surfing expedition to raise awareness about the destructive impact humans have on the “rainforests of the sea”: coral reefs. This four-year journey starts in San Diego, California, and circumnavigates the globe, finishing here in Halifax.

Robert Buttamor, a graduate student at Dalhousie University and participant in the expedition, will collect general data on the fragile ecosystems of coral reefs with the help of his friend Brent Seamone and the Global Coral Reef Alliance. The information collected is to be presented to local authorities, inhabitants and tourist bureaus and posted for international viewing on the internet—and it’s all being done in the name of increasing the awareness of the devastation that is occurring to coral reefs.

James Baker of the US Coral Reef Task Force estimates that in the year 2050, 70 per cent of the world’s coral reefs may be completely destroyed. Activities such as blast fishing, cyanide poisoning, land development, pollution and global warming have already destroyed hundreds of coral reefs on a global scale, and these incidences are only increasing in number each year.

The importance of coral reefs ranges from ecological sustainability to economic benefit. The reefs provide home

and habitat for an incredible diversity of wild life, much of which is endangered or threatened. Reefs are the breeding ground of fish that in turn feed between 30 and 40 million people a year. Islands and coastlines are protected from the erosive power of waves and storms by barrier reefs. Coral reefs also attract visitors, bringing in much needed tourist dollars to support local communities and culture in maritime areas.

Surfing these reefs will allure active young people into a sport that is ecologically responsible and create a movement within the surfing community to protect the very resources that bring surfers so much enjoyment. EcoSurf also intends to develop a greater appreciation and understanding of coral reefs among nearby residents to reefs through the environmentally sound—and relatively inexpensive—sport of surfing. As local recreation on coral reefs develops, so will the desire to protect the reefs—not only because of their economic and ecological value, but also through their beauty and recreational potential.

To learn more about the world’s coral reefs and EcoSurf, check out [www.ecosurf.org](http://www.ecosurf.org). Currently, EcoSurf is applying for organizational status and looking for corporate sponsorship to realize their goals.

*Check out [www.globalcoral.org](http://www.globalcoral.org) for more information.*

