

## State of the Reefs, Addressed

### **What's being done, and what can you do, to save the world's reef resources?**

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There's been some big news and important developments recently for those interested in coral reef decline. The World Ocean Conference (WOC) is going on right now, from May 11 to May 14, in Manado, North Sulawesi, Indonesia. The four-day conference featured a number of speakers, side events and discussions about the world's coral reefs and climate change.

During the conference a set of rules to prevent large-scale loss of the world's reefs was proposed by a group of scientists representing several different organizations, including the Australian Research Council's Centre of Excellence for Coral Reef Studies (CoECRS), The Australian Museum, Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution in Falmouth, Massachusetts, James Cook University in Australia, the University of Perpignan in France, the United Nations University and The Nature Conservancy.

#### Reef Saver Rules

The researchers' list of rules includes the establishment of margins of error in terms of the extent and nature of protection to act as a form of insurance against unforeseen threats to coral reefs. Risks should be spread among different areas, according to the researchers.

The researchers also want to establish networks of protected areas that include protections for all reef creatures and their interactions within the designated areas. They want to create protections for types of habitat, for whole regions and for processes occurring within reefs. The researchers want to include various types of reefs in the protection framework to spread risk around. In general, the researchers have emphasized that protections must include the actual interactions between species, and not just individual species themselves.

The rules also include a mandate to protect entire reefs when it is possible to do so and to place buffer areas around important reef centers. Reef species should be allowed to spread out over a range of distances, according to the researchers' rules. The group advocates the use of variety of conservation approaches, including the establishment of Marine Protected Areas.

Marine Protected Areas are defined by The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) as "any area of the intertidal or subtidal terrain, together with its overlying water and associated flora, fauna, historical and cultural features, which has been reserved by law or other effective means to protect part or all of the enclosed environment."

#### The Coral Triangle Initiative

As part of the WOC, the Coral Triangle Initiative (CTI) was also discussed. The CTI seeks to establish a special "Coral Triangle Area" located between central and eastern Indonesia, East Timor, Philippines, Malaysia, Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands.

This area contains more than 75 percent of all known coral species on Earth. The Coral Triangle is also home to more than 3,000 fish species and has the largest and most extensive mangrove forests of any region in the world.

The CTI is intended to establish protection for corals and other creatures within the defined area, to effectively manage the area's economically important reef resources and to establish Marine Protected Areas within the Coral Triangle Area.

Member nations of the CTI include Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, East Timor, the Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea. The meeting was also attended by representatives of the governments of Australia and the United States, along with several private organizations.

#### Hobbyist Effects

During a side event at the WOC, called the "International Science, Technology and Policy Symposium," Eric Borneman, a reef aquarium hobbyist and outspoken supporter of captive coral propagation, spoke about coral reproduction methods in his talk, "Sustainable Production Methods for Threatened and Desirable Ornamentals."

Borneman's focus on captive coral propagation is quite important. We as reef hobbyists need to set our own goals and

establish standards to make sure our hobby can continue in the face of climate change, reef decline and legal changes in the trade of exotic marine animals.

The pressures on the reef hobby are greater now than they've been in a long time. Reef hobbyists can play a big role in helping to understand coral reefs and in their conservation (just take a look at my recent blog entry, "Reefs Show Signs of Rallying").

If we make positive contributions to reef conservation, we'll be able to keep political pressure off of our hobby and ensure a future for our hobby all at the same time.

Make sure to check out "Things You Can do to Save Reefs."

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