

CORAL CURRENT

The Newsletter of The Coral Reef Alliance

PROPOSED LEGISLATION PREPARES FOR GLOBAL WARMING IMPACTS

Breaking News!

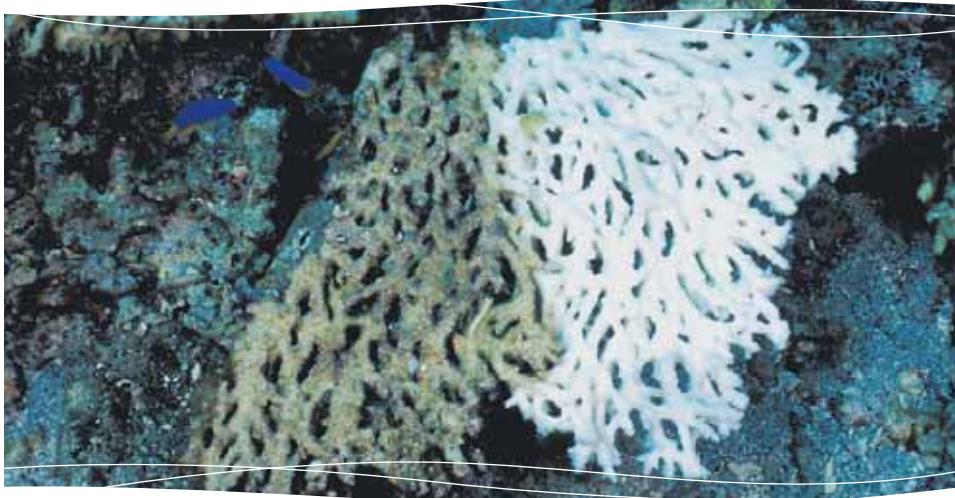
The first legislation to plan for the resiliency of coastal, marine, and Great Lakes ecosystems to withstand the impacts of global warming has been introduced by Senator Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI). The groundbreaking *Global Warming Wildlife Survival Act, S2204*, has been referred to the Senate Committee on the Environment and Public Works (EPW). EPW Chair, California Senator Barbara Boxer, will be an original co-sponsor of the bill.

Whitehouse, who is a member of the Senate Committee, states, "Global warming has already begun to have a severe and lasting impact on wildlife populations and marine ecosystems around the world. As we work to mitigate the causes of global warming, we must also take urgent action to address its effects on wildlife, oceans and other natural systems on which we all depend."

CORAL is a signatory to a letter supporting the US Senate bill, and we encourage you to contact the members of the Senate Committee

This legislation could not be timelier. In a recent article in Science Daily, reporting on a National Forum on Coral Reef Futures a statement from over 50 scientists, including some who are part of the International Panel on Climate Change, which shared the Nobel Prize with Al Gore calls for action.

"The world has a narrow window of opportunity to save coral reefs.... We call on all societies and governments to immediately and substantially reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Without targeted reductions, the ongoing damage to coral reefs from global warming will soon be irreversible."



Bleached coral. Photo courtesy of Wolcott Henry.



**Working Together to
Keep Coral Reefs Alive**

The newsletter of The Coral Reef Alliance (CORAL) - the only international organization working exclusively to save our Earth's coral reefs. CORAL is a member-supported, non-profit organization dedicated to protecting the health of coral reefs by uniting ecosystem management, sustainable tourism, and community partnerships.

CONTACT YOUR SENATORS!

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Letter from Executive Director Brian Huse

In welcoming you to our final newsletter for 2007, I wanted to express my thanks for your efforts in helping CORAL advance reef protection over the last few months.

First, your phenomenal response to our request for funding our Raja Ampat program has enabled us to continue our work there, uninterrupted. This matchless resource can be protected before it's too late and your support ensures no lag in our work through June of next year

Second, Thanks to all of you who respond to our action alerts to contact your representatives to support the Coral Reef Conservation Amendments Act of 2007.

Working together our supporters applied some of the positive momentum that brought us very close to seeing the legislation reenacted. On 22nd October, the US House of Representatives re-authorized and strengthened the 2000 Coral Reef Conservation Act (CRCA), expanding the bill and providing new funding for the protection of reefs under U.S. jurisdiction. And on 30th October the Senate Commerce Committee voted to send their CRCA legislation to the full Senate for consideration. The legislation covers coral reef ecosystems that span more than 6,500 square miles and include American Samoa, Guam, Hawaii, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

When you have a moment, please contact your Senators and urge them to approve Senate Bill 1580.

The challenges we face in our mission to save coral reefs and the communities dependant on them grows more urgent all the time. In response, CORAL is growing ever more rapidly to fulfill our mission. To accommodate this, CORAL is in new offices, just two blocks from our old ones. If you live in San Francisco, or are visiting for the holidays,

Please join us for an Open House Reception Thursday December 13, 2007, 5pm to 7pm at our new office at 351 California Street, Suite 650, San Francisco, CA 94104. Please reply by sending an email to rsvp@coral.org.

Meet board members, staff and others who, like you, support CORAL's hands-on approach to protecting the world's coral reefs.

Thank you from all of us here at CORAL for making 2007 a year of growth that included many major accomplishments.

Together we really are saving our last great wilderness.

Cheers,

Brian Huse
Executive Director

WINTER 2007



REDUCING CRUISE TOURISM'S FOOTPRINT IN THE MESOAMERICAN REEF



Previously, we wrote about CORAL's first-of-its-kind audit process for implementing sustainable business practices, the *Voluntary Standards for Marine Recreation*. This comprehensive set of guidelines—which promote environmental business practices that minimize impacts to the Mesoamerican Barrier Reef—has captured the attention of the Northwest Cruise Ship Association in Hawaii. Norwegian, Holland American and Princess Cruise Lines are participating along with shore based vendors in a taskforce facilitated by CORAL Field Manager, Liz Foote. The cruise lines have stated their desire to support recreation services that adopt the voluntary standards. The standards represent the best in grassroots involvement and voluntary participation by all the stakeholders. The interests of local people, the business sector, and the environment are not at odds with one another.

Now we can report that the practical application of these standards by CORAL's Field Representatives in Cozumel has been an unqualified success. We focused on nine local operators with large contracts with the tourist industry and cruise ships. Utilizing the environmental walk-throughs, the operators were able to assess and improve their performance.

Rich Wilson, our Mesoamerican Program Manager is excited at the level of participation by tour operators which resulted in a comprehensive survey of operational practices in the region's biggest tourist hub.

We are ready to take the successful program region-wide. Funding is in place to start in Belize, and we are seeking funding for a Honduras-based program.

DESTINATION SCORECARD NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC TRAVELER



The November 2007 issue of National Geographic Traveler Magazine features “Destination Scorecard—Islands.” It rates 111 selected islands around the world. **CORAL's Executive Director, Brian Huse, was among the panel of experts whose evaluations of six criteria made up the survey.** The criteria were: environmental and ecological quality; social and cultural integrity; condition of historic buildings and archaeological sites; aesthetic appeal; quality of tourism management; and outlook for the future. The survey was conducted by National Geographic's Center for Sustainable Destinations (CSD), whose mission is to help protect the world's distinc-

tive places through wisely managed tourism and enlightened destination stewardship. The CSD works to attain this goal through “geotourism,” defined as “tourism that sustains or enhances the geographical character of the place being visited—its environment, culture, aesthetics, heritage, and the well-being of its residents.”

The annual “Places Rated” Destination Scorecards are designed to highlight issues of stewardship, put them on the table for public discussion, and facilitate ways for destinations to improve.

Among the reef destinations discussed, CORAL has been active at a number of the sites that have seen improvement. However, more funding must be obtained to keep the progress moving.



RAJA AMPAT UPDATE

THANKS TO YOU, CORAL SUCCEEDS

In the summer 2007 CORAL CURRENT, we wrote about the critical situation in Raja Ampat, Indonesia, and CORAL's urgent efforts to restructure the way in which tourism fees were collected and used to benefit the local marine protected areas (MPAs). We needed donations to continue our crucial work in these mostly pristine reefs. You responded and, thanks to you, we were able to continue our work without interruption throughout 2007.

CORAL's Field Representatives held training sessions with dive operators and tourism board members, in addition to reaching out to local communities to facilitate creation of a new vision by all stakeholders. Coral reef communities know the best way to protect their own coral reefs, and even the best conservation efforts cannot succeed without all stakeholders being engaged and invested in the solutions created to address local conservation challenges.

We are proud to announce that effective August 12, 2007, the Raja Ampat Regency Government officially changed the tourism fee amount collected from visitors to the MPAs, as well as how the fees will directly benefit the resources and the people of Raja Ampat.

The new fee will be approximately US\$55, for an annual pass. Visitors



will receive a waterproof plastic entrance tag which they will be required to carry at all times and can be easily fixed to snorkeling or diving gear bags. The user fee system has been adapted from the very successful Bonaire and Bunaken Marine Park systems. The 2008 tag, shown here, features the Pygmy Seahorse (*hippocampus bargibanti*) one of over 1200 fish species in Raja Ampat. The CORAL logo is on the flip side of the tag.

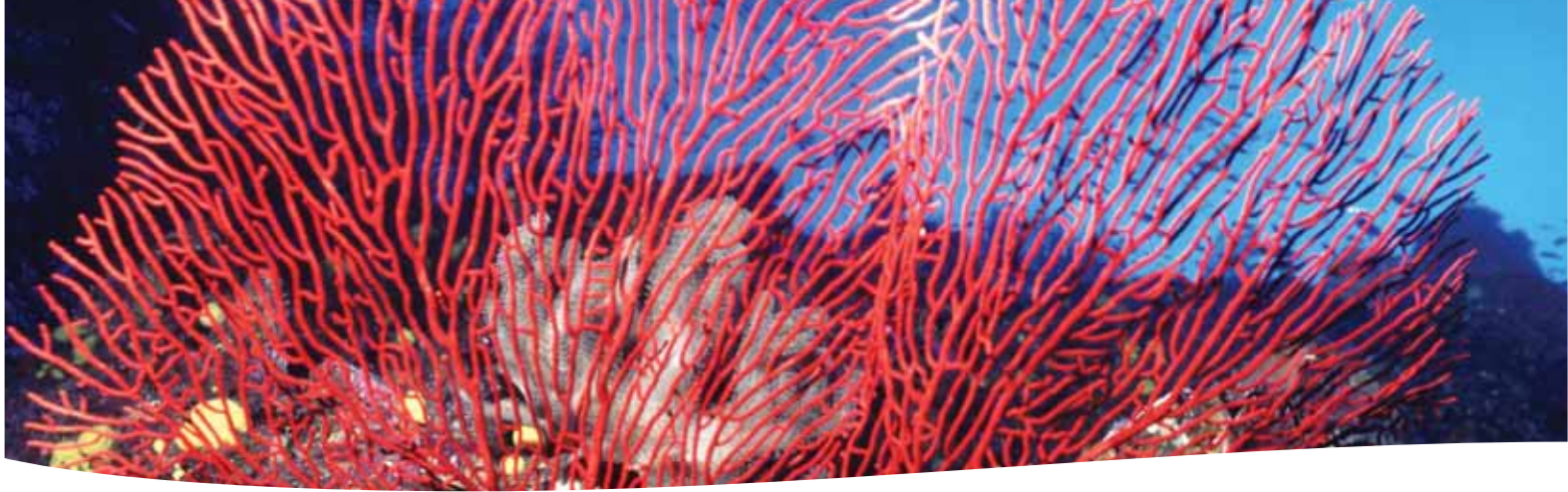
Tags will be available for purchase at the Sorong, Indonesia, airport, the main point of entry for Raja Ampat. The revenues from the entrance fee are managed by the multi-stakeholder "Raja Ampat Tourism Entrance Fee Management Team," which includes representatives from the fisheries department, tourism department, conservation organizations, tourism stakeholders, and community representatives.

We could not have continued this vital program without you. Together we are saving coral reefs.

Coral reef communities know the best way to protect their own coral reefs, and even the best conservation efforts cannot succeed without all stakeholders being engaged and invested in the solutions created to address local conservation challenges.



Photo by Dennis Liberson, Nudibranchs of Raja Ampat



DON'T BUY CORAL

You don't have to dive in an exotic location to see the very real impacts of reef destruction. Like glistening diamonds and gleaming pearls, the brilliant red and pink coral products in souvenir and jewelry stores can seem disconnected from their fragile, endangered sources.

Our Program Director, Rick MacPherson, recently found himself gazing incredulously at a window display of precious red and pink coral, some from obviously endangered reefs. The display was right in downtown San Francisco, and it was a startling reminder of the lobbying power of governments who engage in coral trade.

A new campaign to increase awareness in the fashion and design



industry—aptly titled *“Too Precious to Wear”*—has been launched by SeaWeb, one of CORAL's allies in the reef conservation movement. This high-profile campaign is all the more important in light of the recent failure

to obtain a certification under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) for threatened and endangered corals.

Tiffany & Co. Foundation, who partially funded the campaign, also funded an information signage project currently being prepared by CORAL staff in Marine Life Conservation Districts in Hawaii.

CORAL's work helps people connect the dots. What we do in our own communities—and what products we buy—have a very real, tangible effect on places many of us enjoy and upon whose sustainability the world depends. Every purchase of coral contributes to the destruction of habitats and livelihoods.

BOARD MEMBER PROFILE

DENNIS LIBERSON

CORAL Board Member Dennis Liberson has been scuba diving “anywhere in the world one can dive” for over 20 years and has seen and photographed the degradation of reef habitats, the decline in fish populations, and the effects of dynamite and cyanide on the reefs. Dennis brings to the board a passion for raising public awareness and his experience as an executive at a Fortune 500 company. CORAL's exclusive focus on coral reefs and commitment to practical solutions appealed to Dennis over huge budgets spent on lobbying in Washington. “I've seen this kind of partnership-building work in Botswana” he says. “Economic incentives are tied to low-impact tourism, and local people share in the benefits instead of profits being skimmed off by expatriates. Locals become aggressive advocates for conservation, fighting off poachers and protecting resources.”

Dennis is a tireless fundraiser and generous donor; a solution-oriented thinker, and renowned photographer whose images have been used to raise thousands of dollars for reef conservation. When you join or renew your membership today, order your 2008 CORAL Calendar, which Dennis helped produce by donating his own photos and securing image donations from some of the finest underwater photographers working today.



Dennis Liberson receiving the first Wisdom, Wealth & Work Award from Coral ED Brian Huse. Photo by CORAL.

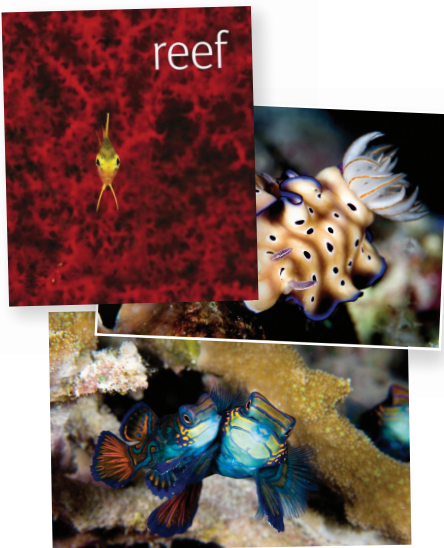
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REEF, A BOOK FOR ALL REASONS

Looking for the perfect gift this holiday season? Everyone in your life will enjoy this stunning photography book, published by DK Publishing. Coral reefs are often called “the rainforests of the sea” because of the quantity and diversity of life they support, and because they are highly sensitive and threatened ecosystems. This vivid collection of photographs, from underwater photography collective Scubazoo, reveals reefs as they’ve never been seen before—and you support CORAL with every purchase. Buy it online at www.coral.org.

By Joni Lawrence/Editor of MarineBio.org

The next best thing to being there! WOW! The photography is nothing short of amazing. I'm so inspired by these photos and impressed by the identification—common and scientific names—of the creatures featured and the site where each photograph was taken, along with information on the behavior or other characteristics displayed in the photos. The DVD that comes with it is also an excellent bonus!

MAKING IT HAPPEN!

An extra large thank you goes out to Michael Bennett and Bonnie Ricca for their tireless efforts in supporting CORAL. We couldn't do it without you! If you're interested in supporting CORAL as a volunteer in our San Francisco office and have skills in updating website content, doing extensive online prospect research, or just want to help us out occasionally when we need to get mailings out the door, please contact Kate Dillon, Development Manager, at (415)834-0900 x319 or kdillon@coral.org. **Thank You!**