

The Human Component of the Coral Reef Ecosystem: A Framework for Sustainability

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This presentation will provide an overview of EPA's Coral Reefs Research Project. The goal of the research is to provide national, state and local decision-makers with information and tools to routinely account for the effects of human activities on the value of coral reef ecosystems. The project is highly collaborative and emphasizes strong interactions with clients to incorporate ecosystem services and values into policymaking. The research includes a series of workshops with jurisdiction decision-makers and resource managers in Florida, Puerto Rico, and USVI to identify relevant decisions and to characterize legal authorities, decision flows and decision landscapes.

The project is an example of integrated transdisciplinary research, combining deep understanding of environmental science with theory and empirical methods in behavioral and decision science. An organizing framework – DPSIR (Driving forces, Pressures, State, Impact, and Response) is being used to organize and better characterize the interactions among coral reef services, environmental effects of human activities, and policy responses influencing human behavior. The research will help decision makers to find holistic sustainable solutions.

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