



## RESOLUTION TCSF #19-05

**A JOINT RESOLUTION OF THE SOUTH FLORIDA AND TREASURE COAST REGIONAL PLANNING COUNCILS REPRESENTING THE LOCAL GOVERNMENTS OF MONROE, MIAMI-DADE, BROWARD, PALM BEACH, MARTIN, ST. LUCIE, AND INDIAN RIVER COUNTIES, FLORIDA; URGING THE GOVERNOR AND FLORIDA LEGISLATURE TO ESTABLISH A LONG-TERM, RECURRING REVENUE SOURCE TO PROVIDE ADEQUATE AND FLEXIBLE FUNDING FOR CORAL REEF DISEASE INTERVENTION AND RESTORATION AND TO BETTER ADDRESS HARMFUL ENVIRONMENTAL CONDITIONS ENABLING THE DISEASE EPIDEMIC CRITICALLY DAMAGING THE FLORIDA REEF TRACT, WHICH CONSISTS OF THE SOVEREIGN SUBMERGED LANDS AND STATE WATERS OFFSHORE OF MONROE, MIAMI-DADE, BROWARD, PALM BEACH, AND MARTIN COUNTIES; AND SUPPORTING FEDERAL LEGISLATION FOR INCREASED FUNDING OF RESPONSE ACTIVITIES AND CODIFICATION OF THE CORAL REEF TASK FORCE**

**WHEREAS**, the South Florida and Treasure Coast Regional Planning Councils' seven county geographical area is comprised of Broward, Indian River, Martin, Miami-Dade, Monroe, Palm Beach, and St. Lucie counties and 122 municipalities, which contain over 6.7 million residents or nearly one-third of the State's population, responsible for generating over one-third of the State's gross domestic product; and

**WHEREAS**, the Florida Reef Tract runs parallel to our coastline from Monroe County north to Martin County, and is a valuable national resource that protects our shores and beaches by reducing wave energy from storms and hurricanes, providing flood protection valued at over \$675 million per year and over \$1 billion during extreme weather events; and

**WHEREAS**, Florida's coral reef ecosystem provides a vital marine habitat for over 6,000 species, including species found nowhere else on earth; and

**WHEREAS**, this habitat is essential to our commercial fishing and tourism industries, supports over 71,000 jobs within the region, and generates over \$6 billion in positive economic impact annually; and

**WHEREAS**, protection of Florida's coral reefs is essential for ensuring the continued protection of our shorelines, coastal food sources, cultural practices, biomedical opportunities, and coastal economies that are a direct result of our coral reefs; and

**WHEREAS**, it has been determined that coastal ocean waters are under great user pressure and suffer from water quality degradation that has compromised the resiliency of the Florida Reef Tract and its habitat; and

**WHEREAS**, the global threat and impacts to coral reefs continue to grow which, coupled with local stressors, is evidenced by coral reefs declining at an alarming rate; and

**WHEREAS**, this coral disease outbreak of unknown origin originated offshore of Miami-Dade County in fall 2014 and has persisted and continued to spread and affect new reefs from southwest of Key West in Monroe County to the northernmost coral reefs in Martin County, harming roughly 50 percent of the coral species present in the Florida Reef Tract; and

**WHEREAS**, the coral disease epidemic is causing near total mortality of vulnerable species present on the Florida Reef Tract, including reef-building coral species and species listed under the Endangered Species Act, resulting in an increasing threat to fragile ecosystems that support Florida's fisheries and protect our coasts; and

**WHEREAS**, a collaborative, multi-organizational/multi-disciplinary emergency response has formed to address this grave threat; and

**WHEREAS**, inaction will ensure near extinction of these susceptible species throughout the Florida Reef Tract; and

**WHEREAS**, the coral disease has spread from Florida to nine locations throughout the Caribbean, with the potential threat of introduction into the Pacific Ocean; and

**WHEREAS**, U.S. Senators Marco Rubio (R-FL) and Rick Scott (R-FL) and Representative Darren Soto (D-FL 9th) introduced the Restoring Resilient Reefs Act of 2019 designed to reauthorize and update the Coral Reef Conservation Act of 2000 to support the conservation of U.S. reefs, including through five years of directed federal funding, technical assistance to jurisdictions for coral reef management and restoration, and the codification of the U.S. Coral Reef Task Force; and

**WHEREAS**, establishing a long-term, recurring revenue source to provide adequate and flexible funding would provide dedicated resources to help find solutions necessary to protect the Florida Reef Tract; and

**WHEREAS**, the South Florida Regional Planning Council and the Treasure Coast Regional Planning Council wish to urge the Governor and Legislature to provide vital funding for the purposes specified below.

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SOUTH FLORIDA AND TREASURE COAST REGIONAL PLANNING COUNCILS THAT:**

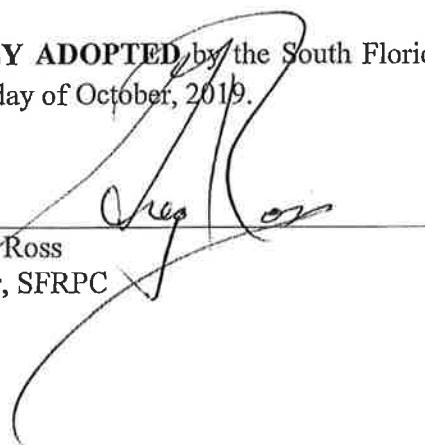
The Councils request that Florida's Governor and Legislature establish a long-term, recurring revenue source to provide adequate and flexible funding to support:

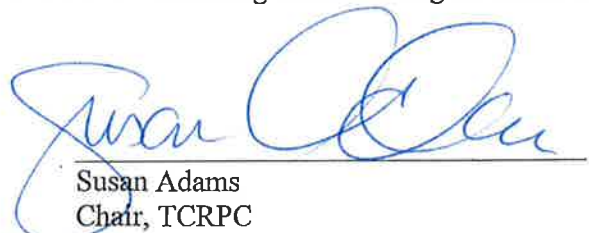
- 1) dedicated staff resources for coral reef disease intervention and restoration efforts;
- 2) infrastructure and capacity needed to maintain reproductive coral populations across the Florida Reef Tract;
- 3) infrastructure and capacity needed for assisted reproduction and propagation of resilient corals for future ecosystem restoration efforts;
- 4) in-water and land-based priority research focused on pathogen identification and disease treatment interventions;
- 5) restoration of coastal water quality through urban wastewater infrastructure upgrades; accelerated coastal septic to sewer conversions focused on local governments with matching fund programs; improved stormwater treatment; expedited closure of ocean wastewater outfalls; and additional strategies to greatly reduce nutrient loading from all human sources and pathways; and
- 6) a campaign to educate residents and tourists on the importance of their role in revitalizing this national natural resource, providing specific actions and challenges for reef users, non-users, business owners, elected officials, etc.

The Councils support new Federal legislation which should include the following:

- 1) measures which ensure effective, science-based protection and management of coral reefs;
- 2) codification of the United States Coral Reef Task Force;
- 3) increased funding, including an increase in direct funding of Jurisdictional Coral Reef Management Agencies; and
- 4) support for adaptive restoration activities.

**DULY ADOPTED** by the South Florida and Treasure Coast Regional Planning Councils this 25<sup>th</sup> day of October, 2019.

  
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Greg Ross  
Chair, SFRPC

  
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Susan Adams  
Chair, TCRPC