



MEMORANDUM

AGENDA ITEM #IV.E

DATE: APRIL 25, 2022
TO: COUNCIL MEMBERS
FROM: STAFF
SUBJECT: RESOLUTION 2022-01: RESTORING RESILIENT REEFS ACT OF 2021

Over the last few years, the South Florida and Treasure Coast Regional Planning Councils have advocated for reauthorization of the Coral Reef Conservation Act of 2000 and passage of the Restoring Resilient Reefs Act of 2020 by Senator Rubio (S. 46) and Congressman Soto (H.R. 160).

Resolution 2022-01 is a restatement of past resolutions of the Councils in support of this legislation.

Recommendation

Approve the Resolution.



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RESOLUTION NO. 2022-01

A RESOLUTION BY THE SOUTH FLORIDA REGIONAL PLANNING COUNCIL URGING CONGRESS TO REAUTHORIZE THE CORAL REEF CONSERVATION ACT OF 2000; SUPPORTING S. 46 AND H.R. 160, THE RESTORING RESILIENT REEFS ACT OF 2021 TO STRENGTHEN THE FEDERAL RESPONSE TO THE PROTECTION, CONSERVATION, AND SUSTAINABILITY OF CORAL REEF ECOSYSTEMS; AND PROVIDING AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

WHEREAS, the South Florida Regional Planning Council is a regional public policy and planning agency representing the geographic area of Miami-Dade, Broward, and Monroe counties; municipalities contained therein, and more than 4.8 million residents; and

WHEREAS, the Council Board consists of county and municipal elected officials, gubernatorial appointees, and ex-officio representatives representing the South Florida Water Management District, Florida Department of Transportation, and Florida Department of Environmental Protection; and

WHEREAS, the South Florida and Treasure Coast Regional Planning Councils continue to work in close partnership with local, state, and federal agencies, as well as academic, nonprofit, and private leaders to further awareness, restoration, and protection of Florida's endangered coral reef; and

WHEREAS, the seven-county Southeast Florida region, with 122 municipalities and more than 6.8 million residents, is home to Florida's Coral Reef - the world's third largest reef and only living barrier coral reef system in the continental United States; and

WHEREAS, Florida's Coral Reef is a valuable national resource that protects Southeast Florida's 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 is essential to the state's commercial fishing and tourism industries providing more than 71,000 jobs within the region and generating more than \$6 billion in positive impact annually; and

WHEREAS, Florida's Coral Reef ecosystem provides vital marine habitat for over 6,000 species, including species found nowhere on earth, and is a significant habit for fisheries; and

WHEREAS, in the United States, about half of all federally managed fisheries depend on coral reefs. NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service estimates the annual commercial value of U.S. fisheries from coral

reefs to be over \$100 million. Reef-based recreational fisheries generate over \$100 million annually in the United States; and

WHEREAS, healthy and resilient coral reefs safeguard against extreme weather, shoreline erosion and coastal flooding. Florida's Coral Reef provides more than \$355 million per year in flood protection benefits and protects nearly \$320 million in annual economic activity (Storlazzi et al.); and

WHEREAS, Florida's Coral Reef is experiencing a multi-year outbreak of Stony Coral Tissue Loss Disease. This event is unique due to its large geographic range, extended duration, rapid progression, and high rates of mortality including reef-building coral species listed under the Endangered Species Act; and

WHEREAS, this outbreak has spread along Florida's Coral Reef and to reefs throughout the Caribbean, including Jamaica, Mexico, St. Maarten, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and the Dominican Republic since first reported off the coast of Miami-Dade County in 2014; and

WHEREAS, massive, region-wide bleaching events have become more common on Florida's Coral Reef. Since 1987, six extensive coral bleaching events have affected the entire tract. Substantial mass coral mortality occurred during the global bleaching events; and

WHEREAS, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) reports that diseases and diminishing health condition among corals throughout the Florida's Coral Reef have dramatically increased; and

WHEREAS, at the federal level there have been limited resources to address this disease outbreak and the overall health of coral reefs. Congress passed the Coral Reef Conservation Act in 2000, which authorized appropriations to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) for coral reef protection and management activities through 2004. Authorization for the overall program expired in 2004 but Congress has continued to fund the CRCP through the annual appropriations process; and

WHEREAS, the Senate and House bills are sponsored by Florida Senator Marco Rubio and Florida Representative Darren Soto, respectively, and are supported by the entire Florida federal delegation; and

WHEREAS, the Restoring Resilient Reefs Act provides a five-year authorization for federal funding, provides increased funding, provides statutory authority for the U.S. Coral Reef Taskforce to lead, coordinate and strengthen federal government actions to preserve and restore coral reef systems, and directs a portion of the federal funding and technical assistance to states and impacted communities so they can help drive priorities and management of coral reef ecosystems; and

WHEREAS, the Restoring Resilient Reefs Act OF 2021 specifically strengthens the federal response to coral reef *emergencies* including disease, bleaching, natural disasters, and hazardous spills; and

WHEREAS, support for Senate Bill 46 and House Resolution 160 is consistent with the South Florida Regional Planning Council's long history of championing protections for Florida's coral reef ecosystems; and

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SOUTH FLORIDA REGIONAL PLANNING COUNCIL:

Section 1. The South Florida Regional Planning Council urges Congress to pass Senate Bill 46 and House Resolution 160, the Restoring Resilient Reefs Act of 2021, reauthorizing the Coral Reef Conservation Act of 2000 and strengthening the federal response to coral reef ecosystem protection, conservation, and sustainability; and

Section 2. Direct staff to transmit copies of this resolution to the Chair and Ranking Member of the U.S. Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation; Chair and Ranking Member of the House Natural Resources Committee and Chair, House Subcommittee on Water, Oceans, and Wildlife; members of Florida's Congressional Delegation, Senator Marco Rubio, and Senator Rick Scott, as well as other regional stakeholders.

Section 3. This resolution shall become effective upon adoption.

DULY ADOPTED by the Board of South Florida Regional Planning Council this 25th day of April 2022.

Chair Steve Geller

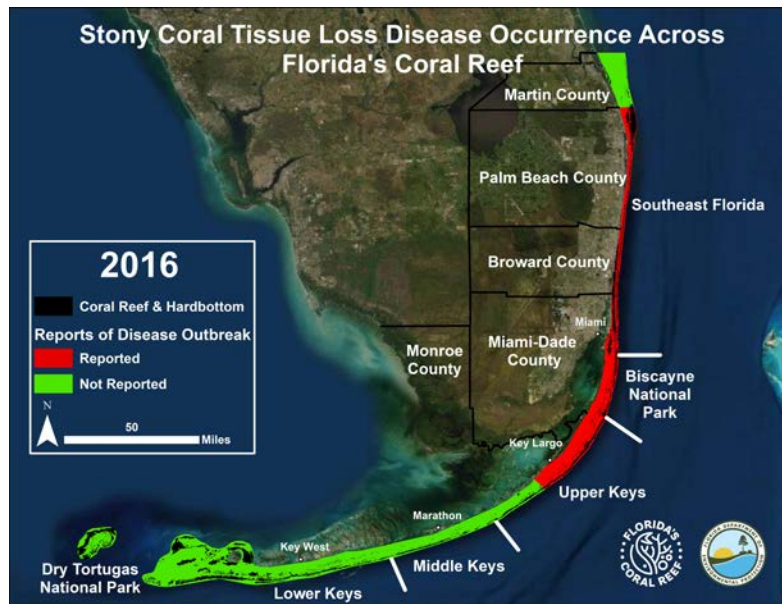
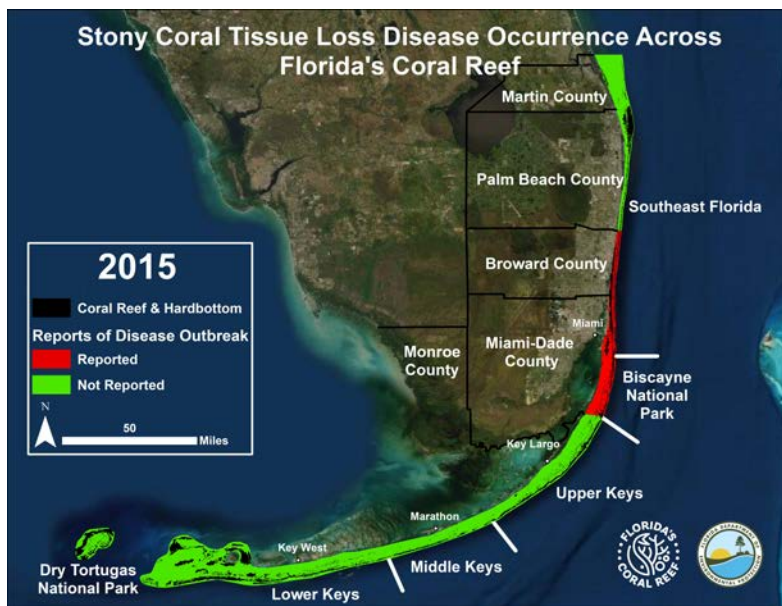
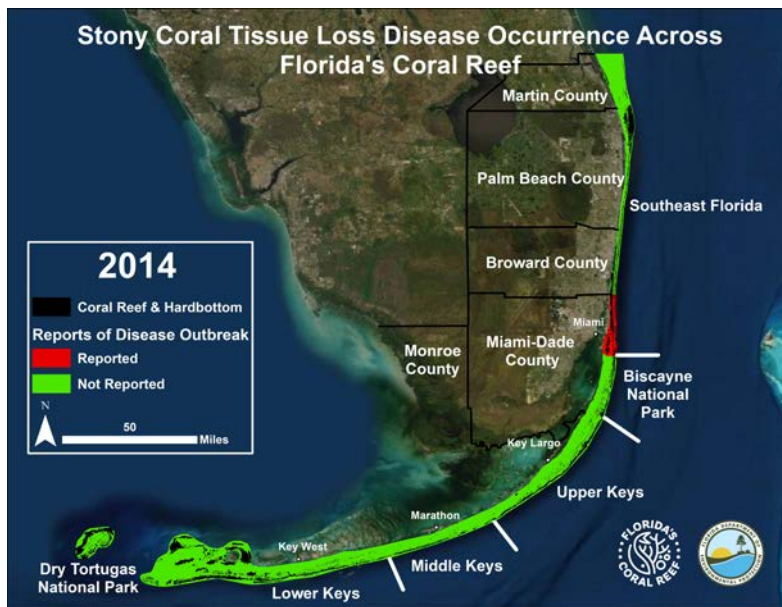
Senator Steve Geller, *(Chair), Commissioner, Broward County*
Samuel Kaufman, *(First Vice Chair), Commissioner, Key West*
Quentin "Beam" Furr, *(Second Vice Chair), Commissioner, Broward County*
Senator René García, *(Treasurer), Commissioner, Miami-Dade County*
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Greg Ross, *Mayor, Cooper City*
Michael Udine, *Mayor, Broward County*
Ana M. Ziade, *Mayor, North Lauderdale*

Ex Officio Members

Jason Andreotta, *Florida Department of Environmental Protection*
Dat Huynh, *Florida Department of Transportation, District Six*
Lorraine Mayers, *South Florida Water Management District*

Isabel Cosio Carballo, *Executive Director*
Sam Goren, *Legal Counsel*

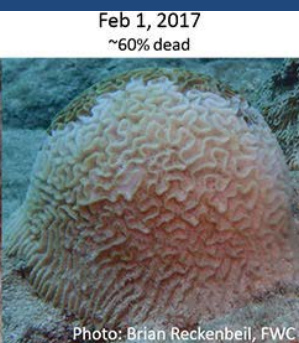
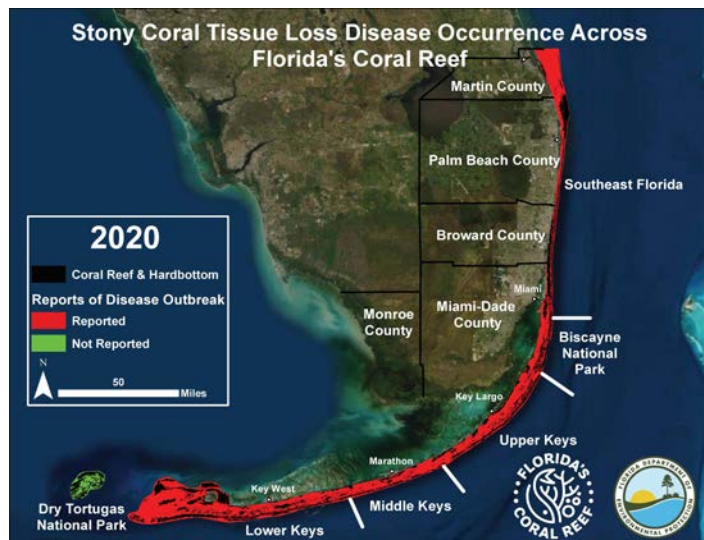
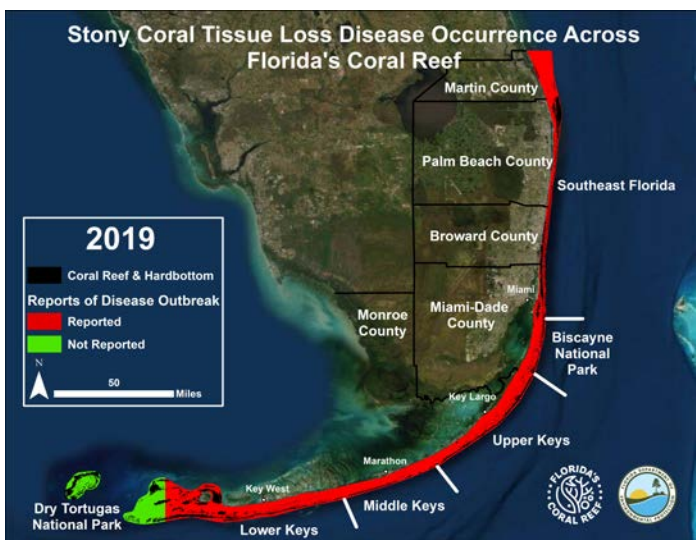
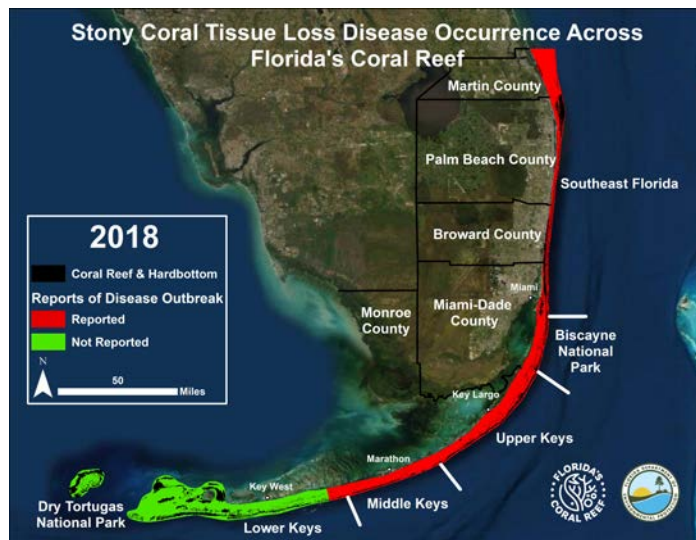
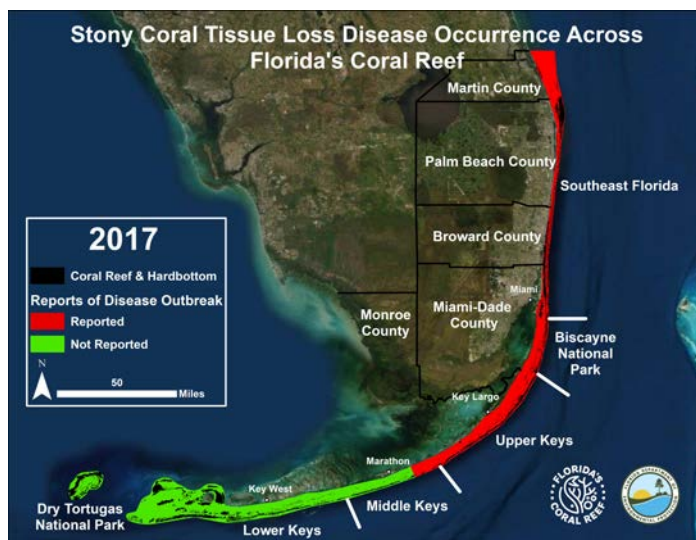




Coral Disease Progression on Florida's Coral Reef 2014 – 2020

The accelerating spread of this disease has never been seen in the Florida Reef Tract.

Funding is needed immediately to identify and assess the scale and severity of this outbreak as well as identify any potential primary and/or secondary causes, determine the feasibility of actions needed to remediate or restore the affected resources, begin actions to prevent and restore affected resources, and document any economic impacts to fishing and diving communities as well as small businesses.



For additional information:

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