

Coral Reefs

Hawaii's reefs account for about 85% of all coral reefs in the U.S. About ¼ of the plants, fish, and invertebrates found in our coral reefs are endemic—they are found nowhere else on Earth. Corals are commonly mistaken for rocks, but they're actually tiny marine animals surrounded by a calcium carbonate skeleton that grows less than an inch per year. Corals offer sanctuary and food to fish and invertebrates.

Coral reefs are crucial to shoreline stabilization because they dissipate wave energy and protect coasts from erosion and storm damage. Reefs create sheltered lagoons for boat mooring and fishing. Coral reefs and the marine life they host are important to the worldwide tourist industry. Millions of people depend on coral reefs for food and livelihood.

MCBH is the only Marine Corps installation with coral reefs within its coastal waters. To support training, the Environmental Division's natural resources program has worked with the USFWS, NOAA, DLNR, and USGS to map out the coral reef structure around MCBH. This helps Marines avoid the reefs and avoid a halt in training.

Coral reef ecosystems are threatened by pollution, overfishing, invasive species, marine debris, recreational overuse, rising temperatures, and more. Here's a few things you can to help:

- Use coral safe sunscreen. Avoid sunscreens that contain the active ingredients: oxybenzone, butylparaben, octinoxate or 4-methylbenzylidene camphor.
- Practice reef etiquette. Don't stand, touch, or anchor your boat on the reef.
- Don't drag kayaks, SUPs, or canoes over a shallow reef. Be mindful of your paddle, and don't dig it into the reef structure.
- When spear fishing, don't allow spears to make contact with corals.
- Hawaii State law prohibits taking live or dead coral or rocks from a beach or the ocean.
- Remove marine debris and other items that may damage corals.

Activity: Check out NOAA's "Just for Kids" page at: <https://oceanservice.noaa.gov/kids/> Post pictures of your coloring sheets, puzzles, or activities in the comments below. P.S. Adults can color too! Random drawings for prizes will be held when social distancing measures have been lifted.

Mālama i ke kai, a mālama ke kai ia oe —care for the ocean and the ocean will care for you.