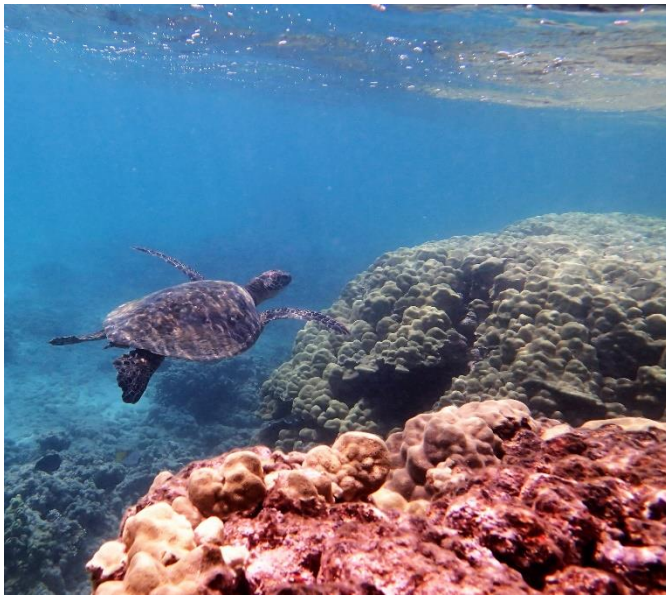




MCBH Environmental Compliance & Protection Division

Coral Reefs need our help NOW!

Coral reefs are gravely imperiled. Coral reefs are not only beautiful, they play a vital role in the oceanic ecosystems. Thousands of species and billions of people across the globe are dependent on reefs for one reason or another. With seemingly infinite structures and growth forms, coral reefs are unlike anything else on the planet. Their intricate, three-dimensional habitats provide valuable shelter for fish and other marine animals.



Hawaiian coral reefs in the Central Pacific, account for about 85 percent of all coral reefs in the United States. About one-quarter of the plants, fish, and invertebrates found in the Hawaiian coral reef are endemic to Hawaii, meaning that they found nowhere else on Earth. Commonly mistaken for rocks, coral are actually tiny marine animals, akin to a jellyfish, surrounded by a calcium carbonate skeleton, which only grows 1-2 centimeters (less than an inch) per year. Living corals and their dead skeletal remains provide habitat in a reef by offering sanctuary and food to fish and countless invertebrates.

Millions of people depend on coral reefs for food and livelihood. Because of their beauty, coral reefs are important to a worldwide tourist industry. Reefs create sheltered lagoons for boat mooring and fishing. Reefs are crucial for shoreline stabilization by protecting them from erosion and storm damage, by dissipating wave energy and limiting the impact of strong waves. Coral reef plants and animals are important sources of new medicines being developed to treat cancer, arthritis, human bacterial infections, Alzheimer's disease, heart disease, viruses, and other diseases. Without coral reefs, the infamous white sandy beaches of Hawaii would not exist at all, since sand's main components are fragments of coral, shells, and calcified algae.

MCBH is the only Marine Corps installation with coral reefs within its littoral 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 communities to assist the warfighter with avoiding this critical resource that could halt training if damaged.

However, coral reef ecosystems are dying at an alarming rate from recreational abuse and overuse, sedimentation, overfishing, invasive marine species, marine debris, and hazardous

For more info please visit: <https://www.mcbhawaii.marines.mil/Offices-Staff/S-4-Installations-Logistics/Facilities/Environmental/>

waste. Researchers are working tirelessly to reverse the trend of worldwide coral collapse by growing corals in laboratories and improving coral transplanting methods.



There are simple things you can do to protect our coral reefs:

- Be aware that Hawaii State law prohibits taking any amount of coral (live or dead) from beaches or the ocean. Once out of the water, live coral will quickly start to die, decay and will smell very bad.
- When visiting a reef, practice reef etiquette - Do not stand on, touch, or anchor your boat on the reef!
- When paddling, don't drag your kayak or canoe over a shallow reef and be mindful you don't strike corals with your paddle or dig it into the reef.
- When spear fishing, do not allow spears to make contact with corals. Coral reefs are not a platform for gaining access to better fishing points or to balance yourself.
- Use coral safe sunscreen. Do not wear sunscreen in the water that contain the active ingredients: oxybenzone, butylparaben, octinoxate or 4-methylbenzylidene camphor.
- While diving or snorkeling, do not use the corals to pull yourself over the coral reef. Also, please take the time to remove plastics and fishing line caught in the coral.

So, spread the word. Tell family, friends, and neighbors all about coral reefs and the important role they play in all of our lives.

Any questions about coral reefs, their inhabitants, or potential threats, contact Base Environmental Natural Resources staff at 257-7000 or 285-6464.