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THE POST NEWS

Florida Department of Environmental Protection



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Breakers Reef Restoration Completed



PALM BEACH –The Florida Department of Environmental Protection's (DEP) Coral Reef Conservation Program (CRCP), Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) and Palm Beach County Environmental Resources Management (ERM) announced on Wednesday the completion of the restoration of the Breakers Reef, which was damaged in November 2008.

Damage to Breakers Reef, which is located a mile off of the coast of Palm Beach, was reported by scuba divers in November of 2008. The damage spanned nearly the entire length of two football fields, and included damage to tube and barrel sponges, as well as brain coral.

FWC and Palm Beach County ERM staff assessed the damage to the Breakers Reef in late November of 2008 and in December 2008 the CRCP selected West Palm Beach water resources and environmental engineering firm, Applied Technology & Management (ATM) to help restore the damage. The ATM team, led by Project Manager Bill Fay, assembled a team of qualified reef experts and recruited volunteers to assist in the restoration efforts.

"DEP is pleased to have partnered with FWC, Palm Beach County, Applied Technology & Management and volunteers to complete the restoration of the Breakers Reef," said Jack Long, DEP Southeast District Director. "This reef is a vital resource which not only provides habitat for marine life, but also provides enjoyment for many tourists and residents in South Florida who enjoy diving there."

Other agencies involved in providing support for the restoration effort included: the CRCP, Palm Beach County ERM, Tetra Tech Environmental Consultants, Inc., Callaway Marine Technologies, Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary and the Pinnacle Group environmental consultants.

"Applied Technology & Management is honored to have worked on a plan for the restoration of the Breakers Reef," said Bill Fay, Project Manager for Applied Technology and Management. "Our volunteers and qualified reef experts, along with the partnership with DEP, Palm Beach County ERM, FWC and collaboration with the private sector made this project a wonderful environmental success."

Restoration activities were completed in February, and included repairing 120 of the damaged hard corals, which range in size from 10 inches to more than three feet in diameter. The restoration team also reattached soft corals such as sea fans and sea whips.

"Although this was an unfortunate event, a restoration effort has been performed that promises the best possible outcome," said Erin McDevitt, Southeast Region Habitat Coordinator with the FWC. "The reattached hard corals have an excellent chance of recovery. The list of volunteers that participated in this effort is extensive and it is encouraging to see the progress that can be made when private industry, government agencies and non-profit organizations work together."

The Department's CRCP, the newest program of the DEP's Office of Coastal and Aquatic Managed Areas (CAMA), was established in 2004. CAMA also manages three National Estuarine Research Reserves in the state, 41 aquatic preserves and the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary. CAMA's programs and activities are designed to help Floridians better understand and conserve the state's resources through research, education and preservation.

For more information on DEP's Coral Reef Conservation Program and the Southeast Florida Coral Reef Initiative, visit <http://www.dep.state.fl.us/coastal/programs/coral/>.

For more information on DEP's Office of Coastal and Aquatic Managed Areas, visit
<http://www.dep.state.fl.us/coastal>.