BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
AGENDA ITEM SUMMARY

Meeting Date: **June 21, 2006/Marathon** Division: **BOCC**

Bulk Item: Yes ___ No x Department: **DISTRICT FIVE**

Staff Contact Person: **DonnaHanson**

AGENDA ITEM WORDING: Discussion and direction to staff regarding the prohibition of the sale of dead coral in Monroe County.

ITEM BACKGROUND: Due to the recent listing of Elkhorn and Staghorn coral as a Threatened species by the NMFS under the Endangered Species Act, it seem appropriate to do everything possible to protect and preserve the world's reefs and ocean environment, even though this listing is not directly related to the sales of imported coral in the Keys.
http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/protres.htm

Selling dead coral in the Florida Keys a National Marine Sanctuary sends the wrong message to the public.

PREVIOUS RELEVANT BOCC ACTION:

CONTRACT/AGREEMENT CHANGES:

STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS:

TOTAL COST:_____ **BUDGETED:** Yes ___ No ___

COST TO COUNTY:_____ **SOURCE OF FUNDS:**_____

REVENUE PRODUCING: Yes ___ No ___ **AMOUNT PER MONTH**____ **Year** ____

APPROVED BY: County Atty ___ OMB/Purchasing ___ Risk Management ____

DIVISION DIRECTOR APPROVAL: Glenn Patton
COMMISSIONER GLENN PATTON

DOCUMENTATION: Included X Not Required_____

DISPOSITION:_____ **AGENDA ITEM #**_____

NEWS FROM NOAA
NATIONAL OCEANIC & ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION • US DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

Contact: Kim Amendola – NOAA
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NOAA 06-R110
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
May 5, 2006

ELKHORN AND STAGHORN CORALS LISTED IN THREATENED STATUS

NOAA hosting public information workshops in south Florida and Caribbean

NOAA Fisheries Service announced its decision yesterday to list elkhorn (*Acropora palmata*) and staghorn corals (*Acropora cervicornis*) as threatened under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). The final rule will be published next week, and the listing will be effective 30 days after that date. This will be the first time a coral has been listed as endangered or threatened under the ESA. A species is considered endangered if it is in danger of extinction throughout all or a significant portion of its range. A species is considered threatened if it is likely to become an endangered species within the foreseeable future.

In response to a formal petition, a status review was initiated by NOAA Fisheries Service to determine whether these corals required ESA listing. The fisheries service convened the Atlantic Acropora Biological Review Team in June 2004. The members of this team are a diverse group of experts including coral biologists and ecologists; specialists in climate, water quality and coral disease, monitoring, restoration and taxonomy; regional experts in coral abundance/distribution throughout the Caribbean Sea; and state and federal resource managers.

The results of the team's 10-month review led to the determination that a threatened listing was warranted for both elkhorn and staghorn corals because they are likely to become in danger of extinction throughout all of their ranges in the foreseeable future from a combination of factors. The primary factors include disease, temperature-induced bleaching, and physical damage from hurricanes. Other factors include damage from commercial and recreational activities, sediments and contaminants from land-based sources, and poor water quality.

"This is the first time a coral species has been listed as threatened in the United States," said Assistant Administrator for NOAA Fisheries Service Bill Hogarth. "As we look ahead, NOAA Fisheries Service is committed to recovering these species, but we cannot do that without help and participation from our constituents and resource users."

Yesterday the U.S. Coral Reef Task Force recognized the Atlantic Acropora Biological Review Team for its dedication and efforts in compiling, editing and completing the status review for elkhorn and staghorn corals by presenting team members with an Outstanding Management award at the task force team meeting in Washington, D.C.

To gather information from the public, constituents, and resource users, the fisheries service will host seven conservation workshops throughout May. The workshops are designed to seek input from participants to help identify programs and activities that may affect these species, physical and biological features essential for conservation, and possible areas to designate as critical habitat.

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These workshops are intended to be constructive brainstorming sessions where all interested members of the public are encouraged to attend and participate. The information gathered during these workshops will be considered in the development of any future conservation measures.

Workshops will be held between May 8 and May 25. More information on time, date and location of the workshops is available online, and regional announcements have been distributed. Comments and suggestions can also be submitted to NOAA Fisheries Service's Southeast Regional Office via mail, fax, or email by Friday, June 22, 2006.

Elkhorn and staghorn corals are of the genus *Acropora*. *Acropora* is the most abundant group of corals in the world and once represented the most dominant reef building species throughout Florida and the Caribbean. They are found typically on shallow water reefs, live in high-energy zones with a lot of wave action, and are found in water temperatures from 66 to 86 degrees Fahrenheit. They have relatively high growth rates for corals and exhibit branching morphologies that provide important habitat for other reef organisms; no other Caribbean reef-building coral species are able to fulfill these ecosystem functions. At the current reduced abundance, it is highly likely that both these ecosystem functions have been greatly compromised.

NOAA Fisheries Service is dedicated to protecting and preserving our nation's living marine resources and their habitats through scientific research, management and enforcement. NOAA Fisheries Service provides effective stewardship of these resources for the benefit of the nation, supporting coastal communities that depend upon them, and helping to provide safe and healthy seafood to consumers and recreational opportunities for the American public.

NOAA, an agency of the U.S. Department of Commerce, is dedicated to enhancing economic security and national safety through the prediction and research of weather and climate-related events and providing environmental stewardship of the nation's coastal and marine resources. Through the emerging Global Earth Observation System of Systems (GEOSS), NOAA is working with its federal partners, over 60 countries and the European Commission to develop a global network that is as integrated as the planet it observes, predicts and protects.

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On the Web:
NOAA www.noaa.gov
Conservation Workshop Information http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/protres.htm
(Click on Acropora Conservation Workshop Announcement)
Elkhorn Coral (*Acropora palmata*) Image http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/docs/07.jpg
Staghorn Coral (*Acropora cervicornis*) Image http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/docs/05.jpg
Elkhorn and Staghorn Coral Information http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/protres.htm
Endangered Species Act http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/laws/esa.htm