



ICRI Press Release

NOAA and ICRI Confirm Fourth Global Coral Bleaching Event

WASHINGTON D.C (Monday 15th April 2024) - The world is currently experiencing its fourth global coral bleaching event, according to NOAA scientists and ICRI's network of global coral reef scientists, the second in the last 10 years.

Bleaching-level heat stress, caused by prolonged increases in anomalous ocean temperatures, as remotely monitored and predicted by [NOAA's Coral Reef Watch](#) (CRW), has – and continues to be – extensive across the Atlantic, Pacific, and Indian Oceans.

"From February 2023 to April 2024, significant coral bleaching has been documented in both the Northern and Southern Hemispheres of each major ocean basin," said Derek Manzello, Ph.D., NOAA CRW coordinator.

Mass bleaching of coral reefs, since early 2023, has been confirmed in at least 53 countries, territories, and local economies, including Florida (U.S.A), the Caribbean, the Eastern Tropical Pacific (including Mexico, El Salvador, Costa Rica, Panama, and Colombia), Australia's Great Barrier Reef, large areas of the South Pacific (including Fiji, Vanuatu, Tuvalu, Kiribati, and the Samoas), the Red Sea (including the Gulf of Aqaba), the Persian Gulf, and the Gulf of Aden.

Bleaching must be confirmed within each Ocean basin to make a final determination of a global bleaching event. Reports have now been confirmed of widespread bleaching across parts of the Western Indian Ocean, including Tanzania, Kenya, Mauritius, the Seychelles, Tromelin, Mayotte, and off the western coast of Indonesia.

"As the world's oceans continue to warm, coral bleaching is becoming more frequent and severe," Manzello said. "When these events are sufficiently severe or prolonged, they can cause coral mortality, which can negatively impact the goods and services coral reefs provide that people depend on for their livelihoods."

Where coral bleaching results in mortality, especially on a widespread scale, it impacts economies, livelihoods, food security, and more. However, it is important to remember that coral bleaching does not always lead to coral death. Rather, if the stress driving the bleaching diminishes, corals can recover, with reefs maintaining their biodiversity and continuing to provide the ecosystem services that we rely on.

"Climate model predictions for coral reefs have been suggesting, for years, that bleaching impacts would increase in frequency and magnitude as the oceans warm," said Jennifer Koss, director of NOAA's [Coral Reef Conservation Program](#) (CRCP).



This global event requires global action. The [International Coral Reef Initiative](#) (ICRI), a partnership of 101 international members, currently co-chaired by NOAA and the US Department of State, is steadfast in applying resilience-based management actions for coral reefs. In response to the three previous global bleaching events as well as regional and local events, ICRI and its members have advanced coral interventions and restoration in the face of climate change. ICRI develops, and shares, best practices for the effective management of coral reefs through the implementation of its [Plan of Action](#).

NOAA has incorporated resilience-based management practices, increasing the emphasis on coral restoration, into its 2018 strategic plan, and funded a National Academies of Sciences' study, leading to the publication of the [2019 Interventions to Increase the Resilience of Coral Reefs](#).

Koss said: "We are on the frontlines of coral reef research, management, and restoration, and are actively and aggressively implementing the recommendations of the 2019 Interventions Report."

The 2023 heatwave in Florida (U.S.A) was unprecedented; starting earlier, lasting longer, and with recorded temperatures higher than any previous event in the region. During the heat stress event, NOAA deployed the 2019 recommended interventions, building a valuable knowledge base and made significant strides, through its "Mission: Iconic Reefs program", to offset some of the negative impacts of global climate change and local stressors on Florida's corals including moving coral nurseries to deeper, cooler waters and deploying sunshades to protect corals in other areas.

Global bleaching events do not affect all coral reefs equally and require a suite of global, regional, and local interventions. This emphasizes the importance of regularly monitoring coral reef ecosystems and not just during bleaching events. Networks such as the [Global Coral Reef Monitoring Network](#), an operational network of ICRI, and the US Coral Reef Task Force, provide mechanisms for reporting on the impact of bleaching on the World's coral reefs, alongside regional bleaching observation networks.

To share key messages and resources about coral bleaching, its impacts, causes and solutions currently being implemented and developed, ICRI has developed the "[Coral Bleaching Hub](#)" to support responses, policy and planning, and encourage global cooperation.

ICRI will be hosting a webinar on Tuesday 14th May 2024 to present and discuss the status of the 4th Global Bleaching Event, and the role of the global coral reef community. Register your interest to attend the webinar [here](#).

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Information for media

The International Coral Reef Initiative

The [International Coral Reef Initiative \(ICRI\)](#) is a global partnership between Nations and organizations that strives to preserve coral reefs and related ecosystems around the world. ICRI's actions continue to be pivotal in continuing to highlight the global importance of coral reefs and related ecosystems to environmental sustainability, food security and social and cultural wellbeing. The work of ICRI is regularly recognised for its important cooperation, collaboration, and advocacy role within the international arena.

The Initiative was founded in 1994 by Australia, France, Japan, Jamaica, the Philippines, Sweden, the United Kingdom, and the United States of America, and has since grown to a network of over 100 members, including 45 countries who are custodians of over 75% of the world's coral reefs.

ICRI continues to advocate for the protection, effective management, restoration and sustainable use of coral reefs and associated ecosystems, promoting effective and adaptable real-world solutions to the coral reef crisis. ICRI's actions are driven through its members, Ad Hoc Committees, and its operational network: the [Global Coral Reef Monitoring Network \(GCRMN\)](#).

In September 2023, ICRI launched the Coral Reef Breakthrough, in collaboration with the Global Fund for Coral Reefs, the High-Level Climate Champions, and over 30 coral reef experts, that sets global targets to secure the future of 125,000km² of coral reefs globally by stopping drivers of loss, doubling the effective protection of coral reefs whilst accelerating restoration and securing investments of up to 12 billion – supporting coral reefs to better withstand, and recover from, bleaching events.

ICRI is currently chaired by the United States of America Secretariat implementing its Plan of Action, [Turning the tide for Coral Reefs](#), 2021 – 2024. ICRI works to incorporate science into action, strengthen leadership and emerging technologies, and promote collaboration and communication among stakeholders. Activities will reach to Indigenous Peoples and local communities, ensuring their knowledge and intrinsic values of coral reefs are appropriately reflected alongside augmenting new technologies to support coral reef monitoring. The capacity of managers to respond to climate change impacts will be built with opportunities taken to raise the plight of coral reefs amongst the international community; securing their protection and recovery.