



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE
Southeast Regional Office
263 13th Avenue South
St. Petersburg, FL 33701
(727) 824-5312, FAX (727) 824-5309
<http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov>

SEP 11 2006

F/SER31:JAM

MEMORANDUM TO: Tom Moore
NOAA/NMFS F/HC3

FROM: David M. Bernhart
Assistant Regional Administrator

SUBJECT: Emergency Coral Reef Restoration Actions Following the
Grounding of the *M/T Margara*

This replies to your memo and restoration plan received on August 2, 2006 and several phone conversations prior to your memo. You requested our comments for the coral reef restoration actions following the grounding of the *M/T Margara*.

Five species of sea turtles (green, hawksbill, Kemp's ridley, leatherback, and loggerhead), and two species of coral (elkhorn and staghorn), protected by the Endangered Species Act (ESA), can be found in the area you describe. We recommend the following measures that would be appropriate to take for protection of listed species in the course of conducting emergency response. Of course, action necessary to protect human life, safety, and property, and prevent further environmental injury should take precedence over these considerations.

As staghorn corals are listed as threatened, and they are the subjects of a large portion of the restoration, we request that all activities be conducted in a manner to reduce further injury to the species. The restoration plan you have provided addresses the proper way to handle staghorn coral during the restoration activities. Specifically, the following measures should be employed.

1. To avoid injury due to repetitive anchoring at the site, use mooring buoys. As you have stated in your restoration plan, due to the size of the site, 15 mooring buoys should be sufficient.
2. All diving personnel engaging in coral reattachment should be trained in the identification of both staghorn and elkhorn corals. Additionally, all personnel should be trained in the appropriate method of handling and reattaching the staghorn fragments.
3. To ensure that proper caution is taken in the handling and reattachment of staghorn fragments, a NOAA staff member or authorized designee should be present on site during all restoration operations.

Please contact us if you would like additional guidance on this or any other response activity. Our office point of contact for coral-related emergency section 7 consultations is Jennifer Moore (jennifer.moore@noaa.gov), 727-824-5312. We look forward to working with you to provide for the conservation of protected species in the future.

