



Ocean Conservancy

Start a Sea Change

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## The Year of the Reef

A message from Vikki N. Spruill, President and CEO, Ocean Conservancy



A decade ago, the world lost 16 percent of its coral reefs in one year. Had it been trees instead, all the forests of North America would have been wiped out ... in a single year. In the Caribbean, where Ocean Conservancy is actively saving reefs, live coral cover has declined 80 percent, but we are turning that around and it is not too late to succeed, if we act now.

The rapid decline of these ancient, complex, and biologically-diverse ecosystems will have significant social, economic, and environmental impacts. Coral reefs are likened to rainforests in the sea, and it is an apt comparison. Corals anchor a strong web of life in the ocean—a web that protects us, our communities, and our economies from harm. The truth is, however, that our reefs cannot protect us unless they and the ocean that supports them are healthy and resilient. The most dire threat, of course, is climate change, which creates warmer, more acidic seawater, both of which devastate coral. To reverse course, we have two options. The first is mitigation. We must reduce greenhouse gas emissions immediately. The second is adaptation. We must find ways to cope with the impacts of climate change so that the ocean can adapt to impending threats, many as yet unknown.

It is as if we have a patient suffering from the flu and arthritis who is diagnosed with a serious but treatable cancer. First, cure the flu. Next, begin physical therapy to lessen the arthritis. Then, with a healthy and strong patient, take on the bigger challenge ahead. Mitigation will cure the disease, but we will need to adapt to lessen the damage and the pain.

2008 is the "International Year of the Reef." Our cover story, "**Fabric of Life**", is a look below the surface at how conservationists are reweaving hope on our reefs and how building resiliency may just save these important ecosystems. Ocean Conservancy is protecting reefs and other ocean ecosystems by fostering sustainable fishing, protecting marine wildlife, putting in place management plans for state and federal waters, and preserving magnificent ocean places that we like to call "Yosemites Undersea." Your support is critical to our efforts. For that, we cannot thank you enough. It is not too late for the reefs, but sea change must start now.

Sincerely,

Vikki N. Spruill  
President and CEO  
Ocean Conservancy



### 5 Ways to Save Reefs!

**Join Ocean Conservancy:** Your donation to Ocean Conservancy gets multiplied when supporting the work of our scientists and policy experts working to save reefs and for adaptation strategies in the face of climate change.

**Be a reef-friendly tourist:** When visiting a reef, respect local guidelines. And support reef-friendly businesses—ask your dive shop, tour operator, and hotel what they are doing to help save coral reefs.

**Recycle:** Wherever you live, help keep trash out of the ocean where it can impair water quality and endanger marine life.

**Learn about reef ecology:** Once you learn the basics at you can help inform and inspire others to preserve these delicate ecosystems.

**Use chemical pesticides and fertilizers carefully:** Believe it or not, even if you live thousands of miles from a coral reef, these products can travel into your local waterways, and from there to the ocean.

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