

**Natural Resistance To Disease in The Endangered Staghorn Coral
*Acropora Cervicornis***

Steve VOLLMER^{*1}, David KLINE²

¹Marine Science Center, Northeastern University, Nahant, MA, ²Centre for Marine Studies, University of Queensland, St. Lucia, Australia

Disease epidemics are reshaping tropical coral reefs from the reef corals on up, and yet we know very little about the abilities of the coral host to respond or resist disease infection. Understanding the potential for natural disease resistance in corals is particularly important in the Caribbean where the two ecologically dominant shallow-water corals *Acropora cervicornis* and *A. palmata* have suffered an unprecedented mass die-off due to White Band Disease and are now listed as threatened on the US Endangered Species Act. We examined the potential for natural resistance to WBD in the endangered staghorn coral *Acropora cervicornis* using *in situ* transmission assays and field monitor of WBD on tagged staghorn coral genotypes and present evidence for the occurrence for WBD resistant genotypes. This WBD resistance demonstrates that staghorn corals have an innate ability to respond to the WBD epidemic, and that the propagation of WBD resistant genotypes can be used to facilitate the recovery of these endangered corals.