

IMMEDIATE RELEASE

FREE World-Class Opportunities to Learn about Coral Reefs in Broward County

(June 23, 2008 – Fort Lauderdale, Florida) The whole world is celebrating the International Year of the Reef 2008 (www.iyor.org), and this summer there is no better place to learn about coral reefs than Broward County!

From July 7 to 11, the 11th International Coral Reef Symposium (ICRS), the world's largest conference devoted to coral reef science will be at the Broward County Convention Center. Held every four years, this scientific meeting is sanctioned by the International Society for Reef Studies (ISRS). Co-hosted in 2008 by the US and state of Florida, this will be the first time this science meeting has been held on the US mainland in more than 30 years. (<http://www.nova.edu/ncri/11icrs/index.html>)

More than 2,500 international scientists, policy makers, managers, and conservationists from approximately 150 countries will focus on the challenges that climate change, ocean acidification, coastal development, overfishing, and pollution pose to the world's coral reefs during the week-long science meeting. They will gather to present research and to share ideas on how to best advance coral reef science, management, and conservation. Admittance to the science program will be restricted to paid registered participants, but admittance to the Education Center will be free of charge to the public. For more information on the 11th ICRS, July 7-11, in Fort Lauderdale, see <http://www.nova.edu/ncri/11icrs/index.html>.

Both children and adults can enjoy the 11th ICRS **Coral Reef Education Center**, with informative booths and a full schedule of educational presentations and demonstrations. It is a free exhibit, located in Hall A at the Greater Fort Lauderdale/Broward County Convention Center, will be open from Monday, July 7, through Wednesday, July 9, from 9:30 a.m. – 5:00 p.m., and Thursday, July 10, from 9:30 a.m. – 3:00 p.m. Local, national, and international organizations will be represented among the various booths, presentations, and demonstrations (<http://www.nova.edu/ncri/11icrs/education.html>).

From the various displays exhibited in the Education Center and the presentations made in the Coral Theater sponsored by the Southeast Florida Coral Reef Initiative (SEFCRI; <http://www.southeastfloridareefs.net>), children and adults can learn about coral reefs and the threats they face worldwide, including here in South Florida. Coral Reef Education Center attendees will leave with a greater understanding of how coral reefs work and of what they can do to help protect and conserve coral reefs.

Centerpiece of the Education Center will be ***Our Reefs: Caribbean Connections***. Updated from a Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute traveling exhibit by its original curators, Drs. Judith C. Lang and Janie L. Wulff, this version was produced by Florida State University (FSU), with grants from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF), the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), the Raymond Foundation, the Local Organizing Committee of the 11th ICRS, the National Coral Reef Institute at Nova Southeastern University, and Project Aware. Designer for the exhibit is Associate Professor Keith A. Roberson of the Department of Art at FSU. Dr. Wulff is Assistant Professor at the Department of Biological Sciences at FSU. Dr. Lang is Scientific Coordinator for the Atlantic and Gulf Rapid Reef Assessment (AGRRA) Project.

In stunning visual display, this 3,000-plus square foot version of the exhibit explores major current challenges to regional reefs and showcases various local Caribbean responses. ***Our Reefs: Caribbean Connections***, a traveling exhibit, will begin its travels through the Caribbean with several stops in Florida.

Other highlights of the Education Center will be the internationally renowned artist and marine conservationist Wyland's **Clean Water Mobile Learning Center**. This exhibit focuses on the challenges of keeping the ocean water clear and healthy. Wyland recently came to Broward County in June to paint one of his famous "Whaling Walls," featuring our local coral reefs and marine life.

Transportation from anywhere in the Tri-County area to the convention center can be arranged through Tri-Rail to the Fort Lauderdale station followed by two bus transfers to the convention center. For more information, consult the South Florida Regional Transit Trip Planner at <http://sfrtp.cinrtosfl.com/>, or dial 511 to access traffic and transit information via the phone for free. This automated phone system can be used to step through to speak to a trip-planning specialist or to obtain other transit information.

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