

## Acropora 2023:

### Heat-related Mortality, Resistance or Rescue

*What's happening? What can we learn? What's next?*

November 13, 2023

Hosted by: Judith Lang & Patricia Kramer (AGRRRA)



Photo: Fragments of Hope



## Guest Speakers

### Introduction

**Esther Peters: Mysteries Abound: *Pathogenic Agents of Disease***

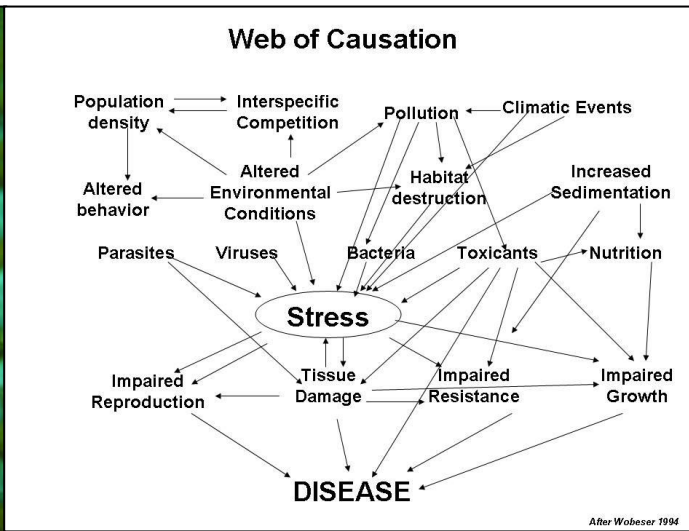
### Examples of Mortality, Resistance or Rescue

- **Genevieve Renaud-Byrne & Ruleo Camacho: Antigua**
- **Lisa Carne: Belize**
- **Felix Charnley: Jamaica**
- **Emily Becker: Florida**

### Group Discussion:

***Rethinking Coral Rescues for a Warmer World***

# “Mysteries Abound” (J. Lang): The Exposome and Coral Diseases



**Esther C. Peters, Ph.D.**

**George Mason University**  
**Environmental Science & Policy**

# Coral Diseases

**“This coral disease stuff is bigger than any one of us, and we need as many bright minds as possible to contribute and move this forward.”**

**Thierry Work, DVM**

**U.S. Geological Survey**

**Wildlife Disease Specialist**

**National Wildlife Health Center**

**Honolulu, Hawaii**

# What is Disease?

- Any impairment that interferes with or modifies the performance of normal [structure] and functions, including responses to environmental factors such as nutrition, toxicants, and climate; infectious agents; inherent or congenital defects; or combinations of these factors (G. Woebeser, 1981).
- Any impairment of an organism's vital functions, organs, or systems, including interruption, cessation, proliferation, or other malfunction, originating from either a biotic or abiotic source (Stedman's Medical Dictionary, 1982).
- Health is the state of an organism when it functions optimally without evidence of disease or abnormality. (Controversy: Coral health vs. coral reef [or other ecosystem] health → organisms in ecosystem are not diseased, high genetic diversity, relatively rapid recovery when stressed).



# Criteria for Disease

- At least two of the following:

- ✓ Recognized etiologic agent(s)

**Pathogen** - Any virus,  
microorganism, or

other substance causing disease (**biotic or abiotic**)

**Alzheimer's disease:  
signs, symptoms, brain  
changes, but  
pathogen(s?) unknown**

- ✓ Identifiable group of **signs** (and, in the case of humans, symptoms)

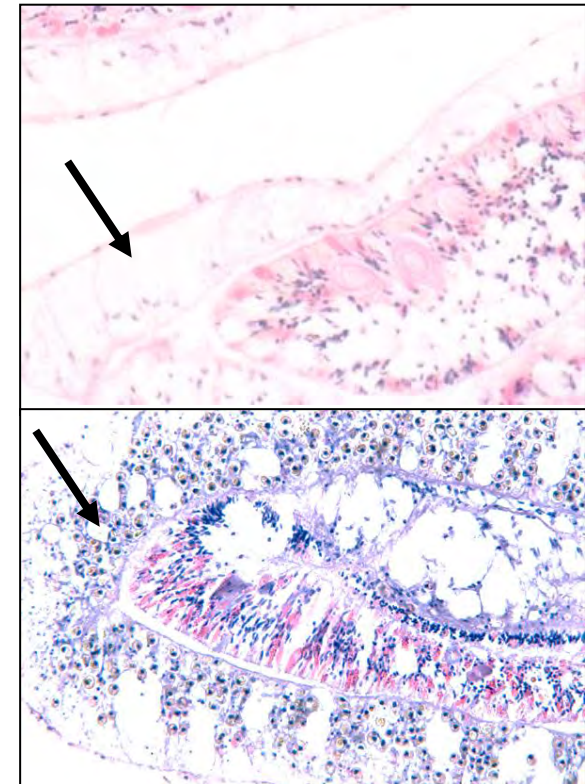
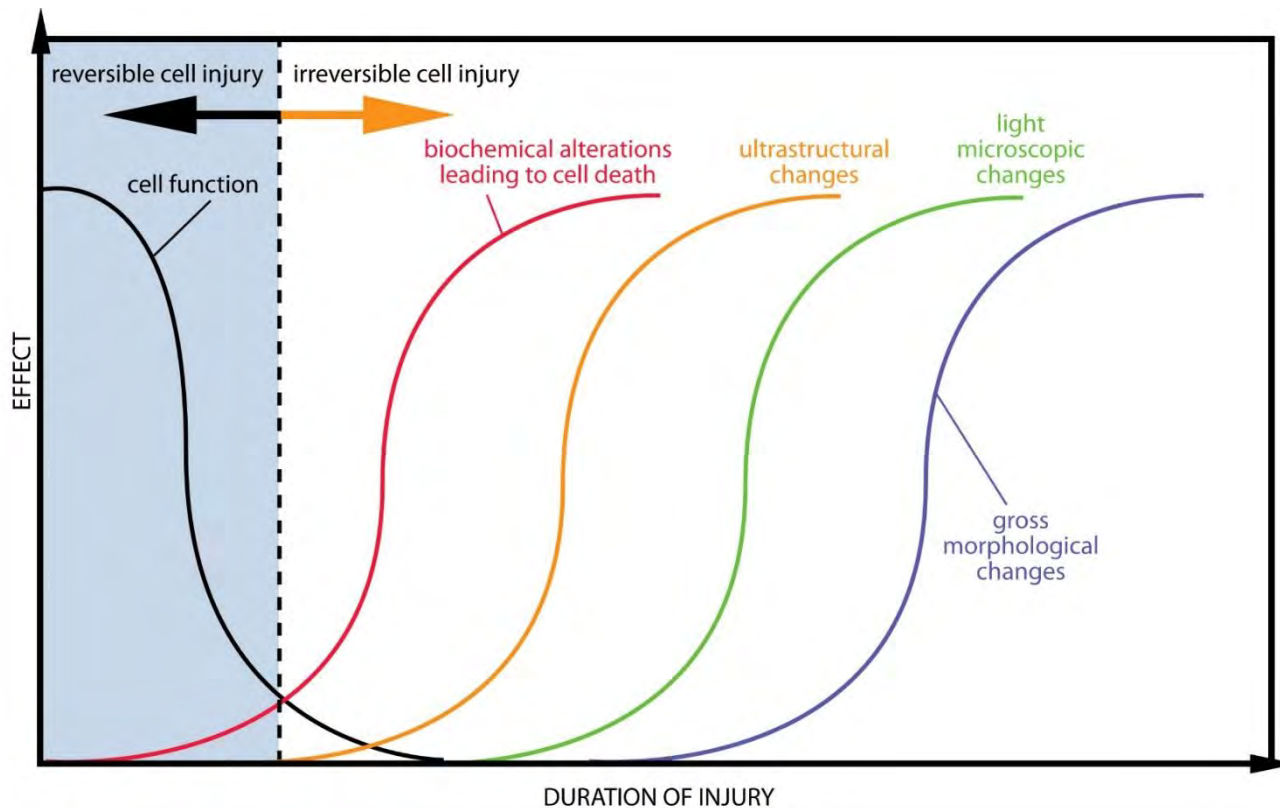
- ✓ Consistent **anatomical alterations**

# Identifying Coral Diseases

- **Appearance of healthy coral** (microscopic and gross):
  - Normal behavior for the species (tentacle expansion, mouth opening, polyp contraction)
  - Uniform covering of tissue over skeleton (no lesions)
  - Uniform coloration indicating presence of zooxanthellae
  - Skeletal deposition pattern and rate appropriate to the species
- **Functional impairment** in corals:
  - Abnormal polyp behavior
  - Unusual tissue coloration (darker or lighter or different color)
  - Abnormal skeletal deposition pattern or rate of deposition
  - Slow or rapid disappearance of tissue from the skeleton

# The Healthy (?) Coral

Tissue changes may be present before visually evident



# Pathology – Paradigms of Disease

## Koch's Postulates

- 1884 – Robert Koch and Friedrich Loeffler
- Four criteria
- Single infectious agent causes one disease, should not be found in healthy organisms, must be grown in culture and reisolated after infecting another individual, and should cause the same disease signs and symptoms in that individual
- Later exceptions: asymptomatic cases, microorganisms that cannot be cultured, other issues

## Hill's Rules of Causation

- 1965 – Austin Bradford Hill
- Nine “viewpoints”
- When can associations be interpreted to be causal in epidemiologic studies?
- More likely to be causal when they are specific, meaning the exposure causes only one disease.
- Knew some diseases had multiple causes or risk factors, but he suggested that “if we knew all the answers we might get back to a single factor” responsible for causation.



# Potential Pathogens

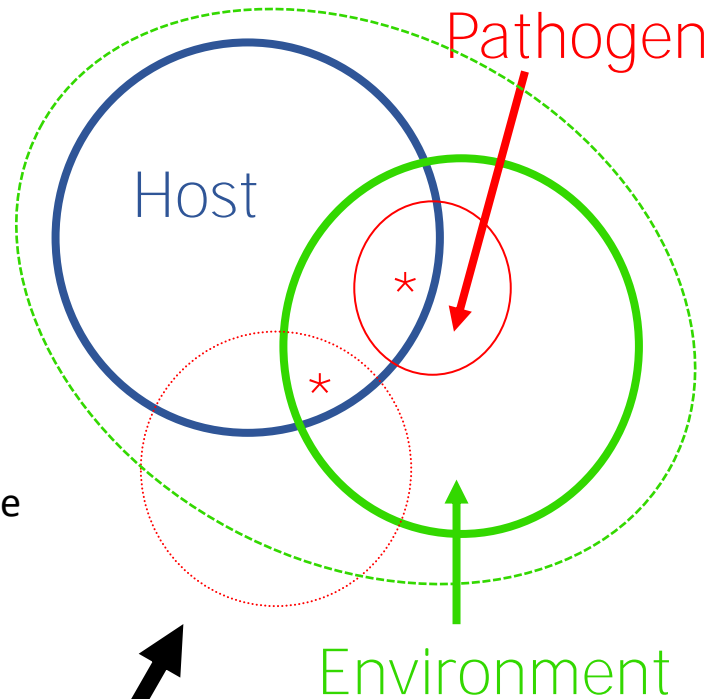
- **Abiotic**

- ✓ Water quality
- ✓ Temperature
- ✓ Light
- ✓ Nutrients
- ✓ Pollutants
- ✓ Toxins
- ✓ Physical damage

- **Biotic**

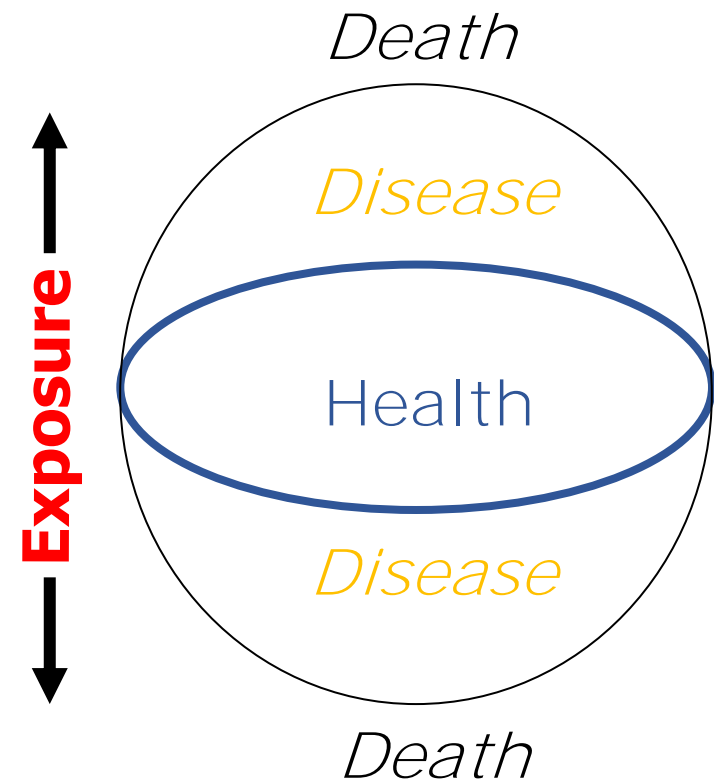
- ✓ Viruses
- ✓ Bacteria
- ✓ Protozoa
- ✓ Fungi
- ✓ Algae
- ✓ Metazoa

- ✓ **Introduced and invasive species**



**Epidemiologic Triad**

## Optimum Envelope



# New Paradigm – The Exposome

## As more types of data collected for diseased individuals, realized:

Infectious pathogenic (disease-causing) microorganisms may have intermediate, non-diseased hosts as part of their cycle

Single infectious agent may cause several different diseases

Multiple infectious agents can cause diseases (mixed infections)

Single disease requires interaction of several causes

Primary and secondary causes of disease may affect organisms

Realized few agents are necessary and sufficient to produce disease over a wide range of environmental conditions

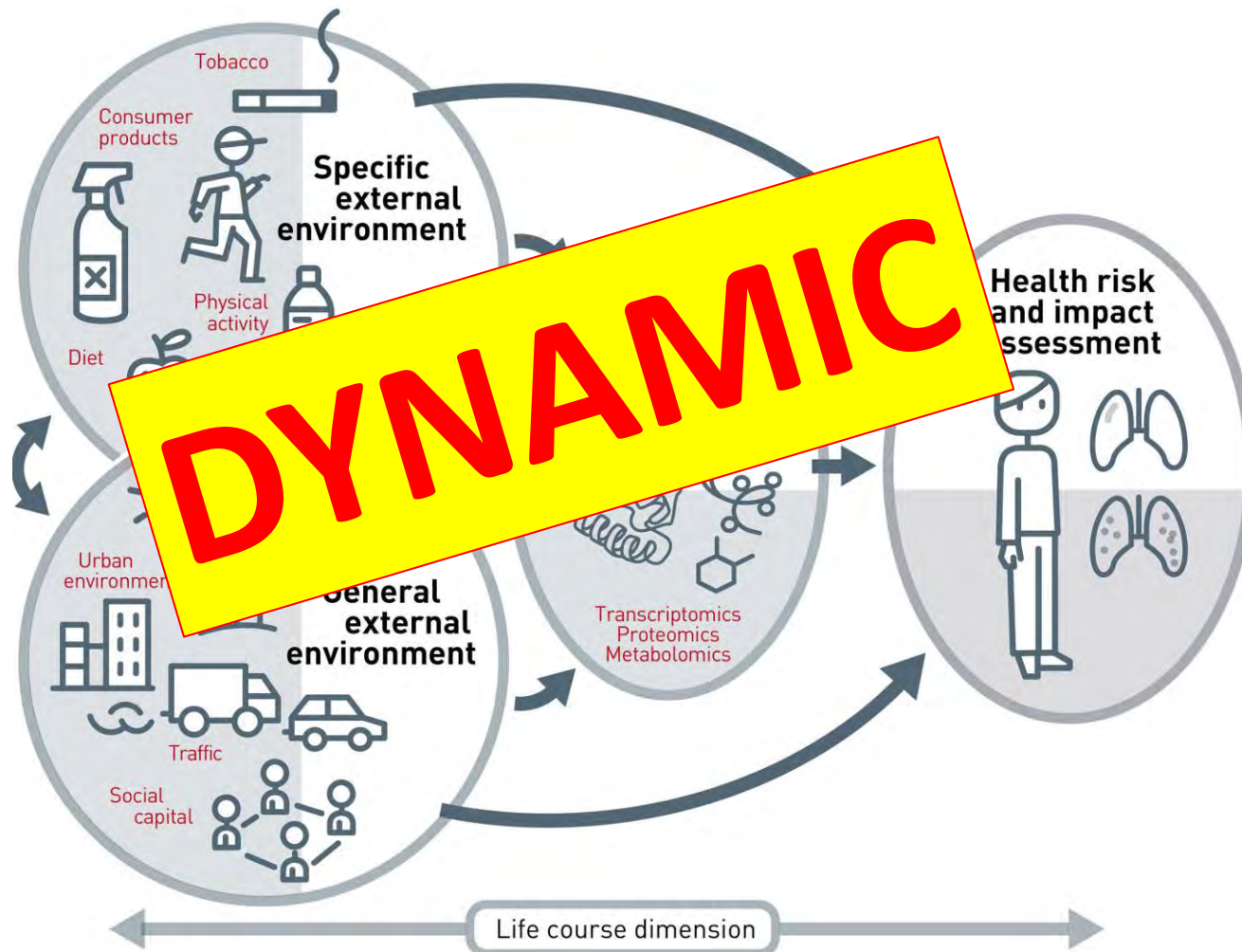
Diseases caused by non-infectious pathogens exist: e.g., biotoxins, metals, pollutants, nutritional, genetic, radiation

**Predisposing factors may lead to disease → → → → →**

“The **exposome** is composed of every exposure to which an individual is subjected from conception to death.” Wild, C.P. 2012. The exposome: from concept to utility.

*International Journal of Epidemiology* 41:24–32. doi:10.1093/ije/dyr236

# The Exposome Concept

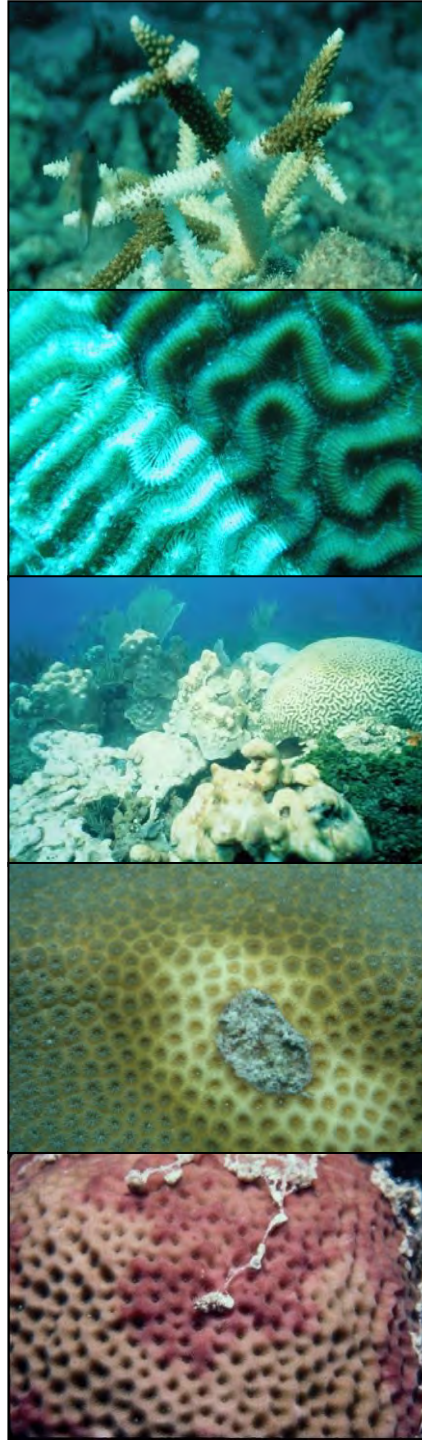


Vrijheid, M. 2014. The exposome: a new paradigm to study the impact of environment on health. *Thorax* 69:876–878.

# Tissue Loss or White Diseases

**FOCUS ON  
ACROPORA**

# Tissue Discolorations



White Band  
White Plague

White Pox

White Syndrome

Stony Coral Tissue  
Loss Disease

Others

Bleaching

Yellow Band

Dark Spots

Dark Band

Others



# Differential Diagnoses

- Bleaching



- Tissue Loss



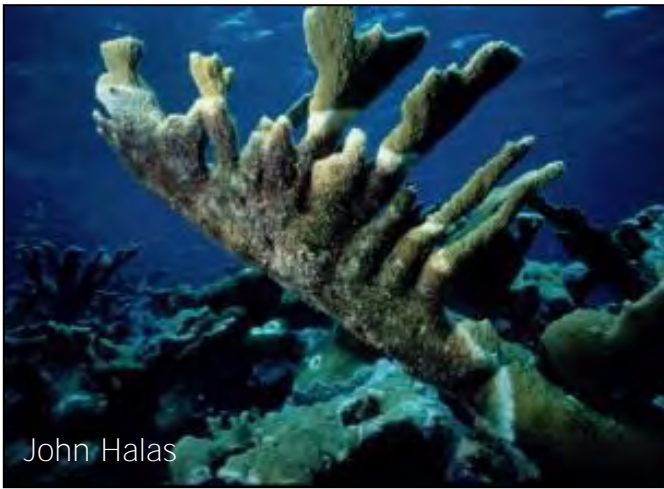
A systematic comparison and contrasting of similar disease signs and findings to determine which of two or more diseases is present.

Same visual (macro) signs, same or different etiologic agents?

Coral individual or species differences or different diseases?

**Must study multiple parameters!**

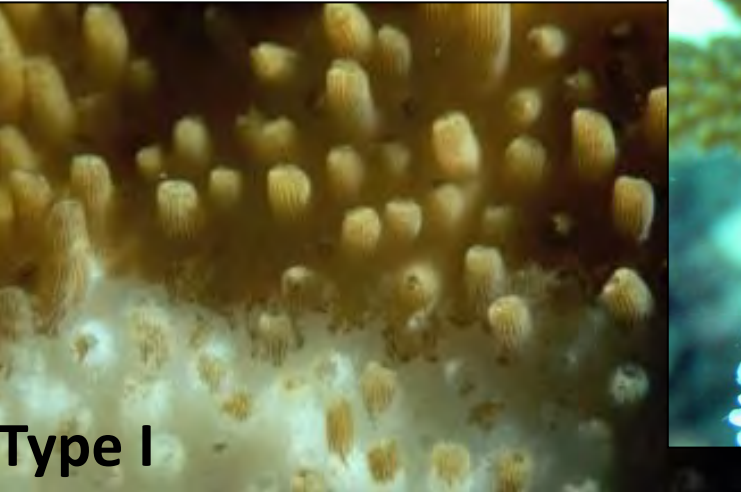
## White-band disease Caribbean elkhorn, staghorn corals



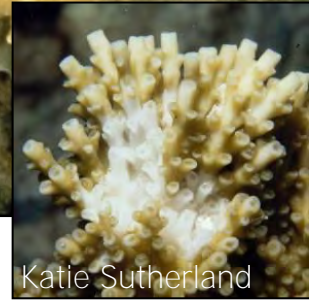
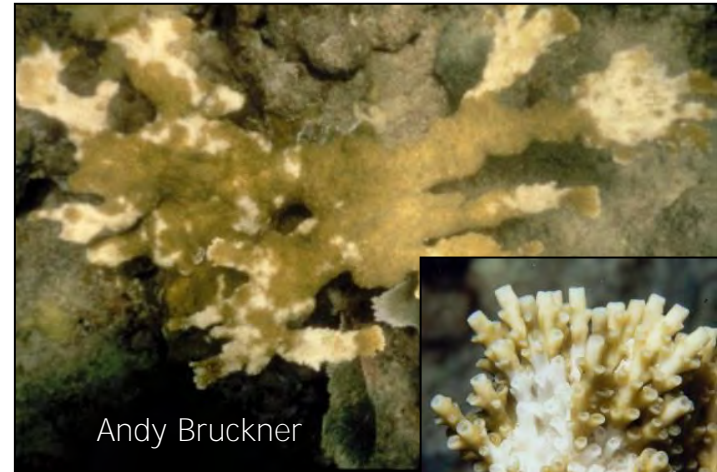
**Type I**



**Type II**




## White pox/patch disease - elkhorn coral



## Rapid tissue loss – staghorn coral


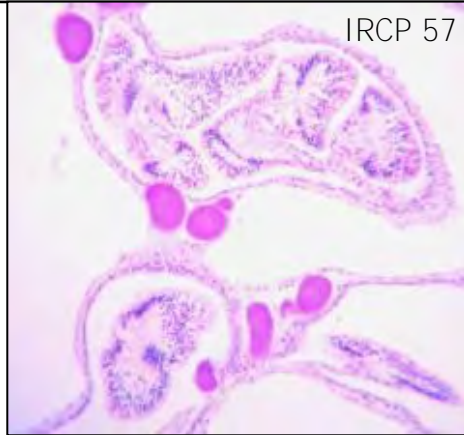


# Etiology(ies)?

| Disease<br>(Publication Year)  | Species Affected<br>Region  | Etiologic Agent  |
|--|---|--|
| White band<br>(1983)   | elkhorn, staghorn, hybrid<br>Caribbean                                | Bacterial aggregates?<br> |
| White pox<br>(2001)  | elkhorn coral<br>Caribbean  | <i>Serratia marcesans</i><br>or not? (2014)  |
| White band type II<br>(1998)<br>White band types I<br>and II (2006)<br>White band type I<br>(2006, 2011, 2014) | staghorn coral<br>Bahamas<br><br>Puerto Rico<br><br>Panama, Venezuela | <i>Vibrio carchariae/harveyi</i><br><br>And other bacteria<br>Ciliates?                                      |
| White disease/RTL<br>(2005, 2007)  | staghorn coral<br>Florida Keys  | Bacterial aggregates? =<br><i>Pseudomonas</i> spp.   |



# Acroporid Tissue Loss, Florida Keys, July 2003

| Species  | Location   | Gross Signs       | Histopathological Findings  |
|--|--|-------------------|---|
| <i>A. cervicornis</i>                            | <b>Elkhorn Reef</b><br><b>Marker 3 Reef</b><br><br><b>White Banks</b><br><b>Little Grecian</b><br><br><b>White Shoal</b> | Rapid tissue loss | Necrosis of mesenterial filaments<br><br>Serratosiis?<br>                              |
| <i>A. palmata</i>                                | <b>Little Grecian</b><br><b>Palmata Patch</b>  | Rapid tissue loss |   |
| <i>A. cervicornis</i><br><br><i>A. prolifera</i> | <b>White Shoal</b><br><br><b>Prolifera Patch</b>   | Rapid tissue loss | Ovoid basophilic bodies in mesoglea of basal body wall<br><br>White band disease?<br> |

Biscayne National Park

Key Largo Sanctuary Reefs

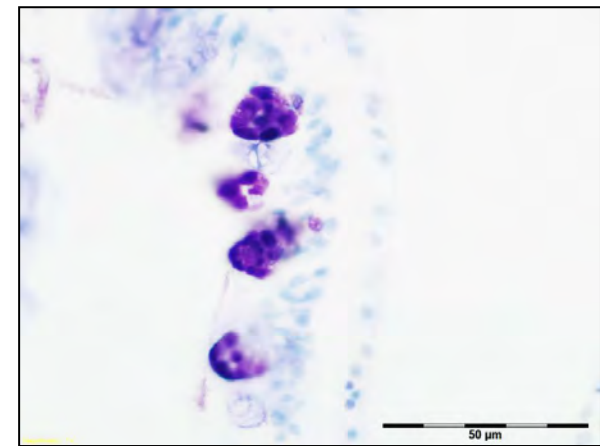
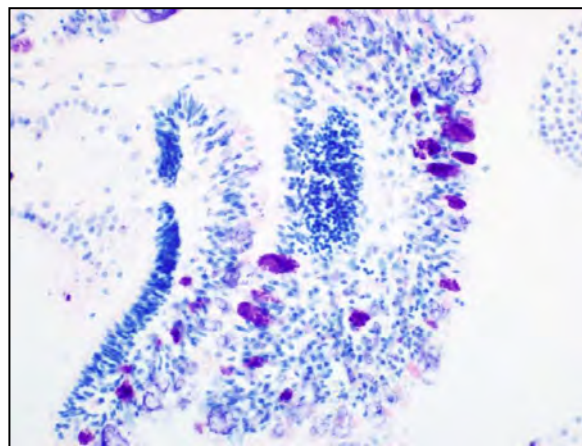
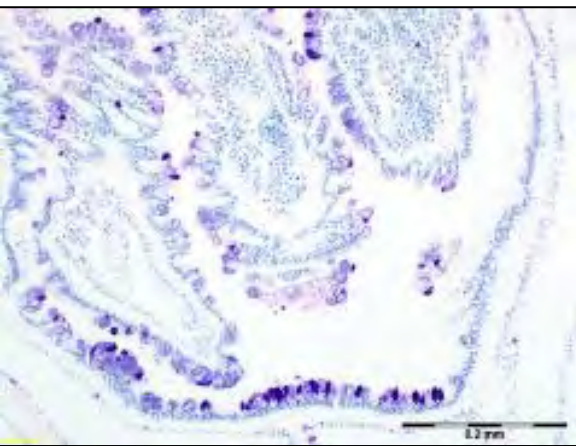
Dry Tortugas National Park



# Microbial-Molecular Studies

- Casas, Kline et al. 2004 (*Environ. Microbiol.*): **Widespread association of a *Rickettsiales*-like bacterium with reef-building corals.**
  - Since present in both healthy and diseased *A. cervicornis*, as well as several other species, concluded it was not the pathogen of WBD
  - But RLOs are nonculturable, obligate intracellular parasites and known pathogens in other animal species!

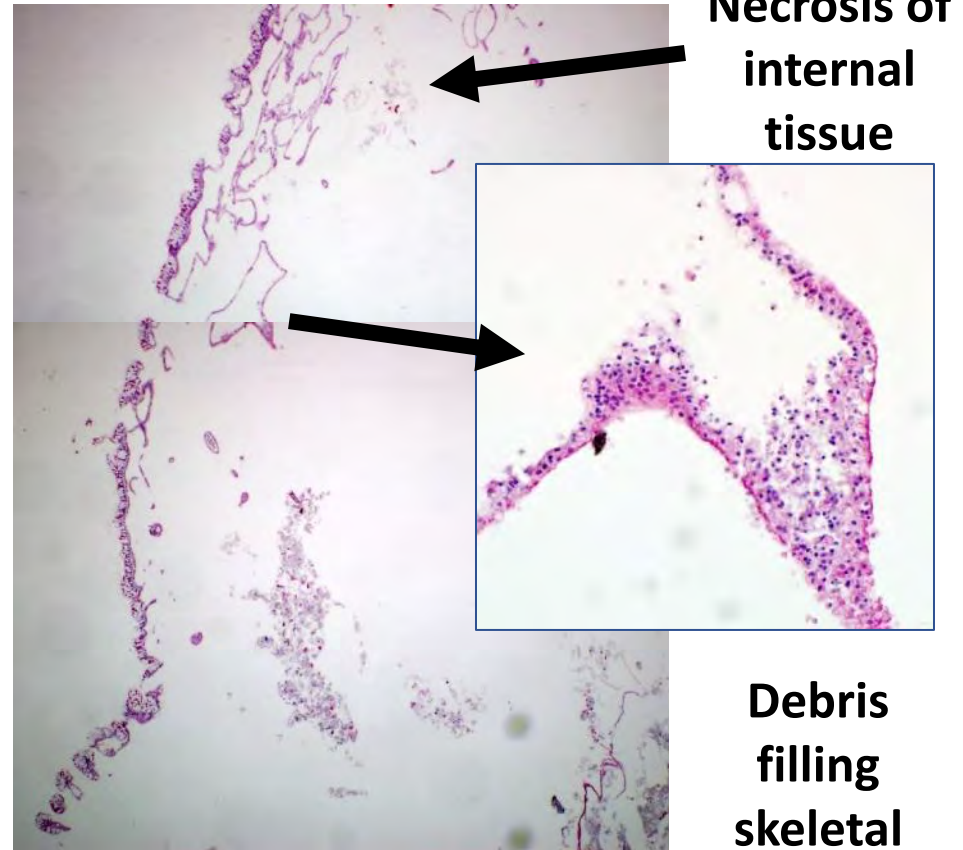
**Primary pathogen, infects polyp mucocytes, kills these cells, affects coral defenses – *Cand. Aquarickettsia rohweri* (Klinges et al. 2019) – 100% of Caribbean acroporids examined histologically are infected, present populations of acroporids in weakened condition, chronic!**



# The Diseased Coral



Only where the  
skeleton is showing,  
RIGHT?



Necrosis of  
internal  
tissue

Debris  
filling  
skeletal  
spaces

Tissue loss margin this end

**WRONG!!!**

# Bleaching: Important Sign of Disease



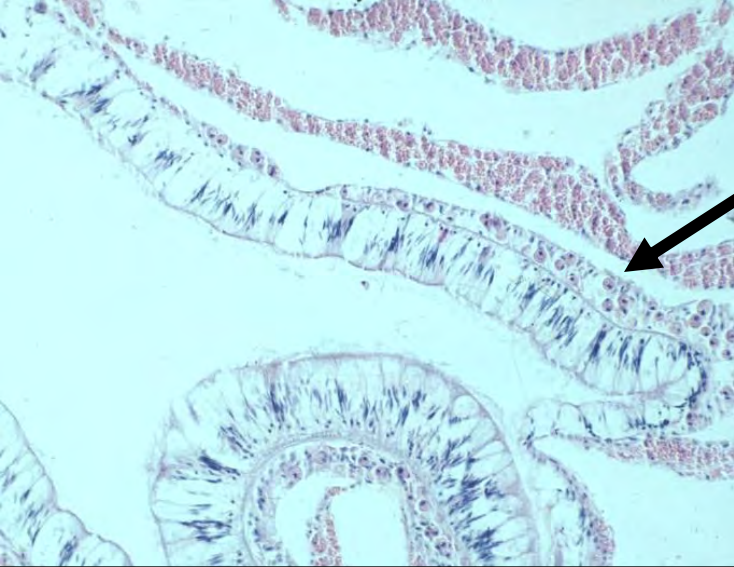
Loss of endosymbiotic algae (zooxanthellae) that live in coral tissue or loss of or damage to their pigments or cells indicates metabolic imbalance in most tropical corals = functional impairment = disease!

Many causes:

**Abiotic factors first identified:**  
**increased or decreased**  
**temperature, salinity, light, UV-**  
**radiation; combinations of factors**

Worldwide prevalence and periodic mass bleaching events since 1980 associated with global warming and local conditions (2016 GBR)

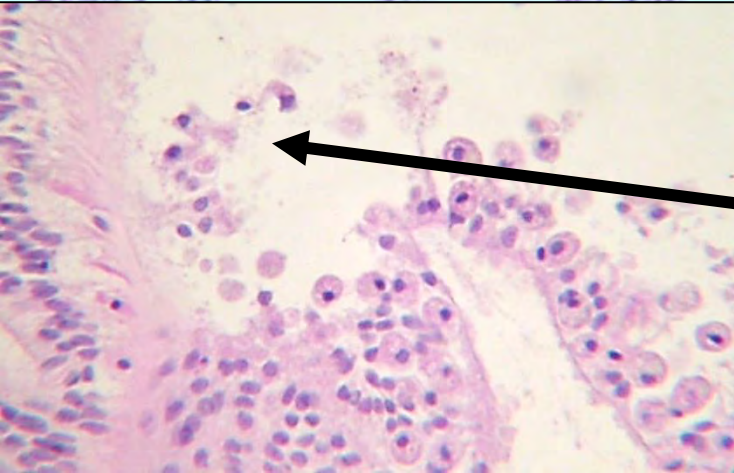




*Agaricia agaricites*, normal



Bleached

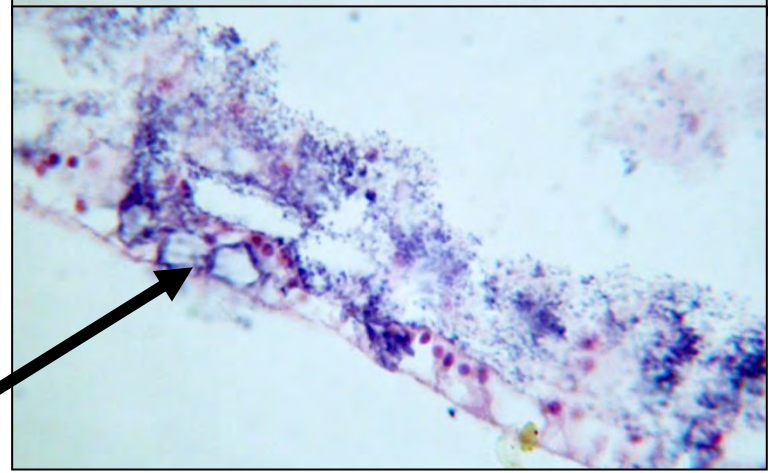
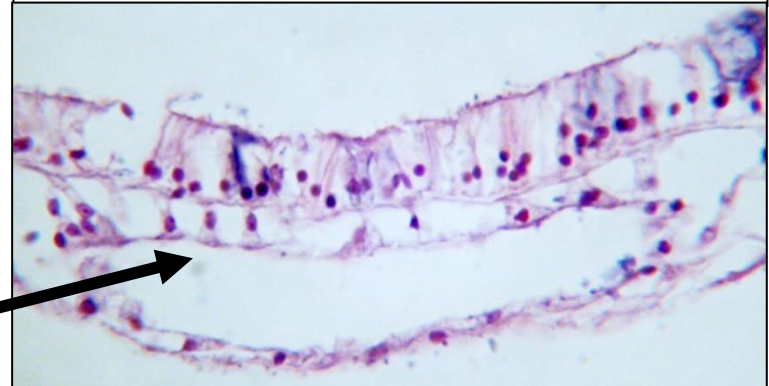
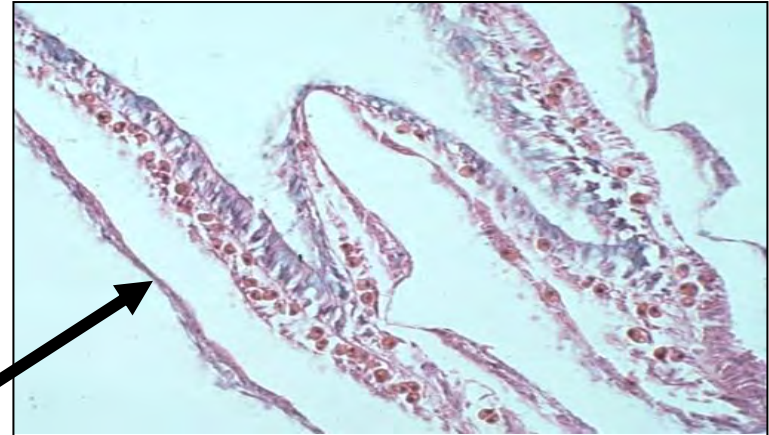


Damaged algal symbionts

Loss of algal symbionts

*Acropora palmata*,  
sloughing  
gastrodermis

Bacteria





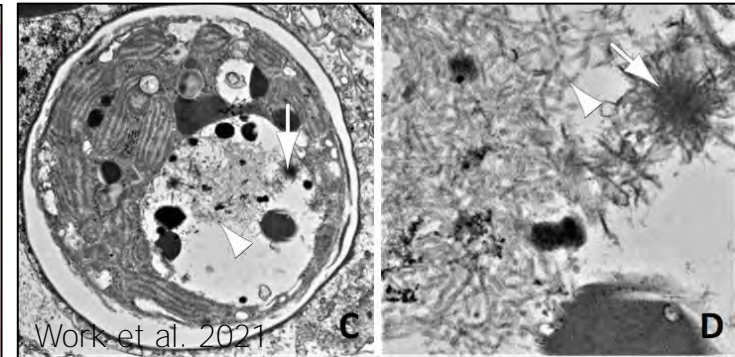
# Biotic Agents of Bleaching

*Vibrio coralliilyticus*, *V. carchariae*, *V. mediterraneae* (*shiloi/shiloni*)

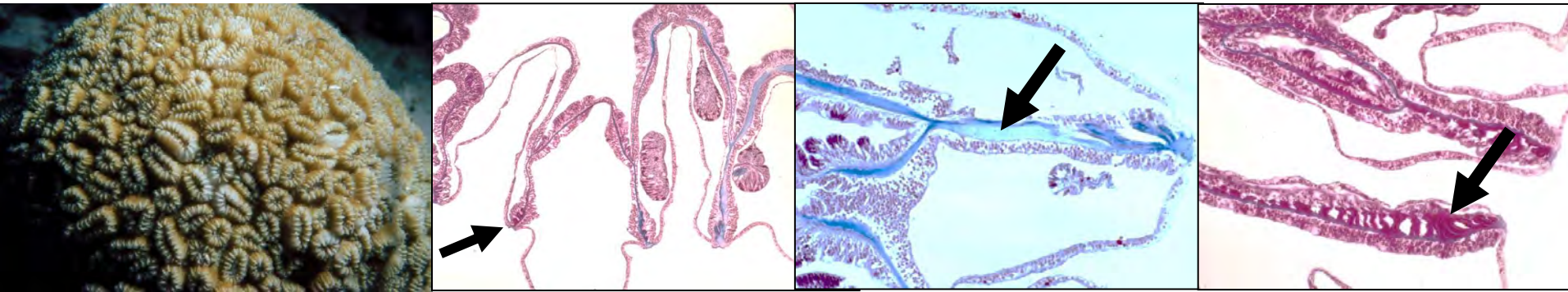
**Corallicolids, apicomplexan parasites** in gastrodermal cells. Hosts may bleach in patches or no visible effect



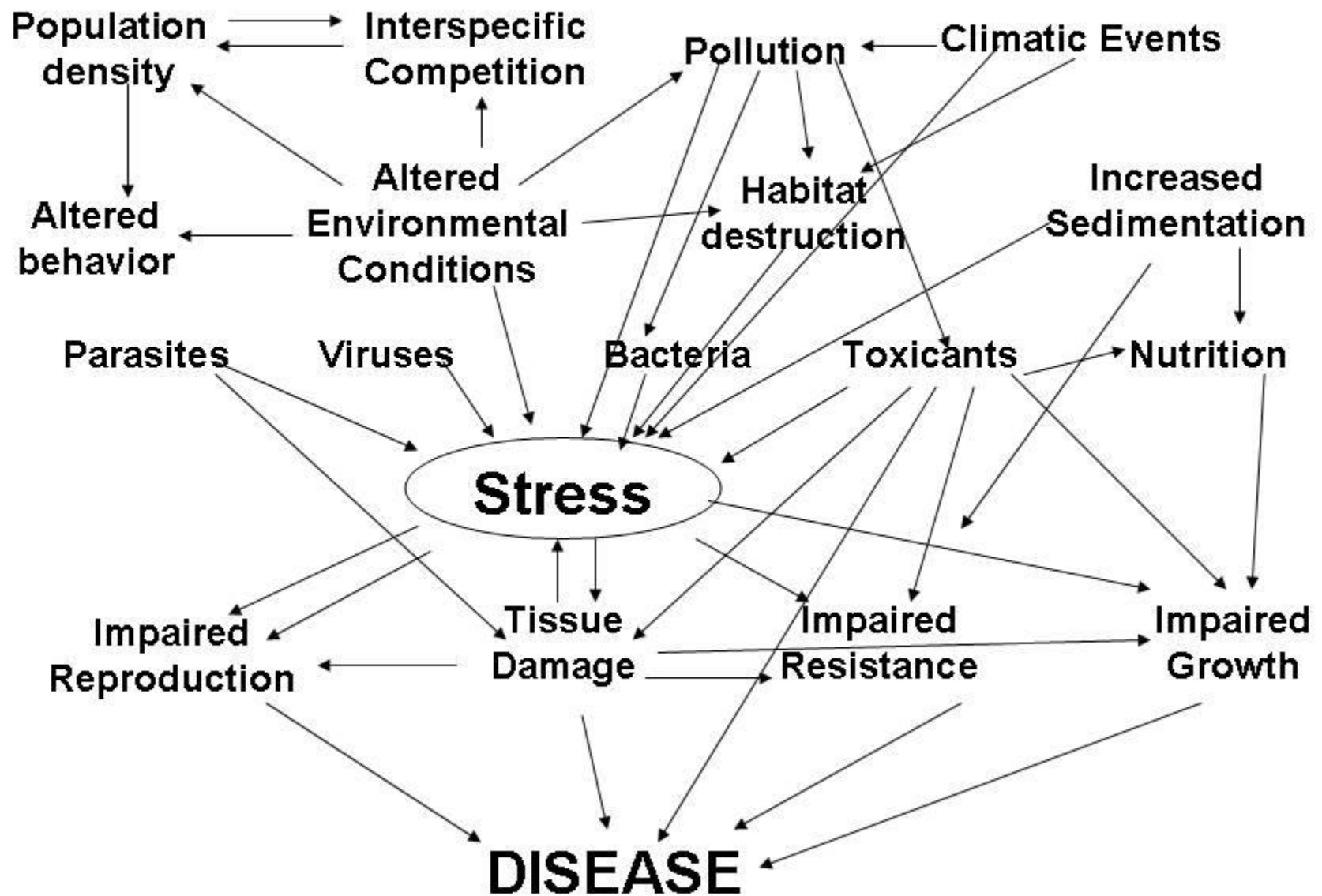
**Viruses** that infect and kill endosymbionts

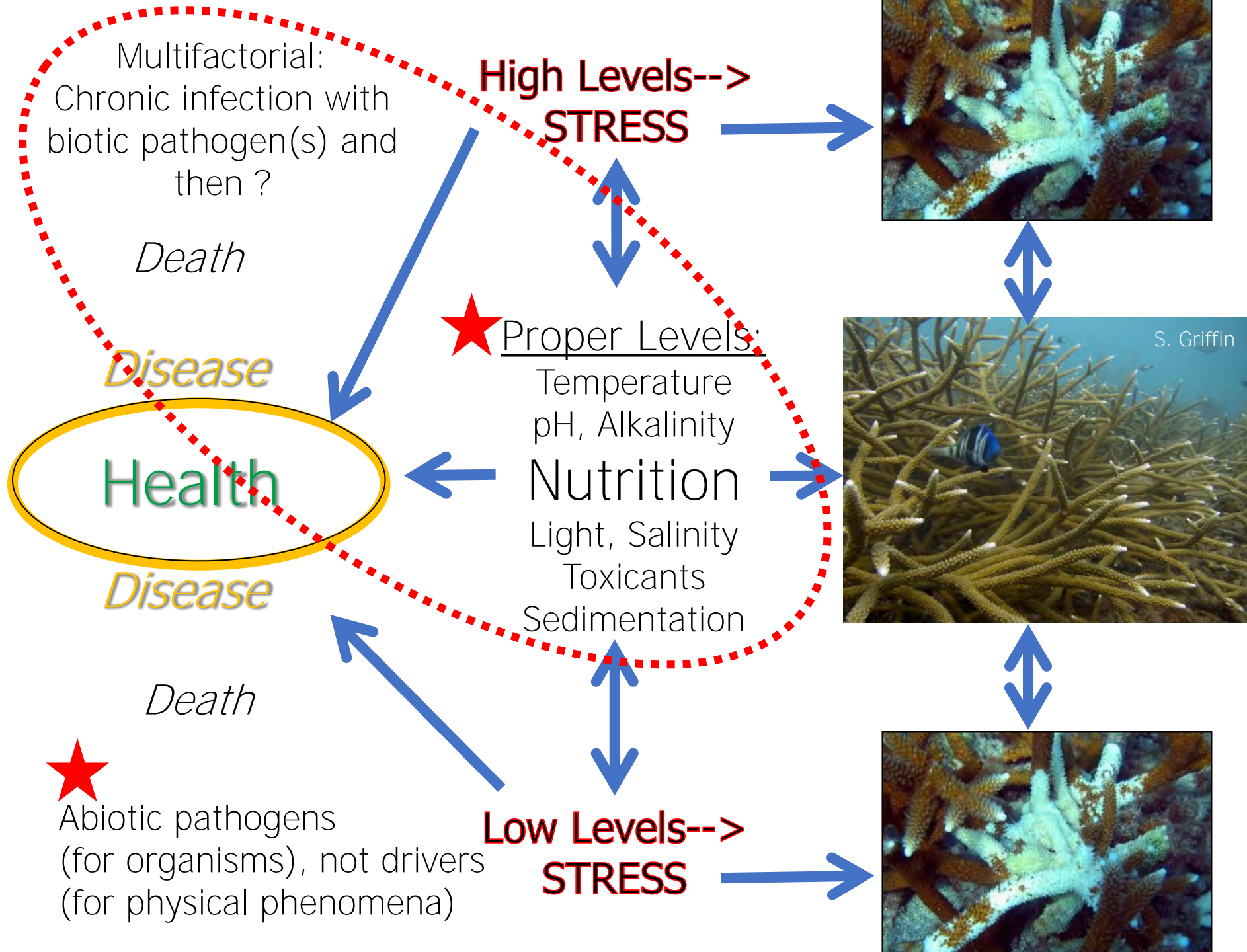


**Unknown cause**, resulting in biochemical change in collagen (mesogleal disease?)



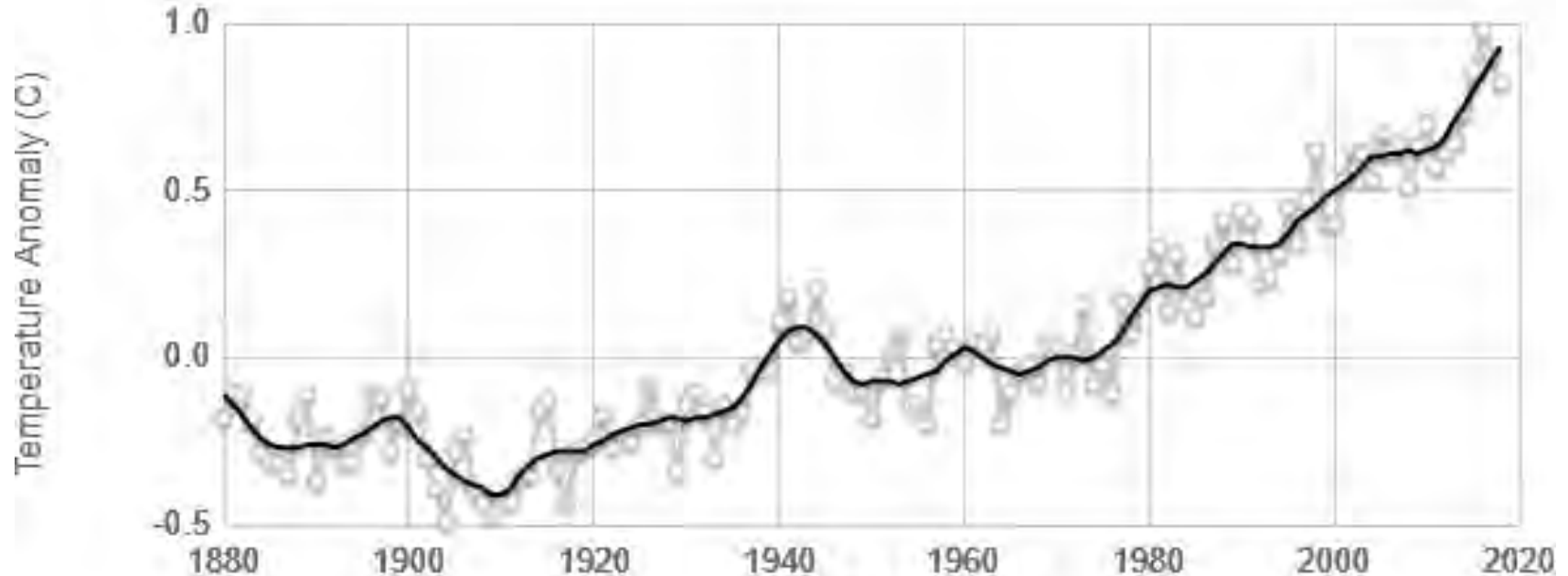
# Web of Causation





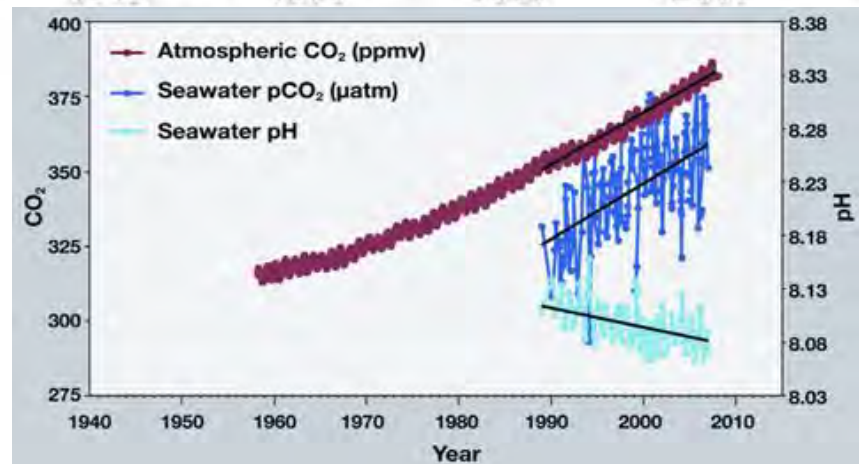


<https://climate.nasa.gov/vital-signs/global-temperature/>



Source: climate.nasa.gov

Human population increases,  
elevated CO<sub>2</sub>, pollution, etc.  
= ecosystem distress  
syndrome



## The One Health Triad

This is not just about zoonotic diseases or infectious pathogens, also ecosystems!



If it is not safe for corals, it is not safe for other organisms or PEOPLE!

A collaborative, multisectoral, and transdisciplinary approach—working at the local, regional, national, and global levels—with the goal of achieving optimal health outcomes recognizing the interconnection between people, animals, plants, and their shared environment. (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)



# Important Reminders from Pathology

- **Disease names are not capitalized!**
  - “White band Disease” should be “white-band disease” (“white” and “band” form a compound adjective of “disease”)
  - Stony Coral Tissue Loss Disease should be stony coral tissue loss disease (SCTLD)
- **Disease is NOT TRANSMITTED and disease DOES NOT “infect” organisms.**
  - Only infectious pathogens that may cause disease can be transmitted from one host to another
  - Corals are not infected with SCTLD or other disease
  - Only an infectious pathogen (prion, virus, bacterium, protist, metazoan) that can infect a host (invade the body and then multiplies) can cause disease (by attacking host cells or tissues or releasing toxins that kill cells or tissues).

# Questions?

**Contact: Esther Peters, [epeters2@gmu.edu](mailto:epeters2@gmu.edu)**



# Rapid Tissue Loss & Coral Bleaching

Antigua & Barbuda

Nov 13, 2023

Ruleo Camacho & Geneviève Renaud-Byrne



**Elkhorn Marine  
Conservancy**

Antigua, W.I.

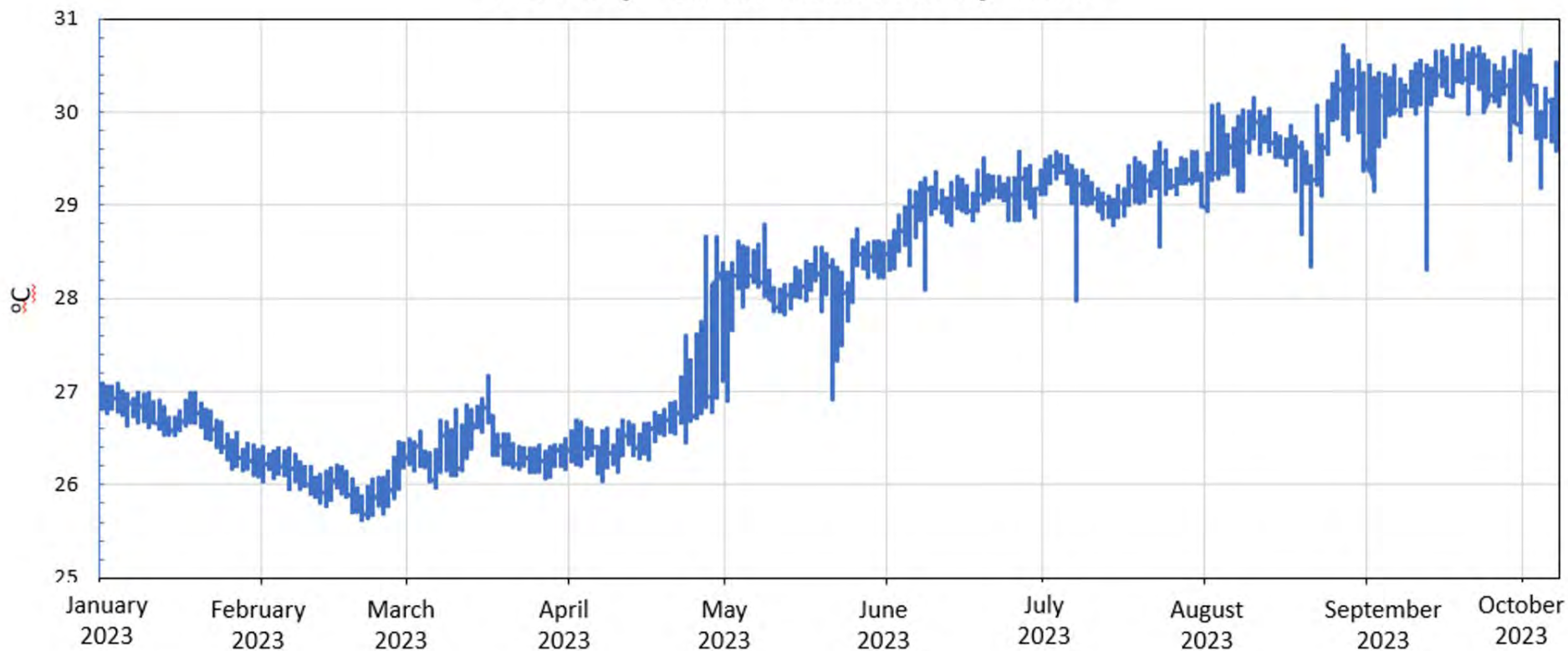


ANTIGUA & BARBUDA  
NATIONAL PARKS

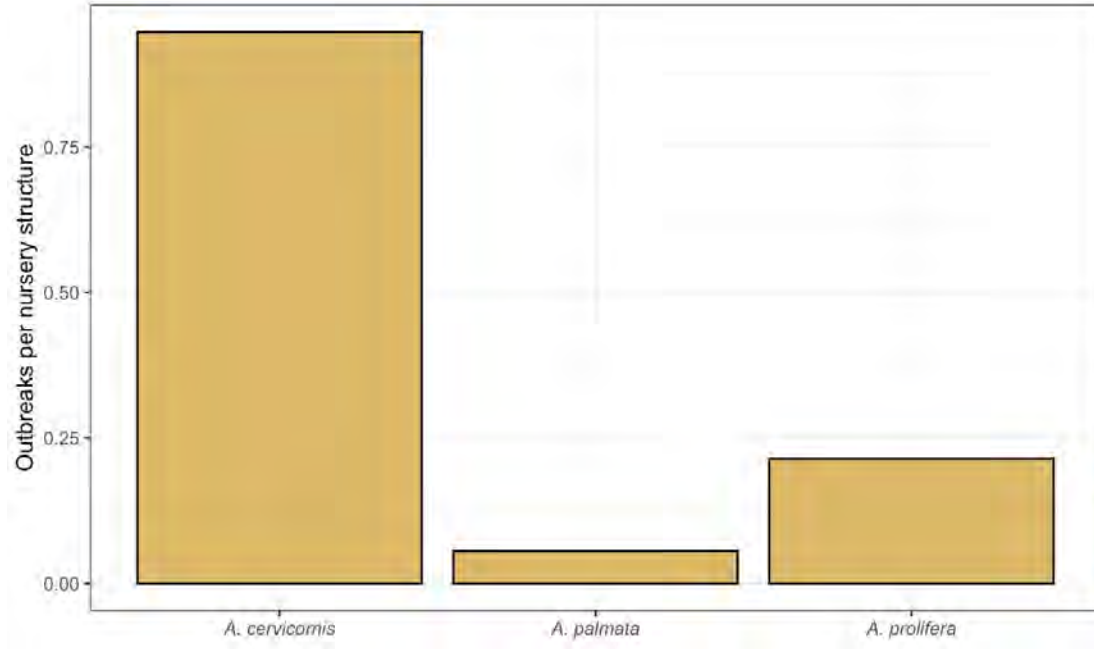


# Temperature

Sea Temp – NDNP Coral Nursery - 2023



# Rapid Tissue Loss in nurseries



Number of RTL outbreaks observed per structure by species in EMC's York Island nursery between May-Aug 2023





Bleaching observed in Aug-Nov 2023



Hell's Gate, NEMMA, 2021



Hell's Gate, NEMMA, Oct 2023



# Bleaching in NPA's nursery

|              | Healthy   | Bleached/Pale | RTL       | Dead/Missing |
|--------------|-----------|---------------|-----------|--------------|
| ACER         | 2%        | 45%           | 0%        | 52%          |
| APAL         | 16%       | 59%           | 0%        | 24%          |
| APRO         | 43%       | 53%           | 0%        | 4%           |
| PPOR         | 0%        | 80%           | 0%        | 20%          |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>7%</b> | <b>47%</b>    | <b>0%</b> | <b>46%</b>   |






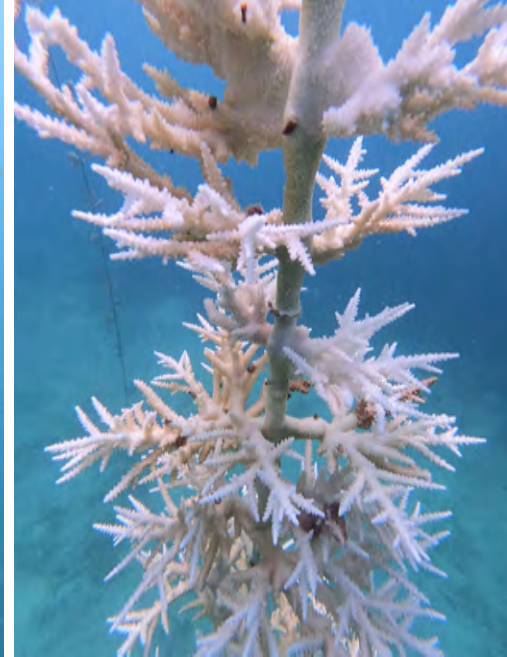
# Bleaching in EMC's nursery

October 9, 2023

| Healthy | Diseased | Bleached/Pale | Dead  |
|---------|----------|---------------|-------|
| 16.10%  | 0.84%    | 73.39%        | 7.63% |

November 6, 2023

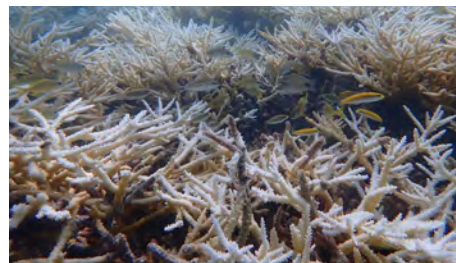
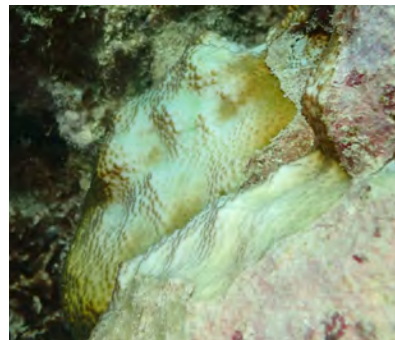
| Healthy   | Diseased | Bleached/Pale   | Dead  |
|---|----------|---|---|
| 22.6%  | 1.2%     | 15.3%  | 60.9%  |



# Bleaching in the wild

Bleached species observed (sept-Nov, 2023):

- All Acroporids (APAL, APRO, ACER)
- CNAT
- DCYL
- SINT
- MCAV
- OANN
- OFAV
- OFRA
- ISIN
- PSTR
- PCLI
- SSID
- SRAD
- AAGA
- ALAM
- PAST
- PDIV
- PPOR
- PFUR
- MARE
- MAUR
- EFAS
- MCOM
- MALC





# Colonies of hope: Genotype specific resistance to thermal stress

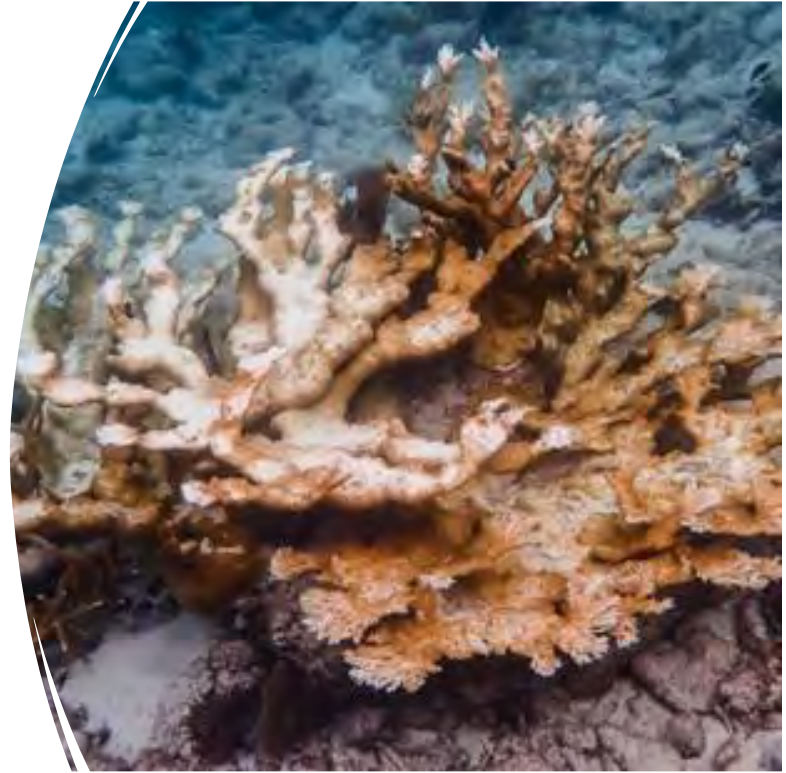


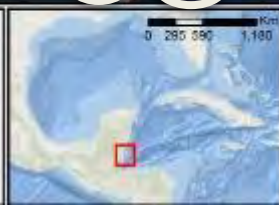


# Belize Coral Bleaching 2023

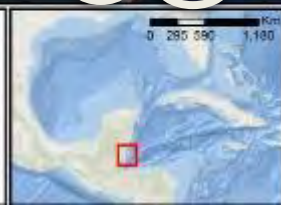
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Lisa Carne  
November 13, 2023





| genet source ACER                         | Outplant locations |           |           |
|---|--------------------|-----------|-----------|
|   | Moho               | LBCNP     | Silks     |
| saddle                                    | X                  | X         |           |
| lazy                                      | X                  | X         | X         |
| gladden buoy                              |                    | X         |           |
| gladden pillar patch                      |                    | X         |           |
| tarpon                                    | X                  | X         | X         |
| whipray                                   | X                  | X         | X         |
| glens bank                                |                    | X         |           |
| loggerhead                                | X                  | X         | X         |
| moho (genetics reveal it's APRO)          | X                  | X         |           |
| FALSE                                     | X                  | X         | X         |
| harvest                                   | X                  | X         | X         |
| hatchet deep                              | X                  | X         | X         |
| mid silks                                 | X                  | X         | X         |
| bl silks                                  |                    | X         | X         |
| near silks nursery table                  | X                  | X         |           |
| cramp                                     | X                  | X         |           |
| crawl                                     | X                  | X         | X         |
| andria                                    | X                  | X         | X         |
| dale's reef                               | X                  | X         |           |
| lil bugle                                 |                    | X         |           |
| LBCNP                                     |                    | X         |           |
| Jeremy patch                              | X                  | X         | X         |
| RG patch                                  | X                  |           | X         |
| south cramp caye                          | X                  | X         | X         |
| <b>Total <i>A. cervicornis</i> genets</b> | <b>17</b>          | <b>21</b> | <b>14</b> |

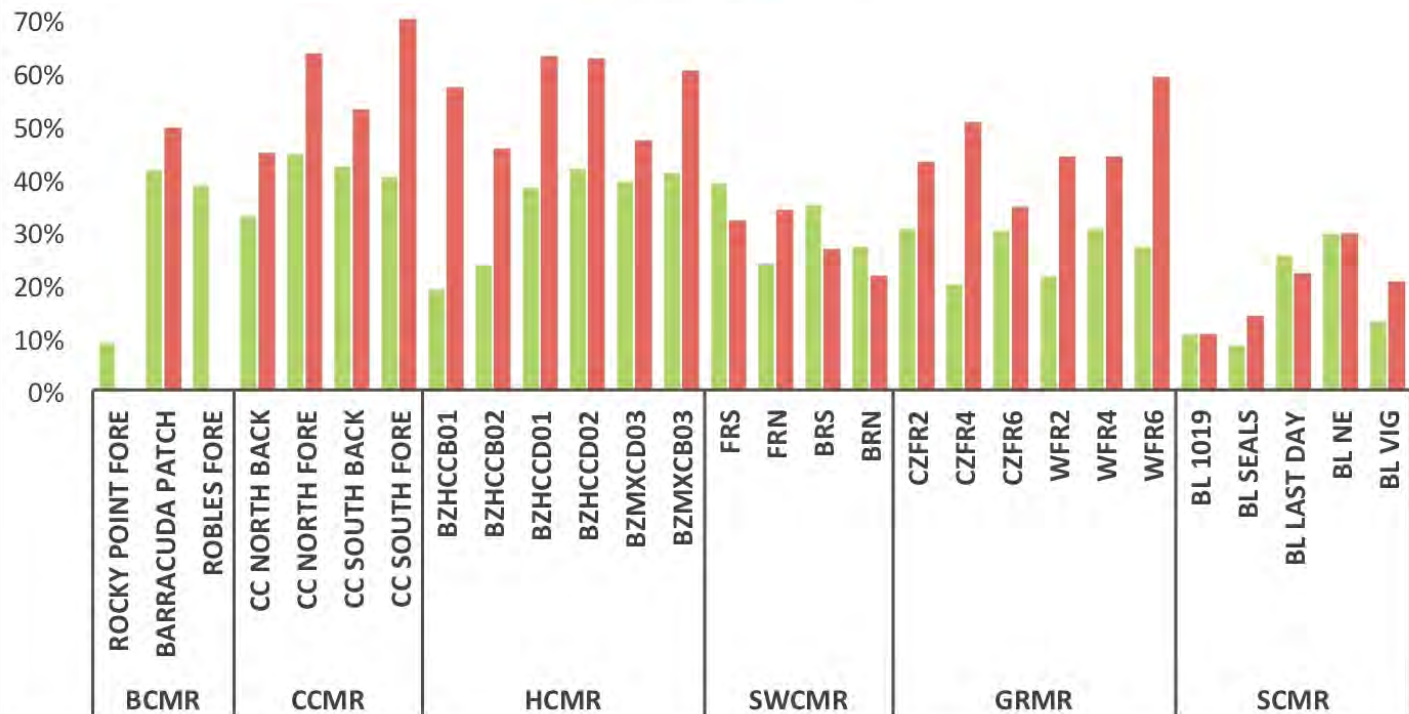


| genet source APAL                     | Moho            | LBCNP     | Silks     |
|---------------------------------------|-----------------|-----------|-----------|
| gladden buoy                          | X               | X         |           |
| gladden pillar patch                  | X               | X         | X         |
| gladden crest                         | X               | X         | X         |
| gladden Bleaching site                |                 |           | X         |
| loggerhead1                           | X               | X         | X         |
| loggerhead2                           | X               | X         | X         |
| bugle                                 |                 | X         |           |
| larks                                 | X               | X         |           |
| larks2                                | X               | X /X      | X         |
| s silk caye s                         |                 |           | X         |
| s silk caye n                         |                 |           | X         |
| middle silk caye1                     |                 |           | X         |
| middle silk caye2                     |                 |           | X         |
| nursery patch silks1                  |                 |           | X         |
| nursery patch silks2                  |                 |           | X         |
| nursery patch silks3                  |                 |           | X         |
| french louie                          | X               |           |           |
| Mosquito caye1                        |                 | X         |           |
| mosquito caye2 ( need genetics?)      |                 | X         |           |
| mosquito caye 3 (need geentics)       |                 | X         |           |
| 17 genets from 2006                   |                 |           | 15        |
| south cramp caye                      | X               |           |           |
| loggerhead patch                      | X               |           |           |
| BL silks patch                        | X/X             |           | X/X       |
| Abigail Caye                          |                 | X         |           |
| <b>Total <i>A. palmata</i> genets</b> | <b>11 or 12</b> | <b>28</b> | <b>14</b> |
| Moho caye/apal over sea fan           | X               |           |           |



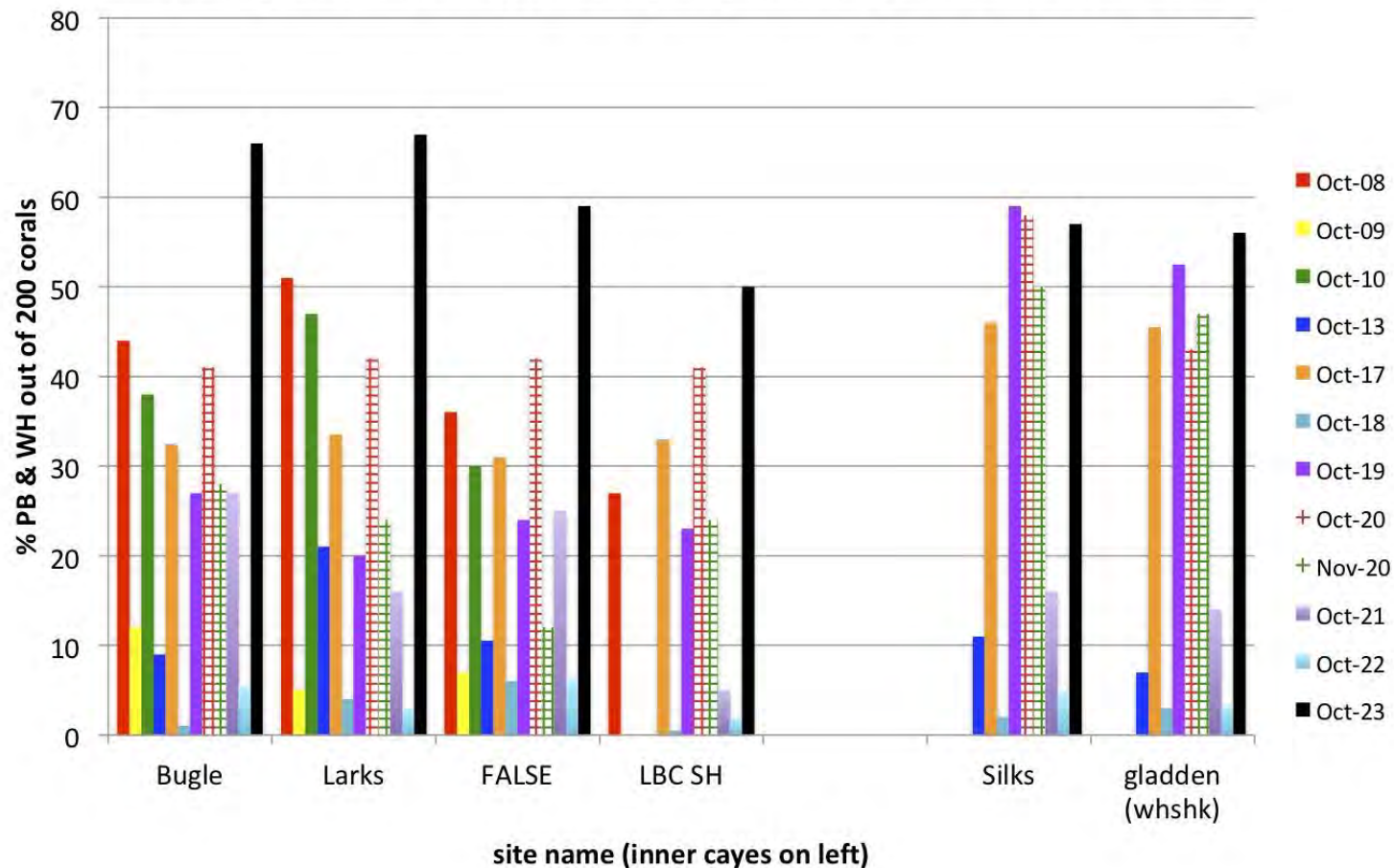
## Comparison of % Bleached (PB + WH) at each MPA per Month

■ September ■ October





# Peak (%Wh & PB of 200 corals/site) bleaching amounts 2008-2023



# Our strategy to date/success indicators:

- Mapping extant acroporids (during hottest months)
- SHALLOW SITES!
- Host & symbiont genetics
- Outplanting multiple genets in proximity & documenting spawning (**success!**)

**Demonstrating effective Caribbean acroporid population enhancement: all three nursery-grown, out-planted taxa spawn August 2015 & 2016 in Belize**

Lisa Carne<sup>1</sup> and Ilana Baums<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Fragments of Hope, Ltd., Placencia, Belize;  
email: lisa@fragmentsofhope.com

<sup>2</sup>Department of Biology, The Pennsylvania State University,  
208 Mueller Lab, University Park; email: ilana.baums@psu.edu

Successful in situ coral cultivation has been



Figure 1. Spawning in nursery-reared, outplanted *Acropora palmata* (above) and *A. prolifera* (below). Photos: Annalise Hassen.



2011



Oct 2020

- Long term monitoring growth, survival, thermal tolerance (**success!**)

# Our strategy to date/success indicators:

- Mapping extant acroporids (during hottest months)
- SHALLOW SITES!
- Host & symbiont genetics
- Outplanting multiple genets in proximity & documenting spawning (**success!**)

**Demonstrating effective Caribbean acroporid population enhancement: all three nursery-grown, out-planted taxa spawn August 2015 & 2016 in Belize**

Lisa Carne<sup>1</sup> and Ilana Baums<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Fragments of Hope, Ltd., Placencia, Belize;  
email: lisa@hopebelize@gmail.com

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# Genet Locations

## Source

- AGRRRA
- FOH
- Fogarty
- UB
- Reef
- MPAs



Source: Esri, DigitalGlobe, GeoEye, Earthstar Geographics, CNES/Airbus DS, USDA, USGS, AeroGRID, IGN, and the GIS User Community

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hs)



2011



FRAGMENTS  
of HOPE  
20Oct23





FRAGMENTS  
of HOPE





FRAGMENTS  
of HOPE

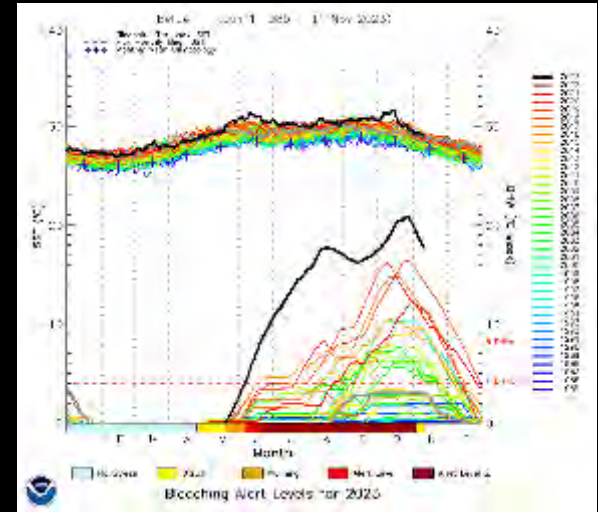






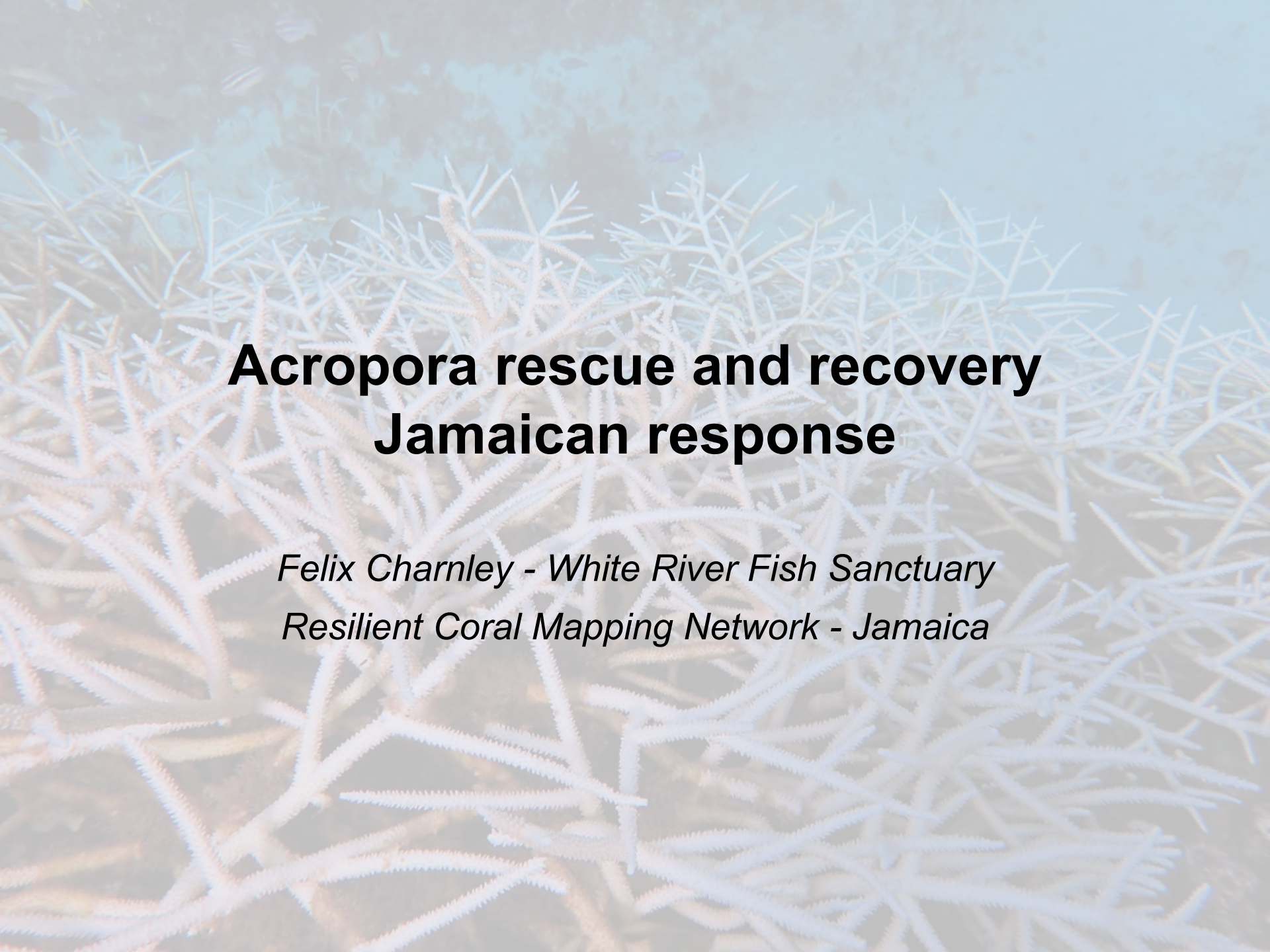
# Lessons learned

- More diversity always better
- Donor corals mostly holding patterns at transplanted sites
- Plant ACER genets as mixed as you want but
- Keep APAL genets somewhat separate
- Do not remove bleached corals from nurseries until 100% dead
- Follow up surveys-mapping



Belize Fisheries Department 2023 surveys funded by the Great Barrier Reef Foundation

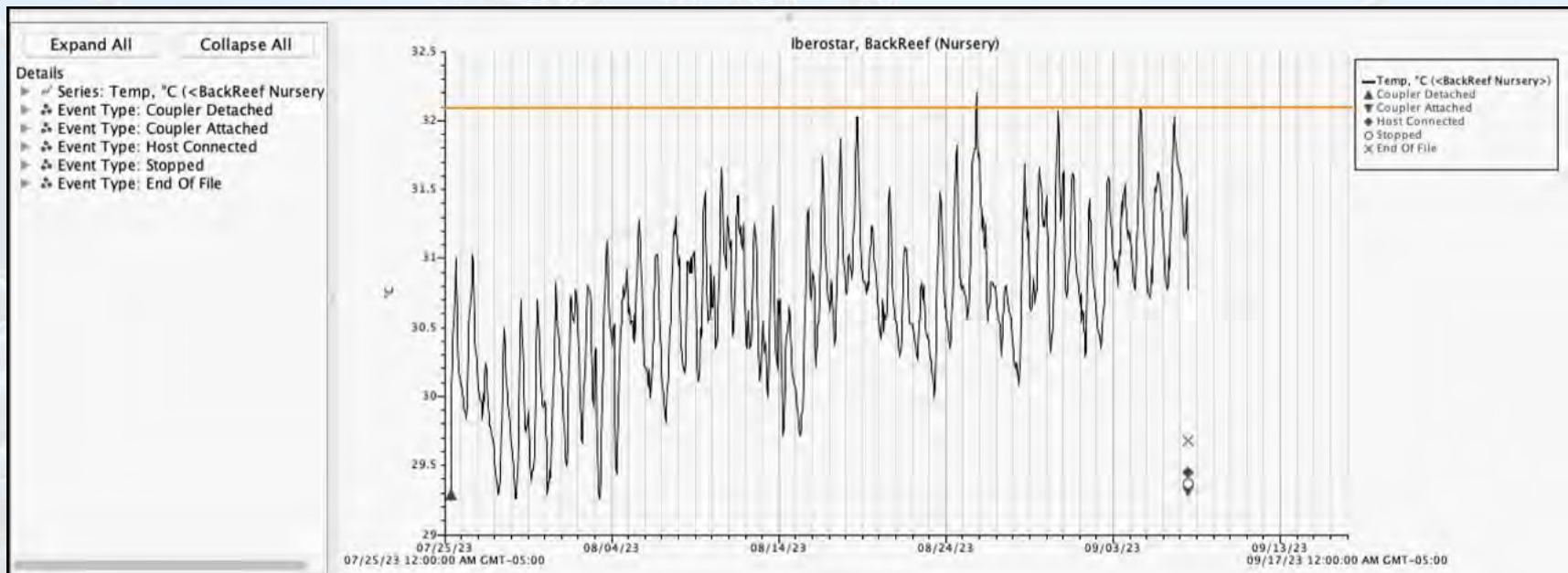




# **Acropora rescue and recovery Jamaican response**

*Felix Charnley - White River Fish Sanctuary  
Resilient Coral Mapping Network - Jamaica*

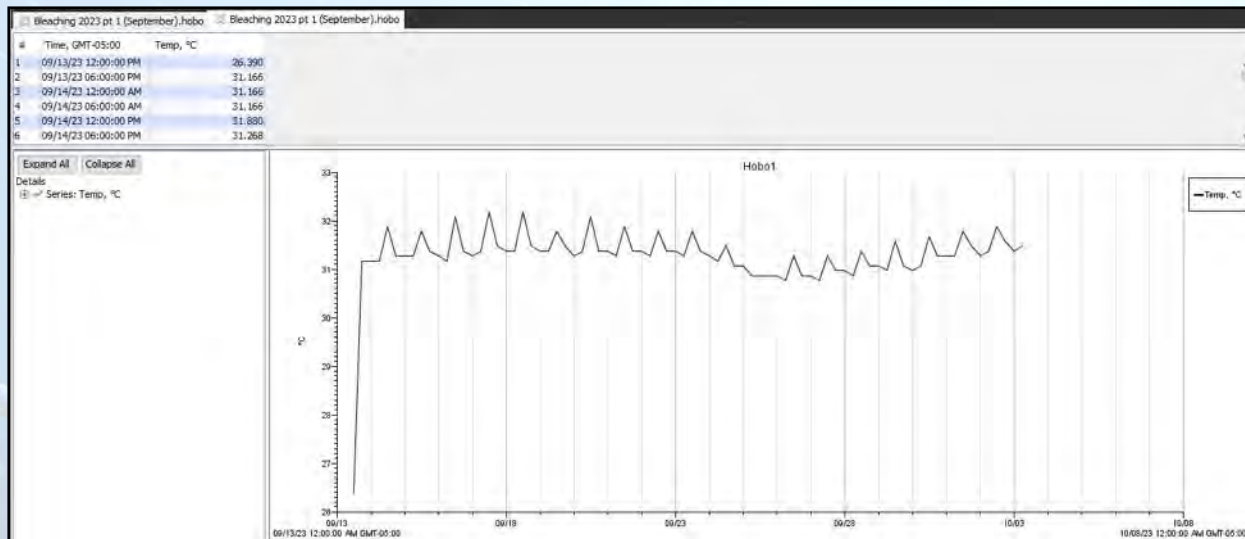
- Avg. temp = 32 C from mid August to early October; 31-32 C through October; now 30-31 C (early November)
- Hot summer and nighttime temperature reductions in early September were still over 30 C = final straw
- Reduced late-summer hurricane frequency



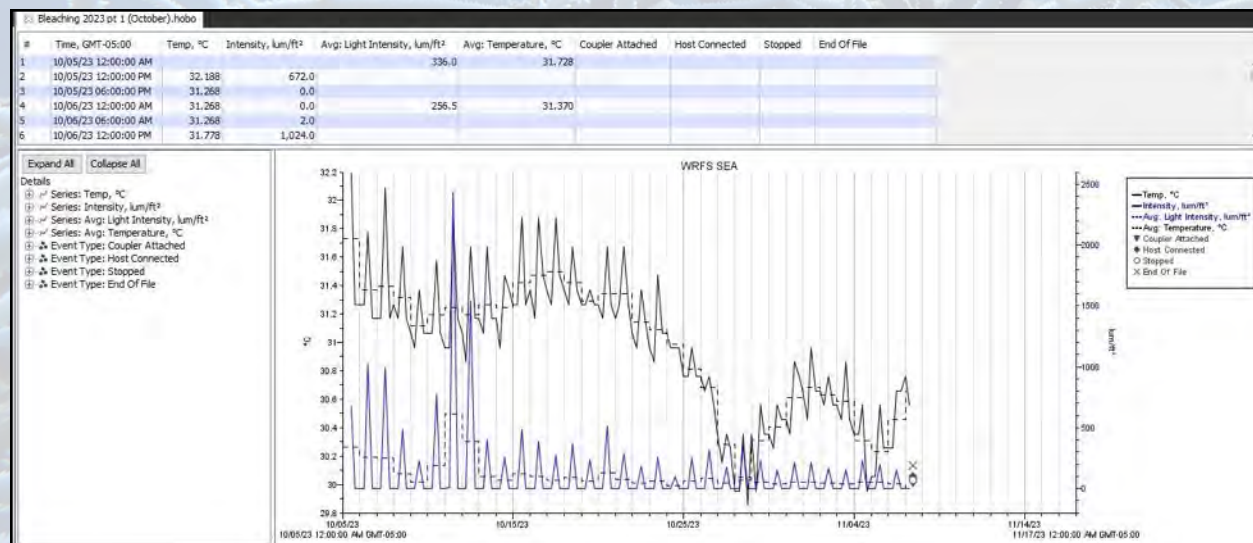
Iberostar back reef, Montego Bay. July 25 - September 11 (Source: Seascope Caribbean)



# White River Fish Sanctuary, Ocho Rios



September



October



## **Rio Bueno West** Before and After



September 9, 2023

Source: Annabelle Cox



October 6, 2023

Source: Felix Charnley



November 3, 2023

Source: Felix Charnley



## Scenario and setbacks

- Near genus level extirpation for *Acropora* spp.
- Loss of almost all wild stock; >90% at a glance
- Loss of donor sources for nursery programmes
- Major setback to genetic variation
- Increased predation of few surviving
- Tissue loss disease/stress observed prior to bleaching and now present in survivors



APAL



ACER

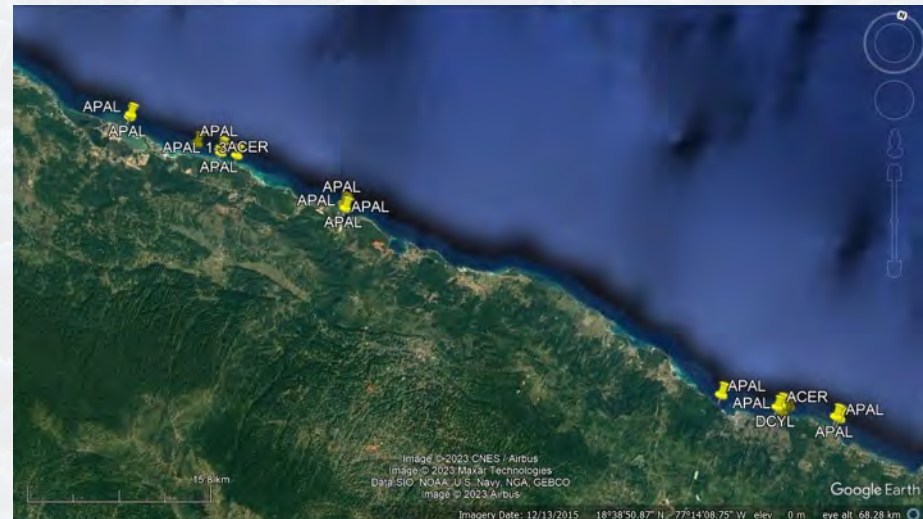


APRO



## Response

- Attempted shading and relocating to no avail. Probably acted too late, circa Sep 5.
- Main focus now genetics
- Now looking for, geo-referencing and tagging surviving colonies
- Criteria: live, non-bleached (full colour) colonies that will/should survive 33 C / next event; stressed “potential recoverers”- can invest in and pair with the thermally tolerant corals as may have genes that resist other stressors
- National WhatsApp group, now 20 participants in 6 parishes (going on 7), reef managers, swimmers, government, coastal property owners, fishers(?); all long distance swimmers.
- Cover ground, fill gaps between swim routes, remove predators
- Materials: GPS, flagging tape, camera, float/kayak





## Results so far:

- 28 surviving isolates and counting (-St. James) across 2 parishes (45 miles as the crow flies)
- 5 ACER, 21 APAL, 1 DCYL; 0 APRO

### ACER



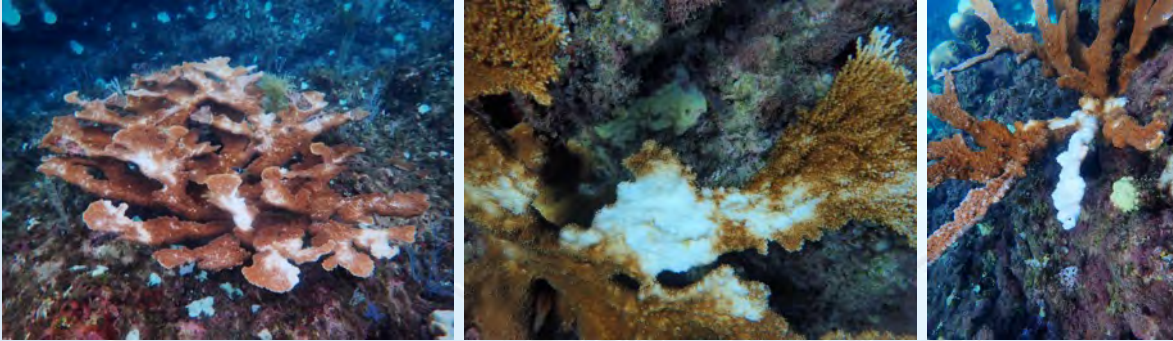
### APAL



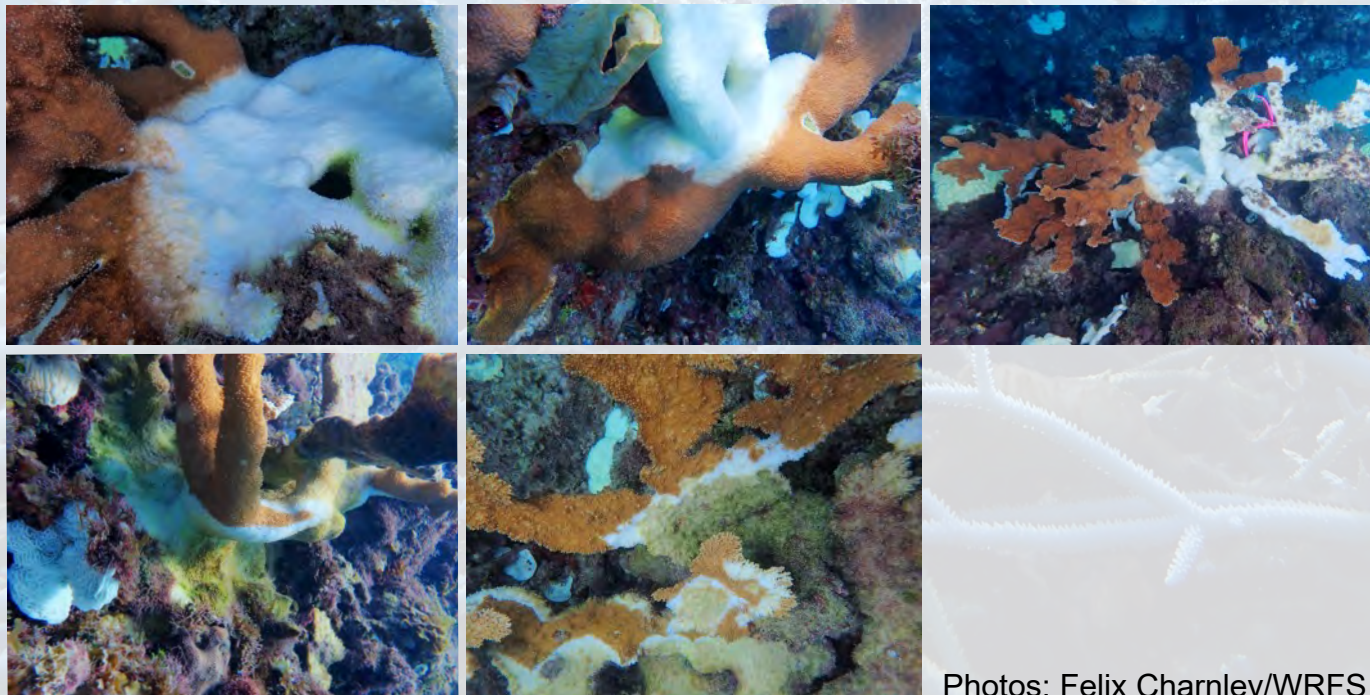


## Continued threats to survivors

### Late bleaching



### Disease and Predation (?)



Photos: Felix Charnley/WRFS



## Tissue Loss

September 9



November 3



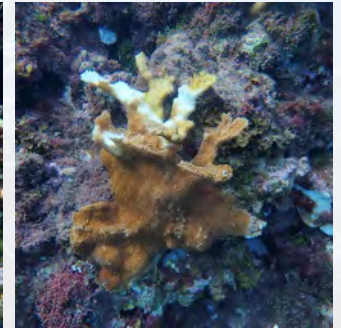
November 3



Pre-bleaching RTL(?), August 30



Same (?), November 01





## Next steps

### In situ

- Adjacent culture, mindful of sites, minimalist, low impact, low harvest, easily relocatable



Photo: Felix Charnley/WRFS

### Ex situ

- Spawn capture, rearing, recruitment, induced broadcast spawning (Craggs et al 2017)
- SECORE/Fundemar/Cayman DoE/CoralAssistLab, Newcastle/Coral Spawning Lab, U Derby to Alligator Head/TNC - centralised national spawning station
- ASAP as donors may not last in situ

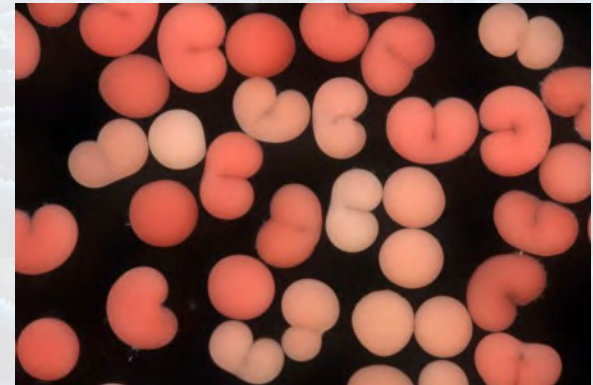
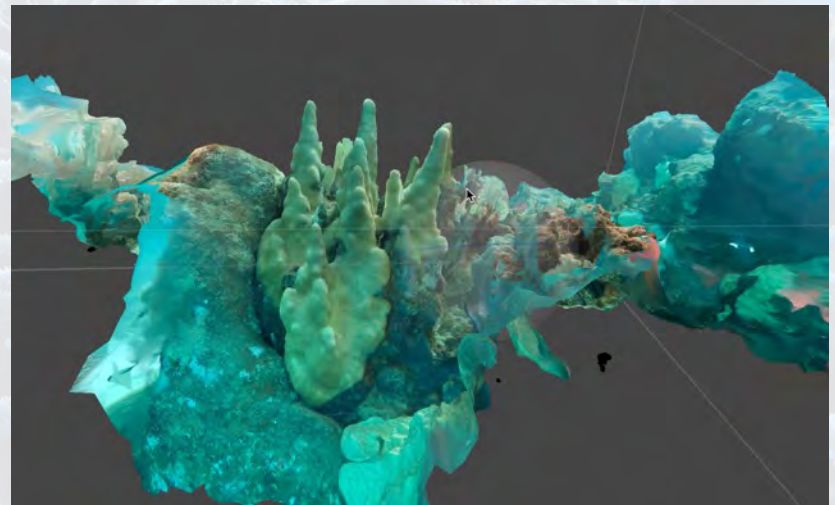


Photo: Coral Spawning Lab Ltd.

## Re: SCTLD species

- Some SCTLD lesions prior to bleaching
- Most SCTLD species still only bleached; likely to recover, keeping an eye out.
- Strong DCYL









Contact: [lisasinbelize@gmail.com](mailto:lisasinbelize@gmail.com) & [fragmentsofhope.org](http://fragmentsofhope.org)



The Pew Fellows Program in Marine Conservation at The Pew Charitable Trusts

# KML

Keys Marine Lab, Florida Keys



## KEYS MARINE LABORATORY

# **2023 Coral Bleaching Emergency Response At Keys Marine Laboratory**

Land-Based Seawater Facilities

Long Key, Florida Keys

**Emily Becker**

Seawater Systems Manager

Sr. Biological Scientist





# Land-Based Seawater Facilities



- Capacity: 60+ SW tables (40-gal to 250-gal)
- SW Source: ~30' deep seawater well
- Pumping >120-gals/minute thru 2 air-stripper/degassing towers
- Maintaining coral tables at 83.9°F – 85.1°F
- 8 temperature-controlled SW reservoirs (total 15,000-gal)
- Five 5-ton heater/chiller units



# Movement of coral from offshore nurseries to land based facilities

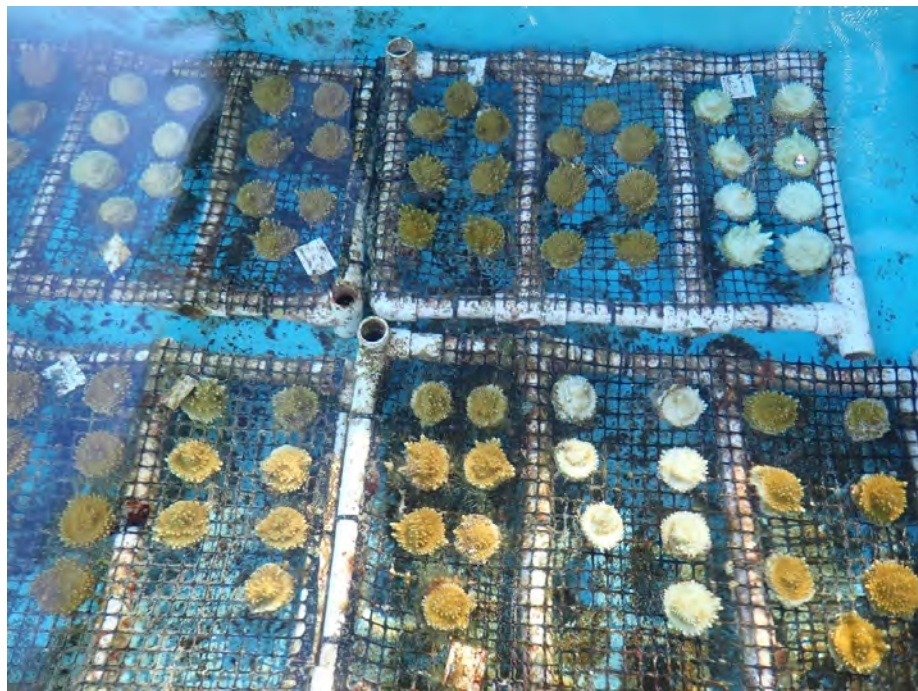
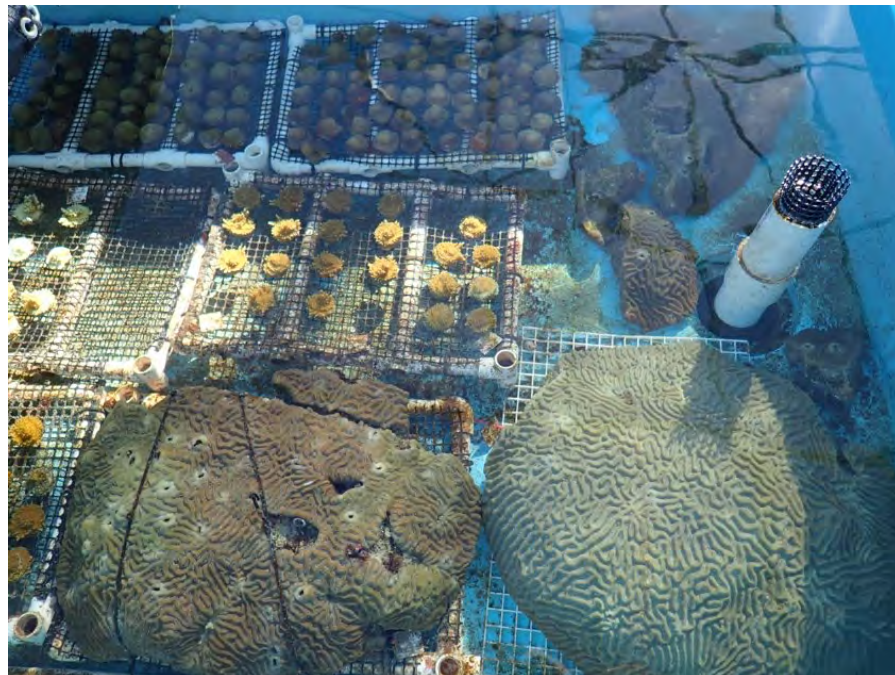
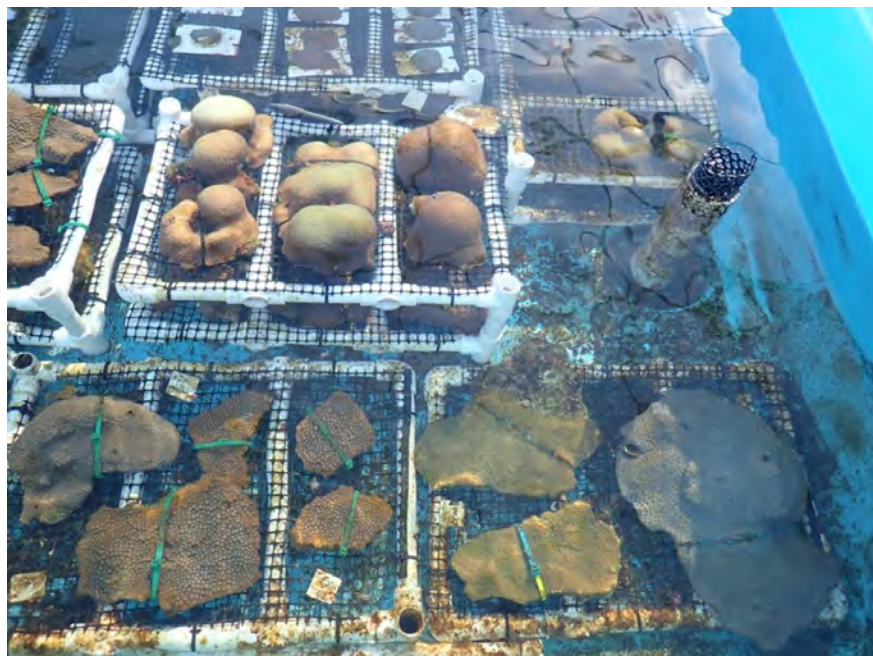
- ~100% capacity for all SW tables at KML
  - Aug through Oct
- More than 5,000 coral fragments, 8-10 coral species
  - Endangered or threatened species



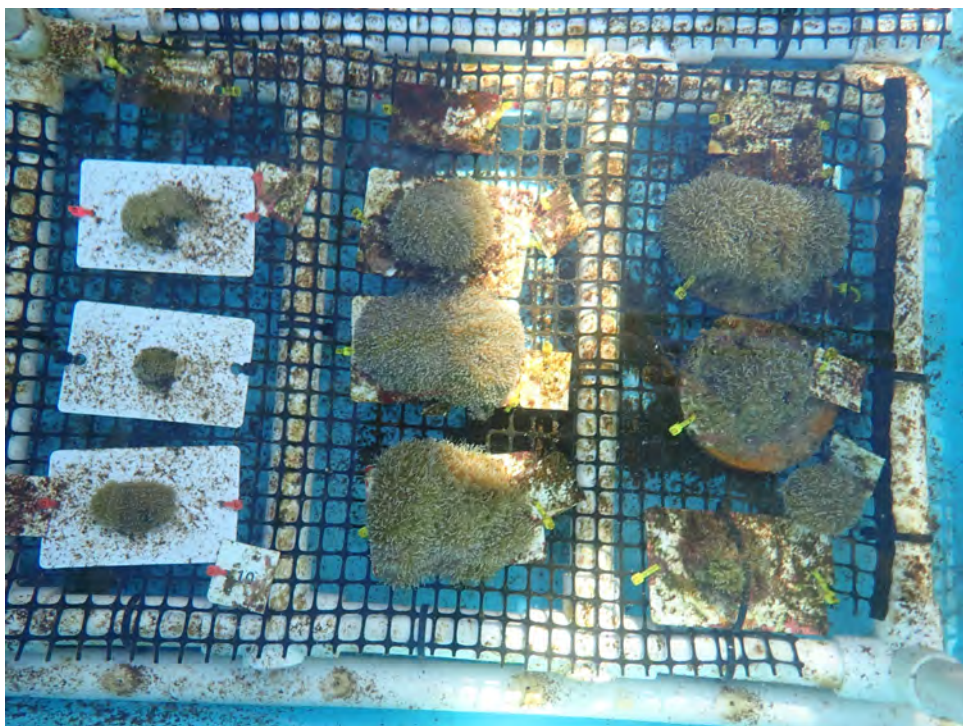








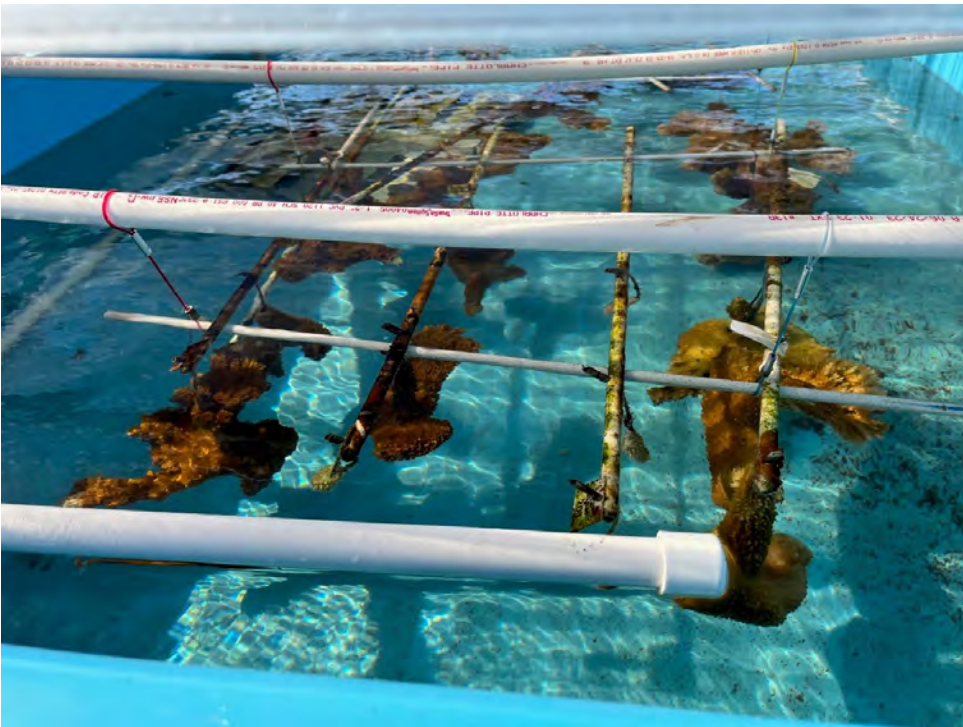
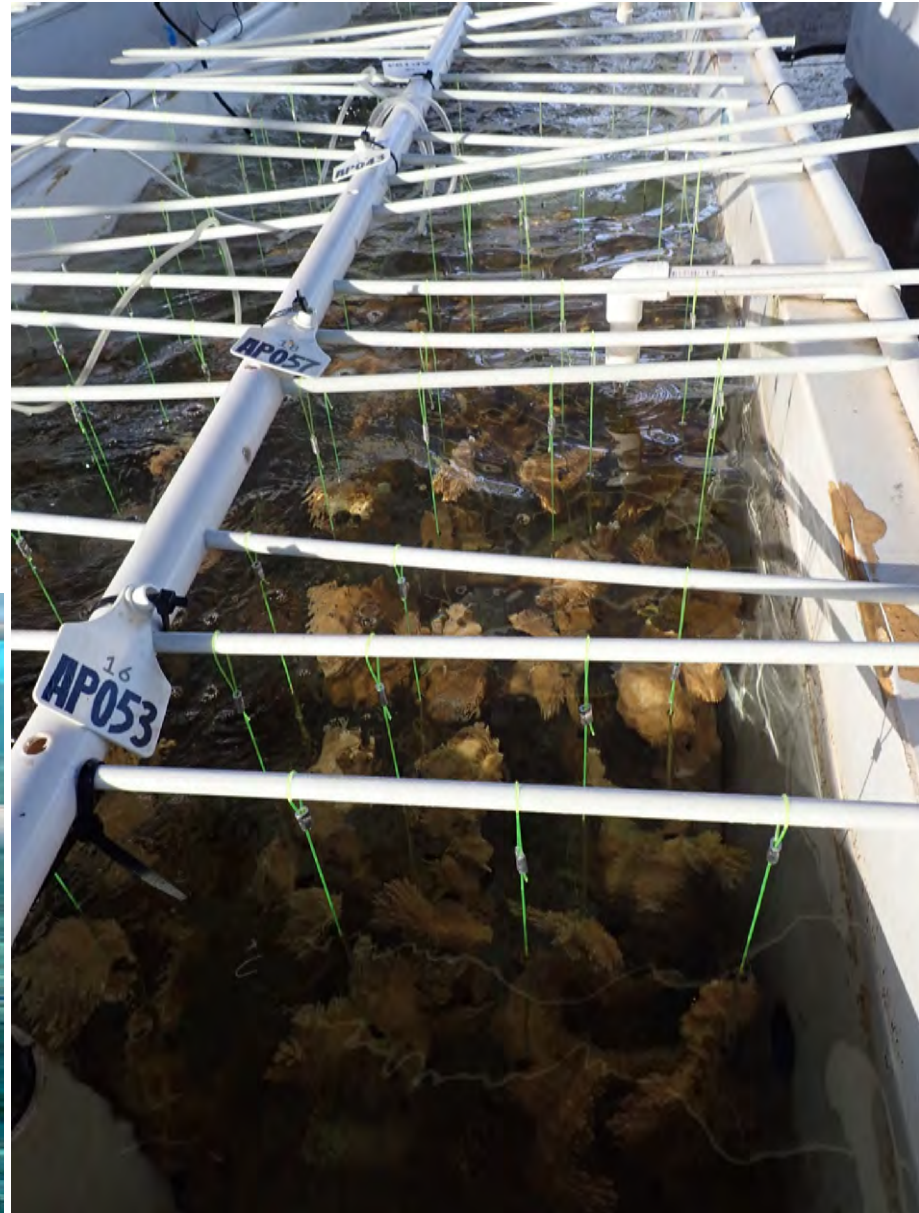
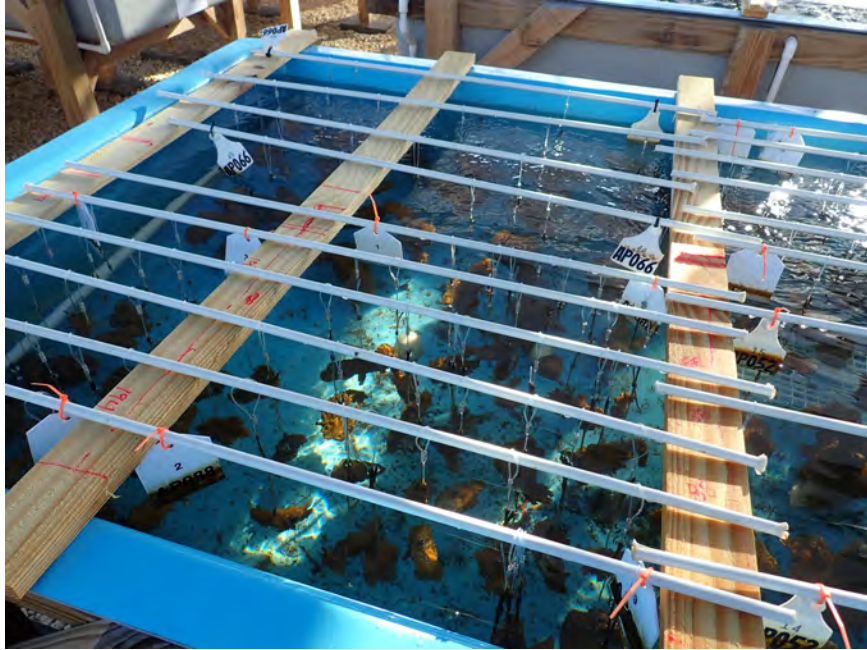




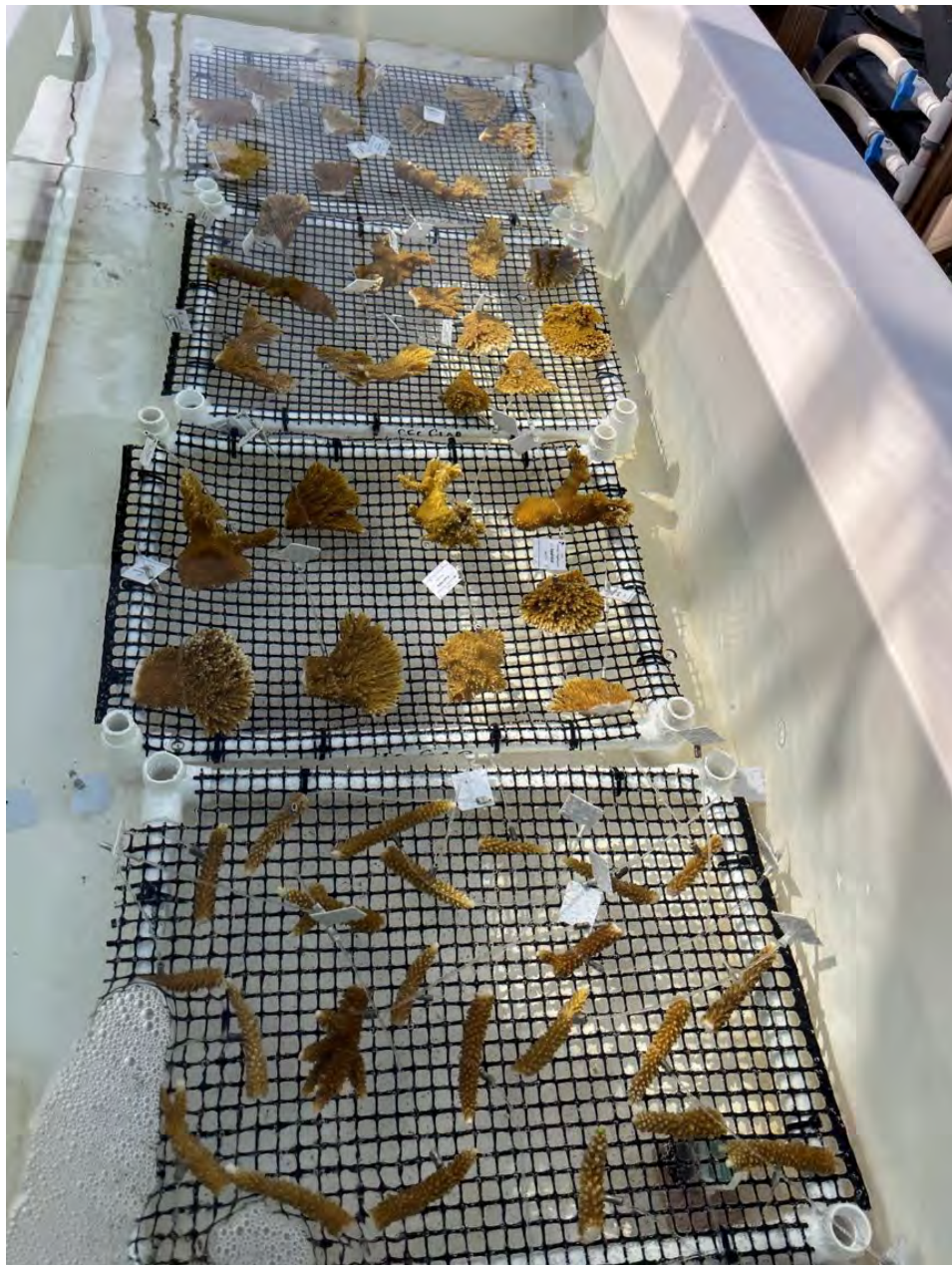














# Husbandry



## AZA HeaRT Team

-Helped to establish coral treatment/husbandry protocols, trained practitioners in basic diagnostics





# Moving Coral back offshore

## Return of rescued coral from land-based facilities to *in situ* coral nurseries

- Collaborating agencies: NOAA & FWC
  - Protocols & guidelines
- After Oct 15, 2023 and
- Water temps on reef below 30.5C/**86.9F** for at least 1 week

## Protocols for all thermally stressed corals held in land-based nurseries:

- No direct outplanting from land-based nurseries to the reef
- Preparation of in situ nurseries
  - Removal of all dead and/or diseased corals
- Coral Health Certification assessment
  - in person by certified Coral Health Veterinarian
  - Valid for 30-days from assessment
- Request approval from FWC Coral Restoration Protocols team to transfer corals to in situ nursery
- Transferred corals will be quarantined in their nursery for 30-days prior to any outplant to the reef; Visual health assessments of all corals





# So what did we learn?

- Learning curve for coral practitioners moving from offshore to land-based nurseries.
- Acroporids were challenging to hold on site. More successful with Boulders.
- Develop protocols, hold training sessions, husbandry
- Biosecurity
- Planning well before coral need to be moved:
  - Parameters outlining when to pull coral from offshore
  - transporting coral
  - Protocols/husbandry practices in place and explained to staff