

Dustan, P. 1999. Coral reefs under stress: Sources of mortality in the Florida Keys. *Natural resources forum*. Dordrecht [Nat. Resour. Forum] 23: 2: 147-155.

**Abstract:**

This article describes the condition of coral reefs at the end of the 20th century, and portrays the ecological stress on these ecosystems as a harbinger of global change. Coral reefs, like rain forests, are threatened ecosystems that are fast declining in luxuriance and vitality in all the tropical seas. This article describes some of the mortality factors that contribute to the declining health of reefs, including bleaching, sedimentation, algal overgrowth and pollution from point and non-point sources. The author raises issues concerning the role of humans in the increase of these stresses. The fate of coral reefs is considered to rest on their ability to maintain their ecological integrity. Without this the ecosystem ceases to thrive and can no longer provide the ecological goods and services and all of the wonders of nature that we take for granted, or have not yet discovered. The article concludes with a discussion of monitoring strategies and recommendations for governments.