

S. 2429, Restoring Resilient Reefs Act

Section by Section Summary

Section 1. Short Title.

The Act may be cited as the “Restoring Resilient Reefs Act”.

TITLE I—REAUTHORIZATION OF CORAL REEF CONSERVATION ACT OF 2000

Section 101. Reauthorization of the Coral Reef Conservation Act of 2000.

This section strikes and replaces sections 202 through 210 of the Coral Reef Conservation Act of 2000 (16 U.S.C. 6401 et seq.) with the following sections:

- Section 202. Purposes. Defines the purposes of the title, including “to preserve, sustain, and restore the condition of U.S. coral reef ecosystems.”
- Section 203. National Coral Reef Resilience Strategy. Sets standards for the development of a National Coral Reef Resilience Strategy that is updated no less than every 20 years.
- Section 204. Federal Coral Reef Action Plans. Sets standards for the development of Coral Reef Action Plans to guide unit-specific management and restoration activities within units with coral reef equities under the management of the Office of National Marine Sanctuaries, the National Park Service, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the Office of Insular Affairs of the Department of the Interior. Such plans are to be updated every 5 years.
- Section 205. Federal Coral Reef Management and Restoration Activities. Details coral reef conservation and restoration activities that the Secretary of Commerce is authorized to conduct in waters managed under the jurisdiction of the Office of National Marine Sanctuaries, the National Park Service, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the Office of Insular Affairs of the Department of the Interior. Allows the Administrator to enter into cooperative agreements with States to fund coral reef conservation and restoration activities.
- Section 206. State Coral Reef Management and Restoration Strategies. Sets standards for the development of voluntary State Coral Reef Management and Restoration Strategies by covered States for submission to the NOAA Administrator that are recommended to be updated no less than every twenty years. Authorizes the Administrator to provide technical assistance in the development of such strategies by request of a covered State.
- Section 207. State Coral Reef Action Plans. Sets standards for the development of voluntary State Coral Reef Action Plans to guide coral reef management and restoration activities in State waters. Such plans are recommended to be updated every 5 years. Authorizes the Administrator to provide technical assistance in the development of such plans by request of a covered State.
- Section 208. State Coral Reef Action Plan Assessments. Authorizes the Administrator to conduct an assessment of the efficacy of State efforts to implement those State action plans in effect, with the goal of informing and supporting the development of subsequent State action plans under Sec. 207.

- Section 209. State Block Grants. Authorizes the Administrator to provide block grants to covered States in response to annual proposals for funds to support State activities that would further the implementation of State Coral Reef Management and Restoration Strategies developed under Sec. 206, State Coral Reef Action Plans developed under Sec. 207, and Coral Reef Stewardship Plans certified under Sec. 212.
- Section 210. Coral Reef Stewardship Partnerships. Authorizes the Administrator to establish standards for, and certify, the formation of federal and non-federal Coral Reef Stewardship Partnerships focused on conserving and restoring local reefs.
- Section 211. Coral Reef Stewardship Plans. Sets requirements for 5-year Coral Reef Stewardship Plans formulated by certified Coral Reef Stewardship Partnerships to guide their local coral reef conservation and restoration activities. **Requires the Administrator to annually convene Coral Reef Stewardship Partnership representatives to identify best practices for the development and implementation of such plans.**
- Section 212. Stewardship Plan Certification. Sets evaluation standards and the process for the certification and recertification of Coral Reef Stewardship Plans submitted by Coral Reef Stewardship Partnerships to the Administrator.
- Section 213. Coral Reef Stewardship Fund. Authorizes the establishment of a Coral Reef Stewardship Fund managed by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) to receive, hold, and administer funds to support coral reef stewardship partnership activities consistent with applicable strategies and action plans in effect as developed under Title I. Includes authorization for NFWF to solicit donations, and mandates continuing reviews of NFWF's grant-making performance by the Administrator.
- Section 214. Coral Reefs as Maintained or Engineered Infrastructure. Qualifies certain coral reefs to be eligible for public assistance under the Stafford Act.
- Section 215. Coral Reef Emergency Plans. Sets standards for the development of Coral Reef Emergency Plans by individual management units of applicable Federal agencies, covered States, and certified Coral Reef Stewardship Partnerships to support a rapid response to outbreaks of disease or invasive species, coral bleaching events, natural disasters, vessel groundings or chemical spills, and other exigent circumstances. **Mandates the Administrator to develop guidance on best practices for coral reef emergency response to be updated every 5 years.**
- Section 216. Emergency Plan Certifications. Sets evaluation standards and the process for the certification and recertification of Coral Reef Emergency Plans submitted by eligible entities to the Administrator.
- Section 217. Environmental Review. Encourages the Administrator to conduct environmental assessments and environmental impact statements under the National Environmental Policy

Act for coral reef emergency plans developed under section 215 or certified under section 216.

- Section 218. Coral Reef Emergency Fund. Authorizes the establishment of a Coral Reef Emergency Fund managed by NFWF to receive, hold, and administer funds to support emergency response activities of eligible entities consistent with Title I. Includes authorization for NFWF to solicit donations, and mandates continuing reviews of NFWF's grant-making performance by the Administrator.
- Section 219. Emergency Assistance. Authorizes the Administrator to provide grants to implement certified coral emergency plans upon declaration of a Coral Reef Emergency, either as determined and declared directly by the Administrator or through evaluation of a petition for such declaration by an eligible entity. Authorizes the Administrator to seek the recovery of expended emergency funds from negligent parties in the case of significant human-caused disasters.
- Section 220. Vessel Grounding Inventory. Authorizes the administrator to track vessel grounding incidents to inform future responses and improve aids to navigation as necessary.
- Section 221. Coral Reef Conservation Program. Modifies the Coral Reef Conservation Program to ensure that federal grants awarded for coral reef conservation and restoration projects are consistent with applicable federal, state, and coral reef stewardship partnership coral reef resilience strategies and management and restoration action plans in effect for proposed project areas. Ensures that the Administrator prioritizes support for restoration activities in areas with degraded coral reefs. Suggests overall funding allocations to promote equitable support for projects in the Atlantic and Pacific basins, and split amongst federally and non-federally managed coral reefs in a way that promotes stakeholder engagement through coral reef stewardship partnerships.
- Section 222. Annual Reports on Administration. Mandates an annual report on the implementation of Title I by the Administrator to the Senate Committees on Appropriations and Commerce, Science, and Transportation, and the House Committees on Appropriations and Natural Resources.
- Section 223. Authority to Enter into Agreements. Authorizes the Administrator to enter into and perform such contracts, leases, grants, or cooperative agreements as may be necessary to carry out the purposes of Title I. Establishes an Atlantic Coral Reef Cooperative Institute and a Pacific Coral Reef Cooperative Institute, to be operated by coral reef research centers, as designated by the Administrator, for the purposes of conducting ecological research and monitoring associated with activities funded by Title I, assist in the development and implementation of required strategies, action plans, and emergency plans, and build capacity among governmental resource management agencies.
- Section 224. Authorization of Appropriations. Authorizes annual increases of \$1.5 million from FY20 through FY24 to carry out Title I, of which half the increases are directed to state block grants. Maintains flexibility to ensure important federal coral reef management and

restoration activities and capacity building programs are enhanced and no less than \$8 million per year available to fund federally-directed research and Coral Reef Conservation Program grants.

- **Section 225. Definitions.** Updates definitions in the Coral Reef Conservation Act for the terms ‘conservation’, ‘coral reef’, and ‘coral reef ecosystem’, and adds new terms including ‘restoration’, ‘resilience’, ‘interested stakeholder groups’, and ‘stewardship’.

TITLE II—UNITED STATES CORAL REEF TASK FORCE

Section 201. Establishment. Codifies the establishment of the U.S. Coral Reef Task Force

Section 202. Duties. Codifies the duties of the U.S. Coral Reef Task Force to include coordination, cooperation, and technical assistance in the performance of coral reef management and restoration activities under Title I, and the production of an annual report on the status of State member coral reefs.

Section 203. Membership. Codifies the membership of the U.S. Coral Reef Task Force with the inclusion of the Administrator of the Federal Emergency Management Agency, the Chief of Engineers, and nonvoting membership for State and Territorial designees to the South Atlantic, Gulf of Mexico, Caribbean, and Western Pacific Fishery Management Councils.

Section 204. Responsibilities of Federal Agency Members. Codifies the responsibilities of Federal agency members of the U.S. Coral Reef Task Force.

Section 205. Working Groups. Codifies the authority to establish Working Groups to meet the goals and carry out the duties of the U.S. Coral Reef Task Force.

Section 206. Definitions. Defines terms relevant to the implementation of Title II, consistent with their usage in Title I.

TITLE III— DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR CORAL REEF AUTHORITIES

Section 301. Coral Reef Conservation and Restoration Assistance. Authorizes the Secretary of the Interior to provide scientific expertise, technical assistance, and financial assistance for management and restoration activities consistent with Title I. Allows the Secretary to enter into cooperative agreements with States to fund coral reef conservation and restoration activities.