

S. 2429, Restoring Resilient Reefs Act

Executive Summary

Senators Marco Rubio (R-FL), Brian Schatz (D-HI), Rick Scott (R-FL), and Mazie Hirono (D-HI) are introducing the *Restoring Resilient Reefs Act of 2019*, which would revive and modernize the *Coral Reef Conservation Act of 2000*, fifteen years after its expiration, to include:

- A 5-year authorization with an explicit focus on restoration activities where natural disasters and human activities have degraded reef ecosystems;
- Directed federal funding and technical assistance so States and impacted communities can drive priorities and management of coral reef ecosystems, such as a State Block Grant, and other incentives for further community participation and investment through new Coral Reef Stewardship Partnerships;
- Overlapping federal, state, and local planning responsibilities and inducements for collaboration to support improved capacity-building at the State and local levels;
- Enhanced assessment and reporting procedures to document, measure, and analyze planning, management, and restoration outcomes to drive increasing efficacy in future coral reef interventions from limited federal tax dollars;
- New avenues for the provision of emergency funds to ensure rapid and effective responses to coral reef emergencies including disease outbreaks, invasive species, coral bleaching, natural disasters, vessel groundings, hazardous spills, and coastal construction accidents.

The bill also codifies and updates the U.S. Coral Reef Task Force previously established by Executive Order under President Clinton, and provides the Secretary of the Interior with the authority to provide scientific expertise, technical assistance, and financial assistance for management and restoration activities consistent with the bill.

The introduction of companion legislation in the House of Representatives will be led by Reps. Darren Soto (D-FL) and Jenniffer Gonzalez-Colon (R-PR).