

# Committee on Resources

## Subcommittee on Fisheries Conservation, Wildlife and Oceans

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### Background

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#### **H.R. 3919 Coral Reef Conservation and Restoration Partnership Act of 2000**

#### **SUMMARY:**

This legislation would provide statutory authority for the Coral Reef Task Force, authorize a matching grant program for coral reef conservation and restoration projects, and authorize ongoing coral reef activities for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA).

#### **BACKGROUND & ANALYSIS:**

Coral reefs are among the nation's most biologically diverse and productive marine habitats. Coral reefs are an important economic resource for many local communities that depend on the tourism, fishing, and other activities supported by coral reefs. Worldwide, coral reefs are declining as a result of disease, natural disturbances and human-induced stresses. Human activities, including destructive fishing practices, nutrient enrichment via nonpoint source pollution, increasing tourism pressure, overharvest of commercial species, and the physical destruction of reefs by vessel groundings contribute to the deterioration of coral reef ecosystems. There is a need to provide assistance to local communities to support coral reef conservation efforts and to ensure greater coordination among Federal, State, and local governments to manage coral reef ecosystems. Congressmen Jim Saxton (R-NJ) and Eni Faleomavaega (D-AS), along with 11 bipartisan cosponsors, introduced H.R. 3919 on March 14, 2000, to address these needs. H.R. 3919 replaces earlier coral reef legislation, including H.R. 2903 and H.R. 3133, and represents a bipartisan effort to protect coral reefs. H.R. 3919 establishes a permanent Coral Reef Task Force, incorporating the task force designated by Executive Order 13089. The Task Force is charged with coordinating Federal agency activities and developing a comprehensive strategy for coral reef management, including a mapping and monitoring component. H.R. 3919 also establishes a grant program for State, Territory and local coral reef conservation projects. H.R. 3919 requires at least 50 percent non-Federal contributions, except where otherwise allowed by law (e.g., the Trust Territories). Finally, H.R. 3919 authorizes ongoing NOAA coral reef conservation programs, including mapping, monitoring, assessment, debris removal and fisheries management.

#### **SUBCOMMITTEE ACTION:**

The Subcommittee on Fisheries Conservation, Wildlife and Oceans held a hearing on coral reefs and H.R. 2903 on October 21, 1999.

#### **ADMINISTRATION POSITION:**

The Administration has not submitted a position on this bill, although NOAA has testified in support of earlier coral reef bills upon which this bill is based.

**AMENDMENTS:** None are expected.

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