



14th International Coral Reef Symposium

Youth Leaders Workshop and Symposium: Coral Reefs and the Next Generation

5th – 10th July 2020

May 10, 2018

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Introduction

Climate change has been identified as the greatest threat to coral reef health worldwide. Despite lofty emissions targets and pledges by the international community, scientists predict that the effects of climate change, severely impacting coral reefs, are likely to get worse before any improvement is realised. Consequently, the next generation is in line to inherit natural ecosystems in a much poorer, and declining state than present, potentially requiring drastic action to support reef resilience and ecosystem health.

The Youth Leaders Workshop is specifically designed to explore opportunities to improve the health of coral reefs globally, incorporating key elements of the UN Sustainable Development Goals 14, Life



Below Water and 17 Partnerships for the Goals. This opportunity will enable them to better understand reef health issues, relate to coral reefs and strategise with industry leaders and professionals in their field how they may become part of the solution in tackling the challenging future of coral reefs.



The Youth Leaders Workshop asks representatives of the today's youth, "What is the role of the next generation in supporting coral reef health and resilience?" This workshop presents an opportunity to engage the leaders of tomorrow in meaningful conversation around the ecological, social and economic values around coral reefs. The workshop will take a multi-faceted approach to problem solving inquiring and addressing elements of good leadership and collaborative decision making to deliver realistic, achievable solutions to coral reef health.

Youth participants will be asked to answer the key question, "What kind of adaptive management, conservation, and restoration measures need to be developed for future reefs?" approached through the more accessible queries, "What do the coral reefs mean to me?" and "How can we protect their future?". Breakout sessions will be conducted to

- a) Assess current events regarding coral reefs and associated threats
- b) Assess current suite of initiatives to help preserve reefs;
- c) Work in teams to determine solutions;
- d) devise projects that can assist in the delivery of outcomes that assist in raising awareness, changing behaviour and helping to change the trajectory of reef health.

Workshop coordinators would like to hold this session over two separate, consecutive afternoons to enable more effective outcomes. We will fund raise to enable participation by a broad socio-economic demographic to improve opportunities for youth the world over.

Collaborative Partners and Supporters currently include

- Reef Ecologic PTY LTD (Australia)
- Coral Restoration Consortium (USA-NOAA)
- Heirs to Our Oceans (USA)

Future potential partners (to be confirmed)

- Australian National University
- Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA)
- National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Association (NOAA)
- Coral Restoration Foundation (CRF),
- James Cook University
- Australian Institute of Marine Science (AIMS) and
- CSIRO
- United Nations Environment Program (UNEP)
- International Coral Reef Initiative (ICRI)
- Australian Coral Reef Society (ACRS)

Expected Outcomes

Youth involvement in meetings, conferences, workshops and symposiums brings an entirely new perspective and energy to the topic at hand. Engaging youth from around the world in the discussion on coral reefs and their potential future. With unrestrained creativity and limited bias, there is the potential for novel ideas and attitudes to influence all participants throughout the conference.

Young participants will gain exposure to a conference environment, feeling empowered by their inclusion in an important global forum. Their inclusion supports the broader conference attendees helping to bridge the communication gap between government, science, managers, policy makers and the community.

Activities

This proposal is designed to support substantial participation throughout the **entire symposium** for participating youth, however it is recommended that their primary activities be limited to the first day or two.

Proposed activities include:

“the idea of involving the younger generation in the ICRS is fantastic and I hope to involve my two children”

Elizabeth Madin, ACRS Council

- **Plenary session** – One or two influential youth should be given the opportunity to present to the assembled audience on what reefs mean to them and why they are important ([Example](#))
- **Workshop – Guided workshop** What do the coral reefs mean to how can we protect their future?”. ([Example](#))
- **Research presentation Session** – Session of live presentations of conservation, and restoration measures for future reefs.
- **Expo session** – Posters, artwork, Points of Inspiration/creative Submissions (Posters, Paintings, Poems, Videos) interactive media (video presentations). An expo style display showing the submissions from children globally with different categories highlighted. Similar to a traditional ‘scientific poster display’ at a conference but with a more casual approach. Presentations or short films may be displayed on a digital medium in a rolling format in the booth and/or held in conjunction with live presentations held on a particular day in a presentation room.

Conclusion

We feel the opportunity to engage the next generation in the issues facing coral reefs provides a powerful opportunity to build social resilience among this important demographic. Additionally, young people bring a different, more creative, often less biased perspective to problem solving opening the door to innovative ideas and solutions beyond what is often possible at many meetings and workshops. We have seen the energy created by the involvement of youth at past symposiums of this nature and welcome the opportunity to deliver something similar on the international stage for ICRS2020 in Bremen.

Contacts

For more information contact

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Supplementary information

Video from the Young Adults Workshop held in Cairns, July 2018 ([Link](#)) and full report ([Link](#))

Selected examples of influential youth in the field of marine conservation

- Kailash Cook presents on his life as an ocean warrior reminding people it takes a community to support the health and resilience of coral reefs ([Link](#))
- Heirs to our Oceans, based in California, has a mission of empowering youth to make positive change in this world through activist-oriented, interdisciplinary, socio- and eco-justice-themed learning projects ([Link](#))
- Molly Steer is a 10year old who pioneered a social movement to rid the community, and by extension, the ocean, of plastic straws ([Link](#))
- Boyan Slat, Youngest-ever recipient of UN's highest environment award and founder of The Ocean Clean Up, the largest clean up in history at 18 years of age ([Link](#))
- Video from the Youth Leaders Workshop, Reef Futures, Key Largo, Florida December 2018 ([Link](#)).

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Appendix 1

Draft schedule of activities for workshop

The workshop will be lead by selected youth to ensure the ideas are lead by youth and not being preached to by the older generation.

We are proposing a progressive format where a cumulative, inclusive experience is created building to the development of clear ideas with the possibility of enduring outcomes.

The workshop is designed to span two days of the symposium:

- Process what makes a good leader. The decision makers today in the public and private sectors are failing humanity including future generations, so before any other steps the most basic layer of characteristics of good leadership should be shared and process.
 - What makes a successful team in achieving its goal for the long term is processed here with a specific focus on SDG 17.
- Participants are divided into groups and are provided current events regarding coral and threats. They are given time to review together.
 - Power dynamics should be considered – who the participants are hasn't been landed upon. .
- Youth leaders give presentations on the health of ocean ecosystems and the threats they are facing.
- Participants in their groups process all of the above and story board solutions.
- *After* teams had sufficient time to process solutions on their own, solutions currently being utilized in the world are presented by youth leaders.
 - We can also bring in tools that can be utilized for choosing a solution.
- Teams regroup and process further answering the critical thinking question: What solutions seem most effective and what challenges do you see with the solutions?
- Using a problem solving grid or other tool to determine the best solution, teams work on what they believe is the best solution to save the coral reefs for their generation.
- Each team presents its findings in a format of
 - (1) issue – coral state and roll it plays for health of oceans and therefore planet for future generations;
 - (2) solutions – top 3;
 - (3) analyses of the 3 top solutions, and
 - (4) best solution chosen by the team.
- Every member on the team must deliver some part of the proposal. (Can include public speaking skill coaching in preparing them)
- Develop a process of implementation that can be taken forward.