



10TH ASSEMBLY OF PLANNERS
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Guam's reef- related policies

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Guam Coral Reef Initiative

Established in 1997 by Executive Order 97-10

Managing all aspects of Guam's coral reefs

- Management plans
- Community outreach
- Mangrove and seagrass conservation
- Watershed management
- Coral reef restoration



Guam's Coral Reefs

42 square miles of
shallow reef

400 species of
hard coral

\$63.46 M calculated
annual value



Providing
seafood



Protecting the
coast



Tourism



Cultural and
recreational
value



Guam's Reef-Related Policies

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Endangered Species Act (ESA)

Endangered Species Act of Guam

- P.L. 15-036:1 - June 14, 1979
- No marine species are currently on the list

(US federal government) Endangered Species Act of 1973

- U.S.P.L. No. 93-205 - December 28, 1973
- Species listed as Endangered or Threatened
- Illegal to import, export, or take listed species
- NOAA Fisheries: marine species, USFWS: land and freshwater species
- Managing agency must develop critical habitat area, a recovery plan, species recovery grants, and 5-year reviews
- Holding groups accountable for minimizing harm: federal agency mandatory consultations and non-federal Incidental Take Permits
- Goal: prevent species extinction

Guam Marine Species on the US ESA

- 6 species of marine mammals
- 5 species of sea turtles
- 3 species of sharks and rays
- 1 species of coral
- 5 clam species **proposed** as threatened



Coral species - *Acropora globiceps*

- Listed as Threatened on 10/10/14
- Threatened because it lives in shallow water and is susceptible to bleaching, but no reproductive failure
- After 5-year review, still Threatened
- Critical habitat designated 7/15/25
 - Department of Defense is exempt





US ESA Impacts on Guam's Reefs

+ BENEFITS

- Effective at preventing extinction
 - Less than 1% of ESA-listed species have gone extinct
- Holds federal agencies accountable for minimizing harm
- Longstanding legislation

- DRAWBACKS

- Not originally designed for marine life
- Not created to address climate change, coral's main extinction threat
- Can complicate work for local reef managers
 - Administrative challenges and permitting delays

Recognizing Corals as Essential Infrastructure

“Relative to recognizing Coral Reefs as essential infrastructure for the protection of the coasts of Guam and its inherent relationship in the conservation of beaches and other elements of nature”

- Guam Resolution No. 207-37 - January 26, 2024
- Officially recognizes coral reefs as essential infrastructure for protecting the coasts of Guam
 - Corals = animals and infrastructure
- Follows in the footsteps of Puerto Rico, the USVI, Hawaii, and the U.S. Coral Reef Task Force
- Goal: formalize reef benefits to open new doors to funding reef conservation



**Annually, Guam and
CNMI reefs protect us
from coastal flooding,
benefitting 400+ people
and preventing
\$13.9 million in property
damage.**

Storlazzi et al. 2019



Recognizing corals as essential infrastructure

+ BENEFITS

- Formalizes the importance of Guam's coral reefs
- Makes us eligible for a new source of FEMA funds
 - Puerto Rico got funding
- This, along with Guam's hazard management plan, may help us get funding to rebuild coral nurseries after a natural disaster

- DRAWBACKS

- The FEMA funds we hoped to access have unfortunately been cut
 - Other funding for reef restoration to protect coastal infrastructure is unlikely in the current presidential administration



Reef-safe sunblock law

“Prohibiting the import of skincare products that pose a danger to Guam’s coral reefs and marine life.”

- Guam Public Law 38-5 - April 12, 2025
- Bans import of products containing: Oxybenzone, Octinoxate, and Octocrylene
- These ingredients can stunt coral growth and harm fish reproduction
- Follows in the footsteps of Hawaii, the USVI, and Palau
- The Guam Department of Agriculture (DOAG), Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and Department of Public Health and Social Services (DPHSS) have the authority to restrict these imports
 - Can also add to the list of Guam Banned Skincare Products
- \$100-\$5,000 fine for violations
- Import ban begins October 9, 2025 (180 days from enactment)
- Goal: protect Guam’s reefs from harmful chemicals

An underwater photograph of a coral reef. In the foreground, there are several yellow tangs (fish with yellow heads and black bodies) swimming near a large, brown, brain-like coral. The background shows more coral and the blue water of the reef.

Reef-safe sunblock law

+ BENEFITS

- Protects reefs from 3 harmful sunblock ingredients
- Provides a way to add more harmful sunblock ingredients to the banned import list in the future
- Makes better, reef-safe products available to tourists

- DRAWBACKS

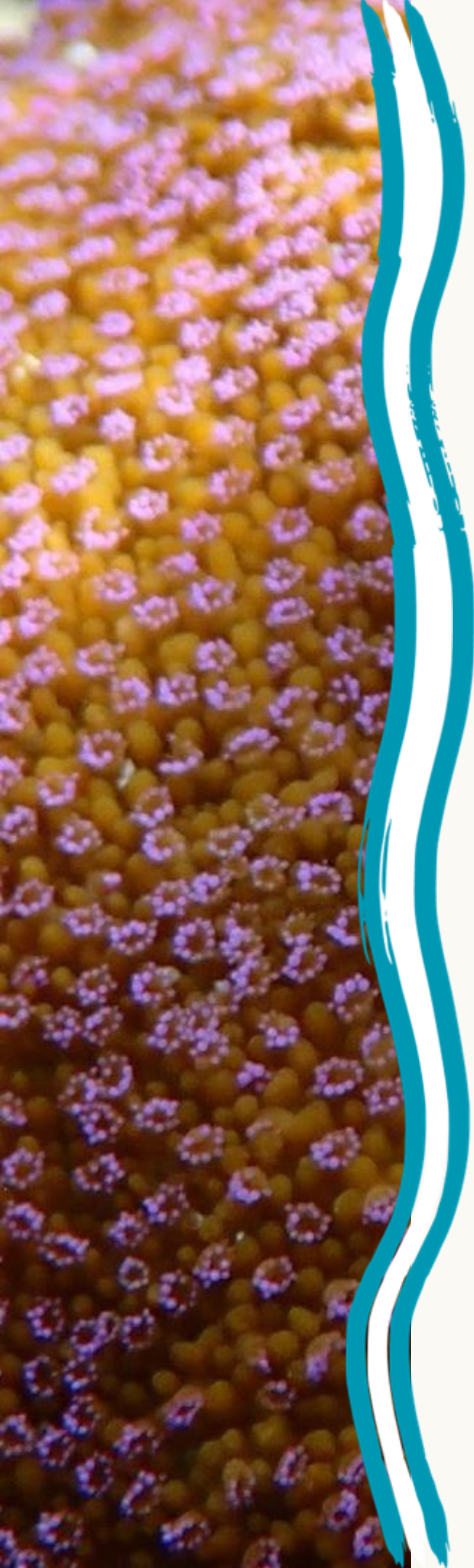
- Does not include all known harmful ingredients, just some

Guam's Marine Preserves

“An act to establish rules and regulations for the control of fisheries by the Department of Agriculture”

- Guam Public Law 24-21 - May 12, 1997
- Established 5 marine preserves on Guam:
 - Piti Bomb Holes, Tumon Bay, Sasa Bay, Achang Reef Flat, and Pati Point
- Each preserve has different fishing rules
 - Sasa is no-take, others allow some fishing
 - DOAG can permit seasonal fishing
- Many rules apply to all preserves, like no spearfishing, and no taking corals, invertebrates, or natural materials
- Enforced by DOAG's Conservation Officers
- Goal: protect Guam's ecosystems from fishing pressure





Guam's Marine Preserves

+ BENEFITS

- Protects 5 of Guam's marine ecosystems
- Safe haven for fished species
 - Especially since Guam doesn't have a fishing permit system
- Healthy reefs draw tourists

- DRAWBACKS

- Enforcement challenges
 - Limited staff and resources
 - Punishment for violators is time-intensive
- Rules are complicated



Guam's Reef-related Policies

- Important to be informed!
- Effective policy is an investment in our reef's future
- Always a work in progress
- Lots of agencies and individuals working hard to care for Guam's ocean ecosystems long-term



Thank you!

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