

## “Reef Doctor” Dedicates Decades to Coral Reefs



**Hudson’s extensive reef restoration work earned him the nickname “Reef Doctor”.** Photo: Jeff Anderson

Harold Hudson was a young man when he made the commitment to pursue a lifelong career studying and working in the marine environment. But Hudson didn’t just want to learn about the environment. He wanted to do more, and that is just what he has done. Hudson’s awards and accomplishments during his 48-year career as a federal government scientist, including the past 18 years as a sanctuary resource biologist, are too numerous to list in full.

Hudson’s expertise was critical in developing the mooring buoy system that is used throughout the world to protect coral reefs from anchor damage, and he has designed everything from undersea geodetic markers to museum exhibits. All of this would be enough for most people, but in the last 18 years, Hudson, nicknamed the “Reef Doctor”, has pioneered reef restoration techniques designed to restore the lost infrastructure of coral reefs severely damaged by vessel hulls in grounding accidents. Cement and carefully chosen limestone rocks are his favorite materials for creating the reef restoration modules.

Today, several sites restored under Hudson’s direction have shown signs of healing and boast a myriad of corals and other marine life. Each restoration project was individually planned to meet the needs of that site and to address the damage being repaired. Over time, the restoration techniques and process used by Hudson have evolved to produce a natural looking module of cement and limestone designed to replace the lost reef and support marine life.

Not to worry, Hudson didn’t really hang up his mask. He’s back with the sanctuary as a volunteer continuing his life’s work.

## Council Meets Regularly to Discuss Management Issues

At its December 2007 meeting held in Key West at the Florida Keys Eco-Discovery Center, the Sanctuary Advisory Council (SAC) heard presentations from experts about projects of interest to the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary. Topics included: the proposed ocean current turbine project designed to generate electricity, the regulations and review process of the NOAA Office of General Counsel regarding violations in sanctuary waters, the outreach programs offered by Crane Point Nature Center and Museum and the research results from the Florida Reef Resiliency Program summarized by scientists from The Nature Conservancy. At the conclusion of the meeting, members of the Education and Outreach and Ecosystem Restoration SAC working groups provided updates about educational initiatives and projects associated with the restoration of the Everglades and Florida Bay, respectively.

The SAC meets on a bimonthly basis to discuss issues related to the management of natural and maritime heritage resources within the nearly 2,900 square miles of sanctuary waters. Most meetings are held in Marathon. They are open to the public and a public comment period is held twice per meeting. Bruce Popham serves as the chair and Ken Nedimyer serves as the vice-chair. Lilli Ferguson is the sanctuary advisory council and volunteer coordinator.

The Department of Commerce established the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary Advisory Council to advise the sanctuary superintendent and the director of the Office of Coastal and Aquatic Managed Areas in the Florida Department of Environmental Protection regarding the management of the sanctuary, including providing assistance in developing and implementing the sanctuary’s management plan. Council members apply for their positions and are appointed by NOAA in consultation with the state of Florida. To read the resolutions passed by the SAC, find out about upcoming meetings and workshops, or contact a SAC member, please visit <http://floridakeys.noaa.gov>.



**The SAC Ecosystem Restoration Working Group sponsored a workshop on climate change and energy held at the Board of County Commissioners meeting room in the Harvey Government Center in Key West. The workshop was televised on closed-circuit television throughout the Keys.**