

CORAL REEFS

APRIL 23, 1997.—Referred to the House Calendar and ordered to be printed

Mr. YOUNG of Alaska, from the Committee on Resources,
submitted the following

REPORT

[To accompany H. Con. Res. 8]

The Committee on Resources, to whom was referred the concurrent resolution (H. Con. Res. 8) expressing the sense of Congress with respect to the significance of maintaining the health and stability of coral reef ecosystems, having considered the same, report favorably thereon with amendments and recommend that the concurrent resolution be agreed to.

The amendments are as follows:

Strike out all after the resolving clause and insert in lieu thereof the following:

That the Congress recognizes the significance of maintaining the health and stability of coral reef ecosystems, by—

- (1) promoting comprehensive stewardship for coral reef ecosystems;
- (2) encouraging research, monitoring, and assessment of and education on coral reef ecosystems; and
- (3) improving the coordination of coral reef efforts and activities of Federal agencies, academic institutions, nongovernmental organizations, and industry.

Amend the preamble to read as follows:

Whereas coral reefs are among the world's most biologically diverse and productive marine habitats, and are often described as the tropical rain forests of the oceans;

Whereas healthy coral reefs provide the basis for subsistence, commercial fisheries, and coastal and marine tourism and are of vital economic importance to coastal States and territories of the United States including Florida, Hawaii, Georgia, Texas, Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands;

Whereas healthy coral reefs function as natural, regenerating coastal barriers, protecting shorelines and coastal areas from high waves, storm surges, and accompanying losses of human life and property;

Whereas the scientific community has long established that coral reefs are subject to a wide range of natural and anthropogenic threats;

Whereas the United States has taken measures to protect national coral reef resources through the designation and management of several marine protected areas, containing reefs of the Flower Garden Banks in the Gulf of Mexico, the Florida Keys

in south Florida, and offshore Hawaii, Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, and American Samoa;

Whereas the United States, acting through its agencies, has established itself as a global leader in coral reef stewardship by launching the International Coral Reef Initiative and by maintaining professional networks for the purposes of sharing knowledge and information on coral reefs, furnishing near real-time data collected at coral reef sites, providing a repository for historical data relating to coral reefs, and making substantial contributions to the general fund of coral reef knowledge; and

Whereas 1997 has been declared the "International Year of the Reef" by the coral reef research community and over 40 national and international scientific, conservation, and academic organizations: Now, therefore, be it

Amend the title so as to read:

A concurrent resolution recognizing the significance of maintaining the health and stability of coral reef ecosystems.

PURPOSE OF THE BILL

The purposes of H. Con. Res. 8 are to express Congressional commitment to maintaining healthy and stable coral reef ecosystems and to honor the designation of 1997 as the International Year of the Reef.

BACKGROUND AND NEED FOR LEGISLATION

Coral reefs are among the world's most biologically diverse and productive marine habitats. Requirements of warm water, free of excessive nutrients and sediments, generally restrict reef growth to shallow, tropical and subtropical coastal regions. Thus, coral reefs are well developed in the coastal waters of only two U.S. States, Florida and Hawaii. Extensive reefs are associated with islands and territories under U.S. jurisdiction in the Caribbean and Pacific (Puerto Rico, U.S. Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa). Offshore in Federal waters, deeper coral communities with broader distribution are also present (e.g. Gray's Reef off the coast of Georgia, and the Flower Garden Banks off Texas).

Healthy coral reefs provide countless products and benefits to the coastal communities of these U.S. States and territories. They are vital to coastal economies, serving as the basis for coastal and marine tourism. Annually, for example, the reefs of the Florida Keys attract over six million visitors and generate over \$2.1 billion in revenue from snorkelers and scuba divers, recreational fishermen, boaters and wildlife enthusiasts. Also, this reef-based tourism creates hundreds of thousands of job opportunities in south Florida.

Healthy reefs also support valuable subsistence and commercial reef fisheries. In 1995, domestic landings of commercial reef fish and shellfish (snapper, grouper, spiny lobster, etc.) exceeded \$79.5 million. Reef fish imports, for consumption or the marine aquarium trade, account for an additional \$25–50 million annually.

Healthy reefs function as habitat for many marine organisms valued by the biomedical and pharmaceutical industries. For example, a chemical compound derived from Caribbean reef sponges is the active ingredient in medicines which are widely used in cancer chemotherapy. Many other marine plants and animals which live on coral reefs produce compounds with anti-viral, anti-bacterial and related properties.

Finally, healthy reefs serve as natural protection for the coastlines of Florida, Hawaii, Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, Guam and American Samoa. Coral reefs are effective coastal breakwaters and barriers, and can reduce energy from incoming waves by up to 97 percent. This minimizes the impacts of high waves, storm surges, coastal erosion and the accompanying threats to human life and property.

Nevertheless, scientists agree that the world's coral reefs are subject to numerous natural and human-induced threats, including: predator damage; storms and extreme weather events; tourism pressures; commercial harvests; destructive fishing techniques; vessel damage; and non-point source pollution associated with coastal development. An estimated 10 percent of reefs have degraded beyond recovery, and that statistic is expected to reach 20 to 30 percent by the year 2010.

In response to evidence of widespread coral reef decline, representatives from the governments of the United States and seven other countries, non-governmental organizations, multilateral development banks and private-sector businesses formed a partnership, the International Coral Reef Initiative (ICRI), in May 1994. The mission of ICRI is to build on existing programs and expertise in coral reef conservation and management by coordinating national, regional and international activities. Explicitly, its aim is not to create new agencies or bureaucracies or to act as a funding entity. The United States is a leading participant in ICRI, and major efforts are coordinated by the State Department and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

Consideration of H. Con. Res. 8 deliberately coincides with the designation of 1997 as the International Year of the Reef (IYOR) by the international community of scientists, policymakers, natural resource managers, and coral reef advocates. The goal of IYOR is to promote public awareness of issues pertaining to coral reef ecosystems, through a year-long worldwide campaign of briefings, workshops, and related initiatives. Major participants in IYOR activities include the American Zoo and Aquarium Association, Center for Marine Conservation, Environmental Defense Fund, World Conservation Union, Nature Conservancy, Smithsonian Institution, World Wildlife Fund, and over thirty other zoos and aquariums, conservation societies, trade organizations, universities and academic programs.

COMMITTEE ACTION

H. Con. Res. 8 was introduced on January 9, 1997, by Congressman Jim Saxton (R-NJ), Chairman, Subcommittee on Fisheries Conservation, Wildlife and Oceans; and Congressman Neil Abercrombie (D-HI), Ranking Minority Member, Subcommittee on Fisheries Conservation, Wildlife and Oceans. The bill was referred to the Committee on Resources, and within the Committee to the Subcommittee on Fisheries Conservation, Wildlife and Oceans. On March 13, 1997, the Subcommittee held a hearing on H. Con. Res. 8, where testimony was received from Mr. Terry Garcia, Acting Assistant Secretary for Oceans and Atmosphere, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration; Ms. Barbara Jeanne Polo, Policy Director, American Oceans Campaign; Dr. Robert Ginsburg, Chair-

man, International Year of the Reef Organizing Committee; and Dr. James Porter, University of Georgia. On March 19, 1997, the Subcommittee met to mark up H. Con. Res. 8. Three amendments to make minor changes to the language of the resolution, its preamble, and its title were offered by Mr. Saxton, and adopted by voice vote. The bill was then ordered favorably reported to the Full Committee. On April 16, 1997, the Full Resources Committee met to consider H. Con. Res. 8. No new amendments were offered and the bill, as amended, was passed by voice vote and ordered favorably reported to the House of Representatives.

COMMITTEE OVERSIGHT FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

With respect to the requirements of clause 2(1)(3) of rule XI of the Rules of the House of Representatives, and clause 2(b)(1) of rule X of the Rules of the House of Representatives, the Committee on Resources' oversight findings and recommendations are reflected in the body of this report.

CONSTITUTIONAL AUTHORITY STATEMENT

Article I, section 8 of the Constitution of the United States grants Congress the authority to enact H. Con. Res. 8.

COST OF THE LEGISLATION

Clause 7(a) of rule XIII of the Rules of the House of Representatives requires an estimate and a comparison by the Committee of the costs which would be incurred in carrying out H. Con. Res. 8. However, clause 7(d) of that rule provides that this requirement does not apply when the Committee has included in its report a timely submitted cost estimate of the bill prepared by the Director of the Congressional Budget Office under section 403 of the Congressional Budget Act of 1974.

COMPLIANCE WITH HOUSE RULE XI

1. With respect to the requirement of clause 2(1)(3)(B) of rule XI of the Rules of the House of Representatives and section 308(a) of the Congressional Budget Act of 1974, H. Con. Res. 8 does not contain any new budget authority, spending authority, credit authority, or an increase or decrease in revenues or tax expenditures.

2. With respect to the requirement of clause 2(1)(3)(D) of rule XI of the Rules of the House of Representatives, the Committee has received no report of oversight findings and recommendations from the Committee on Government Reform and Oversight on the subject of H. Con. Res. 8.

3. With respect to the requirement of clause 2(1)(3)(C) of rule XI of the Rules of the House of Representatives and section 403 of the Congressional Budget Act of 1974, the Committee has received the following cost estimate for H. Con. Res. 8 from the Director of the Congressional Budget Office.

CONGRESSIONAL BUDGET OFFICE COST ESTIMATE

U.S. CONGRESS,
 CONGRESSIONAL BUDGET OFFICE,
 Washington, DC, April 18, 1997.

Hon. DON YOUNG,
 Chairman, Committee on Resources,
 House of Representatives, Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. CHAIRMAN: The Congressional Budget Office has reviewed H. Con. Res. 8, a concurrent resolution recognizing the significance of maintaining the health and stability of coral reef ecosystems, as ordered reported by the Committee on Resources on April 16, 1997.

CBO estimates that adoption of this resolution would have no effect on the federal budget. H. Con. Res. 8 would express Congressional commitment to promoting stewardship of coral reef habitats; encouraging research, monitoring, assessment, and education about reef ecosystems; and improving the coordination of coral reef activities among federal agencies, academic institutions, nongovernmental organizations, and industry. Coral reefs serve as habitats for many species of marine life and are located in coastal waters off several states and U.S. territories.

If you wish further details on this estimate, we will be pleased to provide them. The CBO staff contact is Gary Brown. This estimate was approved by Robert A. Sunshine, Deputy Assistant Director for Budget Analysis.

Sincerely,

JAMES L. BLUM
 (For June E. O'Neill, *Director*).

COMPLIANCE WITH PUBLIC LAW 104-4

H. Con. Res. 8 contains no unfunded mandates.

CHANGES IN EXISTING LAW

If enacted, H. Con. Res. 8 would make no changes in existing law.