

Media Release

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Americans learn of the great threat to the Great Barrier Reef

The growing threat to the future of the Great Barrier Reef will be highlighted to tens of millions of Americans as a result of extensive coverage on the American ABC network to mark Earth Day.

Stories and live reports tomorrow and Saturday from Hayman Island will chronicle the predicted impacts of global warming on the 3,000 individual reefs that make up the world's largest coral archipelago, and the efforts underway to thwart what would be an economic and environmental disaster.

The Chairman of the Great Barrier Reef Foundation, Dr John Schubert, will feature in a segment on the high rating Nightline program, including a reef dive with the co-host of Good Morning America, Bill Weir.

Other reports on Reef preservation initiatives will appear on World News with Charles Gibson, Good Morning America and 20/20, as part of a special series on what the world is doing to save the environment. The ABC's link to their coverage is <http://abcnews.go.com/2020/GlobalWarming/story?id=3023804&page=1>

The recently released report of the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change identified the Great Barrier Reef as one of the most threatened natural eco-systems in Australia, predicting catastrophic outcomes for the Reef and the systems it supports over the next 50 years.

The IPCC is predicting mass bleaching events as frequently as every two years by as early as 2020. "This will be devastating because the recovery period for bleached coral in between events is drastically reduced. Corals can recover but they need time – and optimum conditions - in which to do so. There are a lot of other variables at work," comments Foundation Managing Director, Judy Stewart.

"The solution is increased knowledge...understanding how best to manage reefs during these ever-diminishing windows will determine whether and how quickly we can widen the gap between coral bleaching and coral mortality."

The Great Barrier Reef Foundation is an independent organisation that brings together the financial strength of the business community to work with Australia's leading marine scientists as they search out ways to preserve the Great Barrier Reef.

Mrs Stewart said the Foundation's ZooX Atlas project will map in fine detail the risks and responses to the multiple pressures affecting the Reef.

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For further information:

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