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"The Flagpole" 11-11-00 by [unclear]

Patch Reef Monitoring

Patch reefs are common to the shallow waters of coral reef ecosystems and they play an important role in maintaining local reef fish populations. Many species of reef fish use patch reefs when they migrate from inshore habitats where settle as larvae, to offshore fringing reefs where they eventually mature and reproduce. Unfortunately, reef fish inhabiting patch reefs are quite vulnerable to capture by fishers because of the shallow water in which they reside. As such, the intensive harvest of reef fish from patch reefs may not only reduce current fish abundances, but could also reduce future stock size as fish may not have had the chance to reproduce and contribute young to the population before being captured.



The shallow waters near Cape Eleuthera contain numerous patch reefs, many of which are located in and around a proposed marine fully protected area. Marine fully protected areas can be an effective management tool as they eliminate fishing, allowing the abundance of organisms to increase and potentially spillover into adjacent fishable habitat. The **Patch Reef Research** being conducted at The Island School this semester will map patch reefs in and around the adjacent protected area, and examine the abundance and size of economically important reef fish inhabiting these patch reefs. We will also be examining the utility of different types of artificial reefs for enhancing the abundance of reef fish. Lastly, based on community surveys conducted in Fall 2002, we will be interviewing local residents to learn more about the importance of reef fish to their economy.



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