



Florida Institute of Technology Update:

Cayman Islands Coral Reef Restoration

Editor's note: This month begins a new feature, "University Update." Once a month a professor from Florida Institute of Technology, the University of Florida or the University of South Florida will provide a column.

Dr. Lee Harris, Florida Institute of Technology associate professor of ocean engineering, and two of his ocean engineering graduate students, Doug Bowlus and Ashley Naimaster, participated as volun-

teers for a Reef Ball Foundation coral reef restoration and coral propagation project on Grand Cayman in the Cayman Islands during September 2005.

Last year Grand Cayman suffered severe damages from a direct hit by Category 5 Hurricane Ivan, including some damages to the shallower nearshore reef areas. This project was filmed by the BBC for a special television program, "Jewels of the Caribbean."

Work performed by the

Florida Tech volunteers included fabrication and deployment of Reef Ball artificial reef units, gathering and preparation of corals, and propagation of corals on the artificial reef units. Sponsors and organizers for this project included the Reef Ball Foundation (project organization and supplies), Dr. Lee Harris (engineering and deployment supervision), Grand Cayman Marriott Beach Resort (hotel accommodations and meals), Red Sail Sports (SCUBA equipment and boat support), West Indian Marine Group (ship & diving operations and Reef Ball

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fabrication), and the Cayman Islands Departments of Tourism and Environment.

■ **Background Information:** Dr. Harris was the engineer who designed, permitted, and oversaw installation of the Reef Ball artificial reef breakwater, which has performed very well in stabilizing this highly eroding beach. He oversaw the deployment of additional Reef Ball units at both the Grand Cayman Marriott Beach Resort and offshore at the hurricane-damaged

reef (Cemetery reef), both sites are offshore of the famous seven mile beach on Grand Cayman.

Dr. Harris headed up the deployment activities, and assisted with the fabrication of the Reef Ball units. He assisted the BBC in filming the project and also assisted with the gathering of imperiled corals to be propagated on the Reef Balls, and photographed all phases of the project.

Graduate students Doug Bowlus and Ashley Naimaster worked with Dr. Harris on this project. □