

Office National des Forêts

Coral reefs are composed of corals, small animals called polyps. Most of them live in colonies, in symbiosis with algae (called zooxanthellae) and secrete a calcareous skeleton. In the Caribbean, coral reefs cover about 26,000 km², making up 10% of the world's reefs.

Coral reefs are home to $\frac{1}{3}$ of the world's known marine species. Millions of humans depend on them for food security, income, but also for the physical protection they provide against natural hazards.

FUNCTIONS AGAINST NATURAL HAZARDS

Coastal protection

They are the first line of defense against the swell: coral reefs act as a natural barrier to wave action and storms, and protect coastlines from flooding and erosion.



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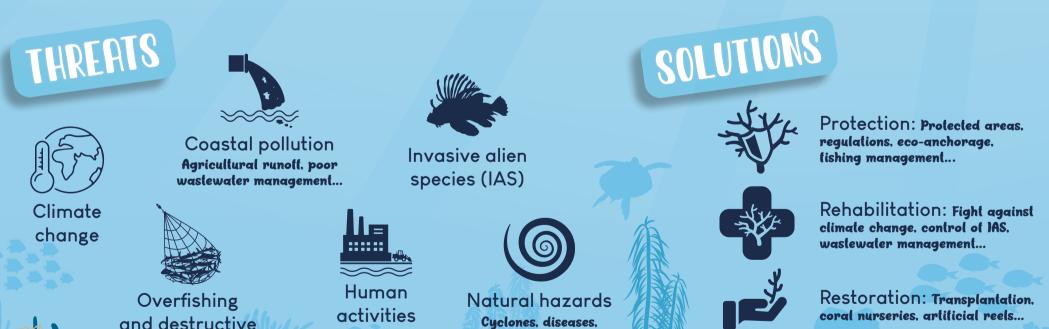
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Mitigation of erosion

Coral fragments accumulate on the beach where the waves transform them into sand. Coral reefs are home to many **herbivorous species** that produce large quantities of **sand** through their diet (parrotfish, sea urchins...).



and destructive fishing practices

Coastal development, anchorage, scuba-diving... sargassum...

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