



Fact Sheet

Black Coral

- ! Black coral harvesting in Hawaii has been largely confined to state waters (0B3 miles from shore) because gear constraints have restricted divers to waters less than 80 meters, even though managed species of black corals are known to occur at depths of 100 meters.

- ! Since 1980, virtually all of the black coral harvested around the Hawaiian Islands has been from the Auau Channel, located between Maui and Lanai. A survey of the bed has showed that harvesting between 1975 and 1998 has had no significant effect on recruitment. However, black coral in a few areas (for example, AStonewall@ off Lahaina, Maui), which are easily accessible with conventional scuba and were intensely harvested in the 1970s, have not shown signs of recovery.

- ! Harvesting pressure in the near future is possible:
 - Increased demand for out-of-state raw black coral aggressively pursued by Hawaii coral processors or a decrease in imports of cut and polished black coral from Taiwan could increase the demand for Hawaii's black coral.
 - The introduction of new technology, such as mixed-gas scuba and affordable, manned submersibles and remotely operated vehicles, could extend the length of time and maximum depths of local harvesting.

- ! Recognizing the potential for greater pressure on the resource, the Hawaii Division of Aquatic Resources has recommended a mandatory minimum size limit of 3/4-inch base diameter for harvested black coral. A coral colony with this basal stem diameter corresponds to an age of about 15 years. Because a black coral colony reaches sexual maturity at 10 to 12 years, this size limit may not sustain recruitment of the species, according to Richard Grigg of the Hawaii Institute of Marine Biology.

- ! Data indicate that a 48-inch tree height or 1-inch base diameter is the minimum acceptable harvesting size limit for maximum sustainable yield should harvesting pressure increase. An Aeither/or@ minimum size of 48-inch tree height or 1-inch base diameter would take into account variations in growth forms and reduce the negative economic impact of minimum size regulations on harvesters.

