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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
Dec. 22, 2009

### **NOAA Awards Funds to Analyze Coast and Set Ecosystem Goals in South Florida**

Scientists and other stakeholders with an interest in the ecological health of the South Florida coast have been awarded \$493,000 as part of an anticipated three year, \$1.47 million grant from NOAA. Funding given to the multi-agency Marine and Estuarine Goal Setting for South Florida (MARES) cooperative partnership will be used to develop ecosystem models and define ecosystem goals needed to ensure long-term sustainability of the coast.

The project brings together resources managers, social scientists, economists and the public to work on defining quantitative water quality and other ecosystem goals and developing indicators and other tools to assist in managing toward these goals.

"Twelve federal and state agencies represented in the south Florida ecosystem restoration effort have repeatedly and publicly stated their commitment to using indicators of ecosystem health to guide their decisions and set priorities," said Dr. Peter Ortnier, director of the Cooperative Institute for Marine and Atmospheric Studies at the University of Miami. "They are not only all actively participating in MARES but have also endorsed the MARES processes and workshop formats."

Input from agencies and the public will be gathered during a series of public meetings leading to a "Total Marine Ecosystem Assessment Report" which will include the specification of and rationale for quantitative ecosystem goals. The report will also include information needed to initiate and develop a series of report cards to assist natural resource managers in south Florida in determining the current state of the ecosystem, as well as any changes that occur in response to management actions taken during Everglades Restoration.

"The coastal marine ecosystem of South Florida is invaluable to the nation's economy as well as the overall well-being of communities in the region," said Dr. Robert Magnien, director of NOAA's Center for Sponsored Coastal Ocean Research. "NOAA is pleased to support this inclusive and robust process to develop a roadmap for managing these vital coastal ecosystem services well into the future."

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#### **On the Web:**

NOAA's Center for Sponsored Coastal Ocean Research  
[www.cop.noaa.gov](http://www.cop.noaa.gov)

MARES Project website  
<http://sofla-mares.org/>