

# AQUANEWS

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## One-Third of All Known Reef-Building Coral Species Face Extinction Project AWARE Foundation Joins Leading Coral Experts

Rancho Santa Margarita, CA – July 18, 2008 – In a first-ever comprehensive global assessment to determine the status of coral species worldwide, leading coral scientists warn that a third of reef-building coral species are threatened with extinction.

Citing climate change and human-induced destruction as causes, the Global Marine Species Assessment (GMSA) – a joint initiative of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and Conservation International (CI) – applied the IUCN Red List Categories and Criteria to assess over 800 coral species. Project AWARE Foundation joined partner organizations and more than 3,000 leading coral scientists and marine resource managers during the recent International Coral Reef Symposium (ICRS) in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, July 7 – 11<sup>th</sup>, where this major announcement took place.

The ICRS, held every four years, is committed to sharing the best available global reef science with government agencies, resource management and non-government organizations throughout the world. Project AWARE was a sponsor organization and worked with its Coral-Watch partner, the University of Queensland, to showcase the conservation efforts of volunteer divers to protect coral reefs worldwide.

The 39 scientists who co-authored this latest study agree that if rising sea surface temperatures continue to cause increased frequency of coral bleaching and coral disease events, many reefs may not have enough time to recover and this could lead

to species extinctions.

"These results show that as a group, reef-building corals are more at risk of extinction than all terrestrial groups, apart from amphibians, and are the most vulnerable to the effects of climate change," said Roger McManus, Conservation International's Vice President for Marine Programs and Project AWARE Foundation's Board of Directors member. "The loss of the corals will have profound implications for millions of people who depend on coral reefs for their livelihoods."

"These recent findings make it clear that we need to act now to improve corals' ability to cope with global changes. We need to reduce our CO2 emissions and tackle the major local drivers threatening coral reefs such as overfishing and poor water quality, caused by runoff of chemicals, fertilizers and sediments." states Jenny Miller Garmendia, Director for Project AWARE Foundation. "Together with the University of Queensland's CoralWatch program and partners like Reef Check and dive volunteers worldwide, there are many opportunities for individuals to participate in reef monitoring, education and conservation locally."

The threatened corals species will be placed on the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species in October 2008. Currently, the assessments can be found at

<http://www.sci.odu.edu/gmsa/about/corals.shtml>.

More information about coral reef

*(Continued on page 2)*

## AQUANEWS

THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION  
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WRITTEN CONTRIBUTIONS &  
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education, conservation and CoralWatch monitoring worldwide can be found at [www.projectaware.org](http://www.projectaware.org).

Photos, video and other media materials related to global assessment available at:

[ftp.conservation.org/guest/CORALS](http://ftp.conservation.org/guest/CORALS)

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Project AWARE Foundation is a registered nonprofit organization dedicated to conserving underwater environments through education, advocacy and action around the world. Each year Project AWARE coordinates reef cleanups and coral monitoring projects in partnership with dive professionals and volunteers. Project AWARE is calling for increased participation in IYOR events this year. A global list of activities can be found on Project AWARE's



Divers Conserving Underwater Environments™



### Even Grand Cayman has treacherous currents

A father and daughter from Utah were making an early-morning dive in Stingray City on April 15, when currents pulled them out of the North Sound into rough seas with four-foot swells. A marine patrol boat happened on them a few hours later, unhurt but fatigued from unsuccessfully battling the currents to get back into the Sound.

**You're Never Too Old to Be a Diver:** For years, Marge Frisch would hear stories and see photos of Grand Cayman diving from her daughter, Linda. Finally in mid-May, she went diving for the first time – at the age of 81. Frisch took lessons in her hometown of Sun City Center, Florida, and completed her first openwater dive at Stingray City on May 18. Her divemaster, Absolute Divers owner Mark Sahagian, said she acted like a diver decades younger. “Once we got her ears cleared, she was like a fish in the water, immediately taking to the stingrays.”

Rockland Aquanauts Organization Inc.

Mission Statement:

**To provide, promote, and advance environmental protection, care, and voluntary clean-up of waterways by any and all lawful means; to promote the importance and care in every manner possible by environmental awareness and otherwise; to purchase, print, publish, and circulate literature to promote the importance and care of the waterways and the work of the Corporation. To perform all acts the Corporation may deem appropriate or advisable in such operation; to establish, provide, and voluntary clean-up waterways, to encourage, support and subsidize the cleaning and protection from pollution.**

## **Diver deprived of air**

### *Accident leaves 24-year-old in coma*

Chester – Commercial diver Anthony Guarascio climbed down a ladder off a pier in Camden, N.J., in a heated dive suit and diving helmet to chip away at underwater piles of cement with a jackhammer.

As he entered the water, he was leaving his life in the hands of two co-workers who would monitor his air tanks and his progress from a two-way communication box on the pier.

Before submerging, Guarascio might have glanced across the water at the glittering Philadelphia skyline to consider, if only for a moment, his good fortune.

After a rough but not so regrettable start out of college, the 24-year-old had a good-paying job, a beautiful fiancée, and a 19-month-old son waiting for him at home in Chester in Orange County.

There was little to indicate that his luck might change as he entered the waters of the Delaware River, a 40-pound weight belt pushing him 35 feet to the bottom on that late February day.

What went wrong almost three hours later is still being investigated by federal officials, as well as family members who suspect negligence on the part of the diving company Guarascio worked for.

According to Chris Drake, the owner of Drake Associates, who was the supervisor of the dive that day, “something” caused a critical valve to shut off on the air tanks he was monitoring for Guarascio. Drake estimates Guarascio went without air for five to 10 minutes, during which time the diver either clawed his way up one of the large underwater cement piles he was working on or used the umbilical tube feeding him air and hot water for his suit as a rope to get to the surface.

Seeing Guarascio’s body come up, Drake and another worker turned on the backup air tank to no avail. They pulled Guarascio in, using a forklift to heave his suited body by its umbilical tube to the pier 10 feet above.

Co-workers administered CPR, which restored his breathing before medics arrived to take him to Camden’s Cooper University Medical Center.

When the ambulance left, Drake examined the tank valves to find the problem. He guessed that Guarascio’s umbilical tube hit the valve at some point during the dive.

A former Navy diver and U.S. Naval Academy at Annapolis graduate, Drake said he plans to add secondary locks to his equipment to ensure such an accident doesn’t happen again.

There are no standards requiring such safety features be used, he said.

“It was a terrible, terrible, freak accident that just shouldn’t have happened,” he said.

Guarascio’s family believes the accident could have been avoided.

Anthony’s younger brother, Joe Guarascio, who also works for Drake Associates, said Drake should have detected his older brother in distress over the communication box.

“There’s always supposed to be someone on the com box and watching the pressure gauges,” the younger brother said. “If someone’s in the water and they’re in distress, you would know it and pull him up right away.”

Drake said he was standing near the communication box but that it was a windy day, making it possible for him not to hear distress calls if they were made.

Officials from the federal Occupational Safety and Health Administration are investigating. Calls to their Camden office were not returned.

Guarascio is sedated and in a medically-induced coma at Helen Hayes Hospital in Rockland County. Doctors at the hospital won't know until he wakes the extent of his brain damage or his chances of recovery, family members said.

Had the accident occurred the way Drake described it, Guarascio would have had time to think, even panic, as he sucked the remnants of oxygen from his air tank.

Through his mind might have floated thoughts of a June marriage to Christine Wile, his fiancée, playing with their infant son, Michael, or joking with brothers, Joey and John, and their large group of friends.

"I miss him so much," said Wile, the 22-year-old mother and bride-to-be. "I just can't wait for him to say something, anything, to me."

This was sent in by Mike Hatalla

## **Approved Hessian Lake Dives 2008**

Saturday June 7<sup>th</sup> 9:00 am

Sunday July 13<sup>th</sup> 9:00 am

Saturday August 9<sup>th</sup> 9:00 am

Sunday Sept. 7<sup>th</sup> 10:00 am

Saturday Sept. 27<sup>th</sup> 10:00 am

Sunday Oct. 12<sup>th</sup> 10:00 am

Saturday Oct. 25<sup>th</sup> 10:00 am

**ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP FEES ARE DUE**

Rockland Aquanauts Organization  
2008 Dues

I guess it is that time of the year again, Membership Dues are due. Last year all our members received much more than they gave out to the Organization. As usual you will be receiving a tax donation for the first \$25.00. All members who attended the Annual Dinner not only received money off their own dinner but they also received money off their guests dinner. Everyone whom attended also received prizes, some worth many times the cost of their Dues. Don't forget the Annual Picnic as well as all the BBQ lunch's after the Lake Dives.

So please send in your \$42 dues early to;

Rockland Aquanauts Organization  
c/o  
Paul Galeazzi Jr.  
4 Greensward Drive.  
Valley Cottage New York 10989

**BBQ Help Needed**

We have BBQs after every Hessian Lake dive, but next year, we don't want the chef tasks to fall on the same people all the time, so we are asking for your help. If you plan on coming to the Hessian Lake dives, please consider offering to set up, cook, or break down the BBQ gear.

**Setting up** might mean you set up before diving, get out of the water first, or forego diving that day. **Cooking** means you cook for everyone who shows up, not just yourself & your friends. **Breaking down the BBQ gear** means you stay until everyone has eaten and the grill is cool enough to put into your car to store until the next dive.

You don't have to be a Board Member to help. Everyone can pitch in. Any expenses, like buying food, are reimbursable. So please look at the dive dates and let us know when you can help out.

Thank you

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10956**

**August 2008**

Coral Species Face Extinction, Diver Deprived of Air, Hessian Lake 2008 Schedule, Membership Dues

**\*\*There Will be NO August Meeting \*\***