

## REEF FISH SESSIONS

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### Introduction to the Reef Fish Sessions

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These sessions were conceived by several of us to assemble scientists from various fields who can shed some light on the study of coral reefs and particularly trap fisheries on reefs. Development of these sessions was also in response to the recommendation for a reef-fish workshop proposed by the Evaluation Team on Scientific Assistance to Caribbean Fisheries at GCFI in 1978. The need for this study has grown out of developments largely related to the extension of exclusive fishery zones by countries of the region. For the United States, the creation of the Fishery Conservation Management Act which moved reef management to national control compels that immediate attention be given to this fishery. The importance of reefs is increasing as demand for fish and recreation increases. Reefs are very complicated ecosystems, and consequently the development of a theory of reef utilization is also very complicated. Reef utilization is not only biologically complicated, but it is socially and politically complicated as well. Currently there is a controversy in South Florida over the management of reefs, specifically in regard to the use of traps as a means of catching fish. The South Florida local press has carried a number of articles both pro and con concerning this trap fishing around reefs. It is surprising to note the differences in numbers of traps and the size of the catches that have been mentioned in arguing for the "good" and especially "bad" aspects of trap fishing. It has reached the point of such public concern that it has now become more of an emotional issue than a factual issue, and managers have no real information which they can consider to be accurate.

We have assembled here a number of outstanding scientists who have worked on problems associated with reefs or on problems that have an effect on reefs. As we hear the papers by these speakers plus the comments by our panel members, some very fruitful information will come out of this session. Hopefully, this will lay the groundwork for future consideration of reef studies and fisheries supported by reefs.