



DEPARTMENT OF
ENVIRONMENT
CAYMAN ISLANDS GOVERNMENT

DoE Advisory: Coral Disease has spread westward – decontamination protocol recommended.

22nd January 2021

The Department of Environment (DoE) is issuing an advisory due to the spread of the devastating Stony Coral Tissue Loss Disease (SCTLD) to additional Grand Cayman dive sites on the north coast. Since SCTLD was identified at the dive sites from Bear’s Paw to Delia’s Delight three months ago, the disease has progressed approximately 2 miles westward. While DoE scientists have confirmed that the disease has not yet progressed across our management ‘firebreak’, located immediately west of the Ghost Mountain dive site, further monitoring and observations have confirmed that the disease has progressed and infected the shallower reefs inside the North Sound.

The DoE is therefore asking that, due to the high prevalence of SCTLD and the increased likelihood of the transmission of this infection to other sites, all SCUBA divers, snorkelers, and associated companies who access this area immediately implement a decontamination protocol for all watersports gear. Additionally, we are also discouraging fishing in this area due to the potential for transmission of the disease vector on fishing line and gear.

The DoE is advising the public to decontaminate dive and snorkel gear using a mixture of water and ordinary household bleach (1% Bleach Solution for 10 minutes as outlined on the AGRRR poster (https://www.agrra.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/PRINT_AGRRA-STCLD-2.pdf)) after being in the water within 2 miles of infected sites, including within the fringing and back-reef areas of the North Sound. The more support and compliance we get from stakeholders, the greater the chance to succeed in our fight against SCTLD and to save our reefs.

DoE scientists continue to work to slow the spread of SCTLD and prevent the infection of our treasured marine parks and more coral reefs around Grand Cayman. The DoE is part of a collaborative scientific effort to share data in a regional operation to determine the cause and mode of transmission as well as effective treatments and interventions to slow the progression of this deadly disease.

The DoE would like to thank the public for their continued support and patience as we confront and treat this relentless coral disease that is not only ravaging the coral reefs on the north of Grand Cayman but coral reefs regionally. Any sightings of SCTLD can be reported to the DoE at: <https://five.epicollect.net/project/cayman-islands-coral-disease-and-bleaching> using the Epicollect app. For more information, contact the DoE’s SCTLD Project Lead, Tammi Warrender at Tammi.Warrender@gov.ky or by calling 949-8469.