

From Heather L Spalding <hspaldin@hawaii.edu>

Sent Friday, October 15, 2010 12:54 pm

To hihwmanagementplan@noaa.gov

Cc [REDACTED]

Subject include mesophotic coral ecosystems in management plan

Dear Management Plan Review Coordinator,

I strongly encourage you to include mesophotic coral ecosystems (MCEs) in the Hawaiian Islands Humpback Whale National Marine Sanctuary Management Plan. As a researcher and graduate student at the University of Hawaii at Manoa, I have spent the past seven years studying the ecology and physiology mesophotic corals and macroalgae throughout the Hawaiian Archipelago. I've been astounded by the high abundance and diversity of organisms found at mesophotic depths. Many of these reefs are composed of ecological dominants, such as the large, plate-forming coral *Leptoseris hawaiiensis*, that appear to form significant habitat for some fishes. Luxuriant macroalgal meadows are also found at mesophotic depths, and are likely important in the formation of carbonate sediments. We are just beginning to document and study these impressive reefs – please consider including MCEs in your management plan. I believe these ecosystems are of national significance.

Sincerely,
Heather Spalding

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“Results! Why, man, I have gotten a lot of results. I know several thousand things that won't work.” -
Thomas A. Edison