



## **CAN-066-Anchorage Damage- Cayman Islands**

Vic Ferguson

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# **Reef restoration from Carnival anchor drop nears completion**

By  
**Charles Duncan**

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Organizers leading the volunteer effort to restore the reef off Don Foster's that was damaged by the Carnival Magic's



anchor in August 2014, say the work is '99 percent complete.' Lois Hatcher with Ocean Frontiers said the work has moved into the maintenance and cleanup phase, with all of the big pieces of coral and many smaller pieces back on the reef. – Photo: Lois Hatcher



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When the Carnival Magic dropped its anchor in the wrong spot on Aug. 27, 2014, it destroyed about 16,000 square feet of coral reef off the George Town waterfront. Now, almost 20 months later, the restoration work by a dedicated group of volunteers is almost complete.

"It never will be back to what it was," said Lois Hatcher, one of the lead volunteers in the restoration, but the group's efforts have paid off and the work is now "99 percent complete."

The work involved cementing big pieces of coral back onto the reef and using epoxy to reattach smaller pieces. The volunteers set up a coral nursery near the damaged site to grow corals to put back onto the reef.

The Carnival Magic cruise ship requested a different anchorage away from the designated areas because of the weather conditions, according to an incident report from the Department of Environment. A pilot from Bodden Shipping tried to anchor the ship in a sandy area, but instead the ship dropped its anchor and 450 feet of chain on living corals in a popular dive site.

"Significant damage resulted," the Department of Environment report stated.

Photos from the time show a wide swath of live corals destroyed by the anchor and chain.

The cruise line and its insurance company gave government \$100,000 to help with the reef recovery efforts.

"All of the heavy work is done now," Ms. Hatcher said, adding that volunteers spent countless hours salvaging live corals from the rubble and using epoxy to reattach them to the reef.

"The volunteers have been great," she said, and the community backed the effort with "tremendous support" with funding and volunteering.

She said the group is planning a party at the end of the month to celebrate wrapping up the restoration work.



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The work now involves reattaching some of the remaining corals from the nursery and cleaning and maintaining the site. Ms. Hatcher said volunteers plan to continue to monitor the corals.

The next big step will be to see how the corals do during spawning season in September. "We hope to see them spawn this year so the corals can get back to their normal life cycle," she said.

Carnival Magic's anchor and chain, dropped by mistake on a reef off George Town, caused major damage to the coral in the area in August 2014. – Photo: Lois Hatcher

Some promising developments, she said, are "new recruits" showing up on the site, meaning new corals moving naturally to the rehabilitated reef.

She said volunteers will be working to keep the corals free of too much algae.

"It's very easy for algae to overgrow the coral and suffocate it," Ms. Hatcher said.

Ms. Hatcher said big incidents like the Carnival Magic accident can bring people's attention to the destruction of coral reefs, but every day larger threats come from overfishing, development and global environmental factors.

"It's not just one thing impacting the reef," she said, it's a number of local and global issues. Overfishing along Cayman's reefs have caused problems for the corals around the island because fish help keep the algae at bay.

"Reefs are the first line of defense against waves if we get a hurricane," she said. And if that wasn't reason enough to protect the reef, she argued, "People aren't going to pay to look at dead reef."



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The \$100,000 from Carnival went into a fund with the Cayman Islands National Trust to pay for the cleanup. That money went to buy supplies such as cement and epoxy, and to pay stipends of \$10 a dive to volunteers, as well as a boat to shuttle volunteers back and forth to the reef. Ms. Hatcher said any money left over in that account will be for the National Trust to support local environmental causes.

- **carnival cruise company**
- **Carnival Magic**
- **Cayman Islands National Trust**
- **Department of Environment**
- **reef**
- **reef restoration**





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*The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is that good men do nothing"....**Edmund Burke***