PACIFIC ISLANDS FISHERIES SCIENCE CENTER

Challenges for Surveying Corals

Identifying corals in the field during surveys can be difficult when you consider that:

NOAA FISHERIES

Pacific Islands Region

corals

The Pacific-wide coral reef ecosystem surveys conducted by NOAA Pacific Islands Fisheries Science Center are aimed at documenting larger-scale, long-term status and ecological trends and NOT to specifically identify the locations of the corals proposed for listing. Detailed, exhaustive maps that illustrate where corals occur are impossible to produce because the methods used to survey coral involve vast areas and limited time underwater to accurately identify species (as shown on the right).

In American Samoa, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands and Guam many of the corals proposed for listing are uncommon to rare. Therefore, maps showing density and spatial distribution of these species would not accurately illustrate the spatial distribution of the corals proposed for listing.

Corals can be missed because they may look like algae

Millepora tuberosa

Algae

Different coral species can look very similar

Pocillopora meandrina

Pocillopora verrucosa

The same species can look different depending on its location

LOCATION 1
Acropora aspera

LOCATION 2
Acropora aspera

LOCATION 3
Acropora aspera