

# MARINE ECOSYSTEMS IN CRISIS

United Nations Environment Programme  
Caribbean Environment Programme and  
Cartagena Convention Secretariat

ACP MEAs 3



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**90%+**

of coral reefs in the Wider Caribbean Region and around the world are negatively impacted by untreated sewage.

**40,000 deaths annually** are caused by the infectious Hepatitis A and E which are transmitted through the consumption of raw shellfish harvested from polluted seas.

**US \$800 B is the annual cost of damage from coastal "low oxygen zones".**  
This represents a major challenge for economic progress and poverty reduction.



### What is happening to coral reefs?

Human activities such as overfishing, poor land use practices and sewage discharges are associated with coral reef decline across the Wider Caribbean Region. Due to excess nutrients (eutrophication), the overgrowth of algae can smother corals, seagrasses and other sessile organisms.



### How does untreated sewage impact me?

Sewage pollution can contaminate seafood, particularly shellfish, which are often consumed raw. It directly impacts human health causing gastrointestinal illnesses, as well as ear, eye, and skin infections.



### What are "low oxygen zones"?

"Low oxygen zones" are also known as "dead zones". They are caused by hypoxia or oxygen depletion in coastal waters. Low oxygen levels can result in the death of marine organisms and severely impact fisheries.

The Caribbean Environment Programme (CEP) was established by the United Nations Environment Programme in 1981 to protect and develop the coastal and marine ecosystems of the Wider Caribbean Region. Member States adopted the Cartagena Convention which entered into force on October 11, 1986 and is supported by three Protocols.

Visit our page to learn more about marine ecosystems: <https://www.unenvironment.org/cep/>

Reference: State of the Cartagena Convention Area (SOCAR) Report <https://bit.ly/3oVmiDp>



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