

Coral Reef mapping software being developed to advance managers' abilities to monitor and assess coastal resources

*Coastal States Organization (CSO)
October 6, 2006*

Scientists from the National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science and the Nova Southeastern University's National Coral Reef Institute are working to build an automated coral reef mapping system that will provide scientists and managers with the information necessary to improve management of coral reefs within the U.S. territorial waters.

The project, entitled the Hybrid Mapping Tool (HMT), uses high-resolution satellite imagery in unison with cutting-edge feature recognition algorithms to automatically delineate benthic habitats. The project is geared to support the ongoing reef mapping efforts conducted by NOAA within U.S. territorial waters, and in particular, the Florida Keys.

At present, a manual approach to mapping is followed, where an operator expertly digitizes features from satellite data; the HMT software seeks to provide a reproducible, robust, and rapid alternative to complement the human intuition relied upon by the current method.

The NCRI is a Congressionally-directed program that is funded through a grant by NCCOS and is a core component of NOAA's Coral Reef Conservation Program. For more information, please contact David Hilmer at (301) 713-3338 x154 or David.Hilmer@noaa.gov.

