

From the Volunteers

The Global Coral Reef Conservation Project involves MC employees and other members of the general public as volunteers to support the research activities. We asked volunteers from each of the three locations, Okinawa, Midway, and Seychelles, for their impressions and observations.

Okinawa

I have been diving for over 10 years. In 1998, when the issue of coral bleaching first came to my attention, I was extremely saddened by the idea that corals would eventually bleach and die off. There is a limit to what I can do as an individual, and for a while I wasn't able to contribute at all. When I saw that the company was looking for volunteers for this project, I decided that I absolutely wanted to participate.



I am involved in new energy and the environment through my work, so I am conscious of the environment and energy issues. I was thinking in particular about what I personally could do to combat global warming, which is affecting the earth directly. Although I was aware of the issues, that was not leading to actual action. During that time, there was an announcement in the Company magazine about the Coral Reef Conservation Project. Based on that, I got involved as a first step to taking real action on environmental issues.

This was an excellent opportunity to think long and hard about nature, the coral reefs, and the sea. I consider myself extremely lucky to have had the chance to participate in the cutting-edge research in such a wonderful place as Okinawa. In so many ways, I feel this is a wonderful project.



To be honest, I cannot tell you exactly how valuable those five days working on the project were. But what I do know is that from now on whenever there is a breakthrough discovery, it will be amazing to know that it was connected to a project that I was involved in.

A long time ago I visited places like Cancun, the Great Barrier Reef, and Palau. When I heard the news that the beautiful coral reefs there had become so damaged over the past 10 years, it struck at my heart. I consider myself very lucky to have been able to participate in this research.

I have always been interested in scientific experiments, so it was very enjoyable to work in a lab, where I wouldn't normally have the opportunity to help. This was a priceless experience, and I am grateful to have had the chance to attend the lectures by Prof. Suzuki and his colleagues.

I have learned how connected our daily lives are to the biology of the coral reefs. When I have the chance, I like to tell people about my experience in Okinawa with this project, and help them gain a deeper understanding of the issue. I am very grateful to Shizuoka University, the University of the Ryukyus for how much they have helped me in my time at the research center in Sesoko.

Project Leader (Okinawa) **Prof. Yoshimi Suzuki, Shizuoka University**

It has been over four years since our project began, and in that time, I think we have made tremendous progress in addressing the goal of the project: to gain insight into the scientific mechanisms of coral bleaching and verify new methods for revitalizing reefs. We have obtained results that counter the received wisdom of the field, all thanks to the support of MC's staff, the volunteers, researchers, and students who have worked with such passion, purpose, and harmony together. In the remaining two years, I would like to bring together government, academia, and the private sector to produce even more results that we will be proud to share with the world.

Midway

Thanks to my experience with the coral reef, I have been making an effort to change my own lifestyle. Specifically, I've been avoiding driving, as well as reusing plastic bags and shopping responsibly. And when I see people doing something harmful to the environment, I point it out to them.

Through this project, I was able to experience various kinds of work. The tasks I performed ran the entire gamut, from physical labor, such as filling scuba tanks and preparing, repairing and cleaning other equipment, to collecting samples and data at the research sites, and helping to confirm and write up results.



This volunteer program was physically tough, but it gave me an amazing opportunity to participate in scientific ocean research in a unique and beautiful environment with other volunteers from every sort of background and profession. I would definitely recommend it to others.



These activities taught me how delicate the balance is between a healthy ocean and the natural changes that occur. I understood for the first time how much damage human beings have done to nature. We should treasure the Earth, our oceans, and our skies. It is not enough that they last for our lifetimes—we should make sure they are around for eternity.

Seychelles

Before I participated in this project, I didn't know much about global warming at all. Now, though, I think deeply about the environment. This experience absolutely changed the way I think about the environment. I am much more aware now of the effect I have on the environment around me and the possibility of me making a difference.

The islands are a beautiful place with tropical beaches, mountains, and palm trees. As a volunteer, I collected basic data to check the changes in the number of living species, and it was challenging and meaningful work. Working in the ocean with the sun shining on my back is a world away from working at a desk.



This experience made me painfully aware that nature is fighting against a rapidly changing environment. From now on, I intend to continue to support the project as much as I can.



Through my experience with this project I learned that a scientific survey is like opening a box without having any expectations about what is inside. I think that one important thing about participating in the project was not to have any preconceived notions about the outcome—you have to learn from the results you discover. This project taught me that this is the ultimate goal of research.