



NSU Scientists Receive Coastal America Award and Recognition from President Obama



(L to R): Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs, David L. McGinnis; Farquhar College of Arts and Sciences Associate Director/Associate Professor, Robin Sherman, Ph.D.; Oceanographic Center Dean, Richard Dodge, Ph.D.; Congressman Ron Klein (FL-22) at the award ceremony.

Richard Dodge, Ph.D., Dean of the Oceanographic Center, and Robin Sherman, Ph.D., Associate Director/Associate Professor at Farquhar College of Arts and Sciences, received awards during a ceremony on August 12 in Hollywood. Coastal America and Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs, David L. McGinnis, recognized efforts made by the Florida Artificial Tire Reef Cleanup Team by presenting them with a Coastal America 2008 Partnership award. Recipients of the award received a signed letter from President Barack Obama and the award is the only environmental award issued from The White House. Congressman Ron Klein participated in the award ceremony.

In the 1970s approximately two million tires were placed in the ocean off Broward County in an attempt to create an artificial reef and to enhance fish populations. The project became known as Osborne Reef. While the original intention was commendable, the tires have been displaced after years of weathering currents and storms. Many have made their way to shore – while those remaining are a threat to the fragile skeletal coral sculptures growing about the ocean floor.

A pilot project conducted in 2001 by the NSU Oceanographic Center and its National Coral Reef Institute (NCRI) determined the Osborne Reef tire removal and disposal project to be important to protect the natural reefs in the area. Dr. Sherman was the Principle Investigator. Dr. Dodge is Executive Director of NCRI. In 2006, a group of federal, state and local agencies undertook a mission to determine if these tires could be removed in a coordinated recovery effort. This team discovered that few, if any, living organisms were attached to the tires and these could be easily removed and transplanted to a safe location during the recovery operation.

Understanding the importance of protecting the nearby natural reef, Governor Charlie Crist requested \$2 million in the state budget for the much needed Osborne Reef project, available through the Solid Waste Management Trust Fund. The Florida Legislature passed the special appropriation enabling DEP to have a major role in protecting this outstanding coral reef and marine habitat.