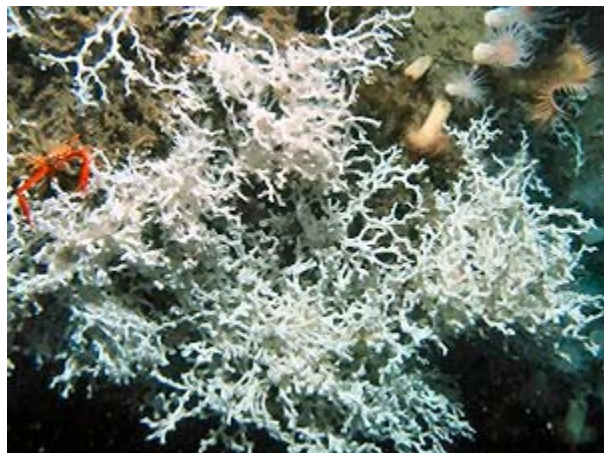


## NSU Oceanographic Center Professors and Student Participate in NOAA Deep-Sea Expedition



A colony of the deep-sea coral *Lophelia pertusa* accompanied by sea anemones and the red crab *Eumunida picta* (NOAA).



Stephanie Rogers and Prof. Charles Messing stand in front of the submersible Johnson Sea Link .

Oceanographic Center professor Charles Messing, Ph.D., and M.S. student Stephanie Rogers recently participated in the 2005 Florida Deep Corals Expedition, sponsored by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) Office of Ocean Exploration.

Professor Messing was one of the co-Principal Investigators, along with Sandra Brooke, Ph.D. (P.I.) of the Oregon Institute of Marine Biology and John Reed of Harbor Branch Oceanographic Institution. They were accompanied by Oceanographic Center professor James Thomas during the first leg of the trip, and the team also included researchers from other institutions, including the Smithsonian and University of Alabama.

The mission's plan was to use the manned submersible Johnson Sea Link to explore deep-sea coral reefs along Florida's east coast, from St. Augustine to the Keys, and to document the diversity and distribution of the corals and their associated organisms, e.g., crustaceans, fishes, sponges, mollusks and microorganisms. Members of the expedition team used the sub to reach depths as great as half a mile.

Deep-sea coral habitats off Florida represent an almost unknown environment. Studies carried out on this expedition included ecological, evolutionary and biodiversity investigations, as well as searches for new biopharmaceutical compounds. Prof. Thomas discovered what may be an entirely new family of small crustaceans that live as prisoners inside certain sponges.

Read more about the expedition, including essays by Profs. Messing and Thomas, by visiting <http://oceanexplorer.noaa.gov/explorations/05deepcorals/welcome.html>.