



(L to R) **Richard E. Dodge**, Ph.D., Dean, NSU Oceanographic Center and Executive Director of the National Coral Reef Institute; **Jacqueline E. Schafer**, Deputy Assistant Administrator, Bureau for Economic Growth, Agriculture, and Trade, U.S. Agency for International Development; **Timothy R. E. Keeney**, Deputy Assistant Secretary, U.S. Department of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration; **Colleen Castille**, Secretary, Florida Department of Environmental Protection; and **James L. Connaughton**, Chair, White House Council on Environmental Quality, Executive Office of the President.

## **National Coral Reef Institute's Bid Initiative Featured at U.S. Coral Reef Task Force Meeting**

The U.S. Coral Reef Task Force met December 2, 3, and 4 at the Intercontinental Hotel in Miami to conduct business related to the conservation of the Nation's precious coral reef resources. During the meetings, Dr. Richard Dodge of the National Coral Reef Institute ( NCRI ), reported on the successful U.S. bid to host the International Coral Reef Symposium (ICRS) in 2008.

The ICRS is the largest and most prestigious gathering of coral reef scientists and government natural resource managers from around the world. Held every four years, the week-long gathering attracts an international array of coral reef scientists, governments and non-governmental organizations to exchange information on research, management and coral reef conservation. The last two symposia were held in the eastern Pacific -- Bali and Okinawa . The Symposium has not been held in the continental United States for over 30 years. It is expected that over 2,500 experts will attend from all over the globe when held in 2008 in Ft. Lauderdale.

"The Sunshine State is a natural location for this prestigious gathering of ocean scientists," said Governor Jeb Bush." Florida 's commitment to coastal protection serves as an international model. This meeting of the minds will increase protection for some of the world's most diverse and sensitive natural systems."

Drawing millions of visitors each year, Florida 's clear waters, pristine beaches and coral reefs support a \$53 billion tourism industry and a \$14 billion marine industry. Recognizing the importance of healthy coastal habitats, Florida has taken important steps to strengthen protection for coral reefs over the last five years.

Bob Ballard, Deputy Secretary of Florida Department of Environmental Protection gave public accolades for NSU's efforts in securing the Symposium.

The U.S. Coral Reef Task Force (USCRTF) is composed of representatives of 12 federal agencies and 7 governors' offices with jurisdiction over U.S. coral reefs. At its last meeting, February 25, 2004, in Washington, the USCRTF endorsed the preparation and submission of a proposal for the US to host the 11th International Coral Reef Symposium (ICRS) in 2008. The successful bid was presented in July in Okinawa.