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### **Public aquaria help restoring the endangered Elkhorn Coral *Acropora palmata***

**By:** Dirk Petersen<sup>1</sup>, Mike Brittsan<sup>2</sup>, Mitch Carl<sup>3</sup>, Mark Schick<sup>4</sup> & Bob Snowden<sup>5</sup>

Institutions: <sup>1</sup>SECORE Foundation, Bremen, Germany; <sup>2</sup>Columbus Zoo and Aquarium, Powell, Ohio, USA; <sup>3</sup>Henry Doorly Zoo, Omaha, NE, USA; <sup>4</sup>John G. Shedd Aquarium, Chicago, IL, USA; <sup>5</sup>Pittsburgh Zoo & PPG Aquarium, Pittsburgh, PA, USA

Elkhorn Coral (*Acropora palmata*) is one of the first reef-building corals to be listed as Critically Endangered on the IUCN Red List. It used to dominate shallow and highly wave exposed shorelines all over the Caribbean. However, in the past two decades, more than 90% of the population has been destroyed due to disease, pollution, global warming and other factors. Although coral spawning still occurs, no significant recruitment has been observed. Effective restoration techniques including sexual reproduction are needed.

The SECORE Foundation, an international charity led by public aquariums and research organisations, has initiated a restoration research project in cooperation with the Curacao Sea Aquarium. A flow-through culture system has been established to produce recruits of Elkhorn Coral from field-collected gametes. These have been successively reintroduced in local reefs in order to determine the restoration potential and to develop effective techniques to apply to a broad spectrum of coral species in the future. An annual workshop programme trains aquarium professionals in coral breeding and raises public awareness through the outreach programme of SECORE and participating aquariums. The presentation will give an overview on the project and preliminary results.