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Health of Coral Reefs Open to Fishing Compared to Coral Reefs Closed to Fishing in the Tanga Region of Tanzania

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Poster Presentation P25

HEALTH OF CORAL REEFS OPEN TO FISHING COMPARED TO CORAL REEFS CLOSED TO FISHING IN THE TANGA REGION OF TANZANIA

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Coral reefs are one of the world's most valuable ecosystems, but they are being destroyed at an alarming rate. Anthropogenic factors, especially over-fishing and destructive fishing, contribute greatly to the destruction of coral reefs. In an effort to improve the health of coral reefs, conservation organizations worldwide have imposed fishing bans on select reefs. This preliminary study tested the hypothesis that coral reefs closed to fishing have greater absolute fish densities, lower absolute sea urchin densities, and a larger percentage of hard coral substrate cover than reefs open to fishing. The reefs were closed under the management plans of the Tanga Coastal Zone Conservation and Development Programme in Tanzania. Underwater counts of fish, sea urchins, and substrate cover were conducted on 18 coral reefs in the Tanga Region of Tanzania from November 8-25, 2005.