



Bleached fire coral and christmas tree worm on top  
(Flower Gardens Bank bleaching 2010). Credit:  
NOAA, FGBNMS.

I try occasionally to report good news on this site, to counteract the tendency of most environmental lawyers to suffer periodic depression. But this week I can't find anything but bad news in the marine context. Pour yourself a glass of wine, click, and cry:

- The [World Resources Institute](#) has published a new report, [Reefs at Risk Revisited](#), updating a 1998 study on threats to coral reefs. The key conclusion: more than 60% of the world's coral reefs "are under immediate and direct threat" from local causes, mostly overfishing, and that level rises to 75% when those local threats are combined with thermal stress from global warming.
- Echoing several studies of climate-driven behavioral changes in terrestrial species, scientists at [UC San Diego's Scripps Institution of Oceanography](#) find that [many fish are spawning earlier](#). The implications for marine ecosystems are not yet clear, but on the terrestrial side researchers think these sorts of changes are contributing to the unraveling of natural communities. (Hat tip: [Aquaformia](#).)
- And in the Gulf of Mexico, there has been an unusual [surge in deaths of baby bottlenose dolphins](#). Researchers don't know yet whether oil from last year's Deepwater Horizon disaster or chemicals used to disperse that oil are contributing factors. **UPDATE:** Five more dead baby dolphins were found in the eastern Gulf on Friday. The Washington Post has [this good explanation](#) of why it's so difficult to determine the cause or causes of death in this and other cases of mass marine mammal strandings.