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GRAND CAYMAN MARRIOTT BEACH RESORT LEADS SUCCESSFUL BEACH AND REEF RESTORATION EFFORT

Private-Public collaboration restores beach and underwater environment

GRAND CAYMAN, BWI – May 2, 2007 – Just offshore, guests of the Grand Cayman Marriott [Beach Resort](#) snorkel past parrot fishes and yellowtail damsel fishes that now call the near-shore reef environment their home. They sunbathe on the hotel's stretch of Seven Mile Beach that, until recently, did not exist. The beach, the reef and the fish are back, thanks to a collaboration that began in 2002 between the Marriott, the Grand Cayman Departments of Tourism and Environment, the Reef Ball™ Foundation, and the Florida Institute of Technology (FIT). In March 2007, a new FIT study reported growth of new, natural coral on the reef, which is now supporting an increasingly rich ecosystem.

In the fall of 2002, this Marriott [beach resort](#) sought a way to halt beach erosion, stabilize its shoreline and restore its beach and near-shore reef. The hotel enlisted the help of the Foundation, which had developed an effective, economical solution: the installation of Reef Balls™ to create a designed artificial reef used to stabilize beaches, restore ailing coral reefs and create new fishing and scuba diving sites. The cost to the hotel has been around \$65,000, in addition to housing Foundation staff.

"It's critical that we take responsibility for the future of our island, and our near-shore habitats are the future," said hotel General Manager Walter Regidor. The resort continues to enlist the help of its entire staff as well as its guests and the community.

Project Timeline

- o 2002: The construction and installation of 200 Reef Balls™ to create a five-row submerged breakwater began at the south end of Seven Mile Beach on-site at the Grand Cayman Marriott [Beach Resort](#). By February 2003, the impact was dramatic - the beach had been restored to its previous depth - and the breakwater has remained stable during waves from major hurricanes, including the direct hit by Category 5 Hurricane Ivan in 2005.

- o 2005 - 2007: In 2005, the Marriott commissioned the Foundation to create and place another 69 Reef Balls™ offshore. (Designed to attract and provide habitat for fish, lobster and other marine life, one Reef Ball™ unit produces about 180 kilograms or 400 lbs. of biomass annually.) A study released in March 2007 by the Florida Institute of Technology, found that new coral was growing on the reef at the Grand Cayman Marriott Beach Resort and that many species of fish had returned.

- o Ongoing: Recognizing that the entire community, as well as its guests, could contribute to the preservation effort, this Marriott beach resort began hosting public forums for staff, residents and guests, where Foundation representatives explained how everyone might contribute to restoring the waters and natural reef environment.

- o Ongoing: The Marriott continues to encourage guest involvement through special programs oriented around tropical environmental themes and sometimes involves guests in the construction and casting of new Reef Balls™.

- o Ongoing: The Marriott and the Foundation completed another study on April 9, 2007, on the north side of the property to establish the profile of the beach lines and the water depth. This study will allow identifying the size of the Reef Balls™ needed to complete the project across the entire front of the [beach resort](#).

The Reef Ball™ reef units, originally designed for habitat enhancement in deeper water depths, proved to be easy and economical breakwaters for the near-shore. Like natural reefs that contribute to the stability of the beaches in their lee, submerged Reef Balls assist in stabilizing the shoreline by forcing larger waves to break on the structure, reducing wave energy that reaches and erodes the shore. The first submerged breakwater project constructed using Reef Ball reef units was along the southern Caribbean shore of the Dominican Republic during the summer of 1998. To date, Reef Balls™ have been used in more than 55 countries.

For more information or reservations, contact the Grand Cayman Marriott Beach Resort directly at (345) 949-0088, call the Marriott Worldwide Reservations Center at (800) 228-9290, or visit the hotel web site at <http://marriott.com/hotels/travel/gcmgc-grand-cayman-marriott-beach-resort/>.

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