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TCRF AWARDED A \$2800 GRANT FROM SEACOLOGY

5 February 2013, Providenciales, TCI – The Turks & Caicos Reef Fund (TCRF) is pleased to announce the awarding of a \$2800 grant from Seacology to support the TCRF's dive and snorkel boat mooring project. Seacology is an international environmental nonprofit organization that focuses on saving endangered species, habitats and cultures of islands throughout the world.

David Stone, Deputy Chairman of the TCRF, said "We are grateful that Seacology recognized the importance of the work we are doing to protect the coral reefs around the TCI. This grant will greatly assist us in repairing and replacing the many missing dive and snorkel boat moorings around the islands of the TCI. We have already replaced more than 20 moorings around Provo, Grand Turk and South Caicos and expect to replace or repair many more in the next few months."

In November 2012, the TCRF and the TCI Government's Department of Environment and Maritime Affairs (DEMA) signed a Memorandum of Understanding designating the TCRF as the lead organization for the installation and maintenance of all boat moorings within the Marine National Parks of the TCI. DEMA is the governmental body responsible for maintenance of the mooring system established several decades ago. Due to lack of funding, little work had been done for many years on the dive and snorkel boat moorings. As a result, many of the locations that are supposed to have moorings, don't have a mooring. In other locations, the moorings are in a bad state of repair with missing buoys, inadequate buoys, and tattered pickup lines.

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With so many missing moorings, watersport operators are forced to drop anchors in the Marine National Parks. Despite their best efforts, dropping anchors around coral reefs inevitably result in damage to the coral that can take many years to repair since coral is a very slow growing animal. In some cases, larger vessels dropping anchors in the marine protected areas has resulted in large coral heads being torn from the reef killing not only the coral head that was ripped out, but also any coral or sponges that it fell on.

The plan that formed the basis of the Memorandum of Understanding with DEMA outlines a three year plan to replace missing moorings at a cost of at least \$60,000. It also outlines a maintenance plan that will be implemented by the TCRF to ensure the moorings do not once again fall into a sad state of disrepair. Ultimately, TCRF envisions greatly expanding the number of moorings for both dive and snorkel boats within the Marine National Parks. With the \$2800 grant from Seacology, the TCRF has raised nearly \$30,000 for this project and already invested over \$15,000 in new mooring materials that have been used in Grand Turk, Salt Cay, Pine Cay, West Caicos and Providenciales.

“Coral reefs are essential to the economic and ecologic health of the TCI,” said Don Stark, Chairman of the TCRF. “Without healthy coral reefs, the world-renowned beaches wouldn’t exist, the conch and finfish fisheries would be greatly diminished and tourists would stop coming to the TCI. Healthy coral reefs are the lifeblood of these islands.”

About Seacology

Seacology works to conserve vulnerable ecosystems on islands around the world while also helping local communities by providing an island village with a needed civic project - like a new school or health clinic - in exchange for protection of surrounding land or sea ecosystems. So far Seacology has launched 227 projects on 140 islands in 49 countries. Visit them at www.Seacology.org.

About TCRF

Founded in 2010, the Turks & Caicos Reef Fund is an all volunteer-run organization that provides funding for education, research and conservation programs to individuals, organizations and agencies that help to preserve and protect the marine environment of the Turks & Caicos Islands. Our goal is to have at least 85% of all funds raised through voluntary contributions from divers and snorkelers visiting the Turks & Caicos Islands directed to the Fund’s programs.

Anyone wishing to donate or assist the TCRF in any way can contact them through their website, www.TCReef.org. Scuba divers visiting the islands are encouraged to make a \$10 donation through the purchase of a dive tag that can

be attached to their dive gear to show their support. Snorkelers visiting the islands can show their support through the \$5 purchase of a pink or blue silicone wristband. A complete list of outlets for TCRF merchandise can be found on the organization's website.

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