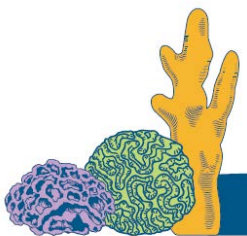




Florida Reef Tract Rescue Project

Coral Aquarist Program



AZA-FRTRP

Coral Aquarist Program

Purpose

The Coral Aquarist Program has been developed by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums' Florida Reef Tract Rescue Project (AZA-FRTRP) to meet the ever-increasing need for experienced and knowledgeable coral aquarists and conservation practitioners. The program seeks to build this professional resource and uses the care of rescued Atlantic coral brood stock and management of coral gene banks created in response to stony coral tissue loss disease as a case study.

The Coral Aquarist Program will provide participants with the knowledge and experiential introductory foundations necessary to manage coral brood stock in land-based nurseries, using rescued Florida corals that are part of the Florida Coral Rescue Program.

The course is composed of **two phases**:

Phase 1 (online training phase)

An online course of robust content provided by The Aquarium Vet[®].

Phase 2 (onsite training phase)

Participants will be assigned to one of four training facilities located throughout the United States. (course duration 7 days; 5 full days of instruction + 2 days travel). Onsite training will be a mentored, manual-based learning experience coupled with hands-on experiential learning activities.

The AZA-FRTRP envisions a national network of coral care facilities meeting the needs of coral restoration and conservation efforts:

Broodstock Propagation Settlement Rearing Outplanting



AZA-FRTRP

Coral Aquarist Program

Who is involved?

The Coral Aquarist Program has been developed by representatives from AZA accredited aquariums and zoos, Nova Southeastern University, and with support of the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission and NOAA Fisheries.

Coral Aquarist Program Champion (lead)

Omaha's Henry Doorly Zoo and Aquarium

Phase One Host

The Aquarium Vet®

Course Advisors

Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC)

NOAA Fisheries (NOAA)

Phase Two Onsite Training Facility Hosts

Omaha's Henry Doorly Zoo and Aquarium

Columbus Zoo

The Florida Aquarium

Riverbanks Zoo

Georgia Aquarium

Florida Coral Rescue Center (FCRC)

Curriculum Development Team

Georgia Aquarium

SeaWorld (FCRC)

SeaLife Orlando

National Aquarium

Butterfly Pavilion

Riverbanks Zoo

FWC

Mote Aquarium

Disney (FCRC)

Omaha's Henry Doorly Zoo

The Florida Aquarium

Virginia Aquarium

Columbus Zoo

Fort Worth Zoo

Nova Southeastern University

Blank Park Zoo

Auditor Team

Butterfly Pavilion

Blank Park Zoo

SeaLife Orlando

Course Workshops Sponsors and Hosts

Omaha's Henry Doorly Zoo and Aquarium

Georgia Aquarium



AZA-FRTRP Coral Aquarist Program

2026-2027 Course Calendar

- | | |
|------------------|---|
| • February 2026 | Call for Participants |
| • March 2026 | Class of 2026 Participants Announced |
| • May 2026 | Registration and Tuition Fees Due |
| • June 2026 | Phase 1 – Digital Training |
| • July 2026 | Phase 1 – Digital Training |
| • August 2026 | Phase 1 – Digital Training |
| • September 2026 | Phase 1 – Digital Training
Participants Assigned To On Site Training Facility
Assignments |
| • October 2026 | Phase 2 – Onsite Training |
| • November 2026 | Phase 2 – Onsite Training |
| • December 2026 | ReCAP Presentations |
| • May 2027 | Six Month Assessment Check Ins |



AZA-FRTRP

Coral Aquarist Program

The Coral Aquarist Program is a two phase program. The first phase is administered online and hosted and proctored by the Aquarium Vet. The second phase is an onsite / hands on learning experience.

PHASE 1

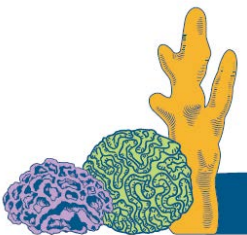
Hosted and proctored by



Phase one is conducted online through the Aquarium Vet® platform. Four learning modules are included in this phase. Completion of this phase is at the participant's pace.

- 1) Coral Biology
- 2) Aquarium Life Support
- 3) Aquarium Water Quality
- 4) Aquatic Animal Welfare

All four modules in this phase will be available to participants starting June 1, 2026 and must be completed with 100% proficiency prior to September 14, 2026.



AZA-FRTRP

Coral Aquarist Program

The Coral Aquarist Program is a two phase program. The first phase is administered online and hosted and proctored by the Aquarium Vet. The second phase is an onsite / hands on learning experience.

PHASE 2

Hosted and proctored by



Phase two is an onsite mentored, manual-based learning experience coupled with hands-on experiential learning activities.

Each participant will be assigned to one of four training facilities around the United States. This phase will take place in October and November of 2026.

The course is seven days that includes two days of travel and five full days of instruction.

Curriculum topics include:

- The Association of Zoos and Aquariums' Florida Reef Tract Rescue Project
- Introduction to Corals of the Florida Reef Tract
- Coral System Design and Construction
- Water Quality
- Coral System Lighting
- Coral Care and Nutrition
- Coral Health Management
- Coral Welfare



AZA-FRTRP

Coral Aquarist Program

Tuition and Fees

Coral Aquarist Program Tuition and Fees = \$2,500

Tuition and fees cover the following:

- The Aquarium Vet for (phase 1) registration and course participation
- Onsite training facility and lab use
- Program administration, course materials, manual teaching supplies, and uniform t-shirt(s)

Participants will be responsible for travel, lodging and food costs. The AZA-FRTRP will assist in developing the most economical options for each candidate.

Some financial assistance through grants may be available to support participation in the program. Participants will be notified if available.



AZA-FRTRP Coral Aquarist Program

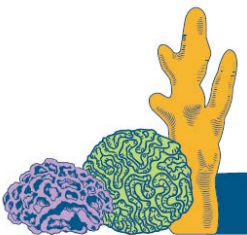
Statement of Diversity, Equity, Accessibility, and Inclusivity

The AZA Diversity, Equality, Accessibility and Inclusion (DEAI) Position Statement.

The AZA believes that diversity results from the equitable inclusion of different physical, social and cultural identities among people including but not limited to gender, gender identity or expression, age, sexual orientation, disability, physical appearance, race, ethnicity, national origin, and background.

The AZA-FRTRP strives to prioritize the cultivation of diversity within the Coral Aquarist Program and work to be responsive to and reflective of the diverse communities it serves.

This course has been approved by the [AZA Professional Development Committee](#).



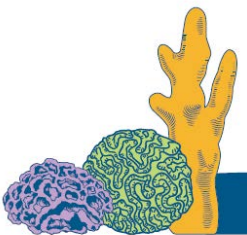
AZA-FRTRP Coral Aquarist Program

AZA Professional Development Course Policies

AZA Professional Development Course Policies

AZA is committed to providing a safe, productive, and welcoming environment for all event participants and AZA staff. Each and every participant, including attendees, speakers, Association staff, and service providers, are expected to understand and follow policies in all in-person and virtual spaces. These expectations apply to all AZA related events, including those held in conjunction with AZA courses and conferences.

[AZA Professional Development Course Policies](#)





Florida Reef Tract Rescue Project

Coral Aquarist Program

[2026 COURSE SCHEDULE](#)

Call for Applications will open in February 2026.

See [SAFECoral.org website](https://safecoral.org) for updates and announcements

Questions?

Need more information?

Contact the SAFE Coral program manager, Beth Firchau: bfirchau@safecioral.org

