

Earthquake Damage Report – Port Honduras Marine Reserve

Nicola Foster, Marlon Williams and Seleem Chan
Toledo Institute for Development and Environment (TIDE)
Email: nfoster@tidebelize.org, Tel: (501) 722-2274

Following the earthquake on May 28th 2009, TIDE surveyed the reefs out in Port Honduras for damage. We found that the shallow reefs on the inner cayes, which are on fairly flat, sandy areas suffered minimal damage. There were a few broken colonies - mainly *Agaricia* species and some older *Montastraea annularis* and *Montastraea faveolata* colonies suffered some damage.

However, the reefs on the outer Snake Cayes and banks, which have fairly steep walls, appeared to have more damage than the inner reefs, with parts of the reef breaking off along the edge and slipping down the wall (see photos). Many of these areas were renowned lobster habitats, which have now been destroyed. A number of these reefs also have cracks running through them and many large coral colonies and barrel sponges had fallen over or were broken apart (see photos). Where possible, corals and sponges were turned upright and wedged, however, little could be done to repair the reefs along the wall. In addition, the visibility was very low (less than 5ft) at the majority of the sites surveyed and we attributed this to large amounts of sediment that appear to have been re-suspended following the earthquake.



Toppled Sponge



Overturned Agaricia



Crack running through reef



Crack running through reef



Edge of wall where reef used to be



Reef/rubble sliding down slope



Crack running through reef