

This excerpt is from the October, 2019 issue of "Undercurrent.org":

DYING CORAL CLOSES MUCH OF COZUMEL DIVING

Cozumel's reefs are under severe danger from the rapidly progressing white band disease, and beginning October 7, the southern part of the Cozumel Marine Park will be closed until further notice, seriously limiting where dive boats can go.

The closure has sparked tourism operators to protest outside the Cozumel offices of the National Protected Areas Commission (Conanp) in San Miguel, claiming that 500 families will lose their sole source of income

But in the mind of researchers and Conanp, the fast spreading disease is out of control, not only in Cozumel but throughout the Caribbean, and if something is not done quickly, most of the coral will be permanently destroyed in just a few years. This is not coral bleaching, from which many corals recovers, but a far more lethal disease

The areas where most diving in Cozumel occurs -- from Palancar Gardens (on Cozumel's southwest quadrant) to Maracaibo, and Playa Bosh in the extreme southeast (including dive sites like Colombia, Punta Sur, and Chun Chacab Reef) will be closed so government scientists may investigate the causes of 'white syndrome' affecting hard corals there and gauge the amount and effect of pollution, especially from the large hotels.

Local dive operators say they can visit Barracuda Reef on the extreme northwest coast and popular sites like the wreck of the C-53, Paraíso, Tormentos Reef, San Francisco Reef, Santa Rosa, El Cedral, and Punta Delila on the west coast . The harder to reach more northern and eastern sites -- from El Mirador on the exposed east coast to Baja de Molas at the most northerly point -- will be open, but these are best for experienced divers who can tolerate lengthy boat journeys in possibly rougher water and handle tough currents when they arise

If you have plans to go to Cozumel -- or are considering it -- contact your dive operator for more information about where you can dive . Also keep in mind, that the disease has no park boundaries . Human activity seems to be the source, and we all have a responsibility to protect our reefs and our oceans .