

IEM Committee



From: orchid6128@aol.com
Sent: Monday, October 16, 2017 4:26 AM
To: IEM Committee
Subject: please pass oxybenzone ban

Aloha IEM Chair and Maui Councilmembers,
Our reefs are in dire need as bleaching and death continues around our islands. Oxybenzone in sunscreens is a contributor to reef death. Please ban oxybenzone containing products' sale, use and distribution in Maui County. Mahalo for doing your part to protect our vital ecosystem. Water is life, and the reef is the filter for that life.
Mahalo nui,
Deborah Mader
Kihei, HI

https://www.vice.com/en_us/article/avyawk/wrecking-the-reef-v22n12

Your Sunscreen Is Destroying the Great Barrier Reef

And so the chain of environmental devastation continues.

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Wendy Syfret

Dec 17 2015, 7:00pm



*This story appears in **the December issue of VICE magazine.***

Humans are good at destroying big, important things like wonders of nature and protective layers in the atmosphere. We've already knocked out half of the Great Barrier Reef through activities like dumping dredge waste, but it appears Australians have a new weapon to eradicate the remaining reef.

Because of half a century spent obliterating our ozone protection, Australia has some of the highest levels of UV rays and, thus, some of the highest rates of skin cancer in the world. As a result, Aussies are raised in the religion of SPF and anoint themselves in sunscreen with UV-filtering oxybenzone daily. At the beach, they practically bathe in it.

Too bad that while oxybenzone protects the skin, it also poisons coral, according to recent studies.

Selina Ward, a coral-reef expert at the University of Queensland, told VICE that she's been suspicious of sunscreen for years and noted that some Mexican marine parks have already banned tourists from applying it before swimming near delicate reefs.

When exposed to oxybenzone, coral larvae become deformed and unable to spread through ocean currents. The chemical also exacerbates bleaching, causing coral to expel its primary source of nutrition: the algae that live inside it. Bleaching is a primary killer of reefs worldwide, and in 2002 it had affected more than 60 percent of the Great Barrier Reef.

Considering Australians' all-pervasive culture of loving the outdoors, swimming, and wearing sunscreen, Ward warns that the country's reefs are particularly threatened by exposure to the chemical, which has been found in high concentrations in water around areas of the reef most popular with tourists. Sure, sunscreen is diluted in open water as we snorkel around, but it takes surprisingly little to cause significant damage.

"The reactions are devastating at incredibly low concentrations," Ward explained. "Imagine a snorkel site, with forty people getting off a boat, lathered in sunscreen." For reference, as one of the most popular travel destinations on the planet, the Great Barrier Reef attracts 2.19 million UV-fearing, sunscreen-covered tourists annually.

So the chain of environmental devastation continues: We take out the ozone layer, ozone layer takes out our epidermis, our epidermis is caked in sunscreen, and sunscreen takes out one of the wonders of the natural world.