Global Warming May Leed to Coral Reefs Grow

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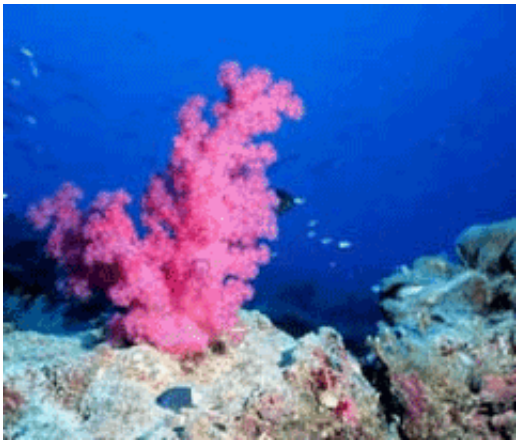

Coral reefs around the world could expand in size by up to a third in response to increased ocean warming and the greenhouse effect, according to Australian scientists. About 100,000 species living in and around coral reefs have so far been noted, although some scientists believe the real total may top 2 million. Currently 58 percent of the world's coral reefs are now endangered.

"Our analysis suggests that ocean warming will foster considerably faster future rates of coral reef growth that will eventually exceed pre-industrial rates by as much as 35 per cent by 2100," says Dr Ben McNeil, an oceanographer from the University of News South Wales. "Our

finding stands in stark contrast to previous predictions that coral reef growth will suffer large, potentially catastrophic, decreases in the future," says McNeil, who led and published the research in the journal Geophysical Research Letters, with colleagues Dr Richard Matear of the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organization (CSIRO) and Dr David Barnes from the Australian Institute of Marine Science, Townsville.

Previous research has predicted a decline of between 20 and 60 percent in the size of coral reefs by 2100 relative to pre-industrial levels due to increasing CO2 levels in ocean surface waters. The new research suggests that present coral reef calcification rates are not in decline and are equivalent to late 19th century levels.

Coral reefs are built from calcium carbonate when red algae cement together a framework of coral skeletons and sediments. They are generally found within 30N and 30S latitudes, because the reef-building corals are living in this waters. Reef-building corals are found mainly in the photic zone (

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