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1 Science and Application Target: Coral Reefs

Coral reefs are distributed throughout the world's tropical oceans (Figure 1), directly occupying an estimated area of 250,000 to 600,000 km² (Smith 1978; Kleypas 1997; Spalding and Grenfell 1997). These values correspond approximately to 0.05–0.15% of the global ocean area, respectively, and about 5-15% of the shallow sea areas within 0-30 m depth. Coral reefs have a global importance that is disproportionately large relative to their areal extent. They are a focus for traditional culture and provide food for innumerable small subsistence economies (White et al. 2000). They provide protection to shorelines from storm and wave damage and form barriers that provide safe passage for shipping (Moberg and Folke 1999). They are a superlative recreational resource and the foundation of a multibillion dollar tourist industry worldwide (White et al. 2000; Johns et al. 2001). Coral reefs are a major locus of global biodiversity, providing an ecological reserve of genetic complexity (Roberts et al. 2002). The high species diversity is a biological storehouse for the biotechnology industry, allowing isolation and identification of chemical substances and biochemical mechanisms (Bruckner 2002). The global economic valuation of the direct and indirect use of coral reefs has been estimated at nearly \$400 billion annually (Costanza et al. 1997). While the accuracy of this dollar amount is debatable, it is certain that coral reefs are important to the cultural and economic lives of hundreds of millions of people around the world.

Reefs are among the first natural ecosystems to respond critically, dramatically, and globally to climate change (Wong et al. 2014). Already stressed by human activities at local and regional scales, the convolved influences of rising sea surface temperature and increasing ocean acidification are predicted to cause a global shift in reef benthic community structure from coralrich to coral-poor (Figure 2; Hoegh-Guldberg et al. 2007). An estimated 33-50% of coral reefs worldwide have already been largely or completely degraded over recent decades (International Society for Reef Studies 2015), 15% are critically threatened with loss in the next 10–20 years, and another 20% are under threat of loss in the next 20–40 years (Wilkinson 2008). Surprisingly, these estimates and predictions are based on sparse observations with disparate objectives, methods, and quality. Only 10s to 100s of km², or 0.01–0.1% of the world's reef area, have received direct, quantitative study, as reef assessments largely rely on in-water survey techniques, which are laborious, expensive, and limited in spatial extent. Thus, the available data are insufficient for rigorous estimates of global reef status. This precludes quantitative modeling of reef-environment relationships across local, regional, and global scales (Figure 3). Global, uniform, high-density measurements and models are critical to better understand how coral reefs will respond to the environmental changes expected in the coming decades.

Remote sensing is the only feasible means to gather the required uniform, high-density measurements across vast coral reef regions (Mumby et al. 1999; Hochberg et al. 2003b). A satellite platform would be the obvious choice to develop such a dataset, but no sensors currently on orbit possess the necessary capabilities for assessment of coral reef condition. Pixel sizes are too coarse to resolve important reef features, there is insufficient ground coverage to assess global or even regional reef condition, and/or there is insufficient spectral sampling and resolution to discriminate between fundamental reef benthic cover types (Hochberg and Atkinson 2003). Targeted airborne remote sensing investigations can serve as precursors for a space mission, providing uniform, high-density data across select reef regions, which, in turn,

can enable development of ecosystem-scale models linking reef condition to biogeophysical forcings (Arias-González et al. 2011). For example, the NASA Earth Venture Suborbital-2 COral Reef Airborne Laboratory (CORAL) mission will provide a one-time assessment of 3–4% of the world's reef area (~1000× more than current in situ observations). However, airborne campaigns simply cannot realistically provide the required global, repeat coverage. A satellite mission with multiple engagements of reefs worldwide can transform our understanding of reef condition and allow scientists, resource managers, and politicians to better understand how natural and anthropogenic processes impact reefs, and thus make more informed decisions toward their conservation.

The key overarching science questions:

- What is the current condition of the world's coral reefs?
- How will global coral reef condition change in response to natural and anthropogenic forcing?

Stemming from these questions, we identify several science and application objectives:

- 1. Measure distributions of coral, algae, and sand for reefs worldwide.
- 2. Examine trends of coral, algae, and sand for reefs across a range of local human impacts.
- 3. Determine how distributions of coral, algae, and sand vary with reef morphology, underlying geology, latitude, and oceanographic conditions (temperature, waves, light).
- 4. Generate map products to help regional and local monitoring, management/conservation, and scientific investigations.

These objectives are community priorities, and they address four of six principal science questions of the Carbon Cycle and Ecosystems Focus Area of NASA's Earth Science Division (*How are global ecosystems changing? How do ecosystems, land cover, and biogeochemical cycles respond to and affect global environmental change? What are the consequences of climate change and increased human activities for coastal regions? How will carbon cycle dynamics and terrestrial and marine ecosystems change in the future?*). The IPCC Fifth Assessment Report: Climate Change 2014 gives special prominence to coral reefs (Gattuso et al. 2014). The National Research Council's Decadal Survey report Earth Science and Applications from Space: National Imperatives for the Next Decade and Beyond (National Research Council 2007) recognizes that coral reefs are both valuable resources and face serious threats. The report specifically lists "health and extent of coral reefs" among the priority satellite data records and missions for land-use change, ecosystem dynamics, and biodiversity.

The science and applications targets identified here are directly linked to the Decadal Survey themes of *Marine and Terrestrial Ecosystems and Natural Resource Management* and select factors in *Climate Variability and Change: Seasonal to Centennial*. Coral reefs are a major locus of global biodiversity that provide various ecosystem goods and services. Reefs are among the first natural ecosystems to respond critically, dramatically, and globally to the combined impacts of local environmental degradation and climate change. It is well established that coral reefs are threatened or in various stages of decline, but there remains a significant gap in our understanding of how coral reef ecosystems are responding to natural (e.g., temperature, acidification, sea state, available light) and anthropogenic (e.g., coastal development, overfishing, marine pollution) forcings and how they will respond in the future. Uncertainty is

due to insufficient measurements of the appropriate quantity and quality. These measurements are also required to advance quantitative modeling of reef-environment relationships across local, regional, and global scales.

2 Geophysical Variables to Be Measured to Quantify Global Coral Reef Condition

1. Benthic cover 2. Primary production 3. Calcification

Natural, balanced coral reefs are mosaics of coral, algae, and sand. Together, these benthic types drive the structure and function of the ecosystem (Stoddart 1969; Kinsey 1985). When corals die, algae rapidly colonize their skeletons. Healthy reefs usually increase coral coverage during recovery from stress, with coral abundance often returning to the predisturbance level (Connell 1997). In contrast, algae and rubble gradually dominate degraded reefs with little or no recovery of coral. With the loss of reef-builders, the carbonate structure erodes, ultimately becoming a flat bottom with shifting rubble and sand (Figure 2). This phenomenon is called a "phase shift" in the ecosystem and represents a radical change in the character of the reef. Thus, a key geophysical variable to measure to assess the condition of a reef is *benthic cover*: the proportional abundances of coral, algae, and sand.

Coral, algae, and sand also each exhibit distinctly different rates for the base ecosystem functions of primary production and calcification (Kinsey 1983; Kinsey 1985). Changes in the coral:algae:sand ratio can therefore result in substantial changes to ecosystem function (Odum and Odum 1955). Primary production represents the energy input that drives all biological transformations in the reef system (Odum and Odum 1955). Calcification is the net gain of biogenically derived carbonates, which determines the long-term growth of the reef structure (Kinsey 1985). Thus, rates for *primary production* and *calcification* are also important geophysical variables for understanding reef condition. Both processes are fundamental components of the carbon cycle on coral reefs.

Benthic cover can be derived directly from spectroscopic measurements due to significant differences between the spectral signatures of coral, algae, and sand (Hochberg and Atkinson 2000, 2003; Hochberg et al. 2003a; Hochberg et al. 2004). An example of benthic cover classification from the Airborne Visible/Infrared Imaging Spectrometer (AVIRIS) (Green et al. 1998) is shown in Figure 4. The information contained in spectral image data can be used to detect coral with an accuracy of 98% (Figure 5; Hochberg and Atkinson 2003). Additionally, primary production and calcification can be modeled using spectral imagery following the light-use efficiency approach described in Hochberg and Atkinson (2008).

3 Key Quality Requirements of the Measurements

<u>Temporal Requirements: Seasonal to yearly, with option for event targeting</u> — Reef benthic community structure is inherently stable on time scales of months to years (Smith and Buddemeier 1992). Barring major disturbance events, coral reef change is typically slow. Thus, it is less important to maintain a high-frequency time series for individual reefs than it is to sustain a campaign of measurements across a large, representative cross section of reefs. This type of extended, low-frequency time-series is almost entirely missing from coral reef science (except at extremely local scales, e.g., Connell et al. 1997, Moorea LTER) but is critical to

understanding reef dynamics in a changing climate. An option for targeting major disturbance events is also important. The observations must begin now, though, because many reefs are believed to already be on a trajectory of decline.

<u>Spatial Requirements: Coverage 35°S–35°N, ground sample distance $\leq 60 \text{ m}$ </u> — The global extent of coral reefs is zonally constrained between 35°S–35°N (Figure 1). Reef community structure exhibits tremendous spatial heterogeneity over scales of centimeters to hundreds of meters. However, most reefs are only on the order of 0.5–1 km wide. Further, examination of spatial semivariance suggests that the majority of spatial heterogeneity occurs at scales less than 70–90 m (Hochberg, unpublished). This agrees with observations of reef hydrographic and ecological zonation (Stoddart 1969). The requirement for a ground sample distance $\leq 60 \text{ m}$ ensures that imagery can capture/delineate important reef features, both biotic and structural.

<u>Geophysical Variable Requirements: Discrimination of benthic cover to an accuracy of $\pm 10\%$ cover</u>

Geophysical Variable Requirement	Measurement/Instrument Requirement		Driver
Discrimination of benthic cover to an accuracy of ±10% cover	Bottom Reflectance Accuracy	±5% absolute ±2% band-to-band relative	Requirements in line with National Research Council (2011) for ocean color
	VIS/NIR Spectral Range	400–1000 nm, 10–20 nm wide (see Figure 5)	Water column correction (Lee and Carder 2002); discrimination between coral, algae, and sand (Hochberg and Atkinson 2003); glint correction (Hochberg et al. 2011)
	NIR/SWIR	Select channels (0.865,	Atmospheric correction (Gao et al. 2000;
	Spectral Range	1.04, 1.24, 1.64, 2.25 μm)	Gao et al. 2007)
	Radiometric Signal-to-Noise	See Figure 6	Detection and discrimination of dark targets
	Polarization Sensitivity	Variation ≤2%	Atmospheric correction over benthic signals
	Spectral Uniformity	Cross-track >90% IFOV mixing <10%	Atmosphere, glint, and water column correction, and benthic discrimination (National Research Council 2011)

Contiguous, 10-nm-wide wavebands over 400–700 nm provide excellent spectral discrimination between coral, algae, and sand (Figure 5; Hochberg and Atkinson 2003). Contiguous 10-nm-wide wavebands from 400-800 nm also provide an excellent band set for retrieval of shallow water bathymetry (Lee and Carder, 2002; Lee et al., 2007). A narrower range of wavebands can be used, but the results will be less accurate retrievals of seafloor optical properties that translate to misclassification of coral reef bottom-types.

Combined wavebands across both NIR and SWIR (i.e., 0.865, 1.04, 1.24, 1.64, and 2.25 μ m) provide very good atmospheric correction (Gao et al. 2007). The most accurate atmospheric correction for shallow water requires SWIR wavebands. NIR wavebands can be used alone, but in complex coastal environments, significant errors can arise. These errors in VIS water-leaving radiance will cascade to errors in retrieval of seafloor optical properties that result in

misclassifications of coral reef bottom-types. With wavelengths >900 nm, sun/sky glint is readily assessable and is correctable for coral reef benthic spectral signatures (Hochberg et al. 2011).

4 Affordability of the Required Measurements

This class of measurements can be achieved affordably in the decadal timeframe, due to investments in response to global terrestrial/coastal coverage missions outlined in the 2007 NRC Decadal Survey (National Research Council 2007) and NRC Landsat and Beyond report (National Research Council 2013), etc. These measurements build on a legacy of air and space instruments including airborne: AIS (Vane et al. 1984), AVIRIS (Green et al. 1998), and AVIRIS-NG (Hamlin et al. 2011); and space: NIMS (Carlson et al. 1992), VIMS (Brown et al. 2004), Deep Impact (Hampton et al. 2005), CRISM (Murchie et al. 2007), EO-1 Hyperion (Ungar et al. 2003; Middleton et al. 2013), M3 (Green et al. 2011) and MISE, the imaging spectrometer now being developed for NASA's Europa mission.

The approach described below exceeds all of the requirements including targeting critical coral impact events with spacecraft pointing.

NASA-guided engineering studies in 2014 and 2015 show that a Landsat-class VSWIR (380 to 2510 nm $@ \leq 10$ nm sampling) (Figure 7) imaging spectrometer instrument with a 185 km swath, 30 m spatial sampling and 16 day revisit with high signal-to-noise ratio and the required spectroscopic uniformity can be implemented affordably for a three year mission with mass (98 kg), power (112 W), and volume compatible with a Pegasus class launch or ride share (Figure 8). The telescope can be scaled for higher orbits.

The key for this measurement is an optically fast spectrometer providing high SNR and a design that can accommodate the full spectral and spatial ranges (Mouroulis et al. 2014). A scalable prototype F/1.8 full VSWIR spectrometer (Van Gorp et al. 2014) with full spectral range CHROMA detector array has been developed, aligned, and is being qualified (Figure 9).

Data rate and volume challenges have been addressed by development and testing of a lossless compression algorithm for spectral measurements (Klimesh 2006; Aranki et al. 2009ab; Keymeulen et al. 2014). This algorithm is now a CCSDS standard (CCSDS 2015). With compression and the current Ka band downlink offered by KSAT and others, all terrestrial/coastal measurements can be downlinked (Figure 10).

Algorithms for calibration (Green et al. 1998) and atmospheric correction (Gao et al. 1993, 2009; Thompson et al. 2014, 2015) of large diverse data sets have been benchmarked as part of the HyspIRI preparatory (Lee et al. 2015), as well as for the AVIRIS-NG India and Greenland campaigns and elsewhere. To enhance affordability and accelerate measurement availability, there is good potential for shared launches, spacecraft, and international partnerships.

A wide swath high inclination sun synchronous affordable approach has been described. It should be noted that this approach can be tailored to work with narrower swaths and a range of swath pointing as well as implementation for lower inclination precessing orbits. The SNR in the spectral range of interest can also be optimized.



FIGURES

Figure 1. Global coral reef distribution: 9,000 reefs in the world, covering an estimated area of $500,000 \text{ km}^2$. Current quantitative in situ surveys cover only 10s to 100s km² worldwide (0.01-0.1% of the world's reef area).



Figure 2. The coral reef problem: combined local and global impacts are predicted to cause a global shift in reef benthic community structure from coral-rich (left) to coral-poor (right). This would severely diminish the ecosystem services and economic value provided by reefs.

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Figure 3. Existing survey data (US Caribbean, Hawaii, Great Barrier Reef) do not follow expected trends with respect to environmental factors. For example, coral cover should *increase* with aragonite saturation and *decrease* with marine pollution. Either our understanding of reefs is incorrect, or our data are inadequate (low density, mismatched scales), or maybe both.



Figure 4. Benthic cover and primary production maps from the Airborne Visible/Infrared Imaging Spectrometer (AVIRIS) in Kaneohe, Hawaii. Imaging spectrometers record the intensity of wavelengths for each pixel in the scene. The spectral signature is then used to identity reef composition (coral, algae, sand) and model primary production.



Figure 5. (left) Classification error matrices for in situ spectral reflectances of the three bottomtypes. (right) Linear discriminant function (LDF) scores for full resolution (1nm spectral sampling) and AVIRIS resolution (10nm spectral sampling). Discriminant functions project the multivariate spectra onto the plane that best describes the separation between coral (red), algae (green), and sand (blue). To see additional error matrices and LDF scores for other instruments with coarser spectral sampling see Hochberg and Atkinson (2003).



Figure 6. The baseline Signal-to-Noise Ratio (SNR) performance for benthic composition reflectance is set based on performance AVIRIS-Classic imaging spectrometer that has demonstrated the capability.



Figure 7. (left) Contiguous spectral coverage from 380 to 2510 nm of the F/1.8 VSWIR Dyson showing overlap with Landsat and Sentinal-2 bands. (right) Signal-to-noise ratio for 30 m sampling with F/1.8 VSWIR Dyson imaging spectrometer. If required, the measurement SNR can be enhanced with spectral and/or spatial averaging (e.g. convolution to multi-spectral bands).



Figure 8. (left) Opto-mechanical configuration for a high SNR F/1.8 VSWIR imaging spectrometer system providing 185 km swath and 30 m sampling. (center) Imaging spectrometer with spacecraft configured for launch in a Pegasus shroud for an orbit of 429 km altitude, 97.14 inclination to provide 16 day revisit for three years. (right) Orbital altitude and repeat options. An altitude of 429 km with a fueled spacecraft supports the three-year mission with the affordable Pegasus launch. Higher orbits require a larger launch vehicle.



Figure 9. Design of F/1.8 VSWIR Dyson covering the spectral range from 380 to 2510. (right) Developed, aligned and qualified Dyson with CHROMA full range VSWIR detector array.



Figure 10. (left) Global illuminated surface coverage every 16 days. (right) On-board data storage usage for illuminated terrestrial/coastal regions with downlink using Ka Band to KSAT Svalbard and Troll stations. Oceans and ice sheets can be spatially averaged for downlink.

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