

The Marine Aquarium Council (MAC) is an international non-profit organization which facilitates third-party certification of the marine ornamental reef species trade for recognized standards of practice. These standards are oriented towards coral reef conservation and a responsible and sustainable international trade in reef species.

The majority of ornamental reef species are collected in and exported from Southeast Asia (primarily Philippines and Indonesia) and the majority of this resource is imported to the U.S.

These regions have an unfortunate legacy of historic and traditional use of cyanide compounds in the collection of coral reef fish species. The use of cyanide to capture anything from marine waters is forbidden by law in the Philippines and Indonesia. Although cyanide is used as a tool to capture fish by stunning or disorientation, it is regarded to be harmful to target fishes and to other reef organisms in the vicinity of its application. The use of cyanide for collecting reef fishes is generally agreed to be a methodology which is destructive, non-sustainable and wasteful of a resource.

A practical and functional cyanide detection test (CDT) is needed that would allow analysts to determine if any given individual fish (sample) had been captured with the application of a cyanide solution.

MAC is interested in supporting the development and usage of a peer-reviewed and legally-enforceable method for detecting the use of cyanide in the collection of coral reef fish species and has undertaken efforts to evaluate possible methods. The MAC Standards do not allow the use of cyanide, other chemicals, and any other kind of harmful and destructive collecting practices.

Even in the absence of such a detection test, MAC utilizes a range of actions and standards which support and compel reef fish collectors to abandon the use of cyanide and instead utilize non-destructive collection methods such as using only nets. These incentive forces also include the involvement and cooperation of local government units (LGU), which enforce national laws against the use of cyanide. Comprehensive training sessions by experts are used by MAC to teach collectors how to capture fishes using only nets. Upon the publicly-recognized establishment of compliance to the MAC Standards of non-destructive and legal collection, a kind of peer pressure is instilled within a community and region which begins to spread outwards towards other collectors and their associations. A fully-compliant and auditable adherence to the MAC Standards allows collectors to be eligible for MAC Certification.

MAC is supported by grants from USAID, NOAA, GEF/IFC, MacArthur Foundation, Packard Foundation and others. MAC's stated mission and ongoing work is focused on reducing harm to coral reefs and ensuring that the marine ornamental fishery and trade are responsible and sustainable.

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MAC supports and encourages the United States Coral Reef Task Force (USCRTF) to work towards establishing an applicable method to detect cyanide usage in capture and also towards enforcement of all national and international laws designed to protect coral reef environments.

Information on the Marine Aquarium Council can be found at <http://www.aquariumcouncil.org> .