

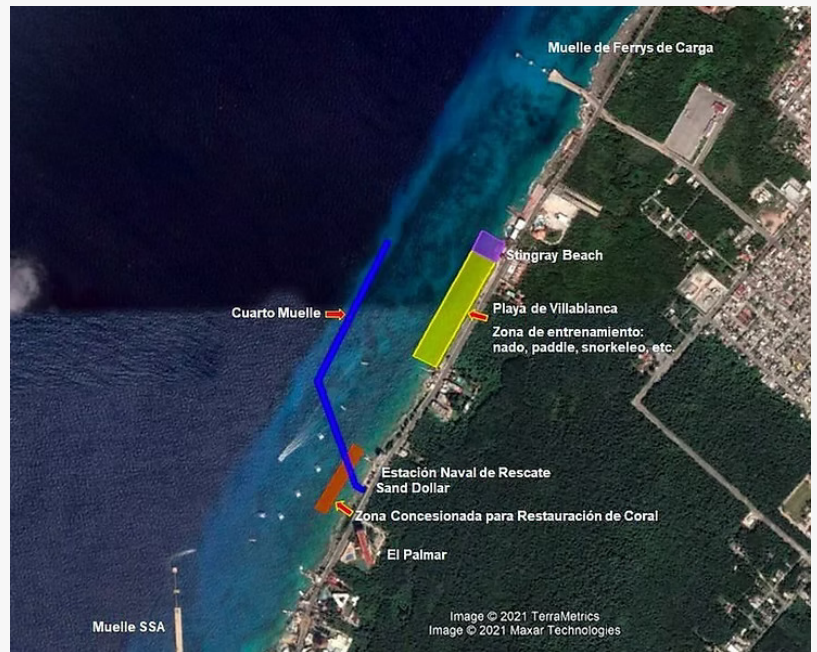
# Fourth Cruise Ship Pier Approved for Construction on Cozumel's Villa Blanca Reef

*Three-year legal battle concludes with approval for major marine construction project backed by MSC Cruises*

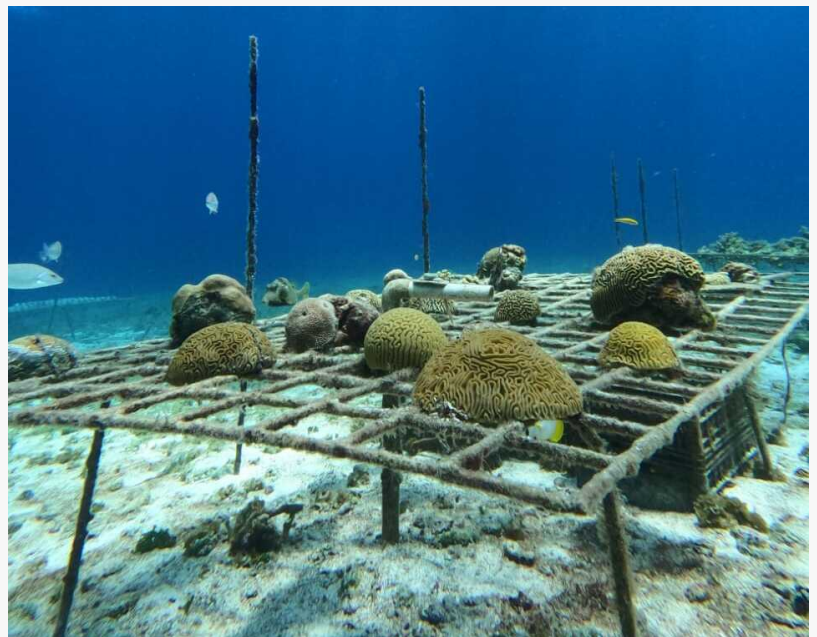
COZUMEL, QUINTANA ROO, MEXICO, June 17, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Muelles del Caribe SA de CV announced this week that it has received final approval to construct a fourth cruise ship pier directly over the Villa Blanca Reef system following a legal process that began three years ago. The project has backing from MSC Cruises and local business interests.

According to company representative José Luis Cervantes, who spoke at a Monday press conference, the new pier will accommodate large cruise vessels carrying more than 7,000 passengers. The development also includes planned extensions to the existing International Pier, creating two concurrent construction projects in the same marine area.

The Villa Blanca Reef has been the focus of local conservation efforts for several years. Multiple organizations, including [Stingray Villa](#) and the [Cozumel Coral Reef Restoration Program](#) (CCRRP), have operated coral restoration platforms in the area. These programs have worked to rebuild coral populations following



The area that will be destroyed by the new Pier



The different corals we are growing to replant on Villa Blanca Reef

losses from disease and bleaching events linked to rising ocean temperatures.

The construction project involves MSC Cruises, one of the world's largest cruise operators, working in partnership with the Molina family business group from the Yucatan Peninsula. The Molina family also operates Winjet Ferry and several beach club properties on the island.

Environmental concerns center on the direct impact of living coral systems. Construction activities typically require dredging channels and installing concrete pilings, which can disrupt marine habitats. Construction damages coral ecosystems, and restoration can take decades; some species may never recover.

The Villa Blanca area has attracted snorkelers and divers due to its marine biodiversity. The reef system also provides natural coastal protection and supports local fishing activities. Tourism operators have used the area for underwater tours and educational programs about marine conservation.

Local conservation groups have expressed concerns about the timing of the construction. Coral restoration efforts in the area had shown signs of progress, with new coral growth documented on artificial reef platforms installed over the past several years. The restoration work represented collaborative efforts between local dive operators, international conservation programs, and volunteer divers.

The cruise industry's expansion in Cozumel reflects broader trends in Caribbean tourism. Larger vessels require deeper ports and more substantial infrastructure, often necessitating modifications to natural harbors and coastal areas. Similar projects throughout the Caribbean have generated discussions about balancing tourism revenue with environmental protection.

Public announcements have not detailed construction timelines and specific environmental mitigation measures. The project will proceed under Mexican maritime construction regulations and environmental oversight requirements.

The development adds to existing cruise infrastructure on Cozumel, which already serves as a major port of call for Caribbean cruise itineraries. The island receives hundreds of thousands of cruise passengers annually, with most visits lasting six to eight hours during port calls.

Marine biologists note that coral reefs face multiple stressors, including climate change, water pollution, and physical damage from human activities. Recovery from construction impacts can be particularly challenging when combined with other environmental pressures affecting reef systems throughout the Caribbean.

The Villa Blanca Reef area supports various coral species, including brain coral, Elkhorn coral, and staghorn coral. These reef-building species create habitat for fish populations and other marine life. The reef system is part of the Mesoamerican Reef, the second-largest coral reef

system in the world.

Tourism stakeholders on Cozumel include both cruise-dependent businesses and operators focused on overnight visitors who participate in diving and snorkeling activities. The island's economy relies heavily on marine tourism, with many businesses built around access to healthy reef systems.

Environmental advocacy groups have called for public input on major coastal development projects, emphasizing the permanent nature of changes to marine ecosystems. Some organizations have suggested alternative locations for cruise infrastructure that would minimize impact on coral reefs.

The construction approval comes as coral restoration programs worldwide face funding challenges and compete with development pressures in coastal areas. Restoration work requires ongoing maintenance and monitoring to achieve long-term success.

Local dive operators and marine tour companies have noted changes in reef health over recent years, with some areas showing recovery while others continue to experience stress from various environmental factors.

The project represents one of several major infrastructure developments planned for Mexico's Caribbean coast, where tourism growth continues to drive demand for expanded port facilities and transportation infrastructure.

Following completion of the required permitting processes and environmental assessments, construction will begin.

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