



**U.S. ALL ISLANDS CORAL REEF COMMITTEE
STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN
2008-2013
(Updated 2010)**

A collaborative initiative to conserve coral reefs in U.S. jurisdictions



**Prepared by the U.S. All Islands Coral Reef
Committee (AIC) and Secretariat**

**The Territory of American Samoa
The Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas
The State of Florida
The State of Hawai'i
Guam**

**The Commonwealth of Puerto Rico
The Territory of the U.S. Virgin Islands**

**With assistance from
U.S. Department of the Interior, Office of Insular Affairs,
and the
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration,
U.S. Department of Commerce**

U.S. All Islands Coral Reef Committee Strategic Action Plan 2008-2013 (Updated 2010)

Prepared and edited by

Takiora Ingram, PhD
Executive Director
U.S. All Islands Coral Reef Committee (U.S. AIC)

Imelda Gebauer
Administration Assistant

All Islands Coral Reef Committee Strategic Planning Retreat held on February 5-7, 2007.

© September 2010

U.S. All Islands Coral Reef Committee (AIC), representing the Territory of American Samoa, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, Florida State, Guam, State of Hawai'i, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands and affiliated members, the Federated States of Micronesia, Republic of Marshall Islands, and the Republic of Palau.

Table of Contents

Background..... 1

AIC Vision and Mission 2

AIC Strategic Plan Top Priorities 2010-2011 2

AIC Strategic Plan - Longer-term Goals 3

Goals, Strategies and Actions 4

AIC Funding and Budget.....10

Performance Measures10

References11

U.S. ALL ISLANDS CORAL REEF COMMITTEE STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN 2008-2013 (Updated 2010)

Background

The **U.S. All Islands Coral Reef Committee** (AIC) is made up of marine resource managers from state, commonwealth, territorial agencies and freely associated states working collaboratively with partners to conserve and protect coral reefs in the United States. This is an update of the AIC Strategic Action Plan 2008-2013, adopted in 2010, addressing both short-term (2010-2011) and longer term priorities.

In 2007, the AIC adopted its Strategic Action Plan (2008-2013), known as the “Gold Book”. The plan built on the AIC’s draft Charter (2007) and the AIC Communications Plan (2006). It also built on the 1999 All Islands Coral Reef Initiative Strategy, (“Green Book”) and the 1997 U.S. Islands Coral Reef Initiative (“Blue Book”). The 2008-2013 Strategic Action Plan focuses on the activities of the Committee as a whole and the AIC Secretariat.

This updated strategic action plan provides a road map to achieve the goals of the Committee and Secretariat to protect the coral reefs of the states, commonwealths, territories, and freely associated states over the next three years. This is a living document, which will be regularly reviewed and updated and evaluated as part of an iterative process.

The AIC was recognized as a key element of the U.S. Coral Reef Initiative in **Presidential Executive Order 13089** (Clinton 1998) which established the U.S. Coral Reef Task Force (USCRTF) in 1998. USCRTF Resolution 2.1, the Maui Resolution, reaffirmed the role of the AIC. The Executive Order recognized that the existing 1997 U.S. Islands Coral Reef Initiative strategy covered approximately 90 percent of U.S. coral reef ecosystems. The USCRTF includes the 12 federal agencies responsible for coral reef conservation and the governors of the 7 states and territories and 3 freely associated states with coral reefs in their jurisdiction.

The AIC is a stand-alone committee that reports directly to the USCRTF and is a member of the USCRTF Steering Committee. It was established in 1994 by the governor-appointed Points of Contact (POCs) from the U.S. island states, territories and commonwealths of American Samoa, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, Guam, Hawai’i, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. In 2000, Affiliate Members joining the AIC included the freely associated states of the Federated States of Micronesia, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, the Republic of Palau. The State of Florida became a full member in 2007.

The AIC provides leadership for and coordination of strategic initiatives to strengthen the conservation and protection of coral reef ecosystems in the United States and its freely associated states. The AIC implements policies and initiatives to conserve and protect coral reefs, and forms partnerships that strengthen stewardship of U.S. coral reef ecosystems. In 2009, the Committee updated this Strategic Plan and Charter to guide its activities.

AIC Vision and Mission

Vision

By ensuring coordination and cooperation within and among our jurisdictions and partners, we are able to manage and protect coral reef ecosystems and biological diversity for present and future generations to perpetuate cultural, environmental and economic values that are vital to our way of life.

Mission

The mission of the AIC is to continue to foster broad coral reef awareness, establish partnerships, build capacity, and develop policy to support local, national, and international needs to effectively manage coral reefs.

AIC Strategic Plan Top Priorities 2010-2011

At the AIC Leadership Planning retreat in March 2010 in Washington, D.C., the following top 4 priorities were adopted by all POCs:

1. Top Priority: CRCA Reauthorization

Priority Statement:

The AIC will play a leadership role in assuring the passage of legislation reauthorizing the Coral Reef Conservation Act (CRCA). Our work, with others, should guarantee that the CRCA reauthorization (and/or related budgets/spend plans) includes at least \$7 million annually (\$1million per jurisdiction) in funding for coral reef conservation actions in (and managed by) the AIC jurisdictions.

2. Second Priority: Enhanced local capacity building

Priority Statement:

The AIC will work in close, formal partnership with the NOAA Coral Reef Conservation Program to design, manage and complete an assessment of jurisdictional capacities in each of the AIC states and territories. Such an assessment will be linked with a previously completed "priority-setting" project, and with other documents and processes, to produce a clear sense of what is needed for the AIC jurisdictions to effectively protect and conserve coral reef ecosystems.

3. Third Priority: Improve AIC capacity and effectiveness

Priority Statement:

The AIC will develop and begin to finance/ implement a plan to increase the AIC's capacity to fulfill its mission. Such a plan is expected to call for additional staff, contractor and intern assistance at AIC; a more sustained presence in Washington, DC; and the creation of partnerships with additional national and international partners that include significant financial assistance for AIC.

4. Fourth Priority: A more effective voice for local coral reef conservation action, locally developed and locally controlled

As a general rule, the AIC stands for the principle that those who care about the protection of the coral reef ecosystems in our jurisdictions (such as NCRTF agencies) should invest in the local programs and projects which local leaders have determined to be priorities.

AIC “points of contact”, staff and advisors will work to provide a more effective voice to assure that local needs are prioritized in governmental policy, budget and implementation forums.

AIC Strategic Plan - Longer-term Goals

Goal 1. Support each jurisdiction’s ability to define and implement plans and best practices to actively manage our reefs sustainably.

Goal 2. Increase local capacity to manage coral reefs.

Goal 3. Secure funding and capacity to implement coral reef management plans.

Goal 4. Provide leadership to focus the USCRTF to meet our local and regional needs.

Goal 5. Strengthen coral reef management through more effective communication and collaboration among AIC, NOAA, DOI, USCRTF and its Steering Committee, and relevant Congressional delegations.

Goal 6. Share information on reef management and AIC initiatives to foster coordination, nationally, regionally, and internationally.

Goal 7. Increase stakeholder awareness of coral reef issues.

Goal 8. Increase effectiveness of the AIC.

Goals, Strategies and Actions

To address these longer-term goals for improved coral reef management and protection, the AIC has agreed on the following goals, strategies, and projects or actions.

| SHORT- TERM PRIORITIES | STRATEGIES | PROJECTS / ACTIONS (Responsible Parties) | STATUS |
|--|--|---|---------------------------------|
| Priority 1. CRCA Reauthorization | Provide AIC leadership to ensure passage of CRCA Reauthorization Legislation. | Meet with Congressional and Committee staff to highlight jurisdictional needs. | Completed Feb. 2010 |
| | | Work with Congressional and Committee staff to ensure legislation passes in 2010. (POCs, Advisors, Secretariat) | Ongoing |
| | Ensure the Reauthorization includes at least \$7 million annually (\$1 million per jurisdiction) in funding for coral reef management in (and managed by) the jurisdictions. | Provide congressional and committee staff with current information on jurisdictional coral management needs and how the \$7 million increased funding will be used. (POCs, Advisors, Secretariat) | Ongoing |
| Priority 2. Assess Local Capacity needs | Work with NOAA/CRCP to design, manage & complete assessment of jurisdiction capacities. | Participate in capacity assessment methodology workshop with NOAA/CRCP. (POCs, Advisors, Secretariat) | Completed July 2010 |
| | | Continue to work with CRCP to identify capacity needs, gaps, persistent barriers, data gaps. (POCs, Advisors, Secretariat) | |
| Priority 3. Improve AIC Capacity & Effectiveness | Develop, finance and implement a plan to increase AIC's capacity to fulfill its mission. | Assess additional staff needs (contractor, intern) (Advisors, POCs) | |
| | | Create a more sustained presence in Washington, D.C. (Advisors, Secretariat) | |
| | | Create partnerships with additional national & international partners, including significant financial assistance for AIC. (POCs, Advisors, Secretariat) | |
| Priority 4. Provide more effective voice for local coral reef conservation action | Engage USCRTF federal agencies to invest in local programs/projects. | Work with local jurisdictional leaders to determine priority programs/projects. (POCs, Advisors) | Ongoing - NRCS coral initiative |
| | Provide more effective voice to ensure local needs are prioritized in federal agencies policies & budgets. | Coordinate with federal agencies to engage them in jurisdiction programs. (Secretariat, POCs, Advisors) | Ongoing - NRCS coral initiative |
| | | Coordinate more effectively to influence federal agencies' policies and budgets. (Secretariat, POCs, Advisors) | Ongoing - NRCS coral initiative |
| GOALS (Longer term) | STRATEGIES | PROJECTS / ACTIONS (Responsible Parties) | STATUS |
| Goal 1. Support each jurisdiction's ability to define and implement plans and best practices to | Improve communication between scientists and managers, to ensure that coral reef science is driven by local and regional management needs, utilizes traditional | Organize managers/scientists workshop at jurisdictional Task Force meetings (Secretariat, POCs, Advisors & USCRTF) | Ongoing |
| | | Work with the NOAA Science & Statistical Committee to redirect their policies to address manager's needs (Gerry) | |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---------|
| actively manage our reefs sustainably | ecological knowledge, incorporates and strengthens local expertise, includes practical management recommendations and is shared with local communities and resource managers to inform management decision making and assist in designing plans and best practices. | Request Coral Reef Institutes provide information for managers on website (Bob & Mike) | |
| | | Provide policy guidance to National Association of Marine Laboratories (NAML) and other appropriate scientific associations to change their practices to ensure that management needs are included in their research efforts.(Bob) | |
| Goal 2. Increase local capacity to manage coral reefs | Design programs to build capacity in the jurisdictions in areas needed (watersheds, social science, fisheries, etc.). | Work with federal agencies (NOAA, EPA, USDA) to continue support programs that build capacity in the jurisdictions, e.g. coral fellows, IPAs, technical assistance. (Gerry, Secretariat, POC's) | Ongoing |
| | | Work with universities to access student interns. (POCs) | |
| | | Involve POCs in decision-making processes that affect the jurisdictions, e.g. NOAA/CRCP grants process, USDA/NRCS initiatives, CRCA Reauthorization, others. (POCs will talk with their congressional delegates) | Ongoing |
| | | Facilitate development of increased capacity for jurisdictions to manage coral reefs through workshops and training. (Advisors, Committee, federal partners, Secretariat) | |
| | Build coral reef management capacity in education institutions. | Work with education institutions to build coral reef management capacity in jurisdictions. (POCs, Advisors) | Ongoing |
| | Strengthen jurisdictional management and capacity. | Provide input to NOAA/CRCP to develop a capacity assessment framework and methodology to identify gaps and needs in each jurisdiction. (POCs, Committee, Secretariat) | Ongoing |
| | | Work with NOAA to review the priority management plans and capacity assessments for each jurisdiction and provide recommendations to the USCRTF members on how to assist in meeting these identified needs (Secretariat, Committee) | Ongoing |
| | | Look at other alternatives to hire staff e.g. through the Research Corporation of the University of Hawaii (RCUH), instead of direct contracts or on-island government positions. (Committee, Advisors) | Ongoing |
| Identify sources to build capacity through grants, fellowships and other mechanisms. (Secretariat, Committee) | | | |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|--|
| <p>Goal 3. Secure funding and capacity to implement coral reef management plans</p> | <p>Secure sustainable funding for coral reef conservation.</p> | <p>Continue to work with NOAA to be involved in development of the annual coral spend plan. (AIC Chair)</p> | Ongoing |
| | | <p>Inform Congressional delegations annually on AIC funding priorities to influence NOAA and DOI's annual spend plans. (POCs, Advisors Secretariat)</p> | Ongoing |
| | | <p>Continue to reaffirm in the AIC report to the USCRTF the Maui Resolution which mandated that priority be given to AIC for funding - USCRTF Resolution 18-3 reaffirms the Maui Resolution. (Committee, Secretariat -AIC report)</p> | Ongoing |
| | | <p>Build a strategy that engages NGOs and private sector entities in supporting coral reef management. (Secretariat in partnership with Federal partners)</p> | |
| | | <p>Seek other mechanisms for funding/support via alternative grant sources and adoption of LAS projects by federal agencies. (Secretariat and Committee)</p> | Ongoing - NRCS coral initiative |
| | | <p>Seek assistance for, and facilitate the development of, sustainable financing plans including user fees, exit taxes, and other strategies for each jurisdiction. (POCs, with NGOs, NOAA)</p> | Guam/CNMI draft sustainable financing plan completed |
| | | <p>Define a new approach to address funding of infrastructure projects in watersheds to address the Caribbean and Pacific water quality resolutions. (Secretariat, Chair, Committee)</p> | |
| | <p>Identify and characterize funding sources going to natural resources in the Pacific and Caribbean/Atlantic regions that AIC can influence, both on use and allocation. (Gerry)</p> | | |
| <p>Strengthening and building partnerships.</p> | <p>Build a better relationship with NOAA's Pacific Services Center (PSC) and the Coastal Services Center for the Caribbean/Atlantic. (letters from Chair - Secretariat, Advisors)</p> | | |
| <p>Goal 4. Provide leadership to focus the USCRTF to meet our local and regional needs</p> | <p>Sustain active participation of the Committee on USCRTF & regional initiatives.</p> | <p>The AIC will continue to report to the USCRTF and participate in its Steering Committee meetings and calls.(Committee, Secretariat)</p> | Ongoing |
| | | <p>Provide leadership and set the agenda for the USCRTF and its Steering Committee in consultation with other members (Chair, Secretariat)</p> | Ongoing |
| | | <p>Facilitate increased federal agency participation and support of the AIC Strategic Plan (Governors, Chair, Committee, Secretariat)</p> | Ongoing |

| | | | |
|---|---|--|---------|
| | Maximize the U.S. All Islands Committee's position | Encourage Governors to continue to attend the USCRTF meetings and present local/regional initiatives (e.g. AIC Strategic Plan, Micronesia Challenge, 2 Samoas Initiative, Caribbean Challenge) | Ongoing |
| | | Coordinate existing jurisdictional members to encourage new members to participate (POCs, Secretariat) | |
| | Promote effective advocacy and engagement of USCRTF | Identify issues to target federal agencies (POCs) | Ongoing |
| | | Present the updated AIC Strategic Plan to the USCRTF and others to articulate the vision and priorities of the Committee. (Chair to present updated plan to USCRTF) | |
| | | Raise awareness of threats to coral reefs at the national level for action e.g. climate change, ocean acidification, responding to major injury events, coral health and disease, population pressure and over-fishing (Committee, Advisors) | Ongoing |
| | Provide leadership and guidance to federal government agencies on coral reef management | Hold targeted meetings with agencies and provide jurisdiction management plans & priorities to federal agencies (POCs) | Ongoing |
| Ensure that local resource ownership is incorporated into federal planning & implementation processes | Plan a pilot partnership project with DOT or ACOE to more effectively protect reef resources through collaborative interagency initiatives in Caribbean/Atlantic and Pacific regions (Committee, Advisors, Secretariat) | Ongoing | |
| Goal 5. Strengthen coral reef management through more effective communication and collaboration between the AIC and members of the USCRTF and its steering committee, and between the AIC and relevant Congressional delegations | Involve AIC in working groups and decision-making within NOAA. | Arrange for POCs or their staff to be involved in working groups (i.e. climate change, monitoring, mapping, land-based pollution, fisheries, education) (POCs) | Ongoing |
| | | Request NOAA CRCP staff to post main points from working group meetings on USCRTF website & link to AIC website. | |
| | | Involve POCs in decision-making processes that affect the jurisdictions | Ongoing |
| | | Congressional advocacy for CRCA (Mike, Bob, POC's) | Ongoing |
| | Coordinate Committee advocacy | Develop position papers, white papers on key issues of concern. (Chair, Advisors, Secretariat) | Ongoing |
| | | As appropriate, coordinate meetings to update congressional delegations. (Committee, Secretariat) | Ongoing |
| | | As appropriate, work with advocacy partners on key legislation such as the Coastal States Organization & others (Committee, Secretariat, Advisors) | Ongoing |

| | | | |
|---|---|--|---------|
| | | Work with federal agencies that provide majority funding to foster additional support and assistance ,e.g. NOAA, DOI (Committee, Secretariat) | Ongoing |
| | | Work with USCRTF to ensure that protocols and policies are reviewed periodically. (Committee, Secretariat) | |
| | | Develop additional mechanisms to address issues raised during USCRTF meetings. (Committee, Secretariat, NOAA, DOI) | Ongoing |
| | | Develop mechanisms to address recommendations raised by the Chair's report at the USCRTF (Chair, Committee, Secretariat, Advisors) | |
| | | Provide guidance on Steering Committee participation (Chair, Committee) | Ongoing |
| | | Ensure that federal initiatives that are not a part of the USCRTF are not working at cross purposes to the goals and needs of the Committee, especially if they are receiving funds from the Coral Program. (Governors, Committee, Secretariat, Advisors, NOAA, DOI) | |
| | | Work together on improving and streamlining the reporting and information needs of NOAA's Coral Program. (Committee, NOAA, Secretariat) | Ongoing |
| | Continue to improve communication with the USCRTF. | Continue to work with the USCRTF to review the status on Resolutions and assess action, priorities and how they have been addressed, as well as to advocate for additional action on those still to be addressed. (Committee, Secretariat, Steering Committee members) | Ongoing |
| | Develop tools for the Committee to strengthen effective communications with key stakeholders* | Maintain and update the AIC website (Secretariat, Committee) | |
| | | Send out press releases that include main points from the AIC Chair's report after USCRTF meetings (Chair, Secretariat) | Ongoing |
| | | Update informational materials such as brochures (Chair, Secretariat) | |
| Goal 6. Share information on reef management and AIC initiatives to foster coordination, nationally, | Promote research and data sharing across regions | Identify data needs across regions to assist the Committee with management strategies (Committee, Secretariat, Advisors) | |
| | | Develop AIC research questions and agendas to inform researchers on the AIC needs – not just data requirements, but also accessible form and format (Advisors) | |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---------|
| regionally, and internationally | Share technical resources and services across jurisdictions | Invite Coral Reef Institutes to present latest coral reef science to POC's at AIC meetings (Secretariat) | |
| | | Include updates from jurisdiction POCs at AIC meetings including tools and mechanisms. (POCs, Secretariat) | Ongoing |
| | Share strategic planning tools and mechanisms to provide solutions towards successful management of coral reefs. | Invite partners to update AIC on strategic planning tools & mechanisms. (POCs, Committee, federal partners, NGOs, Secretariat) | |
| | | Coordinate with regional bodies and initiatives (Micronesia Challenge, SPREP, Caribbean Challenge, LMMA, Two Samoas Initiative) | Ongoing |
| Facilitate increased regional collaboration and cooperation | Work across the region with key international NGOs addressing coral reef management activities. (Chair, Secretariat) | | |
| | | Ongoing | |
| Goal 7. Increase stakeholder awareness of coral reef issues- need to define stakeholders | Increase stakeholder awareness | Continue to conduct outreach activities and advocacy initiatives with federal partners and NGOs (Secretariat, POCs) | Ongoing |
| | | Hold meetings in Washington, D.C. with key federal agency stakeholders (Secretariat, POCs) | Ongoing |
| | | Disseminate AIC brochures, media/presentation folders (POCs, Secretariat) | Ongoing |
| | | Seek opportunities to engage the media directly in support of the AIC Strategic Plan (Secretariat) | |
| Goal 8. Increase effectiveness of the AIC committee | Conduct regular, periodic reviews of the AIC strategic plan to assess improved coral reef management outcomes | Develop a concept for review of the the AIC's goals, strategies, operations and activities.(POCs) | Ongoing |
| | | Convene an annual AIC retreat.(Secretariat, Chair) | Ongoing |
| | | Hold monthly conference calls (Secretariat, Chair) | Ongoing |
| | Improve coordination of implementation and subsequent evaluation and reporting of AIC Strategic Plan progress to AIC Committee and USCRTF | Report to Chair and POCs, to provide a better understanding of activities progress toward goals and provide recommendations for next steps at AIC meetings, and as needed on monthly conference calls between meetings (Secretariat). | Ongoing |
| | | Develop mechanisms to follow up with partners after meetings with specific deliverables, spreadsheet to track progress, having agency appoint a POC for follow up – (Secretariat, Advisors) | Ongoing |
| | Strengthen AIC Secretariat Organizational Capacity and Governance | Increase AIC Secretariat capacity to include at least two professionals and two student interns to improve coordination with POCs, federal agencies. (Committee, Advisors, | |

| | | | |
|--|--|---|----------------------|
| | | Secretariat) | |
| | | Seek increase in AIC Secretariat funding (Mike & Bob) | |
| | | Clarify roles and expectations of AIC including Sec., Advisors and POCs (POCs with an external Facilitator) | Completed March 2010 |

AIC Funding and Budget

Funding for the AIC Secretariat is provided by contributions from each member jurisdiction, and support from NOAA's Coral Reef Conservation Program. Note: The current budget is \$170,000.

It is proposed that the All Islands Coral Reef Secretariat will secure future funding for FY10-13 from reliable and diverse funding sources in on-going support of the AIC Secretariat and the Committee's activities.

Additional staff support will be required to implement all the strategies identified in this Strategic Plan. This budget is separate from the funding for LAS projects. LAS projects in each jurisdiction are funded by grants from NOAA's Coral Reef Conservation Program and local sources of funding.

Performance Measures

The AIC and its Secretariat, Advisors and partners recognize the importance of assessing and measuring the Committee's achievements over time. The following are some examples of performance areas and measures that may be used:

Performance area #1: Increased management action to conserve coral reefs

Some examples of these performance measures are: developed a Strategic Plan and Charter; established or reviewed legislation, policy, resolutions, rules, regulations or guidelines; implemented best management practices.

Performance area #2: Increased capacity to manage coral reefs

Some examples of these performance measures are: created or filled an essential staff position; provided a management training opportunity or workshop; provided management workshops, retreat or planning meetings; established a new internship program; secured additional funding; created an interagency workgroup or finalized an interagency agreement or MOU with key partner; or formed new partnerships.

Performance area #3: Increased understanding of the reef ecosystem, watershed dynamics, and human dimensions

Some examples of these performance measures are: conducted a social survey, assessment or economic valuation; conducted a targeted research project or study; or gathered and shared information to understand reef issues.

Performance area #4: Increased Stakeholder Awareness of Coral Reef Issues

Some examples of these performance measures are: initiated a new awareness activity or media campaign; established a website and other communications tools; conducted outreach activities, advocacy initiatives; held meetings or workshops with key stakeholders, developed a new school program, curriculum, or teaching materials, or completed an assessment of the effectiveness of the AIC's outreach program.

References

Clinton, W.J. 1998. Executive Order 13089: Coral Reef Protection. The White House, Washington, D.C.

AIC Charter 2007, Amended 2010.