

U.S. All Islands Coral Reef Committee (AIC) Report

**U.S. Coral Reef Task Force Meeting
St. Croix, U.S. Virgin Islands
November 2013**



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AIC 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.

AIC 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.

Cover photo courtesy of J. Brooks.



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FROM THE CHAIR

Hafa adai, Talofa, Aloha, Hola, and Hello,

It is my pleasure, on behalf of the U.S. All Islands Coral Reef Committee (AIC), to present this report on our activities, accomplishments, and emerging issues since we last met in Washington D.C. in February 2013.

Thank you to Governor John P. de Jongh, Jr. for hosting us this week in your beautiful islands, we have truly enjoyed our time here. Welcome to Governor Eloy S. Inos from CNMI, Governor Eddie Baza Calvo from Guam, and Lieutenant Governor Lemanu Peleti Mauga from American Samoa.



Coral reef at Buck Island, USVI. Credit: D. Arnold.

We welcome new Task Force co-chair, Dr. Mark Schaefer, Assistant Secretary for Conservation and Management for NOAA. We look forward to working with him in continuing the good work of the U.S. Coral Reef Task Force in the conservation and protection of our coral reefs.

We also welcome Dr. Ruth Matagi-Tofiga as the new POC for American Samoa and express our gratitude to the previous POC, Lelei Peau. Ruth is the Director of the Department of Marine and Wildlife Resources in American Samoa.

Additionally, the AIC welcomes new Affiliate members, Alissa Takesy (Federated States of Micronesia (FSM) and Minister Umiich Sengebau (Republic of Palau). Alissa is the Assistant Secretary for the Division of Resource Management and Development in FSM's Department of Resources and Development and Umiich is the Minister of Environment, Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources in the Office of the President.

We also welcome Carey Morishige, new Secretariat and Executive director of the U.S. All Islands Coral Reef Committee.

Finally, we are pleased to launch our new AIC website, Facebook page, and AIC Blog. Access all three from our website at <http://allislandscommittee.org/>.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Fran Castro', written over a white background.

Fran Castro
Chair



AIC UPDATES

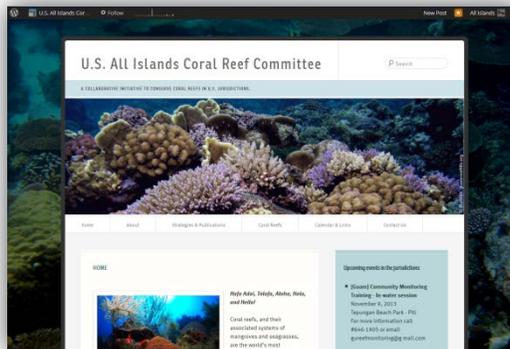


AIC Strategic Plan

AIC Points of Contact agreed to extend the current AIC Strategic Plan (2008-2013) an additional year (2008-2014) to allow for planning time to update the strategic plan for the next five years. Over the next year, the AIC will be working on updating the current strategic plan with input and engagement from AIC all members and Federal coral reef partners.

AIC Outreach and Communications

The AIC announces the launch of its new website – allislandscommittee.org. To supplement the new website, the AIC also launched a Facebook page (www.facebook.com/AllIslandsCommittee) and blog site (allislandscommittee.wordpress.com). The AIC is also updating all of its 1-pagers and handouts. New 1-pagers on the AIC and Local Action Strategies are complete (available at <http://allislandscommittee.org/aboutaic/> and <http://allislandscommittee.org/strategies-publications/strategies/>, respectively) and jurisdictional 1-pagers should be finalized by the February 2014 Task Force meeting.





PROPOSED ESA-LISTING OF CORAL SPECIES

On October 20, 2009 NOAA, National Marine Fisheries was petitioned to list 83 reef building corals by the Center for Biological Diversity. NMFS' 90 day finding determined 82 of the petitioned species to be merited for further review.

After a biological review team completed their assessment in November of 2012, NOAA proposed to list 66 reef building corals. Seven species in the Atlantic-Caribbean and 59 in the Pacific. This was followed by a sequence of public hearing where extensive comments were received. Originally, NOAA extended the target submittal date for the final rule to December of 2013; however this has been extended to June of 2014.

Since the public hearings, extensive published scientific information has become available and this is common in listing processes. However, there are two pieces of information that are recognized as foundational to impacting the proposed listing:

NOAA uses a decision tool for working through the "risk of extinction" for an individual species to first decide if listing is merited and second to decide if they should be listed as Endangered or Threatened. This dichotomous tool needs to be adapted to ensure the selection options do not bias towards selection. One of the major considerations in the original application of the tool was the use of expert opinion as a rubric to evaluating the risk of extinction. This non-linear approach, at the time, seemed merited, but with the new information received, this approach is too subjective to be an acceptable approach. The original application may have resulted in unacceptable bias not consistent with the ESA listing guidance.

Major contributors to this scenario are two key parameters that drive the tool inputs: species distribution and certainty of decision. In the area of distribution, world expert, Dr. Charles Veron, is completing a major eco-regional plan that provides much greater depth in defining coral species range that will be available in December 2013 and greatly improve the analysis of risk. This work is expected to reduce the range of many species and provide improvement in characterizing abundance.

The second major piece of science is the Fifth Assessment Report "Climate Change 2013," by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, which represents the most current accumulation of climate change data available in the United States. This report recognizes that the certainty of prediction for climate change is limited, at a maximum, to the next 50 years. The proposed listing was based on a "foreseeable future" of 2100 based on what was previously felt to be a reasonable level of certainty. This makes the uncertainty of the predicted risk of extinction outside acceptable confidence intervals and merits recalculation. While the original effort used the best available science and approach thought to be reasonable at the time, the significance of these two pieces of science and prudence in finding the most merited process requires reanalysis and reformatting the effort.

The AIC has expressed significant concern over many facets of the proposed listing. In this case, the AIC is encouraging NOAA to adapt the decision tool to address the uncertainty of decision as well as incorporating the important science attributed to Veron's work and the Climate Change 2013 report.



CORAL REEF INSTITUTES

The mission of the Coral Reef Institutes is to provide regionally-located centers for excellence for management-relevant coral reef research. This construct is focused on research expertise that provides relevant science to address priority management needs.

The Institutes have been engaged in building baseline information, gathering site-specific and issue-specific information for management since 1998. In this process, information has been collected and evaluated, often in collaboration with national and international partners and funding agencies. The results of this work have already positively impacted the nation's ability to determine the status of its coral reefs, emerging trends, and science key to specific management needs. The success of this effort is intended to service all U.S. areas with tropical coral reefs.

Presently, there are Institutes located in Florida (National Coral Reef Institute (NCRI)), Puerto Rico (Caribbean Coral Reef Institute (CCRI)), Hawai'i (Hawaii Coral Reef Initiative Research Program (HICRI)) and Guam (Western Pacific Coral Reef Institute (WPCRI)). Each of these programs is providing critical research capacity and support to management entities and partners in their respective areas. However, at the national level there are some gaps that could benefit from expanding the geographical scope of the existing Institutes.

The U.S. All Islands Coral Reef Committee (AIC) has, over the years, expressed interest in and support for the Institutes and their management linkages. The AIC also recognizes that some jurisdictions benefit from the Institutes more than others. This factor has limited the AIC's ability to collectively support and advocate for the Institutes, which has limited effective fundraising opportunities across federal government programs. The AIC recognizes the value, need, and opportunity the Institutes represent for coral reef management. However, the AIC recognizes that the Committee is most effective when operating by consensus and seeks to elevate the Institute presence across the jurisdictions. To do this the first step is to characterize the status of the Institute engagement in each jurisdiction and then identify a strategy to address gaps.



The following table characterizes the AIC view of existing Institute coverage within the respective jurisdictions and suggested actions.

American Samoa	Possibly HCRI	Presently, American Samoa does not have an Institute focused on delivering management focused information.	The POC from American Samoa, facilitator, and HCRI meet to discuss if this service could be provided. This discussion needs to include considerations for the community college and eventual marine laboratory .
CNMI	Possibly WPCRI	Presently, CNMI does not have an Institute focused on delivering management focused information.	The POC from CNMI, facilitator, and WPCRI meet to discuss if this service could be provided. This discussion needs to include considerations for the community college
Florida	NCRI	Florida has an Institute located within the jurisdiction and the State Government is very pleased with this partnership.	no action
Guam	WPCRI	Guam has an Institute located within the jurisdiction and the Territorial Government is very pleased with this partnership.	no action
Hawaii	HCRI	Florida has an Institute located within the jurisdiction and the State Government is very pleased with this partnership.	no action
Puerto Rico	CCRI	Puerto Rico has an Institute located within the jurisdiction and the Commonwealth Government is increasingly pleased with this partnership but would like to see a stronger partnership.	The POC, facilitator, and CCRI meeting to identify a strategy on how to improve this partnership.
USVI	Possibly CCRI	Presently, USVI does not have an Institute focused on delivering management focused information.	The POC from USVI, facilitator, and CCRI meet to discuss if this service could be provided. This discussion needs to include considerations for the community college

The AIC Secretariat will coordinate with the POCs to identify the respective individuals that need to meet and set up a time to meet. The facilitator will then capture the outcome of each meeting to be added to this working document. Once all jurisdictions have reached an acceptable target status, an AIC strategy will should be developed to further advocate the use of the Institutes to fill research gaps for coral reef management.



HABITAT BLUEPRINT

The NOAA Habitat Blueprint Initiative is a regionally-developed ecosystem (watershed) initiative in a NOAA Habitat Focus Area (s) that will enable programs to share knowledge and expertise and focus limited resources in places where activities can address multiple habitat objectives. A major justification for this effort is to develop a National NOAA Habitat effort that demonstrates both value and accomplishment to Congress to highlight the importance of Habitat management in the long term success in managing ocean resources. Targeting habitat conservation in these Focus Areas also maximizes the return on investment of taxpayer dollars and increases the likelihood of successfully achieving the desired habitat results through demonstrating tangible, measurable progress. The target is to select sites and efforts that yield measurable, meaningful conservation improvements in three to five years. While a NOAA initiative, this applies a multi-partner framework where stakeholders are engaged in building the concept and participating in the implementation.

In the Pacific, the site selection process recognized that there are many multi-partner conservation initiatives already underway in the Region. These became the initial candidate sites as it is clear that it will be best for NOAA to bring added capacity to existing efforts that have already developed management plans and engaged stakeholders. This is a delicate balance in supporting ongoing efforts while finding new ways for NOAA to contribute and get credit. The Habitat Blueprint effort does not have new money, but demonstrated in the first application, in the California Russian River effort, that funds can be leveraged from partners and existing funds can be reprioritized to obtain outcomes.

The Pacific Region completed a 9 month effort that led to a workshop with partner engagement where NOAA has proposed Regional focus areas. This proposal is in the final stages of Agency clearance before announcing the site(s) and going out to partners and working together to build an implementation strategy. This approach will be built out in each of the six NOAA Regions and is in the beginning phases in the Southeast Region.

One exciting aspect of this effort is that there were great opportunities in all the Pacific Island jurisdictions and NOAA was pained that they could not just work with all sites. However, those sites that were not selected will be included in learning exchanged with the site(s) selected to help build local capacity. The Pacific effort worked across 13 NOAA programs, all the NOAA line office in the Region, and included engagement by 65 stakeholders, including representation across all four island jurisdictions in the Region. The Pacific Islands effort was co-chaired by Kristina Kekuewa (Pacific Services Center, NOS), Malia Chow (Hawaiian Islands Humpback Whale National Marine Sanctuary, NOS) and Gerry Davis (Habitat Conservation, NMFS).

THE MICRONESIA CHALLENGE AND CARIBBEAN CHALLENGE

Micronesia Challenge

The Micronesia Challenge (MC) was featured as a plenary panel at the **27th Pacific Islands Environment Conference**, held in Guam June 26-28, 2013. Presentations also included updates on measures and progress to date, sustainable finance efforts, and a concrete example of MC implementation in Palau.

The **Micronesia Challenge Communications Working Group** met in August to review the 2008 MC Communications Plan, identify local communications linkages, and deliberate on finalizing a regional MC Communication strategy and framework. The group also published a new fact sheet, themed



"Celebrating Seven Years of Progress". The fact sheet highlights the substantial progress and accomplishments of the MC over the last seven years and is available at https://docs.google.com/file/d/1SWUQge5_mHC1wtPNPnJRb1DGmgTuK1fk_pTghHotNn8yn5rus4OmJd-yA9FF/edit.

In early September, during the 2013 Pacific Islands Forum, Conservation International provided \$500K to the Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI) and The Nature Conservancy (TNC) provided \$500K to the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), as part of their initial pledges of \$3 million each to the MC Endowment Fund. The **MC Endowment Fund** now stands at over \$13 million. The Micronesia Conservation Trust, with support from the Australia Agency for International Development and TNC, is finalizing a **Micronesia Challenge Business Plan** anticipated to be endorsed at the Micronesia Chief Executives Summit in Saipan in December.

Socio-economic leads for the MC Measures Working Group developed a document entitled, "**Indicators for Monitoring Social Impacts of the Micronesia Challenge: An Addendum to SEM-Pasifika Regional Socioeconomic Monitoring Guidelines.**" The document resulted from the First MC Socioeconomic Workshop, held in Palau in August 2012. At this meeting, representatives from all of the MC jurisdictions came together to identify a common set of indicators focused on key aspects of human well-being. The guide was launched at the SEM-Pasifika workshop held in Kosrae in September 2013.

In addition to progress made on socio-economic indicators, the marine ecological leads for the **MC Measures Working Group** have collected baseline data on agreed upon regional marine ecological indicators in nearly all of the main islands in Micronesia and have begun populating a centralized MC database.

Finally, the U.S. Forest Service is working with Micronesia partners to incorporate regional terrestrial indicators into **Forest Inventory and Assessments (FIAs)** that will be conducted in the region in the next several years.

For more information you can visit <http://www.micronesiachallenge.org/> or contact Ms. Vangie Lujan, Chair of the MC Steering Committee at vange.lujan@bsp.guam.gov.

Caribbean Challenge Initiative

Launched in 2008, the Caribbean Challenge Initiative (CCI) currently involves eight participating countries and territories that have committed to: 1) to protect and effectively manage at least 20% of the marine and coastal environment of the Caribbean and 2) to create and implement fully functioning sustainable finance mechanisms that will provide long-term and reliable funding to conserve and sustainably manage the marine and coastal resources and the environment in each participating country and territory by 2020. The 8 governments currently participating include: Bahamas, British Virgin Islands (BVI), Grenada, Jamaica, Puerto Rico, St. Kitts & Nevis, St. Lucia and St. Vincent & the Grenadines.

The inaugural **Caribbean Summit of Political and Business Leaders**, held May 17-18 in the British Virgin Islands, brought together 15 Caribbean governments and 17 corporations from across the region and resulted in a commitment of \$75 million and immediate action to protect the region's marine environment and accelerate renewable energy. Specific areas for further work included: 1) the creation of protection for sharks and rays across the whole Caribbean region with the aim of creating a region-wide sanctuary within two years, 2) establishing a clear regulatory framework that delivers a systemic



and regional approach to conservation of the marine and coastal environment, and 3) acceleration in the transition to alternative energy sources over the next five years. As part of the effort to create new funding sources for effective Marine Protected Area management, through partnering with public and private sectors, a new entity was created to function as a regional endowment.

The **Caribbean Biodiversity Fund (CBF)**, currently at \$42 million, continues to ramp up to support for protected area management through eventual annual disbursements to national protected area trust funds. The CBF is currently funded by the German Development Bank, Global Environment Facility, and The Nature Conservancy. The CBF will be ready to disburse funds to National Protected Area Trust Funds in the near future.

Additionally, during the Summit, a new consumer oriented campaign, entitled **Defend Paradise**, was launched by The Nature Conservancy and GOOD Corps, in partnership with Royal Caribbean Cruise Lines Ltd, KOR Water, and Guy Harvey Sportswear. The campaign is designed to generate funding for marine conservation in the Caribbean and raise consumer awareness of the marine environment.

For more information visit <http://www.nature.org/ourinitiatives/regions/caribbean/defend-paradise-to-protect-caribbean.xml> and <http://www.nature.org/ourinitiatives/regions/caribbean/caribbean-summit.xml>.

NOAA-TNC CORAL REEF COOPERATIVE AGREEMENT

NOAA Coral Reef Conservation Program (CRCP) recently approved a new 2-year partnership agreement with The Nature Conservancy (TNC) to support shared goals of effectively conserving valuable coral reef ecosystems through on-the-ground implementation activities, conservation science and planning, and measuring success. This agreement builds upon the work completed in the current partnership between NOAA and the Conservancy supporting the efforts of coral reef managers in all AIC jurisdictions to protect and sustainably manage their coral reefs. The work in each region will focus on supporting the implementation of local action strategies through sharing scientific expertise, transferring knowledge and skills, and building capacity of coral reef practitioners. Another goal of the proposal is to leverage the activities conducted in these priority geographies throughout other key coral reef regions, including the Micronesia Challenge and AIC Affiliate jurisdictions (the Marshall Islands, Palau, and the Federated States of Micronesia) and the Caribbean Challenge jurisdictions through planned exchanges and capacity-building efforts, supported by TNC's global Reef Resilience program efforts, to increase the effectiveness and overall reach of the domestic work accomplished under this proposal.

JURISDICTIONAL CAPACITY ASSESSMENTS

NOAA's Coral Reef Conservation Program (CRCP) is investing in capacity assessment efforts to build more sustainable coral reef conservation communities in partnership with the AIC jurisdictions. NOAA CRCP contracted Sustainamatrix to conduct jurisdictional capacity assessments (CAs) to identify technical and management capacity gaps in each of the jurisdictions and provide recommendations to understand the capacity gaps in the local agencies with the responsibility to manage coral reefs. Sustainamatrix conducted a site visit to interview key stakeholders in Florida in late October (21-25). Florida is the last of the seven AIC jurisdictions to be completed. Draft capacity assessments are undergoing final review by the jurisdictions and NOAA CRCP in both Guam and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands while Hawaii's CA is nearly complete. Capacity assessments in American Samoa, Puerto Rico, and U.S. Virgin Islands are completed. Once all CAs are finalized, NOAA CRCP and



Sustainamatrix will create and distribute a synthesis document of the findings from all jurisdictions. The AIC is in communication with NOAA CRCP on the status of the CAs and final synthesis document.

UPDATES FROM AIC JURISDICTIONS

American Samoa

CROWN OF THORNS STARFISH OUTBREAK

In recent months, American Samoa has noted an alarming number of Crown of Thorns Starfish in some reef areas in the Territory. Since our report in February, the population of Crown of Thorns has grown, and they are now being found all the way around Tutuila. Local agencies are working together to respond to this threat to our reefs. The Assessment and Rapid Reef Response Plan has been activated in American Samoa, and multiple agencies are working together to survey territorial waters and also to coordinate COTS removals. The territory is actively working to manage this threat, but knows this will be a long term risk to coral reefs.

The American Samoa delegation would like to reiterate the need to have a coral reef disaster and emergency fund to deal with similar issues. It is difficult for us to mobilize funds, and therefore we have not been able to conduct removal efforts in some areas with large COTS populations.

TWO SAMOA MARINE MANAGED AREAS WORKSHOP

In August, the Two Samoa's hosted a Marine Managed Area workshop, with support from TNC and SPREP. This week long workshop brought essential staff in marine management from the entire Archipelago to discuss resilience and MPA design to support better management in the face of climate change.

Outcomes from this workshop include identification of data gaps and needs, potential collaborative research projects on ocean circulation and mapping, and collaborative messaging for No take MPA outreach.

FAGA'ALU WATERSHED

Since the USCRTF meeting in American Samoa, the Community of Faga'alu has been actively working to do their part to restore the watershed. They are working closely with local agencies to implement the goals developed in the Community Based Watershed Management Plan, including recycling and trash programs.

Two Sunia Interns assisted with projects in the watershed this past summer. The Interns contributed to ongoing scientific research, helped determine the site for a future rain garden, and assisted with ongoing education and outreach projects.

We appreciate the support of various federal agencies in the initiatives to solve the problems in the Faga'alu watershed and in developing a model of multi-agency collaboration in dealing with the quarry and other sources of pollution. American Samoa looks forward to further collaborations with all our partners to help us expand our efforts in other watersheds that need intervention to protect our coral reef resources from sedimentation, nutrient loading and other threats.



Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands

BLEACHING EVENT

In CNMI, concerned community members reported that coral bleaching was occurring in our lagoon. During a previous event, roughly 10 years ago, the staghorn patch reefs within Saipan's Lagoon were heavily bleached and some patches suffered major mortality. Consequently, the monitoring team quickly focused on resurveying established staghorn monitoring sites, mostly composed of *Acropora muricata*. At this point we have surveyed four of our staghorn sites. On occasions we have revisited these sites. Interestingly enough some reefs seem to be recovering while others are suffering mortality.

At present, we are studying the bleaching in the northern lagoon and have tagged 59 colonies. These colonies are visited at least once every two weeks. During these visits we track the degree of bleaching with the Coral Watch coral square. This study began on August 13, 2013. At the start of this study we also deployed a YSI Sonde to characterize the water quality. When the YSI was retrieved, the highest temperature found was greater than 33 degrees Celsius, higher than the normal 26 degree Celsius. Also, water temperatures between day and night were greater than 3 degrees difference. We are also collaborating with the University of Guam Marine Lab to conduct a spatial assessment of the bleaching event by assessing up to 30 sites in CNMI.

CNMI CLIMATE CHANGE WORKING GROUP

In 2013 members of the CNMI Climate Change Working Group developed geospatial data and visualizations for nine different sea level rise/coastal flooding scenarios in the CNMI. These scenarios are serving as a baseline for the assessment of climate change vulnerabilities on the island of Saipan. In addition, a social vulnerability index was also developed to assess potential socio-economic sensitivities among Saipan's villages, and enhance the vulnerability assessment. We also surveyed over 400 CNMI residents on the islands of Saipan and Tinian to gauge general levels of Climate Change literacy & understandings in the CNMI.

Next steps for the group is to work on upcoming funded projects include the expansion of the Vulnerability Assessment to the islands of Tinian and Rota, additional surveys and analysis on the island of Rota, and an education/outreach campaign to communicate results of the Vulnerability Assessment.

GARAPAN WATERSHED CONSERVATION ACTION PLAN

We have recently completed a conservation action plan for the Garapan watershed. The plan is a 2-5 year workplan for watershed restoration activities to maintain and improve the valuable natural resources that exist in the West Takpochao Central subwatershed. It will also help to coordinate efforts between stakeholders to provide the most benefits to the natural resources and the community that uses them. Currently, over 30 partner organizations are assisting with implementation of the Conservation Action Plan.

We will begin by identifying sources of pollution and habitat degradation in the Garapan watershed, and educate community members and visitors to become stewards of the watershed. Key targets identified for monitoring or restoration include water quality, wetlands and mangroves, urban greenspace, upland forests, turtles, food fish, invertebrates, marine benthic habitat and beaches.



MICRONESIA CHALLENGE

Our regional support team members from the Micronesia Conservation Trust (MCT) and the Nature Conservancy Micronesia Program recently visited Governor Inos in Saipan to encourage opportunities to build the CNMI's endowment which will address CNMI's sustainable financing needs.

Florida

STAGHORN CORAL OUTPLANTS USED TO STUDY EFFECT OF CORAL DENSITY ON FISH AND INVERTEBRATE POPULATIONS.

In a collaborative coral reef ecosystem restoration project, The Nature Conservancy (TNC), Mote Marine Laboratory, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC), the University of Miami, Nova Southeastern University, and The Coral Restoration Foundation are outplanting nursery grown staghorn corals at two different densities on reefs in the Florida Keys to evaluate the effect of coral density on fish and invertebrate populations. Research partners will survey outplant sites for several years to observe changes in reef fish and invertebrate population structure as the corals grow and create more complex essential fish habitat.

FLORIDA'S LOCAL ACTION STRATEGY, THE SOUTHEAST FLORIDA CORAL REEF INITIATIVE (SEFCRI), OFFICIALLY KICKS OFF THE *OUR FLORIDA REEFS* COMMUNITY PLANNING PROCESS.

This June, Florida's LAS, the Southeast Florida Coral Reef Initiative (SEFCRI), officially kicked off a new stakeholder-driven process to develop recommendations on management options for the northern third of the Florida Reef Tract. The *Our Florida Reefs* Community Planning Process began with a series of community meetings throughout the southeast Florida region. These meetings were held to inform the public about SEFCRI's past and ongoing work, discuss the need for developing new management options, and explain ways that Community members could get involved.

Two Community Working Groups composed of agency and non-agency stakeholder representatives will begin meeting in January. A spatial analysis decision support tool is being developed to aid the Working Groups in using complex coral, fish, water, and human use data to inform the development of management options. Once a draft list of recommendations is complete, a second set of Community Meetings will be held to share them with the broader public to get initial feedback. Final recommendations will be submitted to the appropriate agencies, and their implementation will guide the development of a comprehensive management strategy for southeast Florida's coral reefs.

Guam

COORDINATING BLEACHING SURVEYS DATA COLLECTION

Guam is actively coordinating bleaching surveys to determine the extent and severity of bleaching around the island. We are especially concerned about important stands of staghorn *Acropora* corals, but multiple species around the island have been affected. Initial qualitative assessments around Guam have been completed at five sites on the east coast, seven sites on the west coast, and both the northern and southern tips. Quantitative surveys have begun to assess a suite of sites around Guam and will continue as long as weather permits. Along with the surveys the Guam Bleaching Response plan is also in review.

LONG TERM MONITORING PROGRAM

The Long Term Monitoring Program has a new relationship with the University of Guam's (UOG) Western Pacific Coral Reef Institute. The program will be formally transferred to UOG this fall. One



project the program has continued is the mapping of ecologically important staghorn *Acropora* patches around Guam, as evidence suggests they are decreasing in number and size. Biologists will also continue to monitor Guam's reefs, to assist the Community Coral Reef Monitoring Program, and to engage in new efforts such as SECORE, the Sexual Coral Reef Reproduction project. A SECORE workshop was held this summer with UOG Marine Lab, Underwater World, and other partners.

GUAM CORAL REEF MANAGEMENT FELLOW

Fellow Roxanna Miller is working on the analysis of coral data from 2010 through 2013. She assists the Long-term Monitoring Program coordinator with coral reef monitoring, staghorn *Acropora* mapping, coral bleaching surveys, and the program's transition to UOG. She has also been working with many local and federal partners and continues to present at schools, community events and other venues to promote coral conservation. She has also been active in contributing articles to the PROA newsletter, the Man, Land, and Sea newsletter, and the Micronesia Challenge blog concerning coral reef-related conservation, news, and events.

WATERSHED MANAGEMENT

The Community Watershed work has grown to include an updated Conservation Action Plan for Manell-Geus, work with Humatak Community Foundation and Guam student Austin Shelton on the Fouha Watershed. The Manell-Geus work includes strong community partnerships and a renewed focus on community partnerships to improve both conservation and community well-being.

OUTREACH

We are involved in a new partnership with a Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) coordinating group. We are working with the group to align content with education standards and to develop lesson plans for service learning projects, ranging from watershed conservation work to in-water activities. These efforts will improve coral outreach by helping teachers make science more accessible and more interesting

MICRONESIA CHALLENGE

The Guam Hotel and Restaurant Association has partnered with the Guam MC to raise funds for on the ground restoration projects.

Hawai'i

WAHIKULI-HONOKOWAI PRIORITY WATERSHED

In the Wahikuli and Honokowai watersheds, our Coordinator, Tova Callender, has been working hard with agency partners and community members to pilot best management practices to manage sediment and nutrient inputs. This has included a rain garden demonstration workshop at a public park, a community planting project at a high-erosion coastal cemetery, and a Birthday Bash for the Kahekili Herbivore Enhancement Area. SeaWeb has been working with Tova to kick off the West Maui Kumuwai Campaign in partnership with the many great projects; West Maui Kumuwai is a social marketing campaign aimed at educating the community about their role in watershed management and the importance of responsible land practices in protect coral reef ecosystems.

SOUTH KOHALA PARTNERSHIP

We welcomed Sierra Tobiason, our South Kohala Partnership Coordinator, in July and she has been busy engaging community members and partners to raise awareness of the goals and projects of the Conservation Action Plan completed last year. She has participated in many outreach events and is now



working with land-owners and community members to implement a broad range of best management practices including invasive species fishing tournaments, ungulate removal and re-vegetation of coastal lands, and research to better understand the primary threats to coastal ecosystems.

Investigations have also begun looking at interactions between nutrients and coral in the area and ocean user outreach continues through the Makai Watch Program. Recently, the roi round-up engaged fishers in removing alien fish from the area.

RAPID RESPONSE CONTINGENCY PLAN FOR CORAL BLEACHING DISEASE, AND CROWN OF THORNS OUTBREAKS

One of the important tasks of the Hawaii Coral Fellow, Anne Rosinski, has been coordinating implementation of the Hawai`i Rapid Response Contingency Plan for Coral Bleaching Disease, and Crown of Thorns Outbreaks (RRCP). This has entailed building and updating a database of community reports, supporting the assessment and reporting of a significant coral disease outbreak on the island of Kaua`i including preparing internal communications and public outreach materials, and most recently planning and facilitating a 2 day workshop to build island-based assessment teams and to address key management needs.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND EMPOWERMENT

The Department of Land and Natural Resources welcomed both a Makai Watch Coordination and Community-based Subsistence Fishing Area (CBSFA) Planner this summer. Our CBSFA Planner is building the administrative structure within the department to help us efficiently and effectively engage with communities who wish to implement place-based fishing rules. So far at least 5 communities have expressed strong interest or have already proposed rule packages to the department. A Strategic Plan for the Makai Watch program was completed earlier this year and the Coordinator, our previous Coral Fellow, Luna Kekoa, is tasked with implementing the strategy in coordination with engaged communities.

Puerto Rico

EDUCATION AND OUTREACH AT MONA ISLAND NATURAL RESERVE TO PROMOTE IMPLEMENTATION AND COMPLIANCE OF FISHERIES REGULATION

This project promoted the management and conservation of coral reef fish populations at Mona Island Natural Reserve, by improving compliance with fisheries regulations through an educational campaign.

Main outcomes and project deliverables were the following:

- Produced an educational short video, currently available on YouTube. Called “Reserva Marina Isla de Mona y Monito” and available at http://youtu.be/_9xwv90Ngho.
-
- Conducted 173 visitor surveys at Mona Island.
- Distributed 200 copies of educational materials to visitors at Mona Island.
- Mona Island fisheries regulation fact-sheet provided for camping permits.
- Visited 25 businesses during the off-site educational campaign.
- Delivered over 300 educational materials to stakeholders and businesses.
- Case-study analysis of interventions for fisheries regulations at Mona Island; 4 interventions were made on illegal fishing activities
- Uploading of no-take zone boundaries on GPS units used by DNER Rangers.

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- Rangers' surveillance and patrolling increased after the project.

EDUCATIONAL PSAS ON LIONFISH AND ON LAND-BASED SOURCES OF POLLUTION

Two public service announcements (PSA) have been developed and have enjoyed widely acceptance among social media. One of the PSA is an animated singing chef that teaches the importance of controlling lionfish populations and how to properly manage and cook the species. The second PSA is a brown pelican, called "Chana," who is very upset with land-based sources of pollution and uses Puerto Rican *Plena* music to provoke people to act against pollution. Both videos are available on YouTube at:

- "Limpiando el Agua con la Pelicana Chana" - http://youtu.be/olRzf9GU_nU
- "Chef Volitans y el Pez León" - <http://youtu.be/OEVwEUtGASM>

CORAL FARMING FORUMS

On April 25 and September 11, 2013, the Department of Natural and Environmental Resources' (DNER) Coral Program organized two forums that promoted the participation of every organization working with coral farming throughout Puerto Rico. This venue provided the space for a participative dialogue among community-based organizations, scientists, academia, and DNER. These forums will continue to be scheduled on a regular basis to promote discussion and to share information and techniques that can advance coral restoration efforts throughout Puerto Rico.

U.S. Virgin Islands

BUILDING ENFORCEMENT CAPACITY

In collaboration with NOAA Fisheries through support from the NOAA Coral Reef Conservation Program (NOAA CRCP), the USVI is in its third year of a project designed to increase enforcement capacity in the Territory. The project has provided professional development opportunities to environmental enforcement officers and marine park rangers, including training in SCUBA, fish identification, and best management practices to minimize land-based sources of pollution. Upcoming opportunities through the project include training and staff exchanges with Florida's Department of Environmental Protection and National Marine Sanctuaries.

WATERSHED MANAGEMENT EFFORTS

Efforts to address impacts to adjacent coastal areas are ongoing in several of the priority watershed areas of the USVI, including St. Thomas East End Reserves, Coral Bay, and St. Croix East End Marine Park.

The St. Thomas East End Reserves (STEER) were identified as a priority area for management in 2008; in 2012 STEER was adopted into the National System of MPAs. A number of priority activities identified in the STEER management plan are being pursued, including the creation of a watershed management plan, the purchase and installation of marker buoys, and a human uses map. In collaboration with the University of the Virgin Islands (UVI) and NOAA, contaminant investigations are being conducted that have already yielded data on TBT (tributyltin) levels. These investigations will provide additional information on the depth of the contamination (history) through core sample analysis as well as characterizing contamination of the groundwater by establishing groundwater monitoring wells. In collaboration with TNC, a *willingness to pay* survey of STEER users (resident and visitor) was conducted and revealed that there are those who are willing to pay for the conservation of the resources; however, those who were less likely to invest in STEER attributed their decision to a perceived lack of enforcement and any resulting benefits. Recommendations include the need for additional outreach and education, which will partially be satisfied by the newly established STEER website (<http://steer.reefconnect.org/>) and a voluntary mechanism to collect donations.



In **Coral Bay**, the Coral Bay Community Council and partners at the University of the Virgin Islands, University of California San Diego and NOAA have been tracking the results of the ARRA-funded sediment mitigation projects on water quality. Turbidity and sediment monitoring is occurring in both the ghuts and the bay for both pre- and post-best management practice installation to quantify reductions in land-based sediments and the effectiveness of the BMPs.

In the watersheds adjacent to the **St. Croix East End Marine Park**, partners from the St. Croix Environmental Association, Division of Coastal Zone Management, Horsley-Witten Group, the USDA's Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) and watershed residents completed detailed designs for the stabilization and restoration of a mass-wasting gut (seasonal waterway) and installed a rain garden public demonstration project utilizing funding made available by NRCS.

“DON'T STOP TALKING FISH” INITIATIVE

The USVI Fisheries Management Liaison has been working to further the USVI fisheries LAS through an overarching initiative called, *Don't Stop Talking Fish*. The initiative has been designed to celebrate and communicate the cultural significance of the USVI fishing industry and to bridge the gap between the Territory's traditional fishing heritage and regulatory realities. The initiative has received partial support through CRCP and will be leveraging partnerships with DPNR, UVI and local NGOs.

STXEEMP WATERSHED STEWARDSHIP GROUP

The USVI Coral Reef Management Fellow has facilitated the development of, and provided coordination for, a watershed stewardship group for the areas upland of the St. Croix East End Marine Park. The watershed group complements the pre-existing Friends of the St. Croix East End Marine Park and is intended to serve as a vehicle to raise awareness of LBSP and its effects on park waters and the adjacent MPA, Buck Island Reef National Monument as well as assist in the implementation of recommendations in the management plan that was created for the watersheds of St. Croix's east end. Efforts are being made to facilitate information sharing between established watershed groups such as the Coral Bay Community Council and the fledgling St. Croix east end watershed group to build local capacity to implement these watershed management plans.

UPDATES FROM AIC AFFILIATE JURISDICTIONS

Federated States of Micronesia

NATIONAL: The FSM national government and the Micronesia Conservation Trust (MCT) are working together to secure accreditation for MCT to become a National Implementing Entity for the Climate Adaptation Fund under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change.

STATES:

- **Chuuk:** The Chuuk Conservation Society, in partnership with the Department of Marine Resources (DMR) recently launched the Parem Island Pride Campaign. Curtis Graham, Rare Pride campaign manager, shared an overview of the program of activities with the community, unveiled the Parem MPA billboard, and introduced the Greenhead Parrotfish mascot.
- **Kosrae:** Kosrae conservation officers underwent enforcement training to improve their field skills and learn more about legal aspects of enforcement of conservation laws. The training was conducted by a team of trainers from Guam and sponsored by the Pacific Islands Managed and Protected Areas Community (PIMPAC).



- **Pohnpei:** Conservation Society of Pohnpei, Micronesia Conservation Trust, Rare, and The Nature Conservancy are working with the Municipal leadership in Netts to develop a water fund for the municipality, which provides the majority of drinking water to the capital of Kolonia. Kolonia residents will pay a half cent extra per gallon on their water bills to support watershed management activities in Netts to ensure their water security.
- **Yap:** Yap Community Action Program (YapCAP) and the Yap Marine Resources and Management Division collaborated for the first time to recruit and train community representatives to participate in the State Coral Reef Monitoring Program.

Republic of the Marshall Islands

“FACILITATOR’S GUIDE TO IMPLEMENTING THE REIMAAANLOK CONSERVATION PLANNING PROCESS”

The Field Guide was developed to fill the need for a conservation area planning framework and *“develop principles, process, and guidelines for the design, establishment, and management of conservation areas that are fully owned, led, and endorsed by local communities based on their needs, values, and cultural heritage.”* This step-by-step guide includes management tools and examples that will help facilitators establish resource management plans and community-based conservation areas that consider current and future trends (including climate change), locally and globally, that affect the islands’ resources and their sustainability. We believe it is the most comprehensive community-based conservation tool available today. The Guide is published and available online at http://seagrant.soest.hawaii.edu/sites/seagrant.soest.hawaii.edu/files/publications/reimaanlok_fieldguide.pdf.

FOURTH MARINE CONSERVATION CERTIFICATE PROGRAM

This year there were 29 participants in the program, representing 17 different atolls, and 21 completed the entire course. The three week course went from 8am-5pm every day and included field trips, lectures, and activities by experts in various fields. This year’s course also included an Enforcement Certificate Program, presented by Guam Law Enforcement Officers, effective resource management, community engagement, and disaster risk management. Due to the increased difficulty in traveling to outer islands, it is necessary to train agency and local outer islanders to be able to work in conservation areas. This program is designed to build that capacity within local conservation resource and agency people. The goal of the program is to have trained personnel able to educate others, monitor and collect data, and the enforce regulations. The course has been offered yearly since 2009.

“LANDOWNER’S GUIDE TO COASTAL PROTECTION”

The Landowner’s Guide is a recent publication on options for coastal protection on low-lying atolls of the Marshall Islands. Communities and government agencies face difficult decisions with respect to shoreline erosion and need an easily understandable framework for exploring soft and hard methods of mitigating impacts related to sea level rise. The guide is being integrated into ridge-building and re-vegetation in two communities to date and has been embraced by implementing agencies as well as senior government and traditional leaders. Fundamental to the guide is an understanding that healthy coral reefs are the first line of defense in shoreline protection efforts. The Guide is published and available online at <http://seagrant.soest.hawaii.edu/sites/seagrant.soest.hawaii.edu/files/publications/lowres.-shorelineguide.pdf>.



PROTECTED AREA NETWORK (PAN) LEGISLATION

The drafted PAN legislation will encourage and support local governments and communities in the designation of new protected areas as well as better enable the national government to assist the local governments and communities by providing technical assistance, granting funds, creating programs and facilitating cooperation. Until now, local governments and communities have designated protected areas, but there has been no system by which the national government recognized these areas or assisted in identifying, designating, and maintaining these areas.

ESTABLISHMENT OF A CLIMATE CHANGE CERTIFICATE PROGRAM AT THE COLLEGE OF THE MARSHALL ISLANDS

This program will be piloted at the College of the Marshall Islands and then extended to the region. The program is aimed at elementary school teachers and resource managers and will be a 24 credit program to them how to teach climate change science, climate impacts, and adaptation. An integral part of the courses is the incorporation of traditional knowledge. This program is being funded by a grant through Pacific Resources for Education and Learning and the National Science Foundation.

Republic of Palau

ADAPTIVE MANAGEMENT

The Palau Protected Areas Network (PAN) in collaboration with the Palau Conservation Society conducted a second round of trainings on reporting and adaptive management for site managers and coordinators implementing activities in the 13 PAN member states.

STOCK ASSESSMENTS

Palau International Coral Reef Center (PICRC), Palau Conservation Society (PCS), and The Nature Conservancy (TNC) are working with communities in Ngarchelong and Kayangel to pilot the development and implementation of low-cost, innovative data-poor stock assessments to better inform fisheries management activities.

REGIONAL OCEAN PARTNERSHIPS AND PLANNING BODIES

Pacific Regional Ocean Partnership (PROP)

The Governors of American Samoa, CNMI, Guam, and Hawai'i established the Pacific Regional Ocean Partnership (PROP) in August 2012. The main objectives are to:

- Identify coastal and ocean management priorities that require coordinated regional response and increased collaboration.
- Promote regional sustainability of resources and coordinate regional priorities.
- Enhance state, regional and federal governance and institutional mechanisms to manage ocean and coastal resources.

Since the last USCRTF meeting in February 2013, the PROP Steering Group met in Honolulu on July 8th, elected Fran Castro of CNMI as Vice Chair, and welcomed the new member from American Samoa, Dr. Ruth Matagi-Tofiga. A presentation was made by Gerry Davis, of NOAA Fisheries Pacific Islands Regional Office (PIRO), on disaster preparedness, response, and resilience, a PROP priority identified in the Action Plan.



Pacific Island jurisdictions are at great risk for disasters, especially because of the frequency of hurricanes, tsunamis, toxic spills, and climate change. While the Pacific Risk Management Ohana (PRiMO) has focused on this issue, there is much more to be done. In the 1980s, the U.S. Coast Guard organized an Incident Command planning and training initiative to improve disaster responses from government agencies, which was discontinued. PROP is now working with agencies and partners to plan a regional training workshop.

July 9-10, PROP held a two-day Regional Endangered Species Act (ESA) Workshop to develop strategies for resilience and adaptation to climate change impacts on natural resources, including listing of species under the ESA. This was a PROP climate change implementation strategy to address under the Action Plan. The very successful workshop was developed in close collaboration and partnership with NOAA PIRO, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Coast Guard, and other federal partners and provided a unique opportunity for jurisdictions to share their concerns and find ways to work together to manage the issues.

Members also participated in the CMSP Regional Planning Body (RPB) for the Pacific Islands region held on July 11-12 where they participated in drafting terms of reference for the RPB.

In August, PROP received confirmation that the University of Hawai'i Regional Ocean Partnership (ROP) III proposal has been funded by NOAA.

Pacific Islands Regional Planning Body (PIRPB)

The co-chairs of the Pacific Islands Regional Planning Body (PIRPB) are Michael Tosatto (NOAA) and Jesse Souki (State of Hawai'i). The PIRPB has a total of 17 members -- 8 federal; 8 non-federal; 1 fishery council. The PIRPB held its inaugural meeting on July 11 and 12, 2013 in Honolulu, HI. During this time, the PIRPB drafted a charter as well as a vision and mission statement. For more information on the PIRPB, visit their new website at <http://pacificislandsrpb.org/>.

Caribbean Regional Ocean Partnership (CROP)

The Caribbean partnership has been extremely active since our last meeting in February having met on five occasions, having participated in a Coastal and Marine Spatial Planning (CMSP) training, both jurisdictions holding public community meetings to discuss CMSP and solicit data sources and engaging in monthly calls. Within its first year, the CROP has begun constructing a data portal to support regional CMSP efforts and secured funding in the amount of \$358K to continue its work. This past April, the CROP engaged the federal members of the Caribbean Regional Planning Body (RPB) and provided updates on CROP activities.

Caribbean Regional Planning Body (CRPB)

The RPB met for the first time this week. The meeting underscored the fact that coral reef ecosystem resources are integral to our island communities and therefore warrant special consideration in our CMSP process. Also, the CROP will be providing information on local needs to the CRPB.



THE AIC...

- Welcomes Governor John P. de Jongh, Jr., Governor Eloy Inos, Governor Eddie Baza Calvo, and Lieutenant Governor Lemanu Peleti Mauga, to the USCRTF. It's always a pleasure to have our Governors join us at these meetings and we look forward to working with them on our coral reef management efforts;
- Expresses our appreciation to Governor de Jongh, Jr., and agencies and partners in the U.S. Virgin Islands, for hosting this Task Force meeting.
- Welcomes new U.S. Coral Reef Task Force co-chair, Dr. Mark Schaefer, Assistant Secretary for Conservation and Management for NOAA. We look forward to working with him in continuing the good work of the Task Force in the conservation and protection of our coral reefs;
- Urges the USCRTF and NOAA to continue to communicate and engage with jurisdictions regarding concerns for proposed ESA listing of 66 coral species;
- Urges Governors of the USCRTF to support the reauthorization of the Coral Reef Conservation Act of 2000, in particular, the definitions for *coral* and *coral reef*, articulation of capacity and authority for emergency response, and ratification of the U.S. Coral Reef Task Force and requests that NOAA work closely with the AIC in defining a common path forward;
- Commends the USCRTF for their continued support of the watershed partnerships and urges the Task Force to continue support for the watershed partnerships over the long term;
- Encourages continued commitment of the USCRTF to support the jurisdictions in areas most needed to build capacity through financial, human, and technical capacities, particularly in restoring a Coral Reef Management Fellowship Program; and
- Expresses our appreciation to NOAA and DOI for their support and partnership over the years. We hope to continue on this path of open and honest discussions.
- Expresses our thanks to DOI/OIA, USFWS, and USDA/NRCS for funding and hosting the Governor Sunia Summer Internships for 2013, and we encourage them and other federal partners to continue to support this important program.

AIC POINTS OF CONTACT, AFFILIATE MEMBERS, ADVISORS, AND SECRETARIAT

POINTS OF CONTACT

Ms. Fran Castro, CNMI, Chair
Ms. Damaris Delgado, Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, Vice-Chair
Dr. Ruth Matagi-Tofiga, Territory of American Samoa
Mr. Joseph Cameron, Territory of Guam
Ms. Joanna Walzcak, State of Florida
Ms. Emma Anders, State of Hawai'i
Mr. Jean-Pierre Oriol, USVI

AFFILIATE MEMBERS

Mr. Don Hess and Mr. Albon Ishoda, Republic of the Marshall Islands
Ms. Alissa Takesy, Federated States of Micronesia
Mr. Umiich Sengebau, Republic of Palau

AIC ADVISORS

Mr. Gerry Davis, AIC Resource Advisor
Dr. Michael Hamnett, AIC Policy Advisor
Dr. Robert Richmond, AIC Science Advisor

SECRETARIAT

Ms. Carey Morishige, Executive director