Chair's Report
U.S. All Islands Coral Reef Committee (AIC)
February 22, 2018
Washington D.C.

PRIORITIES and UPDATES
AIC CHAIR’S REPORT

39TH U.S. CORAL REEF TASK FORCE MEETING
WASHINGTON, D.C. | FEBRUARY 20-22

AIC Vision
Thriving coral reef ecosystems, effectively managed to protect their ecological, social, and economic value for future generations.

AIC Mission
To be a unified voice for the effective management of coral reef ecosystems in the U.S. and Freely Associated States.
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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 our last meeting in Florida. We would like to welcome the Task Force Members and points of contact, and offer our sincerest thanks to everyone who helped make this important meeting happen.

In the six months since we last met, the AIC has continued local efforts to conserve and manage our essential coral reef ecosystems in the face of, often times, daunting circumstances. As you know, four of the jurisdictions were impacted by major storms, which had a significant effect on our people and our coral reefs. While recovery efforts are still underway, we are seeing hopeful signs that our coral reef resources will rebound to support our economies and coastlines.

I am pleased to be able to present a new AIC initiative today that will help ensure our coral reefs thrive and continue to survive while facing continual threats from warming oceans, changing acidity, natural disasters and local stressors. The AIC would like to move forward with establishing resilient coral nurseries in each of the jurisdictions to build stronger local breeding stocks of corals, but also to build local capacity in the newest available technologies to help to preserve and protect this important ecosystem.

As always, we look forward to continuing to find innovative solutions by working together, as federal agencies and jurisdictions, to make a positive difference for our coral reefs.

We are excited to participate in this 39th meeting of the U.S. Coral Reef Task Force, happening during International Year of the Reef. We look forward to sharing with you all the coral reef-related efforts and endeavors happening across the jurisdictions.

Sincerely,

Jean-Pierre L. Oriol
AIC Chair
AIC Updates

At this meeting, we focused on the progress of priority projects identified in the AIC Strategic Plan and Action Plan. Additionally, the AIC discussed multiple issues to bring to the forefront to support effective Coral Reef Management across the jurisdictions, in cooperation with the USCRTF.

Our top three Priorities for this meeting are:

- Move forward with the AIC Coral Urgent Action Request
- Cultivate long term Task Force support for the Coral Fellowship Program
- Support the Re-authorization of the Coral Reef Conservation Act

AIC Priorities

Coral Urgent Action

Background: The rate of coral reef degradation is outpacing the ability of corals to adapt to their changing environment. These diverse ecosystems attract tourists and support sustainable economies. Coral reefs also provide services such as coastal protection and food sustainability, while supporting cultural and recreational activities that are fundamental to quality of life. According to the best available science, corals are at risk of local extinction by 2050.

To ensure these essential ecosystems are protected, the AIC Jurisdictions are moving forward with locally driven teams to investigate and support efforts to locally cultivate “adapted corals” and transplant these corals to restore degraded local reefs. Because these corals exist locally, they do not represent an introduction if they are cultivated and seeded more broadly across local reefs - and this can be done now with existing scientific understanding and available technology.

Request to the US Coral Reef Task Force: The AIC requests that the USCRTF establish a new working group (or extend the scope of an existing working group) to support an initiative to investigate and support efforts to locally cultivate “adapted corals” and transplant these corals to restore degraded local reefs, according to the priorities and needs of each U.S. State, Territory, and Commonwealth with coral reefs.

- While overarching support for implementation is needed, the main goal of this working group is for Federal authorities to develop a pathway to expedite permitting for this activity as time may be a significant limitation for success. This process should be tiered to allow activities that are easy to implement to move forward while more complicated...
permitting issues are handled down the line.

- Additionally, this working group will support the Jurisdiction led teams, by providing overarching framework, technical methodologies and other guidance.

**MAIN POINTS:** We need to act immediately to support locally driven plans to cultivate “adapted corals” and sound restoration practices. We seek to implement innovative science, build relationships with our federal partners and increase local capacity to manage coral reefs.

**Coral Reef Management Fellowship Program:**

We would again like to extend our sincere thanks to the NOAA Coral Reef Conservation Program, U.S. Department of the Interior’s Office of Insular Affairs, Nova Southeastern University, and our own agencies’ leadership for their continued financial, technical and programmatic support of this capacity building program.

The Task Force has long identified capacity building as a target issue and one of the biggest coral reef management needs in the jurisdictions. **The Coral Reef Management Fellowship Program is one of the most valuable elements of support for enhanced local capacity and yields benefits not only for the Task Force and its members, but more importantly to our coral reef resources.**

We continue to look for in and out of the box ways to sustainably support this important program for the long term. **We look forward to working with the Task Force to build local capacity through a formalized and sustained Fellowship Program.**

**Accomplishments and updates from the 2016-2017 Fellows:**

- **American Samoa:** Sabrina Woofter led the installation of Rain Gardens in 13 different villages and improved storm water management capacity throughout the islands. She also coordinated the creation of a Samoan Language Climate Change Dictionary, to improve climate literacy throughout the Samoan Archipelago.

- **Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas Islands:** Malcolm Johnson started late into the fellowship, and will continue his project work restoring watersheds in Rota for the next two years.

- **Florida:** Kelly Montenero taught children the importance of reporting marine events through the Southeast Florida Action Network (SEAFAN) - a program to improve protection of SE Florida's coral reefs through marine debris cleanups, increasing response to reef injuries, and early detection of biological disturbances.

- **Guam:** Whitney Hoot coordinated the writing and implementation of the Guam Coral Reef Response Plan and Team, which reacts to coral impacts on Guam’s reefs. Whitney remains in
Guam and has accepted a position with the Government of Guam as the Coral Reef Resilience Coordinator

- **Hawaii**: Cameron Ka’ilikea Shayler currently works for the State of Hawaii’s DLNR DAR as the Fish and Habitat Monitoring Coordinator.
- **Puerto Rico**: Mariana León completed an assessment of the Puerto Rico Coral Reef Monitoring Program and created a database of reef data available to the public. Mariana will be going to Texas A &M University, Corpus Christi, to pursue a PhD in Coastal Marine System Science.
- **US Virgin Islands**: Hilary Lohmann started a turtle monitoring project, and incorporated the East End Marine Park Friends Group. She currently remains in St. Croix, and will be pursuing a Fulbright in Barbados starting this summer.

**Meet the 2018-2019 Coral Reef Management Fellows**

The 2018-2019 Fellows started their fellowships last month. Their biographies and project focus areas are below:

**American Samoa – Motusaga Vaeoso**

Originally from American Samoa, Motu holds a B.S. in Biology from Chaminade University of Honolulu.

After graduating, she started working for a local government agency as the marine debris coordinator, and then a coral reef monitoring technician. Additionally, she has participated in various outreach and education efforts and developed material to increase local community awareness on coral reef management issues. Motusaga loves to observe the behavior of fish in their habitat and photograph them. She is one of the few Samoans who has conducted fish surveys across all the American Samoan islands including Tutuila, Ofu, Olosega, Tau, Rose Atoll National Monument and Swains Island. Her aim is to foster Loto nu’u (stewardship of the environment) in her fellow Samoans to help to preserve and enhance island ecosystems and life.

During her Fellowship, Motu will help to create a locally driven Coral Reef Health Report Card and help ensure the content of these report cards is available to local villages to support village level management decisions. Additionally, she will coordinate with partners to conduct a sustainable fisheries outreach campaign.

**CNMI – Malcolm Johnson**

Raised in Northern Virginia, Malcolm Johnson received his B.A. in Environmental Sociology from Wichita State University and his M.A. in Ocean and Coastal Resource Management from the Middlebury Institute of International Studies in Monterey.

As the fellow in the CNMI, Johnson is working on the Luta/Talakhaya Revegetation Project, located on the island of Rota. The overall goal of his project is to improve the health and protect the Talakhaya watershed, including its streams and adjacent coral reef habitat, from land-based sources of pollution. His main activities include planting grasses and trees in the watershed, as well as assisting with monitoring of the stream and coastal water quality on Rota.
Florida – Maurizio Martinelli

A New York City native, Maurizio Martinelli holds a B.A. in International Development Studies from McGill University and an M.A.S. in Marine Biodiversity and Conservation from Scripps Institution of Oceanography, UCSD.

Martinelli has spent most of his career working in the United Nations system, first with the Permanent Mission of Tuvalu to the United Nations and subsequently for the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. Martinelli has also worked in the private sector on coral reef conservation and restoration in the Gulf of Thailand. Martinelli is a trained dive master, avid hiker, and rather terrible surfer.

Maurizio will focus his fellowship work on coordination of regional meetings for disease response partners to assist the FDEP in identifying and implementing management actions to remediate disease impacts, restore affected resources, and prevent future outbreaks. He will also lead content development and technical writing for a Florida Coral Disease Prevention and Response Plan that will aid coral reef managers for future disease outbreaks.

Guam – Mallory Morgan

Born and raised in Cocoa Beach, Florida, Mallory holds a B.S. degree in both Environmental Studies and International Relations from Florida State University and a M.A.S. in Marine Biodiversity and Conservation from Scripps Institution of Oceanography at University of California, San Diego.

Mallory is an avid water woman and traveled as a SCUBA Instructor through Australia, Bali, and Costa Rica before settling down in San Diego’s temperate waters where she worked on local-level climate mitigation and resilience strategies and environmental conservation philanthropy. She previously worked on marine protected areas in Fiji, black bear management in Florida, and a sea turtle hatchery in response to the Deep Horizon oil spill. She currently serves on the Board of Indigenous Regeneration, a nonprofit on the San Pasqual Indian Reservation dedicated to reconnecting native youth to their cultural heritage through food, holistic medicine, music, community, and environmental stewardship.

Mallory will focus on relationship building with Guam’s Tourism industry to reduce impacts on Guam’s reefs, by developing a training program for staff who work with tourists. Additionally, she will help with outreach events for International Year of the Reef.

Hawaii – Alessandra Shea

Born and raised in Newport Beach, California, Alessandra Shea received her B.S. in Society and Environment from University of California, Berkeley and her M.A. in Geography from University of Hawai’i, Mānoa.

Growing up on the California coast, the ocean became a part of her life from an early age. Her studies and interest about what goes on beneath the surface as well
as peoples’ relationship to the ocean have taken her around the world, studying in island countries throughout the Pacific and Caribbean, landing in Cuba for her masters.

Alessandra will be working to support the Coral Bleaching Collaborative in Hawaii as well as the implementation of the Coral Bleaching Recovery Plan. She will also support DAR’s outreach efforts on sustainable fisheries rules in coordination with the Community-based Subsistence Fishing Area program.

Puerto Rico – Melissa Gonzalez

Melissa grew up in Davidsonville, Maryland and received a BS in Environmental Science from Bridgewater College and an MS in Sustainable Development and Conservation Biology from the University of Maryland.

As a Peace Corps Volunteer in Ecuador, Melissa spent two years in a coastal community working on waste management and mangrove restoration projects, then transitioned to monitoring coral reefs and coastal birds in Machalilla National Park during a third year. She later joined Peace Corps Response in the Philippines, where she worked assessing coral reefs with the local government of Catbalogan City. Melissa is an avid diver and advocate for marine and coastal conservation. Her main interests include underwater photography, coral reef restoration, and spending time with her favorite elasmobranchs - stingrays.

Melissa’s Fellowship will support in the development of a rapid response protocols and associated procedures to initiate damage assessments and engage Federal and Commonwealth agencies as part of disaster related emergencies on coral reefs.

US Virgin Islands – Austen Stovall

Originally from Kill Devil Hills, North Carolina, Austen Stovall earned her B.S. in Biology from Wake Forest University.

Most recently, she worked for the Coral Restoration Foundation in Key Largo, FL developing new education and outreach strategies and diving in their offshore coral nursery and at restoration sites up and down the Keys. She also served as a Special Activities Instructor at the NC Aquarium on Roanoke Island. Previously, she spent time working for various marine conservation non-profits including the Reef Environmental Education Foundation (REEF) and The School for Field Studies (SFS) Panama.

Austin will be focusing on reef relevant restoration opportunities (Marine and terrestrial), helping to reduce the impact of boat groundings in the territory and coordinating a citizen science program.

MAIN POINTS: We continue to look for in and out of the box ways to sustainably support this important program for the long term. Additionally, we look forward to working with the Task Force in building local capacity through a formalized and sustained Fellowship Program.
Re-authorization of the Coral Reef Conservation Act

The reauthorization of the Coral Reef Conservation Act (CRCA) of 2000 remains one of the AIC’s top priorities, and we are pleased to have recently reviewed draft legislation from Congresswoman Bordallo (Guam). We look forward to discussing and settling upon shared targets/objectives, and crafting key messaging that all members of the Task Force can use to help pass this important legislation.

In light of 2018 being International Year of the Reef, the AIC would like to see collective effort to finally achieve the Coral Reef Conservation Act Re-authorization. We look forward to working with partners to ensure this vital piece of legislation is successfully passed.

**MAIN POINTS:** We look forward to working with federal agencies and other partners to secure the successful Re-authorization of the Coral Reef Conservation Act.

Federal-Jurisdiction Integration

A strong, integrated partnership between the AIC/jurisdictions and the federal agencies of the Task Force is critical to the effective management and conservations of our coral reefs. The Task Force itself is an opportunity to share information, strengthen partnerships, increase integration, and leverage opportunities to work towards more effective conservation and management of our coral reef ecosystems.

We greatly appreciate the increased communication and efforts to not only reach out to and engage the AIC and individual jurisdictions, but the increased collaboration that has resulted. Here are just a few of the many examples:

- Once-a-month catch-up calls between the AIC Secretariat Executive Director and USCRTF Secretariat and Steering Committee Co-chairs.
- Active participation by Jurisdiction POCs and staff in USCRTF Working Groups.

We are very open to suggestions of what we (AIC and jurisdictions) can do to increase our outreach to and engagement of federal agencies and the greater Task Force.

**MAIN POINTS:** We greatly appreciate the increased communication and efforts to reach out to and engage jurisdictions. They have led to very fruitful collaborations. We are also very open to suggestions on ways that we (AIC and jurisdictions) can also increase our outreach and engagement of our Task Force federal agency partners.
AIC Member Priorities and Accomplishments

This and the following section contains information and updates from each of the U.S. coral reef jurisdictions and Freely Associated States, including:

- Top 1-3 coral reef management-related priorities;
- Top 1-3 most notable coral-related accomplishments or successes; and
- Notable challenges, issues, or needs that Task Force members should know about.

American Samoa

Priorities

1) MARINE DEBRIS INTERVENTION: To Develop strategies to influence behavior change related to single-use plastics in coordination with a University research project initiated to investigate fish and invertebrate toxicity to inform management.

2) CLIMATE CHANGE VULNERABILITY RESEARCH: Continue projects with external collaborators to understand fisheries vulnerability to climate change in American Samoa, involving fisher focus groups, village surveys, climate prediction downscaling and testing reef resiliency assessment protocols.

3) NU’UULI WETLAND RESTORATION: Nu’uuli Polytech students continue to be engaged with resource agencies to remove non-native plants and trash with restoration of native plants and installation of display boards at the school and public park.

Accomplishments & Successes

1) RESILIENT RESOURCES GLOSSARY: Finalized a comprehensive document listing environmental terms translated into Samoan to increase local climate change literacy. Produced by ASCC Samoan Studies Institute in collaboration with CRAG and all relevant resource agencies.

2) RIDGE TO REEF INTEGRATED CORAL REEF MANAGEMENT: Completion of first phase of field work (2015-2017) to improve watershed and island-scale resilience by linking water quality and coral reef monitoring methods to assess watershed and coral reef health at 30 sites.

3) CORAL BLEACHING MONITORING: Initiated a response to NOAA Coral Watch reports of bleaching at sites around Tutuila and Ofu, including temperature logger exchange to complement existing 2-year dataset.

Notable Challenges, Issues, & Needs

No progress has been made in removing grounded vessel F/V Seahawk after 2.5 years. It continues to shift across the reef during weather events and potentially leach chemicals. A large section of reef has been killed and is now becoming dominated with algae and/or turned to rubble. The Seahawk poses a specific hazard to the reef and local fisheries including culturally-important palolo worm fishing. Funding and technical assistance is desperately needed.
Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands

Priorities
1) CORAL REEF RESTORATION: In light of the perceived increase in global disturbances, the CNMI has placed priority on initiating local restoration efforts to curb the decline of local coral populations.
2) CORAL REEF MONITORING: With the upsurge in development in the CNMI, consistent monitoring of these marine resources remains a priority for understanding coral reef status and trends in the jurisdiction.
3) EDUCATION AND OUTREACH: The CNMI Coral Reef Initiative is developing a comprehensive communications plan, tailoring focus on various audiences to measure efficacy and inform future campaigns.

Accomplishments & Successes
1) ECONOMIC VALUATION: The CNMI Coral Reef and Seagrass Ecosystem Valuation Study has begun, expanding the scope past Saipan and including Tinian and Rota.
2) GROUNDING SETTLEMENT: A settlement was reached by the CNMI government and the responsible party of the Paul Russ vessel grounding that damaged 3,167 sq. meters of coral reef habitat.
3) MITIGATION FUND: An escrow account has been established to fund mitigation efforts related to the Paul Russ vessel grounding.

Florida

Priorities
1) CORAL DISEASE OUTBREAK RESPONSE: State and EPA funding used for ongoing coral disease response. As outbreak spreads in Florida Keys, the management efforts shift in focus to identify in-water intervention strategies to remediate disease impacts.
2) HURRICANE IRMA RESPONSE AND RECOVERY: Partners are working to assess and remediate hurricane impacts including removal of wayward vessels, assessment of reef injury and disease, and engagement of the Keys community in storm-related marine debris cleanups.

Accomplishments & Successes
1) POST-HURRICANE RAPID REEF ASSESSMENT: Multi-partner rapid assessment of Florida Reef Tract conducted. Science divers surveyed 100+ sites, from Martin County to the Marquesas for hurricane damage and coral disease. Efforts included stabilization of corals in most impacted locations.
2) CORAL DISEASE WORKSHOP HOSTED: State hosted workshop in November 2017 brought together veterinarians as well as disease and regulatory experts to discuss disease intervention strategies as well as sampling and repeat monitoring priorities.
Notable Challenges, Issues, & Needs
The multi-year coral disease outbreak in Florida is continuing at an unprecedented scale and is estimated to have resulted in the mortality of millions of corals over 150 miles and 35,000 acres of coral reefs in southeast Florida, Biscayne National Park and the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary. Although world-class scientists and reef managers have been working collaboratively on this issue, greater technical capacity is needed to support comprehensive emergency response activities. Additionally, urban wastewater influences from coastal septic tanks, aging sewer infrastructure, inlets, and ocean outfalls may have contributed to chronic stress of coral reefs leaving them vulnerable to disease and inhibiting recovery. Significant financial and technical support is needed to address wastewater infrastructure in coastal southeast Florida.

Guam
Priorities
1) CORAL BLEACHING RESPONSE: Scientists and managers responded to the fourth coral bleaching event in five years, using the Guam Coral Bleaching Response Plan. Moderate to severe bleaching island-wide to 40 m depth.
2) COMMUNITY OUTREACH: Local and federal staff collaborated to raise awareness of coral reefs and encourage community engagement through outreach, citizen science programs, and three screenings of Chasing Coral.
3) WATERSHED RESTORATION: Addressing water quality issues and coral reef degradation due to sedimentation in southern Guam by mitigating impacts of deforestation, burning, invasive species, and off-roading.

Accomplishments & Successes
1) MANELL-GEUS HABITAT BLUEPRINT FOCUS AREA: Community engagement and partnership building, watershed restoration, invasive species removal, firebreak maintenance, habitat mapping, and nutrient enrichment and bacteria assessments within the Manell-Geus Habitat Blueprint Focus Area.
3) BLEACHING RESPONSE PLAN IMPLEMENTED: Successful implementation of the Guam Coral Bleaching Response Plan by local agencies and federal partners within the Guam Coral Reef Response Team during the 2017 bleaching event, including surveys at 12 sites with both shallow and deep transects

Notable Challenges, Issues, & Needs
Enforcement of marine preserves is a continued challenge. Outside of the preserves, overfishing is a major concern. Guam needs more laws coupled with enforcement and increased community
engagement to improve the condition of coral reef fisheries. **Guam’s reefs have bleached for the fourth time in five years and managers need capacity to develop innovative methods for restoring resilience of these reefs.** Guam needs local – and national – commitment to address climate change issues. We also need to better understand how our reefs will be affected by climate change in the future. Burning by hunters and arsonists in southern Guam and resulting erosion is an ongoing challenge that is being addressed reactively through watershed restoration, but not proactively. Guam needs an effective legal framework to prosecute burning, more community outreach to raise awareness of the impacts of burning on coral reefs and human communities, and scaled-up watershed restoration.

**Hawai‘i**

**Priorities**

1) **MARINE 30x30 INITIATIVE:** Hawaii established objectives to reach the 30x30 marine target, gathering data for a statewide spatial planning effort, writing a communications plan, and identifying biological indicators to quantify 'effective management'.

2) **ENVIRONMENTAL COURT:** Department of Land and Natural Resources (DLNR) worked with the County of Honolulu Prosecutor’s Office and Judiciary staff to streamline DLNR case adjudication within the Environmental Court, and to ensure appropriate penalties are applied.

3) **CESSPOOL MAPPING:** West Maui partners are verifying locations of cesspools and septic tanks to inform nutrient models to better understand impacts on nearshore reefs.

**Accomplishments & Successes**

1) **WEST MAUI ACCOMPLISHMENTS:** Partners in West Maui prevented 3-10 tons of sediment from reaching the ocean with 11 new vetiver erosion control sites, expanded volunteer water quality initiative by 24 sites and added additional lab space, and held 6 outreach events including largest Ridge to Reef Rendezvous with 250 participants.

2) **SOUTH KOHALA ACCOMPLISHMENTS:** Partners in South Kohala continued to fence out ungulates, revegetate riparian corridors, and conduct water quality monitoring. They also aligned community efforts with larger regional fisheries management strategies and established a cohesive volunteer program to share capacity across multiple partner organizations.

3) **ENVIRONMENTAL COURT:** Hawaii presented at the Pacific Judicial Council’s Environmental Law and Science Conference in Guam. Guam and other Pacific island nations expressed interest in establishing environmental courts in their respective jurisdictions.

**Notable Challenges, Issues, & Needs**

Tremendous partnership and state support is driving **Hawaii’s Marine 30x30 Initiative to effectively manage 30% of Hawaii’s nearshore waters by 2030.** The Division of Aquatic Resource is engaged in several management approaches including fisheries rules, marine managed areas, habitat restoration, monitoring, and education. A key success story is the recovery of herbivores and improvements in coral health in the Kahekili Herbivore Management Area on Maui. Results are encouraging; however, a
recent USGS study (Prouty et al) shows that exposure to wastewater from injection wells are accelerating bioerosion of the underlying coral structure. Funds to support alternatives to injection wells and cesspools and projects that support reduction of land based stressors are needed. In addition, engineering support from NRCS headquarters would allow the Honokowai Dam #8 retrofit project to finally be implemented, which would prevent sediment from reaching the reefs. The lack of local NRCS staff capacity has stalled this project.

Puerto Rico

Priorities

1) HURRICANE DAMAGE ASSESSMENTS: Conduct damage assessments at coral reef areas impacted by Hurricanes Irma and Maria as part of the Natural Resources Recovery Initiative coordinated by DNER, DoI, NOAA and FEMA. PRDNER is focusing on coral reef restoration efforts as its top priority during 2018.

2) SUNKEN VESSEL REMOVAL: Ongoing sunken vessels removal as part of the Hurricane Maria ESF-10 PR Unified Command jointly led by PRDNER and the U.S. Coast Guard with support from NOAA, EPA, USFWS and PREQB. Over 500 vessels were found to be damaged, displaced, submerged or sunken. PRDNER and USCG initiated removal actions for 258.

3) CORALS WEEK: Conducted multiple outreach activities for Coral Reef Week as part of the celebration of the International Year of the Reef (IYOR 2018). PRDNER will foster strengthened collaboration between natural reserve managers, the academia, and local partners for the implementation of coral reef conservation activities around the Island.

Accomplishments & Successes

1) CORAL RECOVERY: PRDNER and partners initiated ad-hoc damage assessments, recovered and salvaged multiple live coral fragments, and assessed damages to coral farms as part of its rapid response to post hurricanes Irma and Maria's impacts. Preliminary assessment and triage at high-value sites with known impacts. Approximately 5,000 high value corals have been salvaged where triage has been conducted to date.

2) CORALS WEEK: Coral Reef Week was celebrated from August 29 to September 2. Hundreds of citizens participated of the Coral Reef Activities all around the Island and signed a pledge for the protection of corals.

3) COLLABORATIVE HURRICANE RECOVERY: The support of partners from the academia, private organizations and individuals has made a difference in responding to the emergencies after the impact of Hurricane Maria. Their initiative and interest to support local and federal agencies in the restoration efforts has made it possible to collect data and begin restoration efforts in a situation where time make a difference in species survival.
**Notable Challenges, Issues, & Needs**

Hurricanes Irma (Category 5) and Maria (Category 4) devastated Puerto Rico. Officially, 64 people died as a result of the storm that ravaged the island with nearly 150-mile-an-hour winds and devastated the electric power infrastructure, as well as homes and critical infrastructure. Coral reefs provided important wave energy dissipation but were severely impacted. Ad-hoc actions were coordinated with an array of partners to provide a preliminary assessment on the damages to reefs. Triage actions were conducted to reattach corals, and targeted areas where the available resources can provide the greatest benefits. PRDNER, NOAA, DoI and EFMA are coordinating further island-wide assessment of the damages, while also mapping impacts to facilitate future restoration actions of at-risk coral fragments. Prompt interventions in water and land could give us an opportunity to salvage a large number corals that would otherwise take decades to recover naturally or require an investment of an order of magnitude greater to propagate in nurseries.

**U.S. Virgin Islands**

**Priorities**

1) HURRICANE DERELICT VESSEL REMOVAL: Hurricane-damaged vessel removal from coastal and nearshore areas
2) HURRICANE DAMAGE REEF ASSESSMENT: Organizing and supporting efforts to quantify damage to reefs from hurricanes Irma and Maria.
3) EMERGENCY PERMITTING: Overseeing proper permitting and implementation of rebuilding in coastal zones.

**Accomplishments & Successes**

1) CORAL RECOVERY: 2,000 + coral fragments reattached in St. Thomas by response crews
2) ENFORCEMENT CAPACITY: Program Assessment of USVI Environmental Enforcement completed.
3) REMOVAL OF HURRICANE DEBRIS: Seven cleanups on beaches and waterfronts addressing hurricane debris were conducted.

**Notable Challenges, Issues, & Needs**

On September 06, 2017 and again on September 20, 2017 the USVI was hit by two of the strongest category 5 hurricanes that have ever been recorded in the Caribbean. Damage to human infrastructure and natural resources was severe. Recovery from these natural disasters will be a slow progress and cooperative assistance will have significant impacts. Specifically for coral reefs, projects include funding and guidance for coral and watershed restoration efforts.
AIC Affiliate Member Priorities & Accomplishments

Federated States of Micronesia

Priorities
1) PACIFIC REGIONAL OCEANSCAPE PROGRAM: FSM is participating in the Pacific Regional Oceanscape Program, a regional program of the World Bank. A main component includes completing an assessment of all coastal fisheries. Outcomes of this assessment will add-value to the development of a comprehensive fisheries sector policy to reflect the diverse marine tenure system of the FSM

Accomplishments & Successes
1) PACIFIC REGIONAL OCEANSCAPE PROGRAM: A first draft of coastal fisheries assessment is complete. The report will undergo review by all states and stakeholders, with a final report expected in late 2018.
2) FISHERIES SYMPOSIUM: Pohnpei State convened a Fisheries Symposium in October 2017 where participants from local communities, civil society organizations and local government agencies held discussions to improve communications and effective fisheries management. It was supported by FSM National Government and regional/international partners such as The Nature Conservancy.

Republic of the Marshall Islands

Priorities
1) REIMAANLOK REVIEW RETREAT 2017: To complete an update to the Reimaanlok National Conservation Area Plan based on 10 years of success and lessons learned. Local input will be provided by the Coastal Management Advisory Council (CMAC), with funding and technical support provided by IUCN.
2) REIMAANLOK MARINE SURVEYS: Conduct baseline marine surveys in 5 additional atolls including Aur, Maloelap, Wotje, Mejit and Utrik as part of the Reimaanlok process for resource management planning and designation of MPAs.

Accomplishments & Successes
1) REIMAANLOK REVIEW RETREAT 201: A 3-day workshop in Eneko, Majuro was facilitated by IUCN with CMAC members, to analyze results of Reimaanlok implementation over the last 10 years (2007-2017). Recommendations were set to improve the Reimaanlok.
2) REIMAANLOK MARINE SURVEYS: The new coral reef data has been included in the Micronesia Challenge database to update status on the RMI State of the Reef and to share recommendations with all relevant stakeholders.
Republic of Palau

Priorities
1) EASTERN REEF RECOVERY: A 2 year coral recruitment field study will end in February 2018. The density of juvenile corals has been monitored yearly within the damaged habitat.
2) PAN MPA ASSESSEMENT: Following baseline assessment conducted throughout 2014 and 2015, ecological monitoring is conducted at 14 PAN MPAs and their respective reference sites throughout 2017 and 2018.
3) PALAU FISHERIES: Research efforts continues for nearshore fisheries with ongoing dependent and independent surveys and for offshore fisheries with pelagic fish acoustic tagging around FADs

Accomplishments & Successes
1) STATUS AND TRENDS REPORT: PICRC has released a report showing the status and trends of coral reefs in the past 15 years. The report is available at: http://picrc.org/picrcpage/research/publications/
2) SOCIO-ECONOMIC STUDIES: Socio-economic studies continue with two additional states surveyed in the past 6 months: Ngatpang and Melekeok
3) SCIENCE TO SUPPORT EFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT: Coral reproduction and recruitment studies continue, to deepen our understanding on spawning timing, larval dispersal, and post settlement success of young corals that have major implications in the recovery of damaged reefs.
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AIC Points of Contact and Secretariat

Points of Contact
Jean-Pierre Oriol, Territory of the U.S. Virgin Islands, AIC Chair
Joanna Walczak, State of Florida, Acting AIC Vice Chair
Va’amua Henry Sesepasara, Territory of American Samoa
Janice Castro, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands
Lola E. Leon Guerrero, Territory of Guam
Ray Uchimura, State of Hawai‘i (interim POC)
Ernesto Diaz, Commonwealth of Puerto Rico

Affiliate Members
Emma Kabua-Tibon, Republic of the Marshall Islands
Alissa Takesy, Federated States of Micronesia
Yimnang Golbuu, PhD, Republic of Palau

Secretariat
Gerry Davis, AIC Resource Advisor
Robert Richmond, PhD, AIC Science Advisor
Michael Hamnett, PhD, AIC Policy Advisor
Kristine Bucchianeri, Executive Director