

Guam



NOAA CORAL REEF CONSERVATION PROGRAM

Coral Reef Management Capacity Challenges and Recommendations



Guam is home to one of the most species-rich marine ecosystems in the U.S., with more than 5,100 marine species in its coastal waters. The majority of these live in narrow fringing reefs, which are managed by a loosely coordinated group of local government agencies including Guam's Bureau of Statistics and

Plans, Department of Agriculture, and Environmental Protection Agency. Federal, academic, and community stakeholders also participate.

A team of experts supported by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Coral Reef Conservation Program conducted an assessment of the programs working to manage and conserve coral reefs in Guam.

The resulting report, *An Analysis of Issues Affecting the Management of Coral Reefs and the Associated Capacity Building Needs in Guam*, is available on the Coral Program's website at www.coralreef.noaa.gov. Some of the findings are summarized below.

NATIONAL SUMMARY

As part of a capacity-assessment process, a team of specialists identified challenges common to all seven U.S. coral reef jurisdictions and provided recommendations to overcome them. These findings are summarized below.

CHALLENGES

- A lack of political will and formal commitment for increased coral reef management
- A lack of long-term and sustainable financing
- A lack of supportive and informed constituencies
- A need to move from planning to implementation
- A need for improved enforcement and compliance
- A need for increased support for the effective function and structure of management agencies

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Support for a collaborative approach for the reauthorization of the Coral Reef Conservation Act of 2000
- The expansion and institutionalization of staff capacity-building programs in the jurisdictions
- Establishment of a working group of the U.S. Coral Reef Task Force focused on improving the enforcement of laws that safeguard coral reefs
- Strategic engagement of governors to champion coral reef conservation and management
- Facilitation of peer-to-peer learning exchanges among the jurisdictions

Read the full report, *A Synthesis of Issues Affecting the Management of Coral Reefs and Recommendations for Long-term Capacity Building in U.S. Jurisdictions*, at www.coralreef.noaa.gov.

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CHALLENGES

Informed and supportive constituencies for coral reef management: One of the main challenges is getting the right message to the right people. Even when local leaders or coral reef user groups are aware of management goals, the degree of support varies. Managers identified a need for effective communication campaigns and coordinated communication initiatives to generate support.

Formal commitment to coral reef management: Given the current state of the economy in Guam, economic development typically outweighs natural resource issues. However, awareness of resource protection issues are on the rise, as is a demand for the effective implementation and enforcement of management decisions. Tensions can be high at resource agencies, as communication, collaboration, and transparency between policy makers and the public is not functioning at a high level.

Human resource issues: Managers and stakeholders clearly expressed the need to increase local involvement in natural resource management, specifically community representation in resource agencies. Guam has experienced a significant “brain drain” of qualified managers and resource specialists who have left territorial agencies for more appealing offers. Challenges related to low morale are also evident.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Clarify the responsibilities of local and federal partners and identify areas of overlap. Inter-agency collaboration should be further developed to foster improved relationships among agencies. Having a legal reference document that clearly outlines the roles, responsibilities, and mandates of agencies involved in coral reef management represents a critical step.

Economic valuation of coral reefs and creating the business case for improved coral reef management. There is a clear link between natural resource management and improved economic, social, and environmental conditions in Guam. A succinct document clearly stating the economic benefits would engage potential partners such as the tourism industry to support management efforts. The document should be easy to understand with a clear presentation of strategic implementation plans, types and amounts of expenditures, and metrics of success.

Build engagement with influential community members. To build local capacity for coral reef management, engagement with communities should begin with influential leaders such as village mayors. A manual should be created that articulates best practices and successful methods for improving community outreach. Highly site-specific and targeted outreach and education tools would help build awareness and support from the bottom up.

MORE INFORMATION



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This capacity assessment was conducted by Sustainamatrix under contract to the NOAA Coral Reef Conservation Program. We would like to thank the many partners who participated in this process. The assessments are available online at www.coralreef.noaa.gov/aboutcrpcp/strategy/reprioritization/capacityassessments.

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