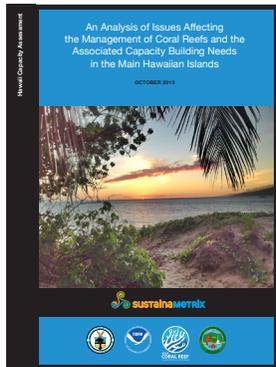


# Hawaii



NOAA CORAL REEF CONSERVATION PROGRAM

## Coral Reef Management Capacity Challenges and Recommendations



Hawaii is home to some of the richest coral reef resources in the U.S. Coral reefs contribute to the state's tourism industry, are a source of food and income for many residents, and play an important cultural role.

Hawaii's Department of Land and Natural Resources' Division of Aquatic Resources is responsible

for the local management of coral reef resources. Efforts are guided by the Hawaii Coral Reef Strategy, which sets priorities for management in the main Hawaiian Islands (excludes the uninhabited islands in the northwest). In 2014, the strategy was modified to adopt a place-based approach, concentrating efforts in western Maui and western Hawaii.

Recently, 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 Hawaii. The resulting report, *An Analysis of Issues Affecting the Management of Coral Reefs and the Associated Capacity Building Needs in the Main Hawaiian Islands*, is available on the program's website at [www.coralreef.noaa.gov](http://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](http://www.coralreef.noaa.gov).

# Hawaii

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## CHALLENGES

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**Broad-level support:** For coral reef conservation to succeed, decision makers and the general public must understand the high economic and cultural value of the state's reefs in terms of tourism, fisheries, recreation, and coastal protection.

**Enforcement of natural resource regulations:** Hawaii's Division of Conservation and Resource Enforcement is an essential partner for effective resource management that is challenged with limited resources and insufficient funding. Without additional support, both enforcement of, and compliance with, natural resource regulations will be undermined, further reducing the effectiveness of measures designed to enhance and protect the state's natural heritage.

**Common framework:** Natural resource managers across Hawaii have increasing responsibilities to meet with fewer resources and often face high staff member turnover. There is no common framework for managers in the various organizations to plan for and implement coherent, ecosystem-based management strategies that make the most of limited staff members and resources.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

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There are several recommended actions that, if implemented, will significantly improve marine conservation and management:

- Strengthen enforcement and encourage voluntary compliance
- Create and enforce a recreational fishing license, which could raise revenues and facilitate enforcement and conservation activities
- Develop and implement a strategic plan for the Division of Aquatic Resources, which includes pathways to sustainable financing and a business case for the division
- Implement community-based subsistence fishing areas and engage relevant stakeholders
- Study and identify marine protected area structures for implementation in the state

Hawaii officials have already acted on several recommendations from the assessment. They have converted key community-engagement positions to full-time staff members covered by the annual budget, initiated rules for a community-based subsistence fishing area, and implemented resilience and response plans.

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## MORE INFORMATION



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/aboutcrp/strategy/reprioritization/capacityassessments](http://www.coralreef.noaa.gov/aboutcrp/strategy/reprioritization/capacityassessments).

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