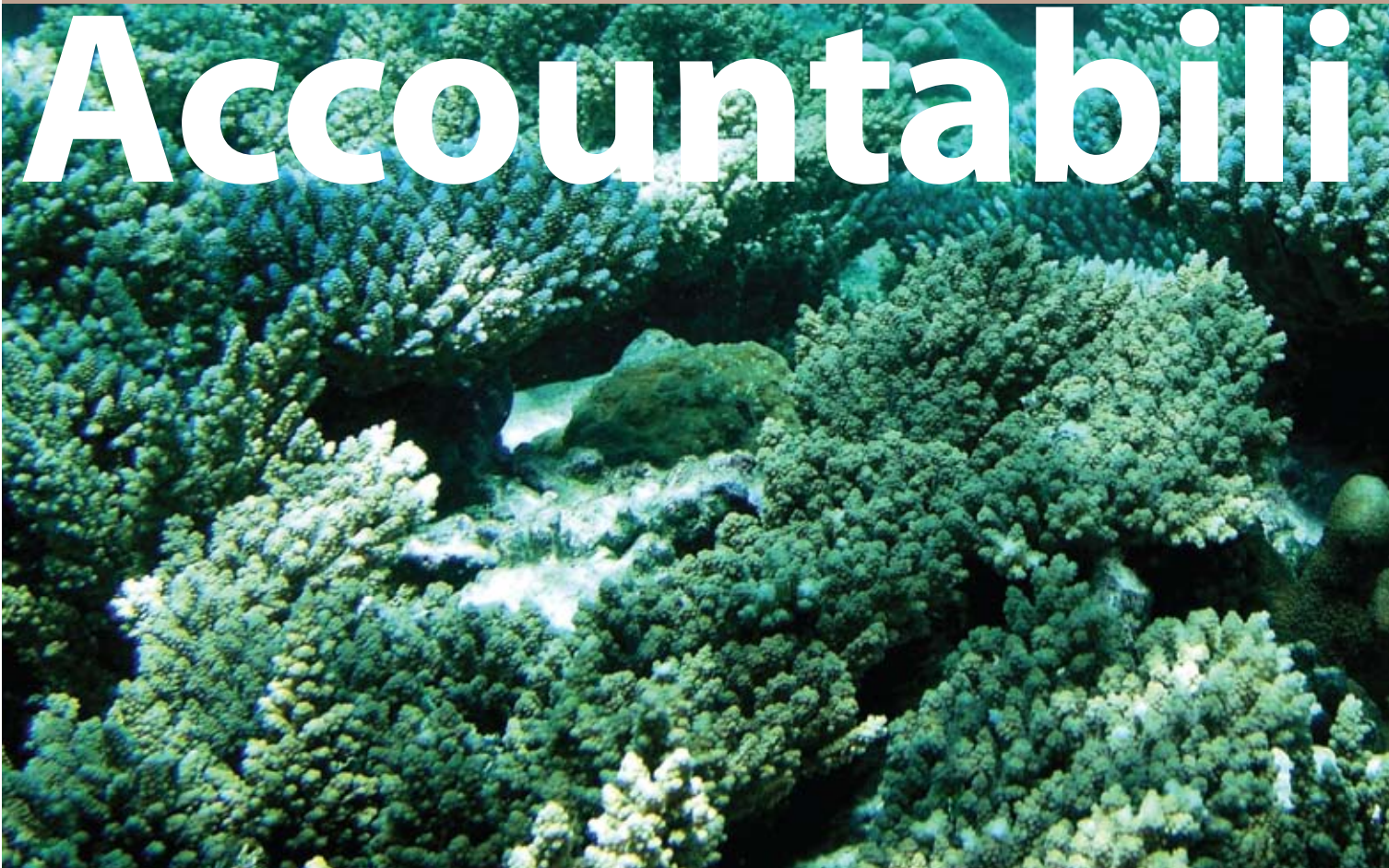


CHAPTER 13:

# Improving Coordination and

# Accountability



# Goal:

**Increase communication, collaboration, and accountability within and among Task Force members.**



Effective communication and collaboration are essential for the successful implementation of coral reef conservation efforts recommended in the *National Action Strategy (2002)*, the *National Action Plan (2000)*, and the specific projects and needs identified in each jurisdiction's Local Action Strategies. Given the frequency with which coral reef ecosystems span a broad range of geographical and organizational jurisdictions, coordination across federal, state, and local governments and with non-governmental organizations is essential for designing and implementing effective management and conservation solutions. Executive Order 13089 on Coral Reef Protection recognizes the value of coral reef ecosystems and directs the U.S. Government agencies to work independently “to ensure actions they authorize, fund, or carry out will not degrade the conditions of such ecosystems.” Federal agencies are also directed to work together through the USCRTF to address, in a collective and strategic way, the threats to

coral reef ecosystems and to lead, coordinate, and strengthen U.S. Government actions to conserve coral reef ecosystems, both domestic and international. Co-chaired by DOC through NOAA and DOI, the USCRTF membership includes senior leaders from 12 federal agencies, seven states, and territories and the three Freely Associated States. To implement the policies and requirements of the Executive Order, the USCRTF has provided a forum for coordinated planning and action among federal agencies, state and territorial governments, and non-governmental partners. To fulfill its mission, the USCRTF developed national strategies, targeted initiatives, and new partnerships to strengthen stewardship of the coral reef ecosystems in the United States and around the world. The USCRTF uses a variety of mechanisms to promote collaborative planning, priority-setting, coordination, and partnership building.

In the nine years since its inception, the USCRTF has taken a variety of actions to reduce key threats and adverse impacts to coral reef ecosystems. It has led the development of national and local strategies to conserve coral reefs, increased collaboration among federal agencies and jurisdictions in coral reef regions, and helped its members launch new actions to protect and manage reef ecosystems. The USCRTF meets twice a year to discuss key issues, propose new actions, present progress reports, and update the coral community on past accomplishments and future plans. In addition, the USCRTF's Steering Committee—made up of representatives from each of the participating federal agencies, states, and territories—meets each month to discuss progress of current USCRTF initiatives and plan new areas for collaboration.

## USCRTF Members

### Co-Chairs

**U.S. Department of Commerce, NOAA**

**U.S. Department of the Interior**

## Federal Agencies

**U.S. Agency for International Development**

**U.S. Department of Agriculture**

**U.S. Department of Defense**

**U.S. Department of Homeland Security**

**U.S. Department of Justice**

**U.S. Department of State**

**U.S. Department of Transportation**

**U.S. Environmental Protection Agency**

**National Aeronautics and Space Administration**

**National Science Foundation**

## States and Territories

**Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands**

**Commonwealth of Puerto Rico**

**State of Florida**

**State of Hawai`i**

**Territory of American Samoa**

**Territory of Guam**

**Territory of the US Virgin Islands**

## Freely Associated States

**Federated States of Micronesia**

**Republic of the Marshall Islands**

**Republic of Palau**



U.S. Coral Reef Task Force Members and staff.

## Accomplishments by Objective

**Objective 1:** *Coordinate the submission of coral reef protection implementation plans, annual reports, and other documents by USCRTF members.*

**Objective 3:** *Coordinate the annual submission of agency reports of programs, policies, and actions.*

The USCRTF completed the report to Congress: *Implementation of the National Coral Reef Action Strategy: Report on U.S. Coral Reef Agency Activities from 2002 to 2003*, which highlights the activities of the USCRTF under each of the 13 national conservation goals defined by the 2002 *National Action Strategy*.

The USCG re-published Ocean Steward, the USCG Marine Protected Species Strategic Plan to achieve its overall goal of protecting natural resources and its specific performance goal

of enforcing federal regulations resulting in all living marine resources achieving healthy, sustainable populations. Ocean Steward provides a well-defined strategy for the USCG role in helping the Nation recover and maintain healthy populations of marine protected species. Ocean Steward complements the fisheries enforcement strategic plan, Ocean Guardian. Together, Ocean Steward and Ocean Guardian provide a roadmap for the Coast Guard's efforts to ensure the Nation's waterways and their ecosystems remain productive by protecting all the Nation's living marine resources.

Several of the USCRTF Working Groups developed reports highlighting recent accomplishments, challenges, outstanding needs, and plans. The Water Quality Working Group presented its report to the USCRTF in 2006. Many of the highlights from the report are included in Chapter Eight of this report. The Pacific Region Interagency Mitigation Working Group, which includes

USFWS, USACE, NOAA, EPA, USCG, Hawai‘i, and Guam, developed a Management Plan outlining the authorities, roles, and responsibilities of each agency (more information on this working group is included on page 95).

In compliance with EO 13089, the USCG developed a Coral Reef Protection Implementation Plan (COMDTINST 16000.2) to identify measures the USCG could take to further coral reef protection. The plan includes providing coral-focused enforcement as needed and when resources allow, developing Statements of Purpose to minimize adverse impacts on reefs, working with relevant stakeholders to review adequacy of aids to navigation, and ensuring coral reefs are included in area contingency plans. DoD developed a similar Coral Reef Protection Implementation Plan, which identifies DoD authorities, policies, and programs utilized to protect coral reef ecosystems and to minimize the impact to coral reefs of DoD activities. DoD also provides funding for coral reef stewardship.

The USCRTF as a body and its individual members provide updates on accomplishments, activities, and opportunities for collaboration at the USCRTF biannual meetings. These updates are made available following the meetings via the USCRTF website: <http://www.coralreef.gov>.

**Objective 2:** *Coordinate planning and development of cross-cutting initiatives; promote exchange of information on activities, needs, and concerns; and facilitate resolution of issues related to coral reef conservation.*

### U.S. Coral Reef Task Force Decision Items

The USCRTF has taken a number of formal actions in the form of resolutions or decision

items to be more effective and specific in meeting the 12 substantive goals outlined in the National Action Plan. Since its establishment in 1998, the USCRTF has adopted a total of 71 resolutions (i.e., major decisions), including 133 decision items. The resolutions and decision items span a range of topics and activities, from general statements of USCRTF support to specific calls for action and deliverables. Several resolutions are highlighted throughout this document as they relate to one of the 12 specific goals of the USCRTF. Examples include the 2005 Caribbean Coral Bleaching Event response, coral spawning, and others.

Of the 133 USCRTF decision items, 55 (41 percent) have been completed, 71 (53 percent) are being worked on, and seven (five percent) are inactive or deferred. Continued (and in some cases additional) effort is needed to complete “active” items. Original text for each of these decision items and updates, where applicable, are available on the USCRTF website. The following are some examples of actions the USCRTF has taken during 2004 to 2006.

### U.S. Coral Reef Task Force Working Groups

The USCRTF conducts much of its work through issue-specific working groups. These working groups are established to develop, coordinate, and oversee implementation of the *National Action Plan* and other duties of the USCRTF. Working groups consist of member staff with expertise in the designated area and may collect information from a variety of government and non-government sources and engage a broad variety of stakeholders as they develop coral reef conservation strategies. A sampling of the active USCRTF Working Groups include:

*Mapping and Information*  
*International Trade*  
*Water Quality*  
*Education and Outreach*  
*International Year of the Reef*  
*Response Tools for Coral Reef Injury Events*  
*Cooperative Conservation*  
*Mitigation*  
*Coral Spawning*  
*Enforcement*  
*Aquaculture (ad-hoc)*  
*Climate Change*

### **Enforcement Working Group Training Workshops**

Strong enforcement is an essential component of any effective coral reef conservation program. Federal members of the USCRTF have worked cooperatively to develop and conduct training workshops to help build enforcement capacity and increase effectiveness in many jurisdictions. These training workshops broadly addressed multiple issues impacting coral reef ecosystems, including land-based pollution, illegal fishing, coastal development, pollution discharges from vessels, and other illegal activities. In conducting these workshops, DOJ and NOAA were joined by other USCRTF partners including the EPA, USFWS, USCG, and the USACE. The first of these three-day training programs was conducted in Guam and CNMI in November 2004. Thereafter the agencies presented trainings workshops in American Samoa in March 2005, and St. Croix and St. Thomas, USVI, in May 2005. The training was also given in Puerto Rico in February 2007. The workshops helped increase local understanding of the federal legal tools available to address environmental problems, promoted more effective cooperation

and coordination among territorial and federal agencies in pursuing appropriate enforcement action, and provided guidance and instruction on basic techniques and methods for conducting inspections and preparing enforcement cases.

### **Federal Agency Grant and Opportunities Workshops**

During the March 2005 USCRTF meeting in Washington, D.C., USCRTF members supported a proposal for USCRTF federal agencies with grants and funding opportunities addressing coral reef ecosystem conservation to assist stakeholders in U.S. island states and territories to understand, apply, and compete for federal grants aimed at coral reef ecosystem conservation. DOI-USFWS and NOAA, along with many USCRTF members helped organize and conduct these informational and interactive workshops on federal grant opportunities related to coral reef ecosystems. These workshops were held in Puerto Rico and the USVI in 2005, where participants numbered 40 in Puerto Rico and 31 in the USVI, with 12 federal representatives presenting 53 grant programs and funding opportunities. Similar workshops were held in Hawai‘i, CNMI, and Guam in 2006, with the final workshop in American Samoa summer 2007. In each location, the workshop content and format was tailored to meet the specific management and conservation needs identified by each jurisdiction.

The workshops presented a unique opportunity for attendees to learn about a variety of funding, partnership, and technical assistance opportunities. And in turn, these workshops gave the federal partners an opportunity to identify ways to improve coordination among federal agency coral reef grant programs to help deliver more support for on-the-ground coral reef conservation.

The workshops also provided a constructive forum for local agency, NGO, and academic representatives to network and discuss potential partnerships and collaborations within and between the various organizations, and helped the attendees understand the various ways to seek funding through partnerships and potential alternatives to combine funding opportunities through cross-agency grant requests.

### **Building Local Capacity through Internship and Fellowship Opportunities**

#### ***Tauese P.F. Sunia Memorial Coral Reef Conservation Summer Scholarship Award***

In 2004, the USCRTF developed the Tauese P.F. Sunia Memorial Coral Reef Conservation Summer Scholarship Award. This award is in recognition of the late American Samoan Governor's outstanding leadership in and contribution to the conservation of coral reef ecosystems, as he is remembered for being an eloquent and impassioned advocate for coral reef protection and management at the local level, not only in American Samoa but throughout the Pacific Region and the United States. This award is intended to continue the Governor's legacy by providing an outstanding college or university student the opportunity to develop professional coral reef management skills to be applied in his or her local jurisdiction. This internship is available for students from Guam; the CNMI; Hawai'i; American Samoa; Puerto Rico; the USVI; or the Freely Associated States of Palau, the Marshall Islands, and the FSM. The 2007 interns, from Guam and the USVI, were jointly hosted by DOI – Office of Insular Affairs (OIA) and USFWS and NOAA.

The first Sunia Coral Scholars from USVI and Guam were hosted by NOAA. The Summer 2005 Coral Scholars, hosted by

DOI's Office of Insular Affairs and USFWS, were from Hawai'i and Puerto Rico. In 2006, NOAA hosted Coral Scholars from American Samoa and Hawai'i. This internship provides students a unique opportunity to gain valuable, professional experience in coral reef conservation policy and management while also contributing to the overall efforts of the hosting agency and the USCRTF.

#### ***U.S. Coral Reef Task Force Coral Management Fellow Program***

The Coral Reef Management Fellowship was established to respond to a need for additional coral reef management capacity and capability in the U.S. Flag Pacific and Caribbean Islands. The fellowship program has provided highly qualified individuals with professional, on-the-job education and training on island-level coral reef management and has provided policy and management support to the U.S. Flag Islands for coral reef issues. Fellows are placed every other year for two years in each of the U.S. state and territory insular areas to work on specific projects and activities determined by each island's lead coral reef management agency. The first round of fellows was placed in January 2004, and the current round started their fellowships in January 2006.

#### ***All Islands Coral Reef Initiative Coordinating Committee***

The U.S. All Islands Coral Reef Initiative Coordinating Committee (All Islands Committee) was established in 1999 by the USCRTF governor-appointed Points of Contact from the U.S. island jurisdictions of American Samoa, CNMI, Guam, Hawai'i, Puerto Rico, and the USVI. The All Islands Coral Reef Secretariat was established in 2002, to provide policy support and coordination for the Committee's full participation as members of the USCRTF. As a state member of the



Coral Management Fellows



USCRTF Sunia Scholars with USCRTF Co-Chairs

USCRTF, Florida was invited to participate in the All Islands Committee meetings in 2005.

NOAA and DOI's Office of Insular Affairs provide functional and financial support for the All Islands Committee and Secretariat. A new Secretariat was hired in 2005 to help coordinate the activities of the All Islands Committee, to better link the needs of the U.S. states and territories with priority activities of the USCRTF, and to serve as a vital link between the federal USCRTF co-chairs and the state, territory, and commonwealth members of the USCRTF. Through the leadership of the Secretariat, in 2007 the All Islands Committee will release a five-year strategic action plan and charter, will launch an All Islands Committee website, and help develop the next phase of LAS in each jurisdiction.

**Objective 4:** *Coordinate the process for the public inquiry about and agency response to issues or concerns relating to federal agency actions and coral reef protection.*

At each biannual meeting, the USCRTF provides an opportunity for the public to submit written and oral comments. Since 2005, the USCRTF has been collecting these comments, posting them online at: <http://www.coralreef.gov>, and working with individual members to provide responses as needed.

**Objective 5:** *Work with the Council on Environmental Quality, federal agencies, and other interested entities to develop guidance and tools assessing alternatives and potential impacts of actions through the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and Executive Order 12114.*

The USFWS began preparing background materials and draft NEPA documentation for several proposed Comprehensive Conservation Plans for National Wildlife Refuges protecting coral reefs, including those in Howland, Baker, Jarvis, Rose, Kingman, Palmyra, and Guam.



## Overview of LAS threat areas addressed by each jurisdiction.

	American Samoa	CNMI	Guam	Hawaii	Florida	USVI	Puerto Rico
Land-based Pollution	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆
Overfishing	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆ <sup>a</sup>	◆	◆
Recreational Overuse		◆	◆	◆	*	◆	◆
Lack of Awareness	*	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆
Disease, Bleaching, and Climate	◆		◇	◆			
Other	◆			◆	◆		

◆ LAS complete and being implemented

◇ LAS still under development

\* “Other” threats include Population Pressure - American Samoa; Aquatic Invasive Species – Hawaii; Maritime Industry and Coastal Construction – Florida; and cross-cutting education and outreach and capacity needs in American Samoa and coral reef resources management needs in CNMI.

<sup>a</sup> Florida’s Overfishing LAS includes fishing, diving and other uses.

## Local Action Strategies – Linking National Goals to Local Action

In 2002, the USCRTF launched development of three-year Local Action Strategies (LAS) by each of the seven member U.S. states, territories, and commonwealths to help link local action to the national goals and objectives in the National Action Plan. These LASs are locally driven roadmaps for collaborative and cooperative action among federal, state, territory, and non-governmental partners to reduce key threats to local coral reef resources. Applying a collaborative decision-making process based on local needs, concerns, and capacities, each jurisdiction developed strategies containing a variety of projects designed for implementation over a three-year period (2005–2007). The LAS framework has allowed the USCRTF to more clearly identify and address local needs, connect local priorities to national goals, and coordinate federal agency actions to better support each local jurisdiction’s management of reef resources.

### The LAS identified six primary threats to coral reef ecosystems:

- Land-based sources of pollution,
- Overfishing,
- Recreational overuse and misuse,
- Lack of public awareness,



- Climate change and coral bleaching, and
- Disease.

**In addition, several jurisdictions developed LASs to address three other significant threats:**

- Population pressure,
- Aquatic invasive species, and
- Maritime industry and coastal construction.

A Status Report on Implementation of the Local Action Strategies covering the fiscal years 2002 to 2006 identified approximately 760 total projects across the seven jurisdictions of which roughly 65 percent are being implemented (493 total projects) and some of which have already been completed.

The total estimated cost to implement all LAS projects is \$61.8 million (total project costs for all seven jurisdictions). Approximately \$25 million from numerous government and non-governmental sources has been applied to project implementation to date (2003-2006). The \$25 million in project implementation funds come from numerous sources including federal agencies (NOAA, DOI, EPA, USDA/NRCS, DOJ, U.S. Forest Service, and USGS), state/territory and county agencies, universities and research institutes, non-governmental organizations, and private corporations and foundations. Local agencies have leveraged hundreds of thousands of dollars in volunteer services and in-kind resources, including time and skills, which have not been quantified in the

total amounts of support received. The LAS focus areas having the greatest number of tasks are land-based sources of pollution, with the largest remaining funding need identified for watershed restoration and capital improvement projects and long-term water quality monitoring projects. A total of \$36.8 million in funding is still needed to complete the identified LAS projects.

The LAS process has resulted in a number of important accomplishments during the five years since this initiative was launched in 2002. Overall, the most notable progress made to date has been in the areas of developing new or expanded partnerships among numerous governmental, nongovernmental, and academic institutions, and in the area of increasing outreach and public awareness of coral reef issues. Specific LAS activities will be highlighted in more depth throughout the document as they relate to the 13 goals of the USCRTE. A few highlights follow:

### **In the area of new or expanded partnerships, for instance:**

- An interagency watershed group has been working effectively in CNMI for the past few years on watershed protection,
- A partnership was established between the Florida Department of Environmental Protection, the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, and the National Coral Reef Institute to comprehensively map and initiate long-term monitoring of southeast Florida's reefs, and
- An important partnership was established in Puerto Rico between the Department of Natural and Environmental Resources (DNER) Coral Reef Initiative and the Puerto Rico Tourism Company to produce educational pamphlets for tourists.

### **In the area of increasing outreach and public awareness:**

- A "Guardians of the Reef" initiative was launched in Guam to engage high school juniors and seniors in delivering coral reef education programs to elementary classes, and
- The Southeast Florida Coral Reef Initiative sponsored a series of workshops for the local marine tourism industry to encourage sustainable marine tourism.

### **Progress has also been made in building local capacity to address management issues and improving our understanding of coral reef processes:**

- Commercial and recreational fishers workshop and enforcement training for coral reef protection were held in Puerto Rico, and
- CNMI successfully hosted a summer internship program to introduce college students to natural resource careers and provide hands-on experience in coral reef resource management.



### **To increase understanding of coral reef ecosystems:**

- The Southeast Florida Coral Reef Initiative (SEFCRI), in partnership with the University of Central Florida, College of Charleston, Broward County Environmental Protection Department, and Haereticus Laboratories, completed the first phase of a biomarker study aimed at linking land-based sources of pollution to coral reef degradation and initiated the second phase of this study,
- The aquatic invasive species team in Hawai'i completed a series of surveys and is designing control techniques to better understand and address detrimental impacts of invasive species on Hawaii's reefs.

### **Moreover, the LAS effort has led to significant advancement and improvement in coral reef management in all jurisdictions:**

- In Guam, Eco-Permit legislation was enacted to manage activities in Guam's Marine Preserves, and a Conservation Officer Enforcement program ensures greater protection for natural resources in the Marine Preserves, and
- A new framework for marine managed areas is under development in Hawai'i.

**The LAS framework has allowed the USCRTF to more clearly identify and address local needs, connect local priorities to national goals, and coordinate federal agency actions to better support each local jurisdiction's management of reef resources.**