

Meeting Highlights
U.S. Coral Reef Task Force Meeting
March 2007
Washington DC

Full meeting summary and meeting materials (agendas, presentations, etc.) are available on the Task Force web site (www.coralreef.org). For more information contact Beth Dieveney (beth.dieveney@noaa.gov; 301 713-3155 x129) or Roger Griffis (roger.b.griffis@noaa.gov; 301 713-3155 x152).

General Summary

The U.S. Coral Reef Task Force (CRTF) held a public meeting in Washington, DC February 27 - March 2, 2007. The purpose of the meeting was to learn about and take action on key issues related to coral reef conservation. The Meeting also provided an opportunity for Task Force Members to share recent accomplishments, existing challenges, and needs in addressing coral reef research and conservation issues locally and globally.

- The Task Force heard updates from state and territory partners implementing the **Local Action Strategies (LAS)**. This LAS Session included panel presentations on two of the five LAS priority issues: Lack of Awareness and Land-Based Sources of Pollution.
- The **International Year of the Reef (IYOR)** Working Group presented the Draft Action plan which promotes Task Force leadership for and participation in the IYOR. Preceding the meeting, the Task Force hosted an International Year of the Reef Mini-Summit intended to inform and engage the wider marine and coral conservation community in planning for and participating in the IYOR 2008, inspiring new and creative collaborative action.
- The **Report on the Status of Marine Protected Areas in Coral Reef Ecosystems of the United States Volume 1** was released at this meeting. This report provides a qualitative review of marine protected areas in state and territorial waters.
- There were two **keynote speakers**, Deputy Secretary Lynn Scarlett of DOI and Jim Sanchirico of Resources for the Future.
- The Task Force considered and acted on **six decision** items proposed by the steering committee and All Islands Committee.
- **Public comment** was given by six individuals and organizations. An additional ten individuals submitted written comment prior to the meeting.

Local Action Strategy Session

In 2000, the Task Force initiated development of Local Action Strategies (LAS) in order to increase resources dedicated to, and improve effectiveness of local coral reef conservation efforts in U.S. jurisdictions. The LASs are locally-driven, short range roadmaps for collaborative and cooperative action among Federal, state, territory, and non-governmental partners which identify and implement locally-relevant priority

projects to reduce threats to coral reef ecosystems. The LASs address primarily six priority threats to coral reef ecosystems: Land-based sources of pollution; over fishing; recreational overuse and misuse; lack of public awareness; and climate change, coral bleaching, and disease. Of this overall effort, approximately 760 total projects and of them 65% are currently being implemented (493 total projects), some of which have already been completed and a further 32% (243) with cost estimates assigned are still in need of implementation support.

The LAS Session provided the Task Force with an update on the activities, accomplishments, partners engaged, challenges, and resource limitations for two of the LAS priorities: Lack of Awareness and Land-Based Sources of Pollution.

Lack of Awareness LAS Panel (*for full presentations go to www.coralreef.gov*)

- American Samoa is using the RARE Pride model to improve awareness by building capacity with student internships and volunteers under the Reefwatch program, awarding teachers involved with coral habitat protection and involving communities in clean-up efforts while also educating them about how land based sources of pollution affect marine systems.
- The Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands works to improve awareness by educating youth with the programs under the CNMI Organization for Conservation Outreach, which includes both general and specific outreach, brochures, campaigns and an internship program.
- Guam promotes local pride in coral reefs, hosts beach clean-ups and uses the creative icon Kika Clearwater to rally community involvement and stewardship of the marine resources.
- The U.S. Virgin Islands has developed a mobile environmental education and outreach van to bring knowledge directly to areas where it is needed.

Land Based Sources of Pollution LAS Panel (*for full presentations go to www.coralreef.gov*)

- American Samoa's strategy to reduce land based sources of pollution is through monitoring coral health and water quality on reefs and developing education and outreach programs.
- The Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands works to reduce land based sources of pollution by taking a watershed approach to management and is re-vegetating areas to reduce erosion and continuing to monitor near-shore reefs to determine impacts and effectiveness.
- Hawaii is using watershed based strategy to reduce land based sources of pollution by conducting workshops on storm and wastewater management and erosion controls, studying sediment and turbidity on Molokai and seeking best management practices for taro farms.
- Florida's Southeastern Florida Coral Reef Initiative is conducting biomarker studies to identify and trace pollutants that negatively affect corals and developing high resolution benthic habitat maps.
- Puerto Rico's Department of Natural and Environmental Resources is working through an interagency and community based strategy to reduce land based

sources of pollution by taking a watershed approach to management coupled with a use of marine protected areas.

This session promoted a discussion for increased collaboration among and between Task Force members and served to solicit additional agency and partner contributions to meeting the LAS goals.

The Task Force members are called to formally review and respond to a list of unfunded LAS priority needs within 30 days.

Coral Reef Conservation Act Reauthorization

The Coral Reef Conservation Act is currently being considered for reauthorization. The current Act authorizes NOAA, through the Coral Reef Conservation Program, to conduct and, through a matching grant process, support activities to further coral reef science, conservation and management. This Act also formalized a Coral Reef Fund. The Task Force supports reauthorization of the Coral Reef Conservation Act and discussed ways to amend the Act, including addressing the needs and challenges faced by the state and territory jurisdictions and providing a mechanism to promote greater participation by Federal agency partners.

The Task Force committed their support for Reauthorization of the Coral Reef Conservation Act. The All Islands Committee will submit language defining their needs and challenges for coral reef conservation to be considered by the Task Force and submitted to Congress.

International Year of the Reef Action Plan

IYOR 2008 is intended to increase awareness at all levels of the importance of coral reef ecosystems, the threats they face, and to encourage sustainable behaviors and highlight important activities that are underway (as well as those that are needed) to sustain these valuable ecosystems. The 2008 IYOR will consist of a year-long campaign of events and initiatives hosted around the world by national, regional and local governments and non-governmental organizations. IYOR provides an opportunity to showcase the Task Force as a model of national level coordination that could be adopted by other nations. An additional highlight of IYOR 2008 will be the 10-year anniversary of the Task Force.

The Task Force IYOR Working Group presented the IYOR Draft Action Plan. The Draft Action Plan outlines the role of the Task Force in both supporting the individual activities of each Task Force member and planning and hosting events that highlight and promote the collective activities of the Task Force. This year, as the 10-year anniversary of the Task Force, provides added value for the Task Force to assess its efforts to date and develop a renewed call to action for coral reef conservation.

The IYOR Working Group will develop a final Action Plan, securing commitments for support and participation by Task Force members for a final review by the Task Force at its next meeting, fall 2007.

Report on the Status of Marine Protected Areas in U.S. States and Territories

The Report provides an inventory of MPAs managed by state and territory partners in the seven Task Force member jurisdictions. In 7 jurisdictional chapters, the report provides a broad description of coral reef resources and MPA efforts in each jurisdiction, describes the MPA Types as defined by jurisdictions, explain the challenges of management effectiveness in the MPA, summarize the efforts supporting the development of MPA networks, and highlights a success story for each jurisdiction. This Report provides the first assessment of MPA sites and the activities supporting MPA management and development in the seven state and territory jurisdictions and highlights the need for management plans, evaluation of management effectiveness and support of the development of MPA networks.

Volume 2 will showcase MPAs in Federal jurisdictional waters.

Draft Framework for Developing the National System of MPAs

The Draft Framework provides an inventory of and describes a national system of MPAs built in partnership with federal, state, tribal, and local governments as well as other stakeholders. The overarching goal of this framework is to increase efficient protection of U.S. marine resources by enhancing government agency cooperation, help sustain fisheries and maintain healthy marine ecosystems for tourism and recreation businesses, and improve public access to scientific information about the nation's marine resources.

Our Sea of Islands: A Regional Forum for Oceania on Marine Managed Areas and World Heritage

The Forum was co-sponsored by NOAA, the Department of the Interior, and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) World Heritage Programme. The goal of this forum is to build local and regional pride across Oceania while enhancing natural and cultural heritage through information sharing, adaptive use of management tools, and relationship building regarding marine managed areas in Oceania.

The National Marine Sanctuary Program committed to working with the Task Force to enhance surveillance and enforcement efforts in remote Pacific islands, and assist in building research and management capacity in the region through information, technology and "traditional knowledge" exchange.

International Coral Reef Initiative (ICRI)

ICRI is a partnership among governments, and international, scientific, and civil society organizations seeking to stop and reverse the global degradation of coral reefs and related ecosystems. ICRI was founded in 1994 by the United States in partnership with Australia, France, Japan, Jamaica, the Philippines, Sweden, the United Kingdom, the World Bank and UNEP. The ICRI approach is to mobilize governments and a wide range of other stakeholders in an effort to improve management practices, increase capacity and political support, and share information on the health of these fragile ecosystems. ICRI is leading the effort to improve science-based management of coral reef ecosystems, and to track and assess the health of coral reef ecosystems globally.

The United States, with Mexico, will serve as the ICRI Secretariat for a two-year term beginning in July 2007. The Task Force is called to recognize our international responsibility and to support ICRI through helping to shape action plans and participate throughout the U.S. – Mexico Secretariat.

The Task Force endorsed the United States and Mexico as co-chairs of the ICRI Secretariat 2007-2009.

Request to the Task Force to Consider Global Warming

The Task Force has been called to review its role in and efforts toward curbing global warming. Specifically, a proposal was submitted to consider an amendment to the National Action Plan, Objective 5 of Goal 11, by adding the following text: “*and support efforts at the local, state, national and global levels to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases.*”

The Task Force called the Steering Committee to review existing tools, research, and monitoring and management activities that serve to address the impacts of global warming on coral reef ecosystems.

Keynote Presentation: Deputy Secretary Lynn Scarlett

The Department of Interior Deputy Secretary Lynn Scarlett addressed the Task Force, highlighting the LAS as a model that offer the virtues of nimbleness and adaptation to local priorities and circumstances combined with the benefits of coordination through shared priorities and collaboration. She noted the importance of promoting thriving communities balanced with commitment to conservation. She challenged the Task Force with considering the following key conservation questions for how to: better define access rights to marine resources, involve user groups in decision making and determine which groups are representative, delineate the scope and scale of management efforts, and coordinate management efforts across jurisdictional boundaries

Keynote Presentation Jim Sanchirico, Resources for the Future

Dr. Jim Sanchirico discussed the role that ocean zoning can play in managing our marine resources. He highlighted the nature and dynamics of ocean zoning – comprehensive planning and segregation of activities into use-priority areas. Noting that ocean zoning can be a catalyst for a variety of ancillary benefits, including opportunities for user groups to form informal or formal long-lived institutions and a reassessment of the focus and scope of the regulatory institutions involved in ocean management. These elements can lead to improved means of conflict resolution, efficiency of use, and enhanced ecosystem stability—critical components for the production of ecosystem services and maintenance of biological and human economic benefits. His presentation generated discussion regarding how ocean zoning can be utilized as a tool in coral reef regions.