

8th Coral Reef Task Force Meeting
October 2-3, 2002
San Juan, Puerto Rico

Resolution 8-7: National Academy of Science Study

The U.S. Coral Reef Task Force acknowledges that the study charge presented by the National Academy of Sciences was developed in cooperation with members of the coral reef management, research, non-governmental organization, and private foundation communities and supports the efforts of the NAS; and endorses the development of this study. The Task Force commends the National Academies for exploring the possibility of its undertaking; and encourages the Steering Committee and agency staff to work with the NAS to assist in defining scope, audiences for the study, locating sponsors, and coordinating funding to carry out the study. The Task Force also asks that the Steering Committee report back to CRTF early in 2003.

Background information on the study proposal

Background

The National Academy of Sciences (NAS) sponsored a one-day meeting on September 17, 2002, to determine the feasibility of conducting a National Academies study on coral reef status, trends, causes of decline, and management efforts. Such a study could provide recommendations to ecosystem managers, legislators, and research agencies to enhance current efforts. Approximately 55 representatives from federal and state agencies, NGOs, congressional offices, and academia attended this meeting to discuss the possible scope of work for a committee to address as well as debate whether such a study should be actively pursued, and suggest possible sources of support for such a study. It was widely agreed that an NAS coral reef study would be extremely valuable. The meeting attendees drafted a statement of task (below) for such a study, which has not yet been established. The Coral Reef Task Force will discuss this statement of task as well as potential sources of funding.

Proposed Statement of Task

This study will summarize the current health of global coral reef ecosystems relative to historical levels, based on a critical review of existing scientific information. In addition to examining coral reef ecosystem biology, the economic, political, social, and cultural dimensions of coral reef use and protection will also be discussed, including an analysis of relevant stakeholders. The study will identify the factors, with a focus on potential global impacts of U.S. actions.

The committee will review current U.S. legislation, federal, state, and local management policies, and implementation strategies identifying strengths, gaps, and weaknesses in achieving sustainable management of coral reef ecosystems. Characteristics of successful management efforts, both within the U.S. and abroad, will be highlighted. The committee will recommend management actions at the federal, regional, and local levels that might help reverse the existing declines and achieve sustainable coral ecosystems, and will outline the legislation, policies, research, and education efforts needed to support those management actions.