



## 2 *State and Territory Coral Reef Management Grants*

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### *Introduction*

The CRCP State and Territory Coral Reef Management Grant Program provides matching grants to the coral reef management agencies in the U.S. jurisdictions of Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands (USVI), Florida, Hawaii, Guam, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI), and American Samoa to address priority coral reef management initiatives and capacity needs. The program's objective is to support effective conservation and management of coral reefs and associated fisheries by state and territory government agencies. This grant program, along with the State and Territory Monitoring Grant Program, is a primary and essential source of funds that enables local jurisdictions to comprehensively manage coral reef resources and implement on-the-ground projects based on island-specific needs and threats.

Since 2000, the CRCP has provided grants to the jurisdictions to support implementation of coral reef conservation and management programs. The goal of this grant program is to fund local priority projects that support the *National Coral Reef Action Strategy* and the U.S. Coral Reef Task Force's (USCRTF) *National Action Plan to Conserve Coral Reefs*. Priority management and conservation activities that are funded under this grant program category are based on the threats identified and ranked by the USCRTF in an October 2002 meeting in Puerto Rico. These threats are:

- Climate change, coral bleaching, diseases of coral reef organisms, and extreme biotic and storm events.
- Overfishing, destructive fishing, and the harvest and collection of marine ornamental coral reef species.
- Tourism and recreational overuse and misuse.
- Lack of public awareness.
- Land-based sources of pollution (including sedimentation, runoff, and non-point source pollution).
- Increasing development pressure, unmanaged land use, and population growth.
- Alien and invasive species.
- Marine pollution and debris.
- National security activities.

Since 2002, \$11.5M in grant funding has been awarded. Of this, \$10M was provided by the CRCP and \$1.5M by the Department of the Interior's Office of Insular Affairs. Funding is competitive in nature and varies each year among jurisdictions based on the content and quality of projects proposed. Grant awards typically range from \$200,000 to \$600,000 per jurisdiction





annually. Each grant supports 12 to 36 specific projects or tasks per jurisdiction. Additionally, many jurisdictions provide some matching funds to leverage Federal funds and expand local coral reef conservation efforts. Since 2002, the jurisdictions have provided more than \$3.8M in matching funds. Local jurisdictions have also attracted a considerable amount of in-kind and volunteer services to augment Federal and non-Federal funding.

The planning and distribution of the grant funds has required extensive collaboration within and among local agencies, as well as with Federal partners, academic institutions and other local stakeholders to ensure the limited funding provides maximum benefits to coral reef ecosystems. Therefore, while the funds are provided to one local government point of contact (POC) agency, funds are distributed to a suite of stakeholder groups that include other governmental agencies, as well as non-governmental organizations that implement coral reef conservation activities.

### *a. Eligibility*

Eligible applicants are limited to the Governor-appointed POC agencies for the jurisdictions of Puerto Rico, USVI, Florida, Hawaii, Guam, CNMI, and American Samoa.

### *b. Activities, Outputs and Outcomes*

The State and Territory Management Grants support a wide variety of activities aimed at advancing jurisdiction-led management initiatives including:

- Building local capacity by providing funds for coral program staff, training, and equipment.
- Developing and implementing Local Action Strategies (LAS) and other initiatives
- Developing education and outreach strategies and activities.
- Managing marine protected areas (MPA) and coral reef ecosystem resources (including fisheries).
- Addressing watershed management and land-based sources of pollution.
- Addressing other local priorities such as invasive species, population growth and development, climate change, disease, and coral bleaching.
- Participating in key meetings (e.g., USCRTF meetings) for POCs and other jurisdictional representation. These meetings provide a venue for POCs to provide critical input to policy initiatives, and allow time for collaboration among USCRTF members.

With this support, jurisdiction agencies have engaged numerous stakeholders in planning and implementation of coral reef conservation efforts, such as LASs, watershed management plans, conservation action plans, communication and outreach strategies, and MPA management plans. Many activities are coordinated with NOAA supported efforts in the jurisdiction.





Many projects were derived through the LASs, which are locally-driven, short-range roadmaps for collaborative and cooperative action. LAS projects are a top priority for state and territory government agencies. This program has supported many LAS projects with significant outcomes including:

- Establishment of educational and outreach programs.
- Numerous successful workshops and trainings for local staff and stakeholders in MPA management and effectiveness.
- Development of strategic plans and management decision-making tools.
- Benthic habitat mapping projects.
- Creation of monitoring programs.
- Identification and implementation of activities to abate the threats caused by land-based sources of pollution.
- Invasive species removal projects.

Some key examples of grant activities and notable outputs and outcomes are provided below.

### *Pacific*

- **Hawai'i**—funding supported the coordination, development, and implementation of six LASs to reduce key threats to reefs including land-based sources of pollution, recreational uses, fisheries, aquatic invasive species, public awareness, and coral disease and bleaching. Specific outputs included training workshops on stormwater/wastewater runoff for developers and enforcement agencies, technical support for community-based management resulting in new policy to support marine managed areas, development of innovative tools for alien species removal, and the development of a rapid response team to address coral disease and bleaching.
- **American Samoa**—funding was used to support outreach staff and related projects to implement a campaign to raise awareness about turtle and coral reef habitat conservation. Some of the outputs of this effort are the introduction of marine science curricula into local schools, public service announcements and radio show discussions, implementation of a marine science summer camp, and the development of two coral reef outreach booklets. Evaluations of these projects are all still underway to determine their outcomes in terms of increasing knowledge and changing attitudes and behavior of target audiences.
- **Guam**—funding was used to support scientific research, which supports management decision-making. Specifically, these projects examine soft coral as a bio-indicator of contaminants in the water and characterize fish spawning aggregations at two sites. These projects are multi-year (two to three years) and are still underway. Final outputs will be scientific papers published in peer-reviewed journals. Additionally, Guam has funded the development of management decision-making tools, such as a digital water resources atlas for all watersheds in southern Guam. The atlas is almost complete and will be used by





government agencies to more easily understand and implement remediation plans that will reduce the impact of point and non-point source pollution on streams and reefs.

- **CNMI**—funding was used to support restoration efforts in two watersheds adjacent to important coral reef habitat. Outputs of these projects include architectural and engineering designs for two watersheds which, when implemented, will reduce sedimentation on reefs from adjacent dirt roads. Revegetation projects have also been implemented to reduce sedimentation on these reefs, including planting of 15,000 seedlings at one site. Additionally, CNMI has used funds to build local capacity of high school students in marine resource management. Funds have supported at least three students per year over the past few years to work directly with natural resource agencies on projects that improve outreach and education. Finally, CNMI has supported the hiring and retention of three enforcement officers to focus specifically on marine-related issues.

### *Atlantic*

- **Florida**—funding was used to establish the Southeast Florida Coral Reef Conservation Program in Miami, which is staffed by seven people. This program led the development of LASs for four focus areas and oversaw or implemented all LAS projects identified under this initiative. Numerous stakeholders continue to be involved in implementing southeast Florida's LASs. Some major activities and accomplishments are:
  - Completion of benthic habitat mapping for two of four counties in the south Florida region (mapping for a third county is underway).
  - Completion of the first phase of a biomarker project to identify and characterize links between land-based pollution and coral health.
  - Development of multi-agency guidelines for rapid response and restoration for coral reef injuries in Southeast Florida.
  - Numerous education and public outreach materials.
  - Workshops and trainings for teachers, media, decision-makers and the general public.
  - Initiation of a long-term comprehensive monitoring program.
  - Creation of a database for assessing land-based pollution information and cumulative impacts during project and permit reviews.
  - Development of Best Management Practices for construction, dredge and fill, and other activities adjacent to coral reefs.
- **Puerto Rico**—funding was used to support a variety of efforts including:
  - Completion of the final draft of the *Puerto Rico Coral Reef Management Plan* to guide future efforts.
  - Development of a new regulation for the *Protection and Management of the Puerto Rico Coral Reefs*, which was signed by the Secretary of DNER.







- Community-based processes resulting in draft management plans for three of Puerto Rico's natural reserves (Tres Palmas Marine Reserve, La Cordillera Natural Reserve and Canal Luis Peña Reserve).
  - Beginning development of management plans for three additional natural reserves (Mona Island, Humacao, and Vieques Bioluminescent Bay).
- **USVI**—funding was used to implement the management plan for the East End Marine Park on St. Croix, which is now in the final stages of the regulatory process. This park, which covers 60 square miles, is the first site in USVI's system of marine parks. Grant funding has supported development and implementation of this important MPA, including funding for staff, equipment, outreach, and installation of mooring buoys. The LAS process helped launch the Virgin Islands Network of Environmental Educators, an outreach and education network with members representing 28 natural resource agencies on the islands of St. John, St. Croix, and St. Thomas. Network members collaborate on outreach and education planning throughout the islands.

### c. Challenges

- *Planning and priority setting*: The program has worked closely with state and territory partners to identify clear priorities and strategies to address major threats to reefs in each jurisdiction. However, there is variability in the quality of planning among these partners, making determination of the most important projects and ultimately the impacts and outcomes of grants difficult.
- *Grants management*: Some of the jurisdictions have experienced challenges in managing the grants. While most issues have been resolved, in some cases this has resulted in reduced or withdrawn awards.
- *Project implementation*: Some jurisdictions have experienced significant challenges in implementing projects due to a number of factors, including core human capacity to both manage grants and complete complex management activities.
- *Project evaluation*: As with many programs within the CRCP, most jurisdictions lack a system of performance metrics for use in evaluating outputs and outcomes of grant efforts over time. Tracking of projects and accomplishments has been challenging. To aid in the tracking of projects, the CRCP is currently working on a database to improve the tracking of accomplishments and funding from all sources (including in-kind contributions).
- *Non-Federal match requirement*: Due to the Coral Reef Conservation Act requirement that CRCP grant program funds be split 40% Atlantic and 40% Pacific, the CRCP at times is constrained from funding the best projects overall (regardless of region) to meet this formula. The availability of alternative sources to supplement CRCP funds vary considerably across jurisdictions. Some jurisdictions have great difficulty producing the required 1:1 matching resources, and have sought waivers of this requirement for the life of the grant program. Others have been very successful in attracting more non-Federal matching funds and other





Federal funds (non-CRCP). In most cases, the jurisdictions believe that they do receive CRCP funds commensurate with their coral reef management responsibilities.

