

Meeting Highlights
U.S. Coral Reef Task Force Meeting
November 5-7, 2005
Republic of Palau

Full meeting summary and meeting materials (agendas, presentations, etc) are available on the Task Force web site (www.coralreef.gov). For more information contact Beth Dieveney (beth.dieveney@noaa.gov; 301-713-2989 x 200) or Roger Griffis (roger.b.griffis@noaa.gov; 301-713-2989 x 115).

General Summary

The U.S. Coral Reef Task Force held a public meeting in the Republic of Palau November 5 – 7, 2005. The purpose of the meeting was to learn about and take action on key issues related to coral reef conservation in the Pacific region, particularly in Micronesia and the Freely Associated States. The Meeting provided an opportunity for Task Force Members to share recent accomplishments, existing challenges, and needs in addressing coral reef research and conservation issues globally. The Task Force heard from leading experts on management schemes, scientific research, and additional tools utilized to better understand and conserve coral reef ecosystems. The Task Force discussed and acted on ten key **decision items** listed below (Full text of Decision Items can be found at www.coralreef.gov). During the Meeting, the Task Force also gave a number of **awards** to several local, regional, and national organizations and individuals in recognition of their significant contributions to coral reef science and management. **Public comment** was heard from eleven individuals and organizations.

The U.S. Coral Reef Task Force meeting was preceded by a meeting of the **International Coral Reef Initiative (ICRI)** (see www.icriforum.org for more information) November 31 – December 2, 2005 and a joint **ICRI – U.S. CRTF Sustainable Finance Workshop** November 3, 2005.

Sustainable Finance Workshop: Recommendations and Task Force Action

Capitalizing on the presence and combined expertise of international coral reef partners, a joint International Coral Reef Initiative – U.S. Coral Reef Task Force **Sustainable Finance Workshop** was organized for participants of both meetings.

Objective: Stimulate interest and commitments to develop sustainable finance models for coral reef conservation at local to national and international scales.

Outcome: Workshop participants developed a list of recommendations and tools aimed at enhancing funding capacity throughout coral reef jurisdictions. These recommendations were presented to ICRI and Task Force Members.

In response to these recommendations, *the Task Force charged the Steering Committee with reviewing the Sustainable Finance Workshop recommendations and developing options for Task Force action including a “sustainable financing toolbox”.*

Task Force Responds to Recent Caribbean Coral Bleaching Event

The Task Force received reports on the recent Caribbean coral bleaching event from leading experts and affected jurisdictions. In response, the Task Force *expressed serious concern about the scope, scale and impacts of the recent large scale coral bleaching event in the Caribbean/Atlantic region, and called for mobilizing efforts across the region (in collaboration with the International Coral Reef Initiative) to monitor and assess short and long term impacts to learn from the event.*

Conserving Coral Reef Ecosystems in Micronesia: Issues & Opportunities

The meeting opened with a celebration of marine conservation strategies in the Pacific and Micronesia, where conservation management methods draw from both traditional and Western practices, and where issues and solutions are complicated by changing values and political systems. This panel highlighted the issues and opportunities for marine conservation in Micronesia, and the possible application for other areas.

Updates from U.S. Coral Reef Task Force State and Territory Members

Task Force Member state and territories provided updates on recent activities and accomplishments conducted through their Local Action Strategies. In response *the Task Force affirmed support for continued implementation of the 3 year Local Action Strategies to address priority threats to coral reefs, and tasked the Steering Committee with producing a progress report on LAS implementation by the next Task Force meeting.*

U.S. Coral Reef Task Force Steering Committee Updates

The Task Force heard highlights of key Task Force affiliated interagency activities and accomplishments included efforts to map coral reefs in Palau, Atlantic/Caribbean Federal Grants Workshop, Enforcement Training Workshops, and a report on *'The State of Coral Reef Ecosystems of the U.S. and Freely Associated States'*. These activities highlighted the successes possible through multi-partner and multi-agency collaborations and serve as a base upon which the Task Force and partners can build.

In response to and as follow-up to these activities, the Task Force passed the following decision items:

Call for Building Enforcement Capacity

The Task Force called on its members to increase efforts to build enforcement capacity, and charged the Steering Committee to continue training and other efforts including the development of an "enforcement toolbox" in cooperation with the International Coral Reef Initiative (ICRI) to help coral reef management communities build enforcement capacity.

Conduct Workshop on Federal Grants and Assistance Opportunities for coral reef conservation efforts in the Pacific

Following report on successful federal grants workshop for the U.S. Caribbean in 2005, the Task Force charged the Steering Committee with holding a workshop in the Pacific in 2006 to provide information on federal grants and other opportunities to support conservation of coral reef ecosystems.

Special Session I: Building Capacity for Coral Reef Conservation

This session consisted of panels on –

- (1) Financial Capacity and developing creative funding strategies – *Don Hess*
- (2) Building Human Capacity through education, training, and partnership building;
Marine Resources Pacific Consortium – *Noah Idechong*
Palau International Coral Reef Center – *Patrick Tellei*
Coral Reef Sustainable Destination Model – *Brian Huse*
Capacity Building with Watershed Communities – *Robin DeMeo*
Freely Associated States Coral and Reef Monitoring Training – *Steven Victor*
- (3) Providing Technical Assistance and Capacity when responding to major damage events;
M/V Cape Flattery Vessel Grounding, Hawaii – *Mike Molina & Gerry Davis*
M/V Explorer Vessel Grounding, Palau – *Portia Franz*
M/V Kyowa Violet Vessel Grounding and Oil Spill, Yap – *Andy Tafleichig*

Objective: Examination of several case studies provided a sense of the varied and common challenges, limiting factors, and recommendations for effectively building the resources, tools, and knowledge necessary for coral reef management and conservation.

Outcome: The Task Force considered existing limitations and discussed ways in which the Members could work collaboratively across agencies and jurisdictions to address the existing needs and gaps for building capacity.

In response to the panel highlighting the technical needs when responding to major damage events, *the Task Force charged the Steering Committee with developing a workshop in 2006 on tools and needs for responding to major injury events in coral reef areas.*

Special Session II: Marine Protected Area Networks in Reef Ecosystems: Challenges and Opportunities

This session consisted of panels on –

- (1) Science and Tools for the design and implementation of coral reef protected areas (MPAs);
Managing for Reef Resilience – *Rod Salm*
Long-Term Research in American Samoa – *Charles Birkeland*
Modeling for Management – *William Skirving*
Spawning Aggregates of Reef Fishes: Myths, Methods, and MPAs – *Pat Colin*
- (2) Jurisdiction Efforts to Develop & Strengthen MPA Networks;
- (3) Tools and Partnership Opportunities and Resources available to enhance and strengthen the use of MPAs as a management and conservation tool.
Pacific Island MPA Community – *Willy Kostka*
MPA – Federal Advisory Council – *Lelei Peau*

Objective: Highlight management schemes (successes and challenges) and recent scientific findings to support the design, implementation, and management of MPAs and MPA Networks.

Outcome: The Task Force was provided with detailed information on opportunities and challenges regarding the design and implementation of MPAs and MPA Networks. In response, *the Task Force affirmed the goals and objectives for coral reef protected areas in the National Action Plan and Strategy, and tasked the Steering Committee with completing the draft inventory of existing U.S. coral reef protected areas by the next Task Force meeting.*

U.S. Coral Reef Task Force Decision Items

Task Force adopted ten Decision Items. Those that are not highlighted above include:

Proposal on 2007 Year of the Reef

The Task Force charged the Education and Outreach Working Group with developing options and recommendations (in collaboration with the International Coral Reef Initiative) on a possible 2007 Year of the Reef.

Approval of 2006 Task Force meeting schedule

The Task Force approved meeting dates for 2006 and tasked the Steering Committee with planning 2006 Task Force meetings for first week of May (Washington DC), and late October (USVI).

Approval of report from Steering Committee on past resolutions

The Task Force accepted and approved the report and recommendations from the Steering Committee concerning past resolutions.

Full Text of Decision Items can be found on the Task Force Website (www.coralreef.gov).

U.S. Coral Reef Task Force

A Presidential Executive Order established the U.S. Coral Reef Task Force in 1998 to lead U.S. efforts to preserve and protect coral reef ecosystems. Through the coordinated efforts of its members, including representatives of 12 federal agencies, the governors of seven states and territories, and the leaders of the Freely Associated States, the U.S. Coral Reef Task Force has helped lead U.S. efforts to protect and manage valuable coral reef ecosystems in the U.S. and internationally. NOAA and Department of Interior co-chair the Task Force.