

CORAL REEF GRANTS WORKSHOP, AUGUST 2005
COASTAL PROGRAM IN THE CARIBBEAN
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE (FWS)

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Program Web Page: <http://www.fws.gov/coastal/CoastalProgram/>

Description: The Coastal Program in the Caribbean is one of 21 nationwide created to partner with coastal communities to improve the health of their specific watersheds benefiting fish and wildlife resources. The program seeks cooperative partnerships with others to forward the program goals in a cost-effective manner through technical and financial assistance. The program is guided by four goals:

- Serve coastal communities by providing assessment and planning tools to identify priority habitats that should be protected and restored.
- Conserve pristine coastal habitats through support of locally-initiated conservation efforts.
- Restore degraded coastal wetland, upland, and stream habitats by working with partners to implement on-the-ground projects.
- Focus resources through conservation alliances that leverage the financial and technical resources of our partners and multiply the impact of the taxpayer's dollar.

Who is eligible? The Coastal Program works with Federal, State, interstate and intrastate agencies; local and tribal governments; sponsored organizations; public non-profit institutes and organizations (such as conservation organizations, watershed councils, land trusts, schools and institutions of higher learning); Federally recognized Indian tribes; U.S. territories and possessions; private landowners (including individuals/families, minority groups, and businesses) . (For more details on eligibility, please see the enclosed FY05 Notice of Availability of Federal Assistance.)

What projects are eligible? Coastal habitat conservation or restoration projects within Puerto Rico or the U.S. Virgin Islands (referred to as "State" for this notice) that address priorities discussed below. The emphasis is for on-the-ground projects where benefits can be measured in area or distance, and projects that address habitat restoration goals for established watershed or special area plans.

What projects are not eligible? Projects outside of the program area. Projects that are being accomplished as compensatory mitigation requirements under Federal or State laws. (For more details on eligibility, please see the enclosed FY05 Notice of Availability of Federal Assistance.)

How to determine eligibility: If the applicant is unsure about the eligibility of the project, we recommend that the Coastal Coordinator for that area be consulted.

What is fundable, what is not fundable? Types of projects fundable are broad, but should address habitats important to Service trust resources (see ranking factors below). Preference will be given to projects that benefit National Wildlife Refuges or other Federal and State designated natural ecosystems. Projects should be self-sustaining (that is, with little or no dependence upon artificial structures or frequent maintenance).

Examples of fundable project types include, but are not restricted to: planting forested stream riparian buffers, designing and installing migratory fish passage devices, conducting natural stream restoration, implementing wetland or coastal upland forest restoration, promoting recovery of an area by restricting or controlling access or impacts (livestock fencing, low-impact mooring buoys for sensitive areas with high boat anchoring activity), implementing invasive species control or removal, etc.

Grant Schedules or Cycles: The program is not a standard “grant” program. Agreement mechanisms include grants, cooperative agreements, MOUs, MOAs, and Intra- or Inter-agency agreements. Availability of funding is announced in the Federal Register, and the announcement is available at: www.fws.gov/coastal/CoastalProgram/

Projects will be considered at any time, however, funding is dependent upon availability, which is determined by the Federal budget on a yearly basis. Agreement packages are usually sent to the Regional Office before June 1. Coordination and consideration of proposals can occur throughout the year, and we recommend early contact with the Program Coordinator.

Grants Management: While underway and after a project is completed, the Service verifies its satisfactory progress and completion with site visits. Any bills incurred by the landowner are provided by him to the Service and reimbursements for project activities are provided based on the cost-sharing agreement. Reporting requirements and timetable are specified in the individual cooperative agreement.

The Service uses its Habitat Information Tracking System (HabITS) to report habitat improvement accomplishments and technical assistance associated with the Coastal Program. The Program Coordinator is responsible for monitoring the progress of projects. (See the FY 2005 Notice referenced above for additional information).

Recent projects: This is a new program, however, some initial projects were previously funded or are in process with this year’s funds, and similar projects were conducted with the Partners Program. Projects have included: restoration of salt flats in Guánica by controlling vehicle access (a similar project is underway for DNER salt flats in Cabo Rojo), removal of invasive plant species (San Juan Bay Estuary system and Mona island), monitoring a fish ladder placed on the Culebrinas River, restoration of a coastal wetland in Hacienda Esperanza in Manatí, and restoration of staghorn coral in Culebra.

Project criteria and ranking: Priority ranking includes projects that benefit: National Wildlife Refuges, threatened, endangered, candidate, or declining species; Species at Risk; migratory birds of concern; and migratory fish species of concern). Secondary ranking factors include: Service ecosystem priorities; actions that reduce habitat fragmentation; conservation or restoration of imperiled habitats; whether the project is self-sustaining; and buffers for State and Federal conservation lands. Other considerations being equal, we give priority to funding projects with conservation agreements that are longer in duration, that involve greater non-Service partnerships and cost-sharing; and/or that have the greatest cost-effectiveness.

Supplemental Information: Contact the Program Coordinator early in the development of a project plan. A written proposal may not be required, but a formal agreement will have to be developed. Information to be included in the Agreement is: 1) Title Page, 2) Project Description that should include expected results in the form of habitat benefits from the project, 3) Project Statement of Work that specifies the participant's cost share if it is in-kind (work, equipment, materials) and a project timetable. 4) Project Budget to include the participant's and the Service's contribution, and 5) Supporting Documentation demonstrating the experience or expertise of the participant to conduct the proposed work and supporting the viability of the project.

As the Coastal Program and Strategic Plan develop, input will be sought from Cooperators regarding the local priorities and specific focus areas.