

An underwater photograph of a coral reef. The scene is dominated by a dense field of branching coral in the foreground and middle ground. Numerous small, yellowish fish are swimming throughout the water column. The background is a deep, clear blue, suggesting a healthy reef environment. The text is overlaid on a dark blue rectangular area in the upper half of the image.

The Status US Virgin Islands Coral Reef Ecosystems Workshop Update

Paige Rothenberger

Marine Resource Ecologist

VI Dept. of Planning & Natural Resources

Division of Coastal Zone Management

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USVI Coral Reefs Workshop Update

- Workshop Goals & Objectives
- Workshop Content
- Workshop Outcomes
- USVI Issues
- Recommendations



Status of USVI Coral Reefs Session

- Target Audience
 - Local policy and decision makers
- Goals
 - Examine state of USVI coral reefs
 - Explore state of knowledge, current challenges, possible solutions and local initiatives
 - Capitalize on the opportunity to highlight territorial issues while federal and local policy makers are at the table

Status of USVI Coral Reefs Session

- Objectives
 - Engage in a solution-oriented discussion about the state of USVI coral reef ecosystems
 - Foster discussion on ecological and management issues facing Caribbean coral reef ecosystems



Status of USVI Coral Reefs Session

USVI Coral Reefs: Issues, Status and Solutions

- Threats to Reefs
- Status of Reefs
- Identifying Needs & Solutions



Sedimentation/runoff

- Very steep hillsides
- Very large houses being built
- Unpaved roads – erosion 10 k higher
- Silt curtains rarely work
- Sediment damage harder to document
- Sewage a problem but not well-studied



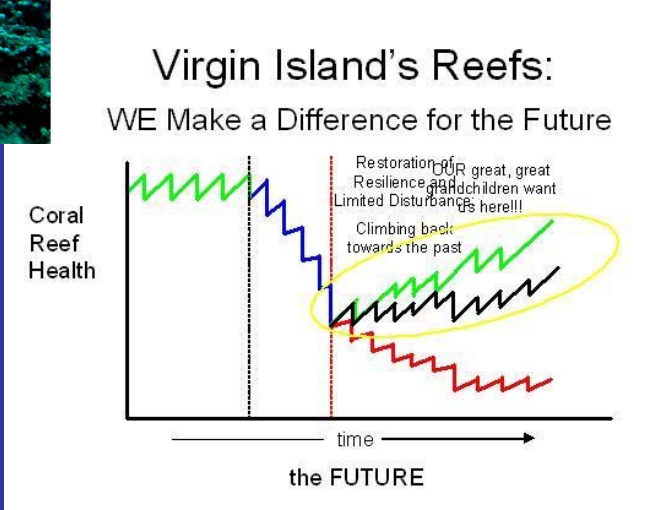
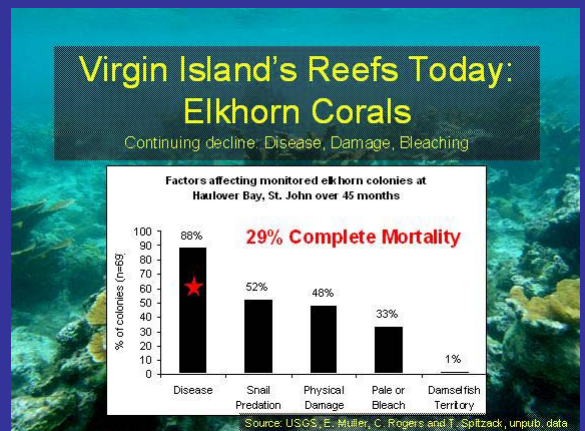
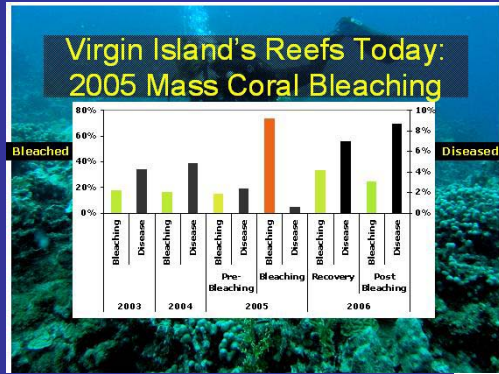
Removal of parrotfishes/other herbivorous fishes



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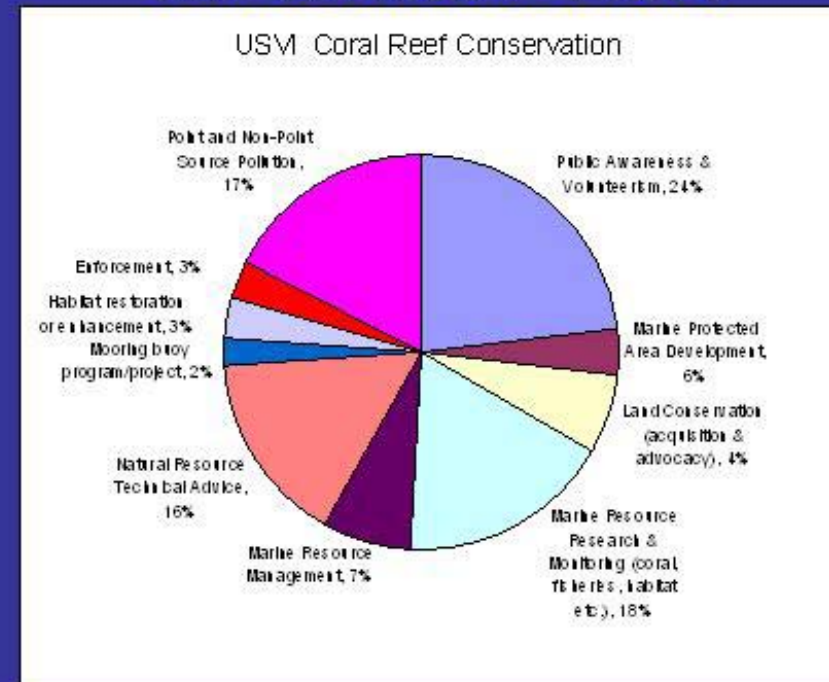


Status of USVI Coral Reefs Session

USVI Coral Reefs: Issues, Status and Solutions

- Threats to Reefs
- Status of Reefs
- Identifying Needs & Solutions

Percentage of USVI Conservation Effort



Status of USVI Coral Reefs Session

USVI Marine Protected Areas: History, Status and Future

- Understanding MPAs
- MPAs in the USVI
- Are MPAs a Good Strategy for Protecting USVI Coral Reef Resources?

MPA Design Questions

- Why use MPA option? – primary management objective
- What is the resource being managed?
- Protection from what?
- Management for whom?
- Management by whom?
- Will it work?

Status of USVI Coral Reefs Session

USVI Marine Protected Areas: History, Status and Future

- Understanding MPAs
- MPAs in the USVI
- Are MPAs a Good Strategy for Protecting USVI Coral Reef Resources?

Different Players

- NOAA/NMFS - CFMC
- National Park Service



Big Questions (Roles as MPAs)

- Big/diverse enough to be effective?
- What are the effects of protection within VICR/BUIS? – need local data to satisfy local concerns
- What are the ecological relationships between park units (VIIS/VICR and BUIS/EEMP)? – NOAA, et al. starting fish movement study
- What are the benefits of no-take (VICR) to partial-take (VIIS)?
- What are the benefits of no-take (VICR/BUIS) to adjacent waters?

All these questions are being worked on by NPS, NOAA and university researchers.

Types of Territorial MPAs

- Fisheries Closures
- Marine Reserves & Wildlife Sanctuaries
- Areas of Particular Concern (APCs)
- Marine Parks



Challenges to Effectiveness of Territorial MPAs

- Management of various designated areas within multiple governmental Divisions
- Mgmt of MRWS not assigned to any particular Division
- Division of Environmental Enforcement authorized enforcement agency for all of DPNR
- Division of Fish & Wildlife operating with very limited support
- Few formally adopted management plans
- Inadequate (nonspecific) goals / objectives for many areas
- Data needs (baseline and continued monitoring)
- Effectiveness evaluations for areas needed
- Adaptive management not realized
- Continued decline of resources

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MPAs in the USVI

Difficult to Communicate and Get Buy-In

Need Buy-in From:

- Government
- Resource Managers
- Researchers
- Stakeholders

MPAs in the USVI

Resource Management

- Consistent Thread
- Funding for long-term management
- Capacity to meet goals
 - Technical Skills
 - Training
 - Integrate Science/Management

MPAs in the USVI

The Elephant in our MPA



Land Use Planning and Coral Reef Ecosystems

Did We Achieve the Workshop Goals & Objectives?

- Yes and No
- Generated discussion
- Whole other set of unforeseen issues arose
- Strategies to evaluate management effort were not addressed sufficiently
- Instead perception of inadequate management was discussed



Management Effectiveness

- Current management strategies insufficient
- Disconnect between managers and scientists
- Insufficient understanding of economic value of reefs



Stakeholder Engagement

- Inability to get appropriate messages out to stakeholders
- Need for consistent and meaningful stakeholder engagement
- Need to engage non-traditional stakeholders



Leadership Continuity

- Every 4 years staff changes
- Compromised thread of continuity & institutional memory
- Risk abandoning processes that work
- Risk stalling program progress



Recommendations

- Development of a **Coral strategy for USVI**
 - Interdisciplinary and comprehensive – include research, community engagement, management, enforcement
 - Need for actual funded position(s)
 - Need for facilitation to begin the development of strategy
 - Strategy would address current efforts, vision, gaps
 - VI coral list
 - VI CRAB (technical advisory board/group) formalized
 - Some framework already exists (VINE, VICCC, VI EPSCoR – ed/out, mechanism in place to distribute message)

Recommendations

- Training/Assistance in conducting effectiveness assessments
- Replicate this workshop for decision makers



Acknowledgements

- Workshop co-coordinators
- Workshop presenters and moderator
- NOAA
- DPNR, CZM
- colleagues

Thank You

