

10th Coral Reef Task Force Meeting
October 3-7, 2003
Guam & CNMI

Resolution 10-2: Proposal on Pacific Water Quality

Whereas, in the Pacific Islands of Hawaii, Guam, American Samoa, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI), and the Freely Associated States, the coral reef resources are a cornerstone of the economy, tourism, fisheries, and traditional cultures; and

Whereas, these coral reefs are of local, national and international importance affording the public at large the opportunity to develop an understanding of the aesthetic, recreational, economic, and scientific value of these resources to the world economy; and

Whereas, coral reefs protect shorelines and support a richly diverse and productive ecosystem; and

Whereas, coral reefs can only thrive under a narrow range of environmental conditions including light, salinity, temperature, water quality, and nutrients, and are thereby extremely vulnerable to anthropogenic inputs to nearshore waters; and

Whereas, the coral reefs of the Pacific exist in close proximity to coastal development which provides lodging and infrastructure to residents and visitors; and

Whereas, these coral reef ecosystems often serve as the receiving waters for land-based pollution such as sewage or industrial effluent, sedimentation and erosion, based on regulations and using management practices that do not adequately take into account impacts on the coral reefs; and

Whereas, in some of the Pacific Islands, current wastewater treatment systems are often in dire need of repair, replacement and expansion in order to accommodate increasing populations and to avoid repeated incidents of sewage spills. Such spills can adversely affect coral reef health and the public health of residents and visitors alike; and

Whereas, over 500 million gallons of raw sewage were spilled in Guam between 1999 and 2002, CNMI has 8,000 septic tanks, many of which were improperly constructed, almost 40% of the population of American Samoa is not hooked up to water or sewage, and there are approximately 18,000 cesspools in Hawaii. Releases of sewage and pollution into the nearshore environment jeopardize the coral reef ecosystem, the vitality of which is based on maintaining nutrient-poor waters; and

Whereas, the coral reefs of the Pacific Islands are exposed to the effects of erosion, sedimentation, runoff from construction and unpaved roads, and other poor land-use practices and these activities can seriously impact coral reef health in some areas; and

Whereas, all of these types of land-based sources of pollution can result in negative impacts to coral reef habitat, varying from poor reef health to complete destruction; and

Whereas, immediate and effective action is needed to ensure these sensitive and slow-growing coral reefs continue to be the cornerstone of thriving ecosystems; and

Whereas, the U.S. Pacific Islands have developed local action strategies that identify strategic short-term actions needed to reduce the threat of land-based sources of pollution on coral reef ecosystems; and

Whereas, these local action strategies have not fully identified the actions needed to address many of the large-scale and long-term infrastructure needs that continue to seriously degrade the Pacific Island coral reef ecosystems;

Now, Therefore, Be It Resolved,

That the U.S. Coral Reef Task Force supports, in coordination with the appropriate local jurisdictions:

- (a) Identification and allocation of funding or other resources to implement the elements of the U.S. Pacific Islands coral reef protection local action strategies that pertain to reducing land-based sources of pollution;
- (b) Assistance to bring relevant jurisdictions subject to enforcement actions into compliance as needed;
- (c) Assistance to address wastewater treatment in the Pacific Islands;
- (d) Assistance to address erosion, sedimentation, and runoff problems in the Pacific Islands;
- (e) Identification of appropriate grant or other opportunities to assist local governments to address land-based sources of pollution;
- (f) Submission of a list from each jurisdiction of the top infrastructure needs to reduce impacts on coral reefs to the USCRTF within 60 days of adoption; and,
- (g) A report by members of the Task Force on progress made toward addressing this resolution as well as the Caribbean water quality resolution by October 2004;

recognizing that, in the case of the Federal members of the Task Force, support for specific amounts and individual actions will be subject to the budget and appropriations process.