

**Final Decisions**  
**U.S. Coral Reef Task Force Meeting**  
**May 4, 2006**  
**Washington D.C.**

The following is a summary of decisions by the U.S. Coral Reef Task Force at its meeting May 4, 2006 in Washington D.C..

Full text of each decision is listed after the summary.

A summary of the meeting and meeting materials (agendas, presentations etc) will be posted on the Task Force web site ([www.coralreef.gov](http://www.coralreef.gov)). For information please contact Beth Dieveney ([beth.dieveney@noaa.gov](mailto:beth.dieveney@noaa.gov)) or Roger Griffis ([roger.b.griffis@noaa.gov](mailto:roger.b.griffis@noaa.gov); 301-713-2989x115).

**Summary of Decisions**  
**U.S. Coral Reef Task Force Meeting**  
**May 4, 2006**

**15-1: Form a Working Group on Enforcement and Utilize Task Force Expertise to Address the Illegal Use of Cyanide and Other Poisons in International Trade**

The Task Force will form a working group on enforcement consisting of experts in law enforcement, field forensics, and toxicology/biomarkers to identify existing or potential cyanide detection methods or tests which could be used to determine if fish had been exposed to cyanide or other poisons. This Working Group will explore the usefulness and need to convene a broader expert panel to resolve the issues associated with cyanide and other poison detection tests. All coral reef jurisdictions will identify and promote alternative, sustainable, non-destructive practices in regard to aquarium fisheries.

**15-2: Endorse an International Year of the Reef in 2008 (IYOR 2008)**

The Task Force endorses the proposal for a 2008 International Year of the Reef and will work with the International Coral Reef Initiative and other partners to plan, support and implement IYOR 2008.

**Resolution 15-1: Form a Working Group on Enforcement and Utilize Task Force Expertise to Address the Illegal Use of Cyanide and Other Poisons in International Trade**

**Responsible Party:** USCRTF Steering Committee, International Working Group and Enforcement Representatives. Contacts:

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**Issue Statement:** There is an urgent need for fast, reliable and convenient detection tests for determining whether cyanide and other poisons have been used in the collection of live coral reef fish entering into international trade. Many Task Force member agencies have expertise in toxicology, biomarkers and forensics that could be applied to this issue. Field-based cyanide detection tests would be extremely useful for local management and enforcement authorities in source countries. Tests that could be reliably used several weeks after exposure would also allow the U.S. to apply the Lacey Act to suspected illegal imports.

Although illegal in most countries, the use of cyanide to capture reef fish alive is widespread, and is driven by the lucrative, growing and largely unregulated international trade in live reef food fish and marine aquarium industry. The U.S. is the number one consumer of live coral, live rock and coral reef fish for the aquarium trade and of coral skeletons and precious corals for curios and jewelry. Previous studies have estimated that most live reef fish entering into international trade and imported into the U.S. are collected with the use of cyanide, and thus are illegal.

**Background:** Provide a brief history of relevant documents pertaining to the proposal being presented to the SC. Include relevance of EO 13089, Coral Reef Conservation Act of 2000, Coral Reef National Action Plan, Coral Reef Action Strategy, Local Action Strategies, Federal regulations or other pertinent guidance as necessary.

**Executive Order #13089 for the Protection of Coral Reefs** mandates that the U.S. Coral Reef Task Force "...assess the U.S. role in international trade and protection of coral reef species and implement appropriate strategies and actions to promote conservation and sustainable use of coral reef resources worldwide."

**The Coral Reef Action Plan** calls for efforts to reduce global threats to coral reefs and to reduce the impacts of international trade in coral reef resources, through exercising global leadership in the international arena, strengthening international conventions, providing assistance and strengthening international research and management.

**Assessment of U.S. Role in Trade:** Under the leadership of the Department of the Interior (USFWS) and the Department of Justice, the Coral Trade Subgroup of the International Working Group conducted an initial assessment of the role of the U.S. in the international trade of coral and coral reef species in 2000. The analysis found that the U.S. is the number one consumer of live coral, "live rock" and marine reef fish for the aquarium trade and of coral skeletons and precious corals for curios and jewelry. Results of that assessment, along with a recommended strategy for action, were compiled in a report to the Task Force entitled, **International Trade in Coral and Coral Reef Species: The Role of the United States**. (The report is available at [www.coralreef.gov](http://www.coralreef.gov))

While it is known that the US is the largest importer of coral reef fish for the marine aquarium trade, the magnitude of the trade is based upon estimates as almost all reef fish are not listed on CITES. The NMFS is analyzing the USFWS import data – recently modified to identify and separate out freshwater and marine fish – to assess the quantity of fish entering the U.S. The initial analysis indicates that more than twice as many coral reef fish are entering the U.S. for the marine aquarium hobby than was originally estimated, up to 16 million fish a year.

**USCRTF Resolution 14\_4 Call for Building Enforcement Capacity:** At the 14<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the USCRTF in Palau, the Task Force called on its members to increase efforts to build enforcement capacity. The Steering Committee was charged with continuing 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.

**Statement Decision(s):**

The USCRTF decides to:

- Form a working group on enforcement to assist in fulfilling Resolution 14\_4.
- Identify and recommend specific experts in law enforcement, field forensics, and toxicology/biomarkers to serve on the working group from Task Force agencies.
- Utilize expertise from Task Force agencies to identify existing or potential cyanide detection methods or tests which could be used to determine if fish had been exposed to cyanide or other poisons.
- Explore the usefulness and need to convene a broader expert panel to resolve the issues associated with cyanide and other poison detection tests, and if needed, assist in convening such a panel.
- Encourage all coral reef jurisdictions to identify and promote alternative, sustainable, non-destructive practices in regard to aquarium fisheries.

Experts and relevant representatives from Task Force Agencies will be identified and the Working Group on Enforcement formed within two months. Progress on assessing cyanide and other poison detection tests and building enforcement capacity will be presented at the next USCRTF Meeting.

**Resolution 15-2: Endorse an International Year of the Reef in 2008 (IYOR 2008)**

**Responsible Party:** An IYOR Working Group will be formed with representatives from the USCRTF Education & Outreach Working Group, International Working Group, CRTF members and key partners. Initial contacts are:

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Kelly Milton, State: [MiltonKK@State.gov](mailto:MiltonKK@State.gov)

**Issue Statement:****What is proposed?**

- International Year of the Reef 2008 (IYOR 2008) would be a year-long campaign of events and initiatives hosted by a wide range of government and non-governmental organizations around the world to provide information, tools, and action for coral reef conservation.
- IYOR 2008 would include a series of “high-visibility” events including an international launch (press conference), the U.S.-hosted international coral reef science meeting (July 2008), release of the World and U.S. reports on the status of coral reef ecosystems, and 10 year anniversary and review of U.S. efforts through the U.S. Coral Reef Task Force.
- IYOR 2008 would be modeled after IYOR 1997 and other successful international campaigns, with a central coordinator and campaign website for international distribution of information, materials and the calendar of events.
- There is strong domestic and international and NGO support for IYOR 2008, with endorsement from the ICRI Co-Chairs, Japan and Palau.

**Why 2008?**

There are a number of significant U.S. related events that make 2008 an ideal time for a targeting campaign on coral reef conservation including:

- 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the U.S. Coral Reef Task Force (USCRTF)
- Release of the report on status of U.S. coral reef ecosystems
- Release of the report, Status of Coral Reefs of the World: 2008
- U.S. to host the quadrennial International Coral Reef Symposium (world’s largest meeting on coral reef science and management)
- U.S. government will serve as Co-Chair of the International Coral Reef Initiative Secretariat

**Opportunities for USCRTF members:**

IYOR 2008 would be a good opportunity to:

- Highlight successful coral reef management, science and education efforts.
- Highlight USCRTF priorities and goals of the U.S. National Action Strategy to Conserve Coral Reefs including:
  - Promote Local Action Strategies
  - Promote watershed, regional, and ecosystem-based approaches to management.

- Address role of US as a major importer and exporter of coral reef species.
- Assume a global leadership role in promoting policies, management and conservation actions to protect these key coastal and marine resources.
- Highlight commitments under U.S. Ocean Action Plan.
- Highlight U.S. as Co-Chair of ICRI Secretariat.

**What it will take for the U.S. to engage and participate:**

IYOR 2008 provides an excellent opportunity to showcase your agency's or jurisdiction's commitment to coral reef conservation and past successes. To maximize U.S. participation and enhance our international leadership on coral conservation, USCRTF members will need to identify what role they can play and what commitments they can make in support of the IYOR 2008. Active U.S. leadership role will require some combination of:

- 1) Financial support to assist with IYOR "centralized services" and member-specific IYOR events and initiatives.
- 2) Staff time to plan U.S. and international campaign, orchestrate member involvement and increase visibility of member's coral reef conservation efforts.
- 3) Content for events, announcements and products.

Each agency and jurisdiction should consider contributing:

- Funds for centralized services
- Funds for events specific to your agency or jurisdiction
- Leadership/representation at global and regional IYOR events
- Identification of constituent outreach and education opportunities:
  - Strategy for and implementation of media outreach and engagement
  - Strategy for utilizing IYOR 2008 to enhance and complement research and management priorities
- Development of appropriate communication, education and science materials
- Hosting events, conferences, workshops to strengthen awareness, conservation efforts, and capacity for enforcement and management
- Release of appropriate announcements and new/updated products

**Background Statement:**

**Executive Order #13089 for the Protection of Coral Reefs** mandates that the U.S. Coral Reef Task Force assess the U.S. role in "... protection of coral reef species and implement appropriate strategies and actions to promote conservation and sustainable use of coral reef resources worldwide."

**Coral Reef Conservation Act of 2000** tasks the NOAA Administrator, with support from the USCRTF, with creating an action strategy and implementation plan to includes goals and objectives for "international and regional issues," as well as "outreach and education." The Act also authorizes NOAA to conduct activities to "conserve coral reefs and coral reef ecosystems" including "enhancing public awareness, education, understanding, and appreciation of coral reefs and coral reef ecosystems," and

“cooperative conservation and management of coral reefs and coral reef ecosystems with local, regional, or international programs and partners.”

**The National Coral Reef Action Strategy (2002)** defines outreach and education as “an essential part of fulfilling all the other goals in this Strategy,” and calls on Task Force members to: “(1) Raise public awareness and appreciation for coral reef ecosystems through targeted and focused communications campaigns; (2) Incorporate coral reef ecosystem issues in education programs to promote understanding of marine conservation; (3) Inform the public and policy-makers about accomplishments ... of the U.S. Coral Reef Task Force.”

**USCRTF Resolution 14\_8 Proposal on 2007 Year of the Reef:** At the 14<sup>th</sup> Meeting for the USCRTF in Palau, 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.”

**Statement Decision(s):**

The USCRTF decides to:

- Endorse the proposal for a 2008 International Year of the Reef.
- Encourage CRTF members to work with the International Coral Reef Initiative and other partners to plan, support and implement IYOR 2008.