

Coral Reef Conservation Program

Implementation of the “Roadmap for the Future”: Threat-based Working Groups and Strategic Goals and Objectives

Background

In 2007, the Coral Reef Conservation Program (CRCP) underwent an external review by a panel of recognized experts in coral reef resource science and management to provide an independent assessment of the CRCP’s effectiveness in meeting its goals and to suggest recommendations for future improvement. In response to the panel’s report, the CRCP developed a “Roadmap for the Future”, laying out new principles and priorities for the future of the Program (see attached 2-page Roadmap summary). According to this new Roadmap, the primary objective of the CRCP will be to address strategic coral reef management needs and the CRCP will narrow its focus by emphasizing efforts on understanding and addressing the top three global and national threats to coral reef ecosystems: fishing impacts, land-based sources of pollution and climate change.

In order to implement these proposed changes, the CRCP will put into place three working groups to provide recommendations on the strategic goals and objectives the Program should work towards in the next 5-20 years in order to effectively address each of these top three threats. These working groups will contain approximately 15 members and will be composed of both NOAA and non-NOAA members, all of whom will have expertise on coral reef conservation issues and the threat areas in question. The panels will be charged with assisting the CRCP in developing long-term quantifiable goals that the CRCP should seek to achieve to address the threat, as well as specific objectives that will assist in reaching the goals, along with performance measures to track their progress. The activities needed to achieve these objectives will range from direct implementation to research and monitoring. The CRCP will use these recommended goals and objectives produced by these panels to guide the development of targeted projects to address each threat over the long term and to assist with the funding decision process.

Working Group Composition

The panels will be composed of approximately 15 members each, including:

- A NOAA panel chair (or co-chairs) with extensive expertise on the topic.
- A panel coordinator (NOAA), who will work closely with the chair and assist with scheduling of meetings and conference calls, taking and distributing meeting minutes, receiving, organizing and processing comments, distributing documents for review, and serving as the liaison with the CRCP headquarters. Both the panel chair and coordinator will be from the NOAA Line Office with most expertise on the topical area.

- 1-3 other NOAA members from the other Line Offices represented in the CRCP matrix.
- Representative(s) from the U.S states and territories with coral reef resources (one from the Atlantic/Caribbean region and one from the Pacific region).
- Member(s) of academia with expertise on ecological or socioeconomic science relating to the topic.
- Members of key federal agencies with purview over issues relating to the threat area.
- Representative(s) from the NGO community
- Non-state/territory manager(s).

Members of the panel will be chosen on the basis of their expertise on the subject matter, their ability to think of the “big picture” and their capacity to work collaboratively in a team with diverse representation. As much as possible, panel members will be expected to represent the voices and opinions of the sector which they represent. They will be expected to gather comments and input from their colleagues throughout the entire process. The panels will have a balance of representation from the scientific and management sectors, as well as balanced representation from the Pacific and Atlantic/Caribbean regions.

Charge to the Working Groups

The CRCP’s mission is **to protect, conserve, and restore coral reef resources by maintaining healthy ecosystem function**. Its primary objective is **to address strategic coral reef management needs** in a targeted, cost-effective and efficient manner. Keeping the Program’s mission and primary objective in mind, each working group will be charged with developing 2-4 conservation goals. Goals should be for a 20-year time horizon. The goals are what would need to happen if we expect to reduce the threat to coral reefs. Each goal should have a quantifiable ecologically-based target we hope to achieve over the next 20 years.

For each goal, the Panel should identify 2-4 objectives that will assist in achieving the goal. Objectives should be for a 5-year time horizon (next 5 years), i.e. what do we hope to accomplish under this plan. Each objective should have a performance measure that will be used to see if we are on track to achieving the goals. The Panel should avoid combining different objectives into one.

Both goals and objectives should be SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-based). For the purposes of this effort, the Panel should only concern itself with U.S. reefs. (See additional materials for a suggested outline and examples)

Before the final strategic goals and objectives are delivered to the CRCP, the panel will be expected to rank each of the 2-4 goals in order of importance and priority. They will also be asked to sort all objectives into 3 tiers based on which are thought to be those that the CRCP should give precedence to (Tier 1 = most critical, Tier 3 = least critical). Each tier should have roughly the same number of objectives. This will assist the CRCP in

prioritizing its subsequent activities, as Program funds will not likely be sufficient to tackle all goals and objectives for all threat areas at once.

The panel is expected to work collaboratively on this task, although the CRCP is not seeking or expecting a consensus opinion. If some form of voting by the Panel is used to prioritize the goals and objectives, the CRCP will request that individual votes be recorded and transmitted to the CRCP. The final deliverable expected from the panel is a short document outlining the goals, objectives and performance measures (see additional materials for suggested page lengths), as well as documentation of alternative recommendations or prioritization of recommendations in the event that opinions within the panel diverged.

Timeline

Panel membership will be confirmed by the end of September 2008 and the panels will begin working together in October 2008 and continue until the end of May 2009. In order for the strategic goals and objectives to be available to inform the Fiscal Year 2010 CRCP Spend Plan, it is imperative that the following deadlines be met by all three working groups:

- Draft strategic goals and objectives will need to be finished by March 27th, to be submitted for comment to the coral reef community.
- After review and incorporation of comments, final input on strategic goals and objectives will need to be delivered by May 29th, 2009.

The formal responsibilities of the working groups will end after the final input on strategic goals and objectives are presented to the CRCP on May 29th, 2009.

Process and Responsibilities

Role of Panel Chair:

- Serves as leader and NOAA's issue expert representative
- Creates vision for the panel and overall process
- Has ultimate responsibility for gathering input and providing final document to the NOAA CRCP

Role of Panel Coordinator:

- Serve as the executive secretary for the panel
- Support the needs of the panel chair and members
- Coordinate and manage conference calls, take the lead on coordinating workshop
- Solicit input from NOAA staff
- Coordinate with other threat working group coordinators to promote information exchange and consistency across panels
- Promote transparency throughout the process

Role of Panelists:

- Represent not just their own personal opinion, but that of the sector they represent. They will thus be expected to solicit comments and information from their colleagues and relay this common voice to the rest of the panel during conference calls or document reviews.
- Actively participate on conference calls and other means of information exchange (email list serve, possible workshop, etc.)
- Contribute to discrete projects and tasks assigned to the panel as a whole or to individual members (compiling background material, drafting documents, reviewing/editing, etc.)
- Review and help finalize document to be forwarded to the NOAA CRCP

Potential/Expected Time Commitment:

We anticipate that this will take approximately 10-12 hours a month of a Panel member's time. Panel members will be expected to participate in conference calls approximately every 2-3 weeks, actively seek input from colleagues and constituents, and perform research and other tasks between phone calls. We also anticipate a one- or two-day workshop to be held around February in or near the DC area that working group members will be expected to participate in. For planning purposes, a panel decision on whether or not a workshop should be held will need to be made soon after the panels are formed.

Periodic updates from each of the panels meetings or conference calls will be posted on the CRCP website in order to increase transparency and encourage the coral community to provide input. The panel coordinator will regularly relay any comments received via the website to the panel members for discussion.

Threat Based Priority Strategic Goals and Objectives: Proposed Outline and Examples

Outline

Introduction to threat: Why is this threat critical to address? To help set the context, the introduction to each section should include a few paragraphs on the issue to explain the threat posed to coral reefs. – *(no more than 1 page)*

Goal #1 – *(each goal, including objectives, should be no more than 2 pages)*

Target for Goal #1: What do we hope to achieve over the long-term?

Why this goal? (1-2 paragraphs)

Objective #1.1

Performance measure for Obj. #1.1

Objective #1.2

Performance measure for Obj. #1.2

Goal #2

Target for Goal #2: What do we hope to achieve over the long-term?

Why this goal? (1-2 paragraphs)

Objective #2.1

Performance measure for Obj #2.1

Objective #2.2

Performance measure for Obj. #2.2

Examples

(These examples are for illustrative purposes only)

LAND BASED SOURCES OF POLLUTION

GOAL #1: Reduce sedimentation and other land-based sources of pollution by developing and implementing comprehensive “ridge to reef” watershed management plans.

Target: Sediment impacting coral reefs in targeted watersheds is reduced by 50%.

Objective #1.1: Develop 21 “ridge to reef” plans in high priority watersheds.

Performance measure: Number of plans developed.

Objective #1.2: Implement high priority projects pursuant to watershed management plans to reduce sediments and other land-based sources of pollution from impacting reefs.

Performance measure: Percentage reduction in amount of sediments impacting the reef in targeted watersheds.

FISHING IMPACTS

GOAL #1: Implement sustainable coral reef fisheries management plans in 20% of coral reef habitat of jurisdiction by 2015.

Target: Coral reef fishery effective operational management plans in place by 2015.

Objective #1.1: Define target management areas to meet 20% target.

Performance measure: Percent of sites defined.

Objective #1.2: Complete prioritized site-based coral reef sustainable fisheries management plans.

Performance measure: Percent of planned area covered.

Objective #1.3: Implement site-based plans.

Performance measure: Measure change from baseline over time and adjust management for maximum benefit.

CLIMATE CHANGE

GOAL #1: Increase and enhance managers' ability to plan for and respond to climate change.

Target: All U.S coral reef managers have planned for the anticipated effects of climate change and can respond effectively to bleaching events.

Objective #1.1: Increase development of bleaching response plans and ensure U.S. managers have the capacity to implement them.

Performance measure: Percentage of U.S. coral reef managers that have bleaching response plans and the capacity to implement them

Objective #1.2: Expand the use of resilience principles in the design of MPA systems.

Performance measure: Percentage of MPA systems that have used resilience principles to design or amend their systems

Objective #1.3: Increase the predictive capability for bleaching events.

Performance measure: Increase in lead time that managers are notified of a potential bleaching event.