

2006 - 2009 Coral Management Fellowship U.S. Virgin Islands Statement of Work

Location of the Project

The host agency for the 2006-2009 U.S. Virgin Islands Coral Management Fellowship is the Virgin Islands Coastal Zone Management Program (VICZMP), located within the Department of Planning and Natural Resources. The Fellow will be located in the VICZMP St. Croix office.

The U.S. Virgin Islands are located about 1,400 miles south-southeast of Florida. St. Croix, St. John, and St. Thomas are the three largest islands with many offshore cays surrounding them. The topography of St. Thomas and St. John primarily consists of steep mountains which form lush, vegetated valleys that slope gently to the shoreline. Cobblestones line some shorelines while white sandy beaches or mangrove forests line others. The warm constant water temperature and remarkable clarity provide ideal conditions for coral reef growth. The coral reefs are comprised of shallow fringing reefs that parallel the coastlines and of scattered patch reefs. The Virgin Islands' climate is temperate, with temperatures ranging from approximately 78 °F to 94 °F.



Program/Agency Background

The Virgin Islands Coastal Zone Management Act was passed by the U.S. Virgin Islands Legislature in 1978, as a means of regulating development and managing coastal resources in the territory. Several of the VICZMP goals that are set forth in the Virgin Island Coastal Zone Management Act, Section 903 (b) relate to the protection of coral reefs. In particular, the VICZMP is charged with conserving ecologically significant resource areas for their contribution to marine productivity and valuable wildlife habitats, and preserving the function and integrity of reefs, marine meadows, salt ponds, mangroves, and other significant natural areas.

The Virgin Islands' coral reef ecosystems are under heavy pressures. Hurricanes and other major storms, higher than normal wave and water temperatures, and diseases that have affected the coral reefs and their inhabitants have combined with destructive boat anchoring practices, boat groundings and cargo spills, careless land usage, improper dredging practices, and over-fishing to cause dramatic deterioration of the Virgin Islands' coral reefs. Within the last 15 to 20 years, the amount of live coral has declined dramatically, while the abundance of algal life forms has increased proportionately.

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The Governor of the Virgin Islands signed into law Act 6572 in January 2003, established the St. Croix East End Marine Park (STXEEMP) and authorized the establishment of a territorial system of marine parks (marine protected areas). The Virgin Islands Division of Coastal Zone Management (CZM) is currently implementing management measures for the STXEEMP. In support of CZM's efforts to establish the Marine Park, and subsequently a system of marine parks, the USVI offices of The Ocean Conservancy (TOC) and The Nature Conservancy (TNC) will be implementing two territorial marine protected area system projects.

The Ocean Conservancy's project titled "Assessment of the Marine Protected Areas of the US Virgin Islands as Part of a Functionally Integrated Network" will involve an assessment of the ecological, legislative and socioeconomic status of the marine protected areas (MPAs) of the territory. Not only is the socioeconomic character of each of the MPAs, in its own right, critical to the management planning process, it is also important to understand the socioeconomic value and potential of the MPAs in the context of sub-groupings of these MPAs, and as a complete territorial system. No such information currently exists. Assessment will be prepared through review of data from government and academic sources, maps, statistical reports and official regulations, and primary sources derived from focus groups on all islands, semi structured interviews, structured surveys and observations. Planning for surveys and data collection will be done in consultation with the fishing community representatives and other stakeholders and experts. Both quantitative and qualitative information will be analyzed. Community participation will be essential for the success of this assessment, particularly in identifying the cross-links between socioeconomic and ecological factors.

"*Bridging Gaps for a Territorial Marine Park System in the US Virgin Islands*," the project being implemented by The Nature Conservancy will incorporate the results of the assessments completed by TOC into decision-making tools based on a simulated annealing (MARXAN architecture). Inclusive in this effort will be an assessment of priority conservation targets, threats to identified targets and a relative ranking of the significance of threats. The MARXAN analysis will be used to determine based on conservation goals of targets, taking into consideration ranking of threats and incorporating concepts of ecological and social resilience, a proposed design of a territorial marine protected areas network.

Project Goal and Job Duties

The goal of the Fellowship is to continue to support the Virgin Islands Department of Planning and Natural Resources, Division of Coastal Zone Management (CZM) in their efforts to implement a territorial marine protected areas system, the St. Croix East End Marine Park; and coordinate with and support the efforts of TNC and TOC in their territorial MPA projects. Job duties will include:

- Work as DPNR liaison for local efforts to establish a territorial system of Marine Protected Areas. Responsibilities will involve:
 - Coordinating the efforts and activities of partner agencies and pertinent Divisions of DPNR as they relate to the territorial marine protected area territorial system initiative.

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-Developing and implementing a communications strategy targeting policy makers and focusing on the importance of an MPA network for the territory. The strategy will include the development of press releases, presentations, fact sheets, web pages and other informational items as needed and will adhere to existing protocol for departmental media relations.

-Creating and distributing press releases and information to the media and other groups regarding the process and progress of the MPA network initiative. Information will be developed to ensure public awareness of the network development process and encourage public involvement where appropriate. Again, this information distribution must comply with DPNR media relations protocol.

- Assist in the collection of socioeconomic data. The type of data may include: demographic profiles, cultural significance, and economic importance.
- Assist with assessments to determine the socioeconomic characteristics of each of the MPAs and to estimate the relative importance of each MPA within this context. This assessment will be prepared through review of secondary data from government and academic sources, maps, statistical reports and official regulations, and primary data collection from focus groups on all islands, semi structured interviews, structured surveys and observations. Specifically, the individual will assist with conducting initial scoping exercises, focus group meetings and simple surveys to determine (1) The groups to be considered in the assessment (2) The key socioeconomic factors of interest (3) The extent to which information for the assessment is available or can be produced; and (4) The detailed process and methods to be used for socio-economic assessment
- Assist with conducting a rapid assessment using a second, deeper level of data analysis, and a more detailed, stratified random sample survey, to focus on specifics derived from the findings of the initial scoping exercise. The information derived from this rapid assessment will also provide the basis for further focus on a maximum of the four primary socioeconomic factors listed above.
- Support management of existing MPA in USVI, the St. Croix East End Marine Park

- Liaison with partners and DPNR to develop effective mechanisms through which EEMP Management Effectiveness monitoring can be operationalized. Assist in identifying and mobilizing appropriate stakeholder groups to participate in developing Management Effectiveness indicators. Provide updates to DPNR personnel and provide support for workshops.

-Manage and update content for the St. Croix East End Marine Park website. This will include the development of information for web pages highlighting the efforts and importance of creating a network of MPA's in the territory.

- Research and document current efforts and commitments by territorial and federal government agencies to create and/or manage marine protected areas.

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- Serve as Co-Coordinator of the Virgin Islands Network of Environmental Educators
- Serve as an advisor to the CZM Commission and provide updates at meetings on accomplishments and new developments related to the tasks described above.
- May assist in the support, planning, and implementation of Coral Reef Task Force meeting to be held in St. Thomas, U.S. Virgin Islands, October 2006.

Fellowship Description

Orientation (3 months)

The Fellow will be introduced to staff and management of the VICZMP and partner agencies. The Fellow will review background information regarding the Virgin Islands', coral reef and marine protected areas initiatives, as well as other coastal management issues. The Fellow will participate with program staff in field visits and interagency meetings. The Fellow will meet with representatives from TNC and TOC to discuss collaboration on the MPA network initiative and craft a timeline for project implementation activities. The Fellow, with input from their mentor, will develop a project work plan.

Outcomes:

- Project work plan for first year of Fellowship

Project Work Plan Implementation (33 months)

The Fellow will implement a work plan that will be reevaluated after completion of year one. This initial work plan will focus on supporting the efforts of VICZMP and other agencies/organizations in creating an MPA network in the USVI. The work plans for the second and third years of the Fellowship will be created by the Fellow, with the assistance of their supervisor and VICZMP staff. The updated work plan will detail project partners, on-going coordination and collaboration among partners, difficulties encountered and their resolutions, and next steps required to continue efforts. Additionally, the work plans may chronicle materials developed during years one, two or three of Fellowship, distribution methods, target audiences, messages, and methods/vendors for production. A final report chronicling the Fellow's efforts will be submitted to VICZMP upon completion of the Fellowship.

Outputs/Outcomes:

- MPA Network Communication Strategy for policy makers
- Multi-Media materials developed supporting communication strategy
- Maintenance of St. Croix East End Marine Park website
- Report chronicling territorial government agency efforts to create or manage MPAs
- Develop social surveys
- Analyze and synthesize data; complete assessment reports
- Year-two and year-three Fellowship project work plans
- Fellowship final report

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Fellow Mentoring

The Fellow will be supervised by the Director of the VICZMP. Susan Curtis, Special Projects Coordinator for VICZMP, will serve as the Mentor to provide day-to-day project guidance. The Fellow will be considered part of the VICZMP, and will be expected to attend staff meetings and participate in program discussions. They will be provided opportunities to join staff on field visits, and in internal and external meetings. The Fellow will have ample opportunities to meet staff within all levels of government, nonprofit groups, and academic institutions. This project will provide an exciting opportunity to learn about aspects of a natural resource management program and a wide range of island management issues.

Project Partners

The VICZMP will actively work with other agency staff, community organizations, government agencies, universities, and non-governmental organizations to fully make available all necessary materials to allow the Fellow to complete the particular assigned project(s).

Potential partners include:

- St. Croix East End Marine Park Advisory Committee
- The Nature Conservancy
- The Ocean Conservancy
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
- U.S. Department of Agriculture
 - Natural Resources Conservation Service
- University of the Virgin Islands
 - Cooperative Extension Service
 - Conservation Data Center
 - Marine Advisory Service
- Virgin Islands Department of Planning and Natural Resources
 - Coastal Zone Management Program
 - Division of Environmental Protection
 - Division of Fish and Wildlife
- Virgin Island Department of Tourism
- Virgin Island Nonpoint Source Pollution Control Committee
- Virgin Island Resource Conservation & Development Council, Inc.
- St. Croix Environmental Association
- Virgin Islands' Marine Protected Area Advisory Committee
- National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

In Kind Support

The Fellow will have access to all of the amenities and services of agency staff, including office space and equipment, personal computer, telephone, fax, and e-mail. Use of agency vehicles will be permitted.

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In addition, the VICZMP will provide funds for administrative travel, purchases of supplies and software, as well as printing, photocopying, mailing, and incidental costs for project products.

Eligibility Requirements

- Bachelor's degree in a natural or environmental science or related area of study with 4 to 6 years experience in marine protected area (MPA) management, outreach and socioeconomic assessment, design and implementation OR a master's degree in a related area of study with 2 years experience in marine protected area (MPA) management, outreach and socioeconomic assessment, design and implementation.
- Valid driver's license

Desired Background and Skill Sets

- Socioeconomic survey/assessment skills
- Experience in working with diverse partners and stakeholders
- Experience in the development of MPA management plans and site-based management activities
- Demonstrated experience in effectively interacting with and mobilizing community groups and stakeholders for information sharing
- Familiarity with MPA effectiveness evaluation
- Experience working with stakeholders on MPA-related issues
- Demonstrated oral, written, and interpersonal communication skills
- A proven ability to be well organized and able to plan, prioritize and manage multiple tasks
- Experience in coordinating multiple groups or individuals to achieve common goals
- Public speaking, events planning, and meeting facilitation experience
- Ability to work independently
- Creative, flexible, adaptable
- Experience living and working in another culture or in an island community
- Experience working with different user groups and nonprofit organizations
- Experience with Adobe Photoshop, Adobe InDesign, Adobe Illustrator, or similar graphic design software
- Experience in developing outreach and education initiatives and materials