

**Coast Guard Annual Federal Agency Report
Coral Reef Task Force Meeting
March 3, 2005**

Education and Outreach:

Sea Partners: The Sea Partners Campaign is the Coast Guard's Marine Environmental Protection outreach and education program. Coast Guard members working on Sea Partners teams operate from each of the 45 USCG Marine Safety Offices located in port communities around the nation, including Puerto Rico and Guam. The primary objective of the Sea Partners Campaign is to educate communities at large in developing awareness of marine pollution issues and improving compliance with marine environmental protection laws and regulations. The Sea Partners Campaign education messages cover:

1. Effects of oil, hazardous chemicals, waste and debris on the marine environment.
2. How marine environmental protection laws and regulations apply to various marine users.
3. Ways groups and individuals can take action to protect the marine environment.

The Sea Partners Campaign has targeted a wide range of audiences, including state, local and federal officials, merchant mariners, offshore industry personnel, ferry operators, recreational boaters, sport and commercial fishermen, seafood processors, local business owners, marina operators, students, scouts and teachers. The Sea Partners Campaign has developed working partnerships with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Ocean Conservancy, the Marine Environmental Education Foundation and other agencies and organizations to expand outreach opportunities. Through the Sea Partners Campaign, the Coast Guard has been able to launch a public education and outreach program with the potential to make a substantial contribution to protecting the marine environment. In 2004 alone, Sea Partners reached an audience of over 300,000 people.

Coast Guard Auxiliary: In 2004, the Coast Guard Auxiliary, the all-volunteer arm of the Coast Guard that reaches thousands of recreational boaters annually in boating safety classes and dockside vessel safety checks, conducted their annual clean boating campaign to educate the boating community on proper waste management, discharge, and pump-out procedures.

Enforcement:

As the nation's primary at sea law enforcement agency, the Coast Guard is a leader in helping the nation recover and maintain its marine protected species populations. The Coast Guard enforces a wide variety of regulations designed to protect vital marine ecosystems and the marine wildlife that depend on them including the Northern right whale, Kemp's Ridley sea turtle, Hawaiian monk seal, Stellar sea lion, and a myriad of other threatened and endangered species. Typical efforts by Coast Guard vessels and aircraft include patrolling National Marine Sanctuaries and other protected areas, providing support to other agencies involved in disentanglement operations, and providing logistical support efforts to return rehabilitated animals to the wild. The Coast Guard also operates the Mandatory Ship Reporting System designed to prevent ship strikes of the Northern right whale, one of the most endangered marine mammals in existence. The Coast Guard works closely with federal, state and non-governmental agencies to help maintain a healthy, diverse and sustainable ocean environment. Our enforcement efforts in 2004 that focused on preserving Coral Reefs consisted of the dedication of 2,032 aircraft, 323 boat and 1,708 cutter hours at a cost of over \$13 million.

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Pollution Control Efforts:

Ballast Water: To comply with the National Invasive Species Act (NISA), the Coast Guard has established both regulations and guidelines to control the invasion of aquatic nuisance species (ANS). Ballast water from ships is one of the largest pathways for the intercontinental introduction and spread of ANS. As a result of Coast Guard efforts to prevent ANS, the IMO adopted the International Convention for the control and management of ships' ballast water and sediments. This convention affects 35% of the gross tonnage of the world's fleet, which will greatly reduce the possibility of a negative ANS interaction with coral reef resources.

Oil Spill Impact Mitigation and Vessel Groundings: The Coast Guard is the lead federal agency for oil pollution prevention and response in the coastal maritime zone, while the Environmental Protection Agency is the lead for inland waters; each agency may take immediate action as first federal on-scene coordinator. During oil and gas exploration and development, the Coast Guard partners with the Minerals Management Service in environmental protection on the Outer Continental Shelf. The Coast Guard participates in a multi-agency workgroup to establish common or complementary goals for clean water. The Coast Guard also coordinates the inspection of waterfront facilities with the Department of Transportation's Research and Special Projects Administration. The Coast Guard actively participates in the International Convention on the Prevention of Pollution from Ships (MARPOL) to establish common or complementary goals for clean water. In 2004 we expended an estimated 540 resource hours responding to, mitigating, and eliminating marine oil and other pollutants in coral reef areas or areas that impact coral reefs. Additionally, Coast Guard personnel and assets have assisted, and stand ready to assist with grounded vessel removal.

Derelict Fishing Gear Removal: During El Nino years the North Pacific gyre, which holds a tremendous volume of marine debris (nets, floats, etc), moves south and runs aground on the 1500 mile windward stretch of the Hawaiian Archipelago. To help combat this problem, the Coast Guard deploys a buoy tender during the summer months for up to two weeks at a time to assist NOAA in their efforts to systematically remove accumulated debris from the Northwest Hawaiian Islands (NWHI). Working with NOAA, the State of Hawaii, the U.S. Department of the Interior (DOI), and many local partners to remove this derelict fishing gear has been a huge success. In 2002 and 2003, we removed approximately 229 tons of debris, and since 1996 have removed an overall total of 336 tons. It is estimated that 25–40 tons per year will continue to impact NWHI.

The Fourteenth Coast Guard District has also been part of an Ocean Conservancy project for the past seven years, helping to remove debris from a remote beach on Oahu at monthly intervals to determine type/volume of debris and time of year where debris accumulation is most apparent. In addition, a Fourteenth District representative participated in the International Marine Debris Conference held in Hawaii in 2004.

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Ocean Steward:

Ocean Steward is the Coast Guard Strategic Plan to achieve its goal of protecting natural resources, and its performance goal of enforcing federal regulations that result in all living marine resources achieving healthy, sustainable populations. Ocean Steward provides a clearly defined strategy for our role in helping the nation recover and maintain healthy populations of marine protected species; it captures the things we are already doing, and provides a comprehensive list of objectives we can achieve if we are provided the necessary resources. Ocean Steward complements our fisheries enforcement strategic plan, Ocean Guardian. Together, Ocean Steward and Ocean Guardian provide a roadmap for the Coast Guard's efforts in ensuring our nation's waterways and their ecosystems remain productive by protecting all our nation's living marine resources from degradation. Ocean Steward was re-published in 2004.

Partnerships:

- USCG representatives actively participate at all Fisheries Management Councils developing Marine Protected Areas to provide enforcement advice. These representatives also participate on marine reserve and sanctuary meetings to coordinate USCG activities with the managers.
- The Coast Guard continues to partner with NOAA on implementation and utilization of the Automated Information System (AIS) to monitor merchant vessels. Additionally, we continue to execute our Integrated Deepwater project, designed to modernize our enforcement vessels and aircraft.