

13th US Coral Reef Task Force Meeting Summary
Thursday, March 3, 2005
U.S. Department of the Interior, Washington, DC

The following is a brief summary of the proceedings of the 13th US Coral Reef Task Force (Task Force) Meeting. If you have further questions please contact the Task Force Secretariat.

The thirteenth meeting of the U.S. Coral Reef Task Force was held on March 3, 2005 at the Department of the Interior in Washington, DC. Governors from two insular areas attended the meeting: the Honorable Felix Perez Camacho of Guam and the Honorable Togiola Tulafono of American Samoa.

Introduction and Welcome

The Task Force heard welcoming remarks from CRTF Co-Chairs Judge Craig Manson, Assistant Secretary of Fish and Wildlife, and Parks (DOI), and Tim Keeney, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Oceans and Atmosphere (NOAA) and Congresswoman Donna M. Christian-Christiansen (US Virgin Islands).

Opening Remarks by the Secretary of the Interior, Gale Norton

Gail Norton, Secretary of the Interior, then addressed the Task Force. Secretary Norton thanked the attending governors of Guam and American Samoa and said that much had changed during the two years since she last addressed the Task Force. The administration is committed to helping coral reefs and this is demonstrated by the \$2.7 million available in FY 2006 for Local Action Strategies (LAS). Since 1984 the US Fish and Wildlife Service has restored more than 1 million acres of wetlands, which aid in improving the water quality flowing to reefs. The Fish and Wildlife Service will be opening a new office in Puerto Rico to help implement the LAS.

REPORT FROM THE TASK FORCE STEERING COMMITTEE

Randy Bowman, Dept of Interior, Co-Chair Coral Reef Task Force Steering Committee
Tom Hourigan, NOAA, Co-Chair Coral Reef Task Force Steering Committee

Progress Report on the Spawning Resolution

Gerry Davis (NOAA)

Available literature for the Pacific Region has been gathered and is available for distribution. To date information that can be used to develop a strategy is available for CNMI, Guam and Hawaii. Additional research is needed to have adequate information for American Samoa. The availability of adequate information for Florida, Puerto Rico and US Virgin Islands remains undetermined. Informal meetings were held with the regulatory agencies within the 4 Pacific jurisdictions to discuss general implementation issues. Agencies indicated a need for suitable educational materials for distribution to regulatory agencies and businesses that would be impacted by this resolution. They also indicated that this resolution should be implemented in a stair-step approach due to the broad impact of this concept. The resolution requires the formation of a working group to implement the resolution. At this time the following entities have committed to participating in the working group: Representatives from the CNMI, Hawaii and the US VI were submitted by the All Island Committee plus the Science and Resource advisors.

ACOE, NOAA (Gerry Davis and Andy Buckner), DOI, USGS (Dawn Lavoie), USEPA. This list will be finalized soon. This working group will provide an update at the next Task Force meeting.

Progress Report on the Mitigation Working Group Resolution

Antonio Bentivoglio (FWS)

The Hawaii Interagency Coral Reef Compensatory Mitigation Working Group (HIWG) formed in 2002 and has been meeting ever since. American Samoa, Guam and CNMI are interested in joining this group. Exact mechanics of involvement remain to be determined.. As part of Florida's Local Action Strategy, the Marine Industry and Coastal Construction Impacts Workgroup was formed and covers very similar issues that the HIWG is discussing. Puerto Rico and US Virgin Islands are interested in joining this group. Exact mechanics of involvement remain to be determined..

Implementation of Past Resolutions

Tom Hourigan (NMFS)

In response to the request by Governor Togiola Tulafono of American Samoa at the Miami meeting, a review of past resolutions and status of action is presented. Since the inception of the Task Force in 1998, 37 resolutions have been passed. Essential resolutions include: 1998 – invited the states and territories to join the CRTF; 2002 – development of the LAS; 2003 – federal response to environmental impacts of natural disaster.

For purposes of review, the resolutions have been divided into three categories.

- 1) Progress has been made with more action needed:
 - Land-based sources of pollution and water quality: in 1999 & 2003, three resolutions, Islands have prepared inventories of top priority infrastructure needs. EPA and USDA have taken steps to address these needs.
 - Trade in Coral Reef Species: four resolutions passed on this issue. There has been significant progress (CITES listing of seahorses and humphead wrasse) but there needs to be continued work, congressional interest in this issue.
 - Education and Outreach: 1999 Working Group established, which has worked to improve stakeholder involvement.
- 2) No significant Progress has been made:
 - Cross-Cut Budget: resolutions passed in 1998 and again in 2004
 - Mariculture guidelines

This is a preliminary review with discussion to continue and complete analysis of resolutions and outstanding action items to be presented at the fall meeting in Palau.

Of particular interest is the identification of priority water quality issues and establishment of regional working group. Important to identify resolutions that have not been implemented and determine follow-on action if still needed

International Working Group Report

Christine Dawson (State)

Report on several international meetings related to coral reef ecosystems. United Nations Environmental Program Rapid Assessment of tsunami impacts has been released and available on-line (www.unep.org). The greatest damage to coral reefs is due to back-wash of debris – trees, cars, and towels from coastal hotels. Preliminary data suggest that where healthy marine ecosystems (reefs and mangroves) exist, the effects of the tsunami were mitigated. Currently assessing whether coral reefs have the same affect of reducing damage as mangroves. Restoration efforts are underway.

Response to Pubic Requests/Petitions

Randy Bowman (DOI)

Task Force Oversight Policy details how to respond to petitions, complaints and suggestions. There appears to be some misunderstanding regarding this policy and whether it has been finalized and accepted by the CRTF. Section 4 of Executive Order 13089 established the CRTF. Section 3 highlights federal agency responsibilities, the need to work within their statutory limitations and procedures, and the importance of working with the CRTF, the states and territories, and other interested parties.

To date, only one grievance has been brought to the CRTF. The federal agency in question (ACOE) with FWS and NOAA communicated additional monitoring measures for the project in question, which had already received federal and state permits.

The Task Force has recently received a petition from the same source, on the same project. This again has been referred to the ACOE and a response is pending. ACOE assured the CRTF that concerns are taken seriously and this will be fully addressed with the response available to the Task Force and the general public.

There was concern from American Samoa that the Task Force has no obligation to respond. That lies with the Federal agency in question, is this correct?

REPORT FROM THE TASK FORCE MEMBERS

Guam

Governor Felix Perez Camacho

As part of the LAS, five priority issues have been identified, highlights of two: 1) land-based source of pollution is caused by hunting on the southern part of the where hunters burn the brush to get deer out and open up areas for new growth that deer feed on. LAS projects address the land-based sources of pollution. A big problem is the aging water infrastructure in Guam. The CRTF must find funding to support the LAS to address these needs. Request the Department of Interior to use the highway projects to reduce pollution from highway runoff. Especially in the southern region; 2) overfishing: address two major concerns – working with fisherman to address their concerns and answer their questions. Stakeholders are very concerned about gillnet fishing – but all understand that this is the livelihood of fishermen. This year projects will focus on supporting recreational fishery. Additionally, Guam is facing pressures on coral reefs from

military development build-up. Military and tourism are the key to Guam's economy and they are looking to strike a balance. He commends the Task Force for their work.

US Army Corps of Engineers

George Dunlop, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Army for Policy and Legislation

The ACOE is committed to the protection of coral reefs and the effective mitigation of any impacts. There is a need to improve the understanding of mitigation so unavoidable impacts to coral reefs can be avoided, reduced and if necessary compensated for. Introduced two individuals working on coral; Penny Cutt and John Studt, both in the Jacksonville FL office and both work with permitting.

ACOE works to fully mitigate all direct and indirect impacts related to construction. Jacksonville district is actively participating in the southeast Florida coral reef initiative LAS. ACOE has representatives on both the land-based sources of pollution workgroup and the maritime industry and coastal construction impacts workgroup. Jacksonville regulatory division efforts include mitigation and minimization of impacts. ACOE is taking a broad view under NEPA for impacts to corals, including deep water species and indirect impacts and are always working to improve mitigation and response. ACOE is fully engaged and committed to implementing E.O. 13089 for coral reef protection.

US Coast Guard

Jeff Pearson

Coast Guard enforces regulations with over 2000 aircraft, 300 boats, and 1,700 cutter hours at a cost of over \$13 million. Education program (Sea Partners) addresses coral issues and in 2004 reached ~350,000 individuals. The Coast Guard auxiliary program has a clean boating campaign to educate the public about ballast water, pump out stations, etc. Coast Guard is also actively involved in Fisheries Management Councils. Coast Guard will continue to partner with NOAA on the Automatic Information System to better monitor merchant vessels. Future efforts include prosecuting cases on aircraft data and continued partnership with NOAA to monitor reefs and prohibit trawling in the Dry Tortugas Ecological Reserve.

CNMI requested greater Coast Guard presence in their and Guams' waters to address the problem of foreign fishing.

National Aeronautics and Space Administration

Dr. Paula Bontempi

5 projects are the most relevant to coral reefs. 1) Dr. Robinson – Data and Products available for Integration. Highlights the importance of partnerships and increasing availability of remote sensing data sets for research and making this information available to managers. 2) Dr. Andrefouet – Mapping Research. Millennium coral reef mapping activities, associated web-page available in May. Also conducting research on tsunami impact to reef areas. 3) Dr. Guild – Airborne remote sensing of corals and seagrass of Puerto Rico and Florida Keys. Coral Reef scientists and managers have a need for higher resolution data. 4) Dr. Hochberg – improve

remote sensing data, hyperspectral remote sensing project with NOAA. 5) Dr. Wright – Experimental Airborne Advanced Research Lidar (EEARL) and coral rugosity. Study of inshore patch reef vs. offshore bank reefs.

US Department of Agriculture

Lawrence Clark, Deputy Under Secretary

In FY02 spent \$2 million; FY03 \$17 million, FY04 nearly \$20 million. USDA continues to work closely with landowners. A major limitation continues to be training. It is important to have training in the regions to ensure that the staff has the knowledge to help landowners to the maximum extent possible.

Special program in FY04 – conservation

\$15 million for national program this year. USDA Grants are open to private land conservation. USDA will continue partnership work with landowners to reduce pollution.

Department of the Interior

Judge Manson, Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife, and Parks

FWS worked with NOAA and ACOE to assess damage due to Florida 2004 hurricane season. FWS federal aid award money to partnership in Florida. Results of which will be presented in August 2005. The National Park Service works with the tourism industry providing extensive information to boaters in the USVI and to the more than 1.5 million people visiting coral parks. Minerals Management Service (MMS) initiated the first study on deepwater coral in the Gulf of Mexico using unmanned submersibles. MMS and NOAA sponsored a national ocean partnership study. WWII ship in Gulf of Mexico shows significant growth on ship wreck and shows that growth rate are slow. USGS conducted surveys of Dry Tortugas. NPS established marine reserve around Dry Tortugas. USGS scientists document African dust on reefs in Caribbean. From air sample collected it was noted that dust contained pathogen harmful to reefs. FWS partnered with Scripps Oceanographic Institute to conduct research on Palmyra. FWS also funds programs in Pohnpei. FWS, USGS, and USDA address wildfire issue in Hawaii this is working to protect endangered plants and decrease runoff onto coral reefs. FWS joined NRCS and EPA for a project to determine detrimental substances to coral.

American Samoa

Governor Togiola Tulafono

American Samoa expresses concern about the hurricane and are still assessing the damage from Olaf. Resolution 6 regarding emergency response was adopted last fall, yet this has not been resolved. American Samoa would like to know who is taking the lead. This hurricane is an opportunity for a pilot case to determine how this resolution will be enacted.

Attention needs to be paid to Resolution 8 of meeting three, which asks the ACOE to expand its educational program for the CWA to the states and territories.

Reemphasizes the significance of the Task Force and urges the reauthorization of the CRCA. There is a need to better coordinate funding mechanism in the agencies. Recommend independent island states be included.

All Islands Committee

Lelei Peau, All Island Committee Chair

Some of the successes: All Islands Committee is providing a successful model for jurisdictional involvement. Partnerships between science and management, as well as involvement of government and non-governmental entities are working. Education is always necessary. The All Islands Committee hopes to increase international efforts.

In implementing the LAS, grant management is a crucial component that is increasing taking more time. Capacity needs can not be resolved if the grants are only limited to a one or two year period. Resolutions regarding water quality issues have been passed for each of the jurisdictions (Pacific and Atlantic) we have yet to find a solution. Capacity needs such as storm drains, roads are expensive and these and other infrastructure costs are prohibitive for islands. If this is not resolved, the islands will find it difficult to address the major causes of impacts to coral reefs.

Environmental Protection Agency

Ben Grumbles, Assistant Administrator for Water

EPA activities all fall into the category of land-based sources of pollution, monitoring reefs, and infrastructure needs.

EPA hosted the Atlantic Caribbean workshop (May 2004) on land-based pollution.

USVI coral reef monitoring program is addressing the needs of both local and regional assessment.

Restoration grants, five star program grant was awarded to Culebra Puerto Rico in 2004 for a pilot restoration project.

Despite full funding, it is still important to address pollution on coral reef ecosystem.

Pacific island infrastructure (EPA region 9) group is working on Hawaii indicators of Pollution Stress.

EPA Interagency Group on Insular Affairs is working to get private money to territories to fund infrastructure needs.

Also partnering with USDA to help fund CNMI to reduce land-based sources of pollution, especially from wastewater. Has recently funded \$2.1 million to Saipan.

Florida (EPA region 4) is focusing on water quality, coral reef, and seagrass, cost \$10 million.

Caribbean (EPA region 2) grants support projects and identify LAS priorities.

US Department of Defense

Don Schregardus, Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Navy

DOD has conducted major survey work in Okinawa, Diego Garcia, and Guam.

Monitoring continuing activities at the Marine Corps base in Hawaii, inner Apra harbor entrance channel, and Guam where they are doing rapid assessment.

Modeling: Saipan anchorage and Apra harbor, Guam. Survey highlights show flourishing coral reef ecosystem, finfish populations are large, diverse and mature, threatened species, such as napoleon wrasse are present. Results from Okinawa survey show areas around military piers at white beach and Tengan pier, found healthy and diverse ecosystems.

DoD reef protection: show that such restricted access has a *de facto* sanctuary effect.

Data management: environmental information management system (EIMS). Provides capabilities to “mine” data.

Developing reef monitoring technology including remote sensing of biochemical changes on reef. Continue to test remotely sensing capabilities.

FY2005 plans–

- 1) Develop a strategic plan.
- 2) Support E.O.13352 “Facilitation of Cooperative Conservation”
- 3) Continue to conduct surveys and assessment.

SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENT

Marshall P. Jones, Assistant Secretary Fish and Wildlife Service

Today, FWS is announcing a commitment to provide education and outreach to the states and territories to assist in grant writing for FWS funding. Currently the number of applications for FWS funding exceeds available funding levels so receiving funds will be competitive and not guaranteed. FWS will offer training to the Pacific and Atlantic/Caribbean regions. In the same way, the National Wildlife Refuge System is willing to provide assistance to potential partners seeking funding. The FWS is working to get all grant application information onto the web to ease the application process. FWS is opening a new coastal office in Puerto Rico.

US Agency for International Development

Jacqueline Schafer, Deputy Assistant Administrator

USAID works closely with the State Department. Programs focus on achieving sustainable resources.

Implementation of new gear to avoid unintentional take of fish.

Status of coral reefs around the world

Support Thai government in post tsunami efforts

Department of Justice

Karen Wardzinski,

DOJ highlighted two types of accomplishments: 1) three specific cases furthering coral reef protection; and 2) training efforts.

Cases: (a) US v Tagol – illegal removal of live coral (over 1 million pounds) from HI for decorative uses. Resulted in two years probation for the offender and the accomplice received 10 months sentence. This case was a joint investigation with FWS.

(b) vessel pollution case – Sabine Transport shipping company. Current trial for dumping material in ocean. This is significant as DOJ is holding corporation accountable, not just ships crew.

(c) land-based source pollution – Isuzu knowingly discharge oil and gas into drains, draining to Puerto Rico harbor.

Training: Workshops held to address needs and issues concerning how to improve enforcement in local jurisdictions and island areas. Two workshops have been held in Guam with 65 participants and CNMI with 35 participants.

Department of Commerce

Tim Keeney, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Oceans and Atmosphere

Status of coral reef report by NOAA and report to congress, which should be available in spring. NOAA has received three petitions to list *Acropora* species as endangered. An announcement has yet to be made regarding listing.

NOAA commissioned a new research ship in Honolulu, the Hi'akalai.

NOAA continues to lead efforts to map and characterize the shallow area reefs which is slated to be completed by 2009 and has also begun work on deep water corals with DOI.

Regarding grants, last year \$9 million went to the states and territories. Including funding to Hawaii Coral Reef Institute.

Invest \$1 m with NFWF for coral reef protection.

Developed LAS and have \$1.5 million new money in FY2006 to implement priorities.

UPDATE ON BUSINESS ITEMS

Northwest Hawaiian Islands Coral Reef Ecosystem Reserve

Aulani Whilhelm

Presentation was preceded by a slide show highlighting the diversity of the NWHI. The NWHI are home of the endangered monk seal, green sea turtles, and various endemic species.

In 2000, the President signed Executive Order 13178 creating the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands Coral Reef Ecosystem Reserve. Since its inception, four major activities have taken place including research, conservation, education, and outreach.

We received 52000 public comments.

Diving and mapping activities have taken place and there is now a transition from characterization to long term monitoring. Matrix data is collected to establish the boundary of the reserve.

State of the Reef Report

Jenny Waddell

There is currently a prepublication copy of the State of the Reef Report. This version of the report is based on quantitative data.

Structure of the report: introductory info, background, executive summary threats and stressors, 14 jurisdictional chapters (80%), and a national summary.

The following are examples of the type of information included in the report:

water quality – water quality improved significantly when tuna factories in Paga Pago Harbor, American Samoa moved discharges offshore.

Benthic habitats: quantifying coral cover is the most frequent monitoring activity.

The CNMI turtle population is dominated by juveniles. Huge amount of biomass in NWHI

National summary chapters provide a national scale perspective.

All jurisdictions are measuring coral cover and fish abundance.

To request a copy contact coralreport2004@noaa.gov

Progress on the Report to Congress

Adrienne Harris

This report is a mandate from the Coral Reef Conservation Act.

The USCRTF passed a resolution at its 11th meeting to provide full support and participation in the creation of this document.

Purpose of the Report

- Summarize actions of the CRTF from 2002-2003
- Highlight accomplishments, future needs
- Provide a foundation for evaluating progress

Report consists of:

Chapters for each of the 13 goals detailed in the Coral Reef Action Strategy.

Final review of the steering committee completed in Dec. 2004

Mar 4, 2005, requested deadline for interagency clearance.

Next step:

- Final NOAA review
- OMB review
- Publication

In essence, this report helps the CRTF take stock of accomplishments.

GEOSS Presentation

Carla Sullivan

Earth Observations: our global and national efforts

Executive secretary, interagency working group on earth observations just returned from Brussels Belgium to adopt a plan on earth observation.

Earth observation summit III – a 10 year implementation plan for the earth observation.

History: world summit on sustainable development (2002), g-9 action plan for sustainable development; earth observation summits I & II – 60 countries + ?

Hon. Carlos Guierrez (commerce secretary) attended the meeting.

US contribution to GEOSS

- enable a healthy public, economy, and planet through an integrated, comprehensive, and sustained earth observation system.

Integrated earth observations: a distributed system of systems:

- links all platforms: in situ, aircraft, and satellite networks
- identifies gaps in our global capacity
- facilitates exchange of data and information

Societal Benefits focus:

- natural and human induced disasters
- water resources
- ecosystems
- human health and well-being
- weather information
- energy resources
- sustainable agriculture

ecological forecasting: earth observations for application to ecosystems and ecological forecasting are less mature than for many of the other societal benefits.

Diverse observational requirements and needs

Integration of data

- lifemapper (www.lifemapper.org)

<http://earthobservations.org>,

Local Action Strategies Progress

Dana Wusinich-Mendez

Local Action Strategic progress:

Progress since Miami:

- performance measure development
- solutions to priority capacity needs
- federal partner meetings (USEPA, USDA)

Tracking success: LAS performance measures

- improved enforceable policies
- implemented best management practices
- increased local capacity
- stakeholder participation
- increased scientific understanding of the reef ecosystem and associated issues
- increased awareness about LAS activities

Top 5 capacity solutions:

1. expand and extend coral fellowship program
2. provide support for program specialists with local liaisons
3. participation in the NOAA education partnerships program
4. expand NOAA GIS technical fellowship to Caribbean /Atlantic
5. provide short-term specialists.

Federal partner meetings:

- EPA and USDA/NRCS
- LAS outreach
- increased understanding of agency programs and linkages to LAS
- discussion of possible avenues of LAS support
- need follow-up discussions and additional meetings

MPA Center – National Network Effort

Jonathan Kelsey

Interpreting the MPA executive order

What's clear; what's not clear; and actions to begin implementing the Executive Order.

Inventory of marine managed areas: initial analysis and results

- hundreds of authorities
- nearly 2000 sites in us waters

Where do we go from here? Hope to build a national system. A system of systems

Developing the national system is about building partnerships to improve:

1. understanding MPAs;
2. collaborative planning;
3. coordinated implementation

Will be developing the framework (2005 – 2006)

The framework aims to include: vision, goals and objectives; criteria for natural and cultural resources.

Gathering significant stakeholder input to build the framework

Links to the USCRTF

- recognized importance of MPAs in conservation and sustainable use of coral ecosystems
- model of state and federal agency coordination
- critical need for stakeholder involvement from all levels
- many agency MPA activities under USCRTF purview
- Request to establish a dialogue to share experiences of USRTF with federal agencies and state partners working to implement the MPA Executive Order.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY TIM KEENEY

Listing of two species of corals in the Atlantic

Endangered species listing of coral species. Today NOAA will propose to list 2 species under the Endangered Species Act: 1) staghorn coral, 2) elkhorn coral. This will be published in the federal register. Public comments will be solicited and reviewed. One year from the date of the proposal, NOAA will issue a ruling. These species of coral used to be the most abundant species but their abundance is currently a mere 90% of what it used to be.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Scott Smith, The Nature Conservancy

Judy Lang, Sierra Club

Bill Keeney, Reef Check

Stephanie Clark, Cry of the Water

Dan Clark, Cry of the Water

Sylvia Spaulding, WesPac

Richard Appledorn, Caribbean Coral Reef Initiative (CCRI)

Dr. Phil Dustan, College of Charleston

Dennis Idleman

Steve Howard, Washington Area Marine Aquarist Society

Linda Paul, NWHI CRER Advisory Council

STATUS OF THE NATIONAL ACADEMY OF SCIENCES STUDY

Susan Roberts

Update of the proposed National Academy of Sciences report on coral reefs. An NAS study is desired due to its independence, balance, objectivity, and quality.

Agencies that would be involved in such a study include:

NOAA, FWS, USGS, EPA, and NSF among others.

Task statement: mitigation, performance metrics

Work plan: 24 month study, 13 expert committee members including 2 non-U.S. participants, 5 meetings, \$520,000

Action needed – National Research Council needs approval to undertake study, determine CRTF and agency interest, and obtain sponsorship.

PRESENTATION OF TASK FORCE AWARDS

Outstanding Scientific Advancement of Knowledge

Dr. Caroline Rogers

Dr. Caroline Rogers' diverse contributions to coral reef research and monitoring have greatly advanced understanding of coral reef ecosystems and threats to their health, particularly in the Caribbean. Her research has ranged over numerous important topics, including coral reef response to sedimentation, coral reef productivity, effects of shading on reef structure and function, effects of hurricanes on reefs, and recruitment patterns of coral. Dr Rogers spent most of her career as a scientist with the National Park Service (NPS) at Parks in the U.S. Virgin Islands where she conducted long term monitoring and assessment of coral health, fish and coral associations, and diseases. At USGS, Dr. Rogers continues to support the NPS in monitoring efforts and providing critical information for park managers for adaptive management of coral reef communities. Her efforts and collaboration with academia, and federal and territorial agencies have created some of the most comprehensive, long-term data sets on coral reefs, reef fishes, and water quality in the Caribbean and Western Atlantic. Presently, Dr. Rogers is the principal investigator of a collaborative project with USGS, NOAA, NPA, College of Charleston, and Enviro scientists investigating the coral disease white plague to understand the causes, spatial/temporal patterns, and mechanisms of coral diseases and their possible relationship to anthropogenic diseases. This award acknowledges Dr. Rogers for her significant contributions to coral reef science and management over the course of her distinguished career.

Outstanding Management

Michael Hamnett

Dr. Michael Hamnett has been instrumental to the success of regional and national initiatives to enhance science-based coral reef management, in partnership with the colleges, universities and governments of the Pacific U.S. island jurisdictions. Dr. Hamnett contributed to developing the U.S. and International Coral Reef Initiatives and Executive Order 13089, which led to creation of the U.S. Coral Reef Task Force. He was instrumental in facilitating the U.S. All Islands Coral Reef Initiative Strategy in 1997. Dr. Hamnett also served as an advisor to the governors of the U.S. Pacific islands through the Pacific Basin Development Council, engaging the four governors and creating support for the unique partnerships that evolved under the Coral Reef Task Force. Dr. Hamnett serves as the U.S. All Islands CRI Committee Secretariat, and facilitated the development and publication of the second U.S. All Island's Strategy document. He also serves as the Principal Investigator for the Hawaii Coral Reef Initiative, translating science into management and successfully coordinating a large group of diverse stakeholders to work toward a common goal. During this period, Dr. Hamnett also served as the Policy Advisor to the U.S. All Islands Committee. This award acknowledges Dr. Hamnett's leadership, vision, and commitment, all of which have directly benefited the coral reef policy and management process.

Outstanding Community Level Participation Conservation Society of Pohnpei

The Conservation Society of Pohnpei (CSP) is the lead biodiversity conservation organization in the State, and one of the premier conservation organizations in the region. Pohnpei, the largest island in the Federated States of Micronesia, is rich in its marine biological diversity and severely threatened by large and local scale stressors. Nearly every major conservation success on Pohnpei since 1998 can be attributed directly or indirectly to CSP. The organization manages five of the eleven official marine protected areas on the island, as well as a variety of environmental programs and initiatives focused on marine and terrestrial resource conservation. These successful programs include upland forest reserve and watershed boundary implementation, the Locally Managed Marine Area network, “the Green Road Show,” sediment monitoring of impacts from upland activities on mangroves and reefs in the Enipehn MPA, biophysical monitoring programs, enforcement programs and socioeconomic monitoring. CSP is well known for collaborating closely with government agencies, traditional leaders, and the community. For example, CSP worked with several Pohnpei agencies and the Association of the Municipal Administrators to form the Pohnpei Resource Management Committee (PRMC). This award acknowledges the Conservation Society of Pohnpei for its critical leadership and contributions to conserving the marine biodiversity of Pohnpei.