

US Coral Reef Task Force

Public Comments of Aaron Hutchins of The Nature Conservancy

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Good afternoon ladies and gentlemen of the Task Force, supporting staff and members of the audience. I am Aaron Hutchins and I work for the Caribbean Program of The Nature Conservancy.

The Nature Conservancy is highly mobilized to support coral conservation and restoration activities across the globe. With our partners, we are working in over 30% of the world's coral reef systems and are making progress towards more effective conservation in larger regional initiatives such as the Caribbean Challenge, Micronesia Challenge and Coral Triangle Initiative. This work will not be successful without broad engagement on local actions, regional collaboration and strong public-private partnerships.

One successful example of this in the US coral jurisdictions is the Cooperative Agreement between NOAA's Coral Reef Conservation Program and The Nature Conservancy. This four year Agreement is nearing its midpoint and is providing successful, tangible, measurable improvements in coral reef management and is creating new opportunities for private investment to leverage public funds. I would like to encourage the members of this body and the agencies you represent to consider this as a successful model and as an opportunity to improve coral reef conservation and management in an environment of intensifying challenges.

Thank you for your time and attention.