



Meeting Highlights
U.S. Coral Reef Task Force Meeting
Washington DC, February 2011

Additional meeting materials (agendas, presentations, etc.) are available on the Task Force web site (www.coralreef.gov). For more information contact [Liza M Johnson@ios.doi.gov](mailto:Liza_M_Johnson@ios.doi.gov) or Lauren.Chhay@noaa.gov.

General Summary

The U.S. Coral Reef Task Force (USCRTF) held a public meeting in Washington D.C., February 24, 2011.

Highlights of the meeting include:

- U.S. Department of the Interior Secretary, Ken Salazar, provided opening remarks promoting the Administration's collaborative conservation efforts.
- Two USCRTF **Governor Members** attended and provided remarks, highlighting recent conservation work in their jurisdictions and requested USCRTF support for two regional conservation initiatives.
- Michael Weiss, Deputy Associate Director for Oceans and Coastal Policy from the White House Council on Environmental Quality provided a **keynote** presentation on the National Ocean Policy (NOP) outlining how it is organized and will be carried forward and how the USCRTF can engage in this process. This presentation served as a backdrop for Resolution 25.1 which details the USCRTF's proposal of how it will engage in the NOP (see below for outcome of vote).
 - Two USCRTF Steering Committee members, the points of contact from American Samoa and the U.S. Virgin Islands, were selected as members of the Governance Coordinating Committee (GCC) on Wednesday the 23rd. The GCC will serve as a key coordinating body on inter-jurisdictional ocean policy issues and consists of 18 members from states, Federally recognized tribes, and local governments.
- Two major decisional items were finalized at this meeting:
 - The USCRTF voted in favor of Resolution 25.1 which outlines a process to formally engage in the NOP, including priority actions for the USCRTF over the next three years. This decision places the USCRTF firmly as a leading intergovernmental body for coral reef conservation in relation to the NOP.
 - The USCRTF selected Ka'anapali, Maui as the priority Pacific watershed to be addressed through a USCRTF place-based partnership where multiple USCRTF agencies will bring resources to bear in collaboration with local organizations.
- The next meeting will be held in the Fall of 2011 in Florida in conjunction with the 2nd Reef Resilience Conference. The meeting theme will be "Integrating Management of the Florida Reef Tract" with the following key issues: Coastal Marine Spatial Planning (CMSP), Water Management, and Coral Reef Restoration.
- The USCRTF heard **public comment** from eight individuals and organizations.

Expanded Meeting Highlights**Governor Remarks**

Governor Togiola Tulafono of American Samoa and Governor Benigno Fitial of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI) shared with the USCRTF each of their jurisdictions' unique opportunities and challenges for coral reef conservation. In addition, they shared their perspective and vision for how the USCRTF and its members can better work to meet the challenges facing coral reefs and local communities.

Governor Togiola touched on climate change efforts in the Territory, the development of a new management plan for Fagatele Bay National Marine Sanctuary, efforts to designate Rose Atoll as a no-take zone, and requested USCRTF recognize the Two Samoa's Environmental Collaborative and prioritize it with regard to funding. Specific climate change efforts mentioned include a recent two-day climate summit; the Governor intends to appoint a Territorial Climate Change Advisory Group that will be tasked to address the recommendations that came out of the summit.

Governor Fitial thanked the USCRTF for elevating issues impacting coral reef conservation to the national level through the National Ocean Policy, requested support for the Micronesia Challenge, and noted a recent bill passed to stop shark finning in the waters of CNMI. He also requested that the other participating jurisdictions take similar efforts to stop shark finning in their waters.

Resolution 25.1: USCRTF Engagement in the National Ocean Policy and Framework for FY11-14 Priority Action

The USCRTF passed Resolution 25.1, which outlines how we intend to engage with the National Ocean Council and contribute to the National Ocean Policy and provides a plan for more targeted and streamlined work in FY11-FY12.

USCRTF and National Ocean Policy

The USCRTF will provide sustained leadership to ensure that coral reef ecosystem conservation is an integral part of the interagency and intergovernmental activities in the Pacific and Atlantic/Caribbean regions for the following NOP priority objectives: Resiliency and Adaptation to Climate Change and Ocean Acidification (NOP priority objective 5), Regional Ecosystem Protection and Restoration (NOP priority objective 6), and Water Quality and Sustainable Practices on Land (NOP priority objective 7). In addition, the USCRTF commits to engaging its members and ensuring participation of both Federal and State / Territory points of contact in the Coastal and Marine Spatial Planning (CMSP) meetings and other associated activities in the Pacific and Atlantic/Caribbean regions, including the formation of two working groups (one per region) to compile the known data and information related to coral reef ecosystems to help inform the CMSP process.

USCRTF Targeted Focus for FY11-FY12

Considering the broad membership of the USCRTF and its ability to serve as a forum for Federal agencies and States and Territories to discuss issues of mutual interest, the USCRTF will focus its future work, including implementation of the NOP, in five thematic areas that directly align with its strengths and State-Federal membership structure as it pertains to coral reef ecosystems:

1. Place-Based Partnerships: Bringing multiple Federal agencies' resources to bear on the challenges confronted by specific locations,
2. Trans-Jurisdictional Issues: Facilitate the sharing of experiences and lessons learned on specific topics between States and Territories,
3. Strategic Science: Partner on research activities and opportunities and work jointly on the identification of scientific/research/observational/modeling needs and gaps, and
4. Upcoming Opportunities: Raise awareness of coral reef ecosystems in novel fora.

Place-Based Partnership: Selection of a Pacific Watershed

As part of the USCRTF's goal to focus on *places* and *issues* that benefit from leveraging multiple members' resources and expertise, the USCRTF moved forward with selection of a Pacific watershed. The USCRTF has been working on a place-based partnership in the Caribbean, Guánica, Puerto Rico, since 2009. USCRTF federal agencies contributed over \$2.5 million towards restoring the Guánica watershed. Priority conservation needs have been identified and are currently being addressed by a series of collaborative conservation activities in the region, including a 2010 award of over \$200,000 in small project funds to seven local non-governmental organizations. Success of the Guánica partnership is due to the dual approach the USCRTF has taken in providing support through both direct application of Federal agency funding and program expertise, and through federal contributions to the competitive grants program.

The USCRTF's goal was to move on to a second watershed, located in the Pacific, once efforts in Guánica were well underway. The USCRTF selected Ka'anapali watershed on the island of Maui as the site of the next USCRTF place-based partnership. Next steps include determining the potential engagement of the USCRTF Member agencies at this site, identifying the site's status and critical conservation needs, identifying local government and partner interest in engagement, and deciding upon avenues for partnership.

Public Comment

Public comment was provided by the following individuals and organizations:

- Judith Lang, Sierra Club
- Manuel "Manny" Duenas, Western Pacific Regional Fisheries Management Council
- Richard "Dick" Dodge, National Coral Reef Institute, Nova Southeastern University
- Laretta Burke, World Resources Institute
- Bill Chandler, Marine Conservation Biology Institute
- Richard Appledorn, Caribbean Coral Reef Institute
- William H. Nuckols III, W.H. Nuckols Consulting
- Aaron Hutchins, The Nature Conservancy

The U.S. Coral Reef Task Force was established in 1998 to lead U.S. efforts to preserve and protect coral reef ecosystems. It includes leaders of 12 Federal agencies, seven U.S. States, Territories, Commonwealths, and three Freely Associated States.