



Meeting Highlights

Additional meeting materials (agendas, presentations, etc.) are available on the Task Force web site (www.coralreef.gov). For more information contact Liza Johnson (Liza_M_Johnson@ios.doi.gov).

General Summary

The U.S. Coral Reef Task Force (USCRTF) met in Saipan, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, September 13-16, 2010, including public meetings on September 14-16 and several side meetings and workshops. The purpose of the meeting was to take action on key issues related to coral reef conservation. The meeting also provided an opportunity for USCRTF members to share recent accomplishments, existing challenges, and needs in addressing coral reef research and conservation issues locally and globally. Much of the content and discussion at this meeting focused around watersheds, partnerships, the Micronesia Challenge, and the National Ocean Policy. The USCRTF also held a pre-meeting on September 10-11 on Guam to discuss the Military buildup. Following the meeting, several of the members traveled to Pohnpei to meet with the President of the Federated States of Micronesia and representatives from several non-government partners to discuss conservation issues in Micronesia as well as the other Freely Associated States.

Pre-Meeting Events: Guam

Information Briefing: The Military Buildup and Guam's Coral Reef Resources- The purpose of the briefing was to familiarize CRTF members with the issues related to the various projects associated with the Military buildup on Guam. The presentations highlighted coral-related issues, potential coral impacts, conservation measures, and mitigation options. Carlotta Leon Guerrero, Chief of Staff for Lt. Governor of Guam and Chairperson for the Civilian Military Buildup Committee, gave a presentation from Guam's perspective on preparing for the Buildup. Captain Peter Lynch, Naval Facilities Engineering Command, Marianas, gave a presentation on the buildup actions to date.

Coral Mitigation Workshop- The purpose of the workshop was to provide information on impacts to coral reefs and discuss potential mitigation options for consideration by Federal agencies and coral reef jurisdictions. Members discussed issues, options and tools identified during environmental reviews of the Military buildup on Guam but did not focus on the specific Guam actions as these were still in process. The workshop served as an opportunity to inform USCRTF members about mitigation issues, opportunities, tools and challenges common to development in the generic sense. Presenters included Ryan Winn of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, J.T. Hesse of the Naval Facilities Engineering Command in the Pacific, Gerry Davis of NOAA National Marine Fisheries

Service, Wendy Wiltse and Paul Amato of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Evangeline Lujan and Dave Burdick of the Guam Coastal Management Program, Trina Leberer of TNC Micronesia, Willy Kostka of the Micronesia Conservation Trust, and the DOD Coordinator Rick Raines of the Naval Facilities Engineering Command in the Marianas.

Guam Pre-Meeting Field Trips and Site Building Opportunities

- **Piti/Asan Watershed** – This field trip included a hike of the Piti watershed from ridge to reef, through savannah, jungle, along a river and out to the beach. This watershed has undergone a considerable amount of development and the Government of Guam is working to reduce negative impacts from this watershed.
- **Cetti Bay Watershed Project Site** – This tour visited the site of the \$5 million mitigation project paid for by DOD to the Government of Guam to reforest the Cetti Bay area. Rick Raines of the Navy gave a presentation of the background and progress of the project.
- **Apra Harbor Dive** – This field trip included a boat tour of Apra Harbor and a dive at the Western Shoals within the harbor. Valerie Brown and Dave Burdick of the Government of Guam led the tour.
- **Guam National Wildlife Refuge at Ritidian Point** – The tour included a visit to the Nature Center, a hike with refuge biologists on a guided nature walk and tour of caves with ancient petroglyphs, and a tour of Ritidian beach and reef area.
- **Navy Base Tour** – The USCRTF members went on a tour of the Guam Navy Base.

Co-Chair Opening Remarks

Co-chairs Eileen Sobeck, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks at the Department of the Interior, and Andrew (Andy) Winer, Director of External Affairs at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, opened the meeting and introduced the other members.

Governor Remarks

Governor Benigno Fitial of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, Governor Felix Camacho of Guam, and Governor Togiola Tulafono of American Samoa 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 Fitial welcomed the members of the USCRTF to his home jurisdiction of Saipan, CNMI. He highlighted the Micronesian challenge and pointed out that the Military buildup on Guam would have greater implications in Micronesia beyond Guam, and stated interest in the USCRTF Partnership Initiative.

Governor Camacho highlighted the Military buildup issues and the need for the success of the Micronesian Challenge, especially in light of the buildup. He discussed the need for increasing local capacity in monitoring and enforcement, and the need to develop effective mitigation strategies for Guam's coral resources.

Governor Togiola emphasized the need to protect the most resilient corals in light of climate change. He also discussed the natural disaster recovery and marine debris removal efforts post-tsunami, and the lack of Federal support in these activities.

Presentation - Conservation Efforts in Micronesia

Noah Idechong, Speaker of the House of Delegates in Palau, spoke about several issues in Micronesia, including watershed-based management, anticipating Military buildup, working to improve relationships when law and traditional systems conflict, and the need for sustainable funding infrastructure for the Micronesia Challenge.

Presentation – New Coral Reef Restoration in Hawaii: Building a Foundation for the Future

Laura Thielen, Chairperson of the Hawaii Department of Land and Natural Resources, challenged the USCRTF members to keep coral reef issues as priority issues within each member agency, prioritize on the ground projects, and examine the possibility to change the regulatory review process for beneficial projects.

Presentation – Informational Update on the Military Buildup

Captain Peter Lynch, Naval Facilities Engineering Command in the Marianas, gave a presentation on the Military buildup to date. He spoke about the Final Environmental Impact Statement and the preferred alternatives for the buildup, impacts from construction, infrastructure constraints, and funding sources for utilities, port and roads improvements.

Steering Committee Update

The co-chairs of the Steering Committee, Steve Thur of NOAA and Andrew Gude of the Fish and Wildlife Service, reported out on several key items including:

- The Department of Justice (DOJ) offered to assist in a legal review of the Stafford Act in light of Governor Tulafono's request for assistance for natural disaster recovery following the tsunami in American Samoa.
- The Roadways Working Group created an index of materials related to roadways design, construction and maintenance for use by transportation agencies and others. The Working Group determined that best management practices (BMPs) were site specific, and therefore generic BMPs could not be compiled. Individual jurisdictions may choose to work with individual agencies, but the SC co-chairs cannot move forward with individual jurisdictions given their little expertise in this subject area.
- DOJ offered to provide legal help in determining how Federal agencies can work with the Freely Associated States.

All Islands Committee Update

- Evangeline Lujan, chair of the AIC, reported out on several topics discussed at the All Islands Committee Meeting, including:
- The AIC requested the USCRTF to provide a formal position that coral reef health is a public health issue.
- The AIC requested the USCRTF to support development of individual jurisdiction plans for roadways best management practices.

- The AIC requested to have a Compensatory Mitigation Working Group that has AIC involvement in creation of functional assessment methodologies.
- The AIC adopted a Strategic Action Plan.

Special Session – Jurisdiction Updates on the Micronesia Challenge

Representatives from each jurisdiction in the Micronesia Challenge gave an update on their progress and issues. Presenters included Fran Castro of CNMI, Evangeline Lujan of Guam, Marion Henry of FSM, Sebastian Marino of Palau, and Yumi Crisostomo of the Marshall Islands. The topics discussed included taking watershed approaches to conservation, stormwater management controls, sustainable financing, contemporary and traditional knowledge, and factoring communities into protected area plans.

Climate Change Working Group Update

Dr. Mark Eakin of NOAA, and chair of the Climate Change Working Group, gave an update on the group's progress, reported out on the Climate Change Adaptation Workshop, and gave an update on the potential for bleaching in Southeast Asia and the Caribbean.

Special Session – Implementation of the Micronesia Challenge

This session focused on results and early trends from the first 5 years of the Micronesia Challenge. Dr. Peter Houk gave a Measures Update on how government and non-government agencies across the MC region work with regional and international partners to formulate a monitoring framework that will provide the guiding structure, direction and tools on how to implement conservation strategies across the region. Willy Kostka of the Micronesia Conservation Trust provided an update on sustainable financing plans for the 5 jurisdictions. Dan Ho discussed the communication strategy across the 5 jurisdictions and showed a video he produced about conservation in Micronesia.

Presentation – Google Ocean Tool

Dr. Bob Richmond gave an overview of the Google Earth OCEAN Tool. He focused on OCEAN stories, including text, images and video that link back to websites that have been inserted into the tool for the Micronesia region.

Keynote Speech – The Coral Reefs of Micronesia and their Future

Dr. Robert van Woesik gave the keynote speech entitled “The Coral Reefs of Micronesia and Their Future.” He focused on many issues with coral health in Micronesia including environmental factors that drive mass spawning, nutrient loading, climate change and coral beaching, and sea level rise. He also discussed some of the needs of the Micronesia region, such as a comprehensive monitoring program, a greater understanding of coral population processes, strategies to control terrestrial discharge onto reefs, the establishment and strict enforcement of a network of marine protected areas, and regional and global actions to reduce climate change.

Panel – Peer Learning Networks

This panel discussed the various networks and tools available throughout Micronesia to move the Micronesia Challenge forward. Presentation topics and presenters included the Regional Support Team by Trina Leberer of The Nature Conservancy, Micronesians in Islands Conservation by Sam Sablan for the Marshall Islands Conservation Society, the Pacific Islands Managed and

Protected Areas Community by Isao Frank of the Micronesia Conservation Trust, Locally Managed Marine Areas by Delegate Wayne Andrew of Palau. A special presentation was given by Sharisse Rivera of CNMI on her projects as a Young Champion.

Presentation – National Ocean Policy

Terry Holman, Ocean and Coastal Activities Coordinator for the Department of the Interior, gave a presentation on the National Ocean Policy, including background on how it came to be, the structure, and who is involved. She also gave suggestions for what role the USCRTF can play in the Policy, including getting involved in Coastal and Marine Spatial Planning and regional efforts in the Pacific and Caribbean regions.

Presentation – Landscape Conservation Cooperatives

Loyal Mehrhoff of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service gave a presentation on Landscape Conservation Cooperatives, which are management-science partnerships that inform integrated resources management actions addressing climate change and other stressors within and across landscapes. LCC's are opportunities for Federal, state, tribal, local government and non-governmental management organizations to work as partners in their development. Loyal focused on the Pacific Islands Climate Change Cooperative as an example.

Presentation - USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service Partnership

Mark Defley of the Marianas Resource Conservation and Development Council gave a presentation on the rise of grassroots conservation and non-governmental organization capacity in the Marianas. He spoke about the number of organizations, their communications reach, and their conservation activities.

Update - USCRTF Partnership Initiative

Larry Yamamoto of the U.S. Department of Agriculture gave an update on the Partnership Initiative. He discussed the progress of the Initiative in the Guanica Bay, Puerto Rico watershed and the selection process for the next watershed in the Pacific region. He also discussed a need for several forms of support, from funding to tools and technical assistance.

Public Comment

Public comment was provided by the following 6 individuals and organizations.

- Alan Ainbinder, citizen
- Laura Biggs, University of Guam, Marine Lab
- Ignacio T. dela Cruz, CNMI Office of the Governor
- Richard Dodge, NOVA Southeastern University, National Coral Reef Institute
- John Gourley, citizen
- Richard B. Seman, Marianas Fishing Magazine

Workshop Highlights

Climate Change Adaptation Workshop

The USCRTF Climate Change Working Group held a half-day workshop on climate change adaptation. Presentation topics and presenters included Advancing Management Adaptation to Climate Change by Mark Eakin of NOAA's Coral Reef Watch, The Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP) and Regional Adaptation to Climate Change by Paul Anderson of SPREP, Adaptation Planning Efforts in the Federated States of Micronesia and the Micronesia Challenge by Marion Henry, chair of the Micronesia Challenge, Rapid Assessment Teams and Testing of Resilience Principles in the Face of the Current Bleaching by Trina Leberer of The Nature Conservancy, Adaptation Planning Efforts in the Republic of the Marshall Islands by Albon Ishoda of the Marshall Islands Conservation Society, Outcomes of the "Preparing for Climate Change in Micronesia" workshop by Britt Parker of NOAA's Coral Reef Watch, and Implementing Intervention Measures in American Samoa: Cooling Waters to Protect High Value Reefs from Coral Bleaching by Brian von Herzen of the Climate Foundation.

Saipan Field Trips and Site Building Opportunities

- **Laolao Bay Watershed** - The field trip included a hike in the Laolao uplands, a briefing on the revegetation work taking place there, and a general overview of the ARRA-funded Laolao Bay Road & Coastal Management Improvement Project. The field trip continued with a short drive down to the bay, and a brief snorkel in an area severely affected by upland erosion and resultant sedimentation. The field trip finished with a snorkel in a healthier part of the bay, and opportunities for further discussion of Laolao watershed restoration projects.
- **Kagman Watershed** - This tour explored the Kagman Watershed Project located on the east side of the Island. The tour began with a visit to Tank beach at the bottom of the Kagman watershed. The group then progressed up the watershed to Education Island wetlands area for wildlife viewing and a discussion about efforts made to restore native wildlife habitat for the endangered Common Moorhen and Nightingale Reed Warbler. The tour continued with brief visits to constructed sediment basins, waterways, Kagman quarry, and 100,000gal water tank. The NRCS Project Engineer gave a brief description of the engineering components and described the overall conservation value. The tour finished at the LaoLao uplands where participants planted some trees and shrubs in the active revegetation area.
- **Saipan World War II Sites** - The South Island tour began with a visit to Mt. Tapochao for a panoramic view of the island and historical briefing of all locations. The tour covered WWII sites, including invasion beaches, Sherman tanks in the lagoon, Japanese bunkers and assorted gun emplacements; along with the Japanese airfield area at As Lito, with its buildings and assorted military items.
- **Managaha Marine Conservation Area Boat Ride and Snorkel** – Participants snorkeled in CNMI's crown jewel, the Managaha Marine Conservation Area, and fully protected no-take area. The Island and its surrounding waters are an important part of the CNMI natural history, cultural history, and its beauty.

Awards

The USCRTF presented nine awards to regional and local individuals.

Special Recognition

- Governor Felix P. Camacho

Outstanding Public Awareness and Education

- Mariana Islands Nature Alliance (MINA)

Outstanding Community Level Participation

- Berna Gorong
- Yap CAP
- Peggy Denney

Outstanding Scientific Advancement and Knowledge

- Dr. Peter C. Houk

Outstanding Management

- Bill Millhouser
- Albon Ishoda
- Micronesia Conservation Trust

Post-Meeting Events on Pohnpei

Meeting with President Mori - Several of the members traveled to Pohnpei to meet with the President of the Federated States of Micronesia and representatives from several non-government partners to discuss conservation issues in Micronesia. President Mori discussed the need for more programs aimed at deterring dynamite fishing, as well as more activities that build capacity for conservation efforts within the Freely Associated States.

Pohnpei Post-Meeting Field Trips and Site Building Opportunities

- Nett Municipality – This field trip included a tour of watershed projects aimed at reducing pig waste from running directly into the local stream to reduce nutrient load from the watershed.
- Ant (Ahnd) Atoll – The tour of Ant Atoll included a boat ride to Bird Island, a major bird rookery for several species and a snorkel along a coral wall. Several partners, including staff from Micronesia Conservation Trust, the Conservation Society of Pohnpei, and The Nature Conservancy, met the members at the sites to discuss partnership opportunities and needs in Micronesia.
- Nan Madol and Kepirohi Falls – The tour of Nan Madol included a kayak through the mangroves and in the shallow ocean environments, and a short hike through the ruins. Bill Raynor of The Nature Conservancy led a tour about the archaeological importance and cultural history of the site.