



Meeting Highlights
U.S. Coral Reef Task Force Meeting
Washington DC
February 2010

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

General Summary

The U.S. Coral Reef Task Force (USCRTF) held a public steering committee meeting and business meeting in Washington D.C., February 23-24th, 2010 with associated events taking place throughout the week.

Highlights of the meetings include:

- Dennis Hightower, Deputy Secretary of the Department of Commerce, provided opening remarks.
- Three USCRTF Governor members provided remarks to the USCRTF and shared their vision for effective partnerships and actions necessary to better conserve coral reef ecosystems.
- Michael Boots, Associate Director for Land and Water Ecosystems, White House Council on Environmental Quality, provided remarks on the National Ocean Policy and Coastal and Marine Spatial Planning.
- A panel entitled Population and Climate Change: An Opportunity for Collaborative Conservation provided presentations from Lelei Peau, Deputy Director, American Samoa Department of Commerce, Karen Hardee, Vice President of Research, Population Action International and Jason Bremner, Program Director, Population, Health, and Environment, Population Reference Bureau.
- Marta Nammack of NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service presented on the Endangered Species Act Listing Petition for 83 Species of Coral.
- On behalf of the USCRTF Partnership Initiative, Ann Mills of USDA announced the availability of grant funding to build local capacity and support for projects that will help restore natural resources in the Guanica/Rio Loco watershed in Puerto Rico.
- The USCRTF heard public comment from eight individuals.

DOI Co-Chair Remarks

Anthony Babauta, Assistant Secretary for Insular Areas, initiated a moment of silence for the loss of Samuel Hamilton, Director of the US Fish and Wildlife Service. Sam was a visionary leader that attended several USCRTF meetings in his 30 years of service.

DOC Deputy Secretary Remarks

Dennis Hightower, Deputy Secretary of the Department of Commerce (DOC), stated that USCRTF plays a critical role in protecting one of world's most vital resources. He highlighted NOAA efforts to address climate change, minimize negative fishing impacts, and respond to natural disasters. The Deputy Secretary stated that of the \$167 million that NOAA was provided for American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) activities, \$15 million has been awarded to coral reef restoration projects in the US Virgin Islands, Florida, Hawaii, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands. In addition, the DOC's National Institute of Standards and Technology provided \$15 million in ARRA funding for the new Center of Excellence for Coral Reef Ecosystem Science, which is part of the National Coral Reef Institute in Florida.

Governor Remarks

Governor Togiola Tulafono of American Samoa, Governor Felix Camacho of Guam, and Governor Benigno Fitial of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands 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 expressed gratitude to the Obama Administration and several Federal agencies that assisted American Samoa in disaster recovery efforts after the September 29th tsunami, and requested financial assistance for assessment and removal of marine debris. He also expressed concern over climate change and population pressure.

Governor Camacho highlighted the Micronesian Challenge, provided an update on the military buildup on Guam and shared successes of coral conservation outreach programs. The Governor also discussed his recent legislation to change the name of Guam to "Guahan" to honor Chamorro heritage.

Governor Fitial also highlighted the Micronesian challenge. He gave members a preview of the September 2010 USCRTF meeting, to be held in Saipan, by showing slides of the beautiful coral reefs of CNMI and challenges to coral reef conservation in the region.

Council on Environmental Quality Chairman Remarks

Michael Boots, Associate Director for Land and Water Ecosystems, White House Council on Environmental Quality provided remarks on the National Ocean Policy and Coastal and Marine Spatial Planning. He stressed the Administration's commitment to ocean conservation in general and protection of coral reefs in particular. He challenged the USCRTF to consider ways in which the USCRTF priorities could assist with and/or align with the goals of the soon to be released National Ocean Policy.

Population and Climate Change: An Opportunity for Collaborative Conservation

1. Lelei Peau, Deputy Director, American Samoa Department of Commerce

American Samoa's key environmental threat is overpopulation. Mr. Peau presented how population pressure is degrading the environmental and coral reef ecosystems, and how the territory plans to combat this problem. He concluded with ways the Federal government can assist in these efforts, including providing technical and financial assistance, and monitoring coral reefs to assess the outcomes and success of these actions.

2. Dr. Karen Hardee, Vice President of Research, Population Action International

Dr. Hardee explored the importance of population for climate change challenges and solutions. She stressed that meeting the currently unmet need for family planning services is something that will have important implications for the growth of greenhouse gas emissions. Family planning is a win-win for climate change because it is relatively easy to implement, is already in demand among the world's women, is relatively inexpensive, and likely to strengthen family's resilience to climate change impacts.

3. Jason Bremner, Program Director, Population, Health, and Environment, Population Reference Bureau.

Dr. Bremner's presentation, Population, Health, and the Environment: Global Challenges and Local Actions, highlighted the Integrated Population and Coastal Resource Management Project (IPOPCORM-PFPI). The project seeks to improve the quality of life of fishing-dependent communities while maintaining integrity of life-sustaining coastal habitats. A key component of this campaign is a unique social marketing component integrating family planning and environmental education.

USCRTE Member Announcements

Ann Mills, Deputy Under Secretary for Natural Resources and Environment of the Department of Agriculture, announced the availability of grant funding to build local capacity and support for projects that will help restore natural resources in the Guanica/Rio Loco watershed in Puerto Rico. The grant funding is part of the U.S. Coral Reef Task Force Partnership Initiative, which will provide funding opportunities through The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF), in partnership with members of the U.S. Coral Reef Task Force (USCRTE), specifically the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). Priority will be given to proposals submitted by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) based in Puerto Rico. To apply online, visit www.nfwf.org/coralreef.

Public Comment

Public comment was provided by the following individuals and organizations:

- Richard "Dick" Dodge, National Coral Reef Institute, Nova Southeastern University
- Kate Brown, Global Island Partnership
- Dan Clark, Cry of the Water
- Stephanie Clark, Cry of the Water

- William H. Nuckols III, W.H. Nuckols Consulting
- John Calvo, Western Pacific Regional Fisheries Management Council
- Richard Appledorn, Caribbean Coral Reef Institute
- Rebecca Cerroni, The Nature Conservancy

Advance public comment was received from the following organizations:

- Dave Rainey and Judith Lang, Sierra Club
- Kate Brown, Global Island Partnership

The USCRTF Steering Committee met on February 23, 2010 at the US Department of Commerce. Highlights from the meeting include:

- USCRTF steering committee co-chair Steven Thur provided an update on the reauthorization of the Coral Reef Conservation Act.
- Fran Castro, the Point of Contact for the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, announced the Governor would offer to host the next USCRTF meeting will be held in Saipan, CNMI, in September 2010. This will include a VIP field visit to the island of Pohnpei, FSM.
- Howard Hankin and Yahaira Lopez of USDA conducted a session promoting open discussion of Executive Order 13089.
- Steering Committee co-chairs lead a discussion on the current and appropriate level of representation at USCRTF meetings, and explored how to engage higher level membership in each agency and jurisdiction.
- At the Puerto Rico USCRTF in November 2009, the representative from the Marshall Islands encouraged the USCRTF to reassess the role of the Freely Associated States in the USCRTF. The Steering Committee discussed this issue and plans to address this issue more specifically at the next meeting in Saipan, CNMI.
- Steering committee members reviewed and discussed two public comments submitted in advanced of the meeting.

The U.S. All Islands Coral Reef Committee (AIC) Update

- AIC Chair Vangie Lujan presented the AIC Report. Highlights included the following:
- An update on ARRA funded projects in USVI, Florida, CNMI and Hawaii.
- An update on the impacts of the current petition to list 82 species of coral on the Endangered Species List on coastal development and local governance capacity. In most U.S. jurisdictions almost all in-water actions along the coast will require Section 7 consultation under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). This will potentially significantly lengthen permit timelines and dramatically increase the need for specialized professional expertise to complete assessments and process permits. The AIC requested that the USCRTF take responsibility for ensuring an open dialogue with local jurisdictions to ensure these issues are addressed.
- The AIC also recommended the following actions:
- That the USCRTF follow up on active engagement in natural disaster recovery activities, including post-tsunami recovery in American Samoa.
- That DOT and USEPA provide leadership for the Roadways Resolution Working Group and report back at the Fall 2010 meeting.

- That federal resource regulatory agencies form a working group to develop interim guidance and long-term standards for compensatory mitigation.

Highlights of Associated Meetings

Climate Change Working Group

The Climate Change Working Group met and discussed current projects related to climate change that agencies were engaged in. The group also discussed the Resolution that established the group and explored options for moving forward including how to better coordinate and leverage ongoing efforts and how the Task Force members could work together to accomplish goals that no one agency could tackle. Discussions will continue during the next conference call when more group members are present.