

Meeting Highlights
U.S. Coral Reef Task Force Meeting
Kona, Hawaii
August 2008



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) or Beth Dieveney (beth.dieveney@noaa.gov).

General Summary

The U.S. Coral Reef Task Force (USCRTF) held a public meeting in Kona, Hawaii, August 24-29, 2008. The purpose of the meeting was to learn about and 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 three theme areas: traditional ecological knowledge, translating science to management action, and developing an understanding and sense of place.

Highlights of the week include:

- USCRTF released a statement: **Framework for Action** – a renewed call to action for coral reef conservation in light of the threats from climate change, land-based sources of pollution, deteriorating water quality, and unsustainable fishing with particular attention paid to the areas in which the USCRTF can take direct action.
- The USCRTF and associated members hosted **five workshops** in association with this meeting:
 - Traditional Ecological Knowledge
 - Communities Bridging Government
 - Watershed Planning
 - Recreational Stewardship
 - Climate Change
- **Three expert panels** presented key findings during the USCRTF business meeting
 - Coral Reef Conservation – Key Threats and Innovative Solutions
 - Hawaii's Network of Marine Managed Areas
 - Sustainable Use of Watersheds and Aquifers for Kona's Coral Reefs
- Senior leadership from Federal agencies, states and territories addressed meeting attendees.
- Yap, Federated States of Micronesia, announced the Yap legislator passed a new law protecting the habitat of manta rays up to 12 miles off-shore, equaling more than 8,243 square miles
- USCRTF staff participated in an **education day** with twenty-two USCRTF staff visiting local schools to give coral reef ecosystem presentations to more than 600 students.
- The USCRTF heard **public comment** from nine individuals and organizations.
- The USCRTF presented **eight awards** to regional and local individuals.
- **Field trips** were offered to six locations of interest

Call to Action Statement Released by the USCRTF

The USCRTF released a call to action for coral reef conservation in light of the threats from climate change, land-based sources of pollution, deteriorating water quality, and unsustainable fishing. This call to action is largely in response to recent scientific findings related to coral reef ecosystems and impacts from climate change reported at the July 2008 International Coral Reef Symposium and statements made by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and the Group of Eight (G8) and leaders of the Major Economies regarding greenhouse gas emissions, climate change and subsequent deteriorating effects on the environment.

The USCRTF states that:

Science has demonstrated that reef communities can recover when they are protected and stressors are removed. Urgent action is needed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. In the meantime, precious time for coral reef ecosystems can be secured through increased protection from land and marine pollution, unsustainable fishing, development, and other stressors, all of which we know can damage coral health. The time to act is now.

EPA Administrator Remarks

Stephen Johnson, Administrator of the EPA, spoke on the importance of strong partnerships, particularly to address international environmental issues, and highlighted the work of the USCRTF as a model for such partnership action and demonstrated progress toward achieving a common goal. Administrator Johnson also highlighted climate change as a threat to our resources, including coral reefs, and noted EPA has been working to address this threat via its climate change action plan for EPA water programs.

Council on Environmental Quality Chairman Remarks

Council on Environmental Quality Chairman, Jim Connaughton, addressed the USCRTF and discussed areas under consideration for potential marine conservation management areas. Sites include the coral reefs, pinnacles, sea mounts, islands and surrounding waters of Johnston Atoll, Howland, Baker and Jarvis Islands, Kingman Reef, Palmyra Atoll, Wake Island, and Rose Atoll. He also discussed the major threats to coral reef ecosystems including climate change, fishing, and water quality and challenged the USCRTF to not only convey these major threats in our message but to also recognize the value of these ecosystems to our economy and well-being and to celebrate important progress that has been made to protect them.

Special Session: The Future of Coral Reef Conservation –Key Threats & Innovative Solutions

The three major threats impacting coral reefs – land-based sources of pollution, impacts from fishing, and climate change – are not simple, cause and effect issues but are complex and work in concert. The USCRTF recognized that these are the areas where we – as the USCRTF and our wider community of partners in academia, the non-governmental sector, and the private sector – need to be focusing our energy, our dollars,

and our actions. This panel was designed to highlight some of the opportunities available for addressing these threats.

- Land based sources of pollution & water quality – USDA and EPA shared opportunities and types of assistance available through the Farm Bill and the Clean Water Act respectively. Arlen Lancaster of USDA discussed the need to educate agricultural producers on best practices, working on a watershed approach, and embracing cooperative conservation. Wayne Nastri of the EPA highlighted the impacts of land based sources of pollution on water quality and coral reef ecosystems, and EPA enforcement and financial assistance efforts.
- Fishing – Alan Friedlander presented on the impacts from fishing in Caribbean and Pacific coral reefs and potential management options which include integrating traditional ecological knowledge, community based management schemes, and the use of marine protected areas.
- Climate Change & Alternative Energy – Dennis Welch of American Electric Power presented an industry perspective to addressing global climate change.

Special Session: Hawaii's Network of Marine Managed Areas

Hawaii has a long and proud history of traditional marine management.

This panel highlighted one such example: The West Hawai'i Fisheries Council (WHFC), a community group on the island of Hawai'i that involves citizens in the management of local marine resources. The WHFC was formed in 1998 partly due to community concerns over the collecting of tropical reef fish for aquarium use. It has been ten years since the WHFC brought together many of the local marine stakeholders, including tropical fish collectors, divers, recreational and commercial fishermen, boat operators, and environmental groups. The WHFC now stands as an example of successful integration of diverse citizens and organizations, who are actively engaged in a wide range of issues relating to the management of the local marine resources well beyond aquarium fish collecting. The panelists included:

Sarah Peck, Dr. William Walsh, Dr. Ivor Williams, Dr. Alan Friedlander, and Dr. Russell Sparks

Guam Joint Military Build-up

The US Marine Corps presented on its dedication to remain good stewards of the environment and more specifically Guam's coral reefs. In the transition from Okinawa to Guam, all cultural and natural resources value will be taken into account and integrated into construction plans and infrastructure development. The US Marine Corps is working with several federal partners to ensure the proper research and evaluations are conducted to ensure sound decisions are made.

USCRTF Member Announcements

- Florida – In July 2008, during the International Coral Reef Symposium, Governor Charlie Christ signed a state bill into law banning outfalls, stops building of any new outfalls, expansion of any existing outfalls, and requires removal of all by

2025. This action is estimated to cost the state 2 billion dollars to build this infrastructure.

- USACE – EPA and USACE have finalized the compensatory mitigation rule in both English and Spanish. It will be made applicable to federal water resource projects nationwide.
- Puerto Rico – An International Year of the Reef event in Puerto Rico engages new partners, the association of builders, to discuss coral reef conservation issues. Puerto Rico invited the USCRTF to host our next jurisdiction meeting there in the fall of 2009.
- USVI – USVI has initiated plans to curb their territories dependence on oil.

Special Session: Sustainable Use of Watersheds and Aquifers for Kona's Reefs

This panel discussed the challenges of managing urban land use sustainably to conserve coral reefs and sensitive aquatic habitats of the Kona Coast. The Kona Coast is facing rapid urbanization and increasing pressures from consumptive uses of groundwater and conversion of forested and agricultural lands for residential and commercial development. Coral reefs, anchialine pools and other aquatic systems in Kaloko-Honokohau National Historical Park and throughout Kona are highly dependent on water quality and quantity of groundwater flows. The National Park Service, County of Hawai'i, and the development community are seeking cooperative solutions that will ensure the environmental integrity on which these ecosystems and the local economy depend. Speakers addressed current activities and efforts to expand public and private solutions. The Panelists included:

Eric Grossman, US Geological Survey, Pacific Science Center

Sallie Beavers, National Park Service, Kaloko-Honokohau National Historical Park

Chris Yuen, County of Hawai'i Department of Planning

USCRTF Member and Partner Initiative Updates

- Rapid response to coral disease outbreak – NPS personnel presented disease monitoring and response at the Dry Tortugas National Park following a disease outbreak during the summer, 2008.
- International Coral Reef Symposium: Science to Management – Key outcomes of the International Coral Reef Symposium held in Fort Lauderdale Florida on July 7-11, 2008.
- U.S. State of the Coral Reef Ecosystem Report – This report represents the most current and comprehensive assessment of the condition of US coral reef ecosystems.
- Two Samoa's Initiative on Environmental Collaboration – The Two Samoas Initiative's background, benefit, outcomes report of 2008, and future actions were highlighted.
- Palmyra Atoll Research Consortium – Healy Hamilton presented the geographical orientation, state of the reef, partnership and organizational structure, and research priorities and opportunities of the Palmyra Atoll Research Consortium.

- Micronesia Challenge – Fran Castro presented an overview of the Micronesian challenge, as well as its organizational structure, financing plans, and future activities.

International Year of the Reef Updates and Accomplishments

Global, Caribbean, and Pacific International Year of the Reef highlights were given with speakers representing the Caribbean region (US Virgin Islands), Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environmental Programme (SPREP), and Hawaii (Maui IYOR Task Force).

Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument Update

Two years after its establishment, Papahānaumokuākea Marine National is drafting a monument management plan and highlighting its accomplishments. Permit processes and native Hawaiian culture were also discussed.

NOAA Coral Reef Conservation Program “Roadmap for the Future”

In 2007, the NOAA Coral Reef Conservation Program (CRCP) went through an external review to assess CRCP’s effectiveness and success in achieving its goals, and to obtain recommendations on how to improve impact and performance. From the feedback and recommendations received, the CRCP created a “Roadmap for the Future.” The roadmap outlines the CRCP’s three key priorities for the future, which include: understanding and addressing fishing impacts, land-based sources of pollution, and climate change impacts. After discussion of this document, Kacky Andrews, CRCP Program Manager, solicited feedback on how the CRCP can most effectively engage the USCRTF or individual members in the roadmap process.

Public Comment

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

- Rod Salm, The Nature Conservancy
- Dave Raney, Sierra Club
- Richard Appledorn, Caribbean Coral Reef Institute
- John Joyner, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands
- Jay Nelson, Pew Environmental Group
- Linda Paul, NWHI Coral Reef Ecosystem Research Advisory council.
- Ellyn Tong, Hawaii Audubon Society
- Dave Raney, Citizen
- Keiko Bonk, Marine Conservation Biological Institute

Workshop Highlights

Traditional Ecological Knowledge

NOAA and the Community Conservation Network have been working with Kupuna, or elders, from various community groups and hosted a workshop in the week preceding the

meeting in which these respected elders worked with youth from their communities to discuss traditional management practices and train future resource stewards. The youth participants presented the products of this meeting which included creative, interactive media presentations.

Communities Bridging Government

Several community groups from around the State shared information, ideas, strategies, and techniques that enhance management and conservation of natural and cultural resources. These presentations explore formal and informal initiatives to bridge community interest and government mandates in Hawaii.

Watershed Planning

Land-based pollutants, such as sediments and nutrients, are among the leading threats to coral reef ecosystems globally. Watershed-based management approaches that focus on the connectivity between land and sea are needed to protect water resources and coral reefs. This workshop introduced the basic concepts of watershed planning and provided participants with tools for developing watershed plans.

Recreational Stewardship

The goal of this workshop was to work with marine tourism operators, policy and management specialists, conservationist and other participants to address green marketing and the educational value of marine tourism.

Climate Change

This workshop was organized by the US Coral Reef Task Force climate change working group and examined the ways in which Hawaii and other jurisdictions are preparing for climate change and attempting to reduce their carbon footprint. The workshop explored efforts to address and adapt to climate change through best practices, planning, and implementation of projects that help secure resiliency of coral reefs and the communities they support. The discussion was focused on: 1) climate change impacts and adaptation, specifically, management tools and techniques that can be used to address climate change, and 2) alternative energy practices from a local business perspective.

Field Trips and Site Building Opportunities

A Hawaiian Watershed: Makai to Mauka

- The tour highlighted the unique challenges of managing a watershed with a wide range of ecosystems, rainfall gradients, and land uses within a relatively short distance.

Kona Dryland Forest and Coffee Tour

- Field trip participants witnessed first hand coffee farming in this unique coffee region of the U.S. and learned conservation techniques a local grower uses to address local resource concerns and land-based pollution.

Kaloko-Honokohau Nat'l Historical Park & Ala Kahakai National Historical Trail

- While visitors walked the trail, park guides discussed why the Hawaiians first came to the area, and how they felt spiritual presence on its rocky coast.

Boat to Kealakekua on Fairwinds

- Field trip participants snorkeled and viewed the abundant, diverse and accessible fish populations in the Kealakekua Bay Marine Life Conservation District.

Kau Watershed to Volcanoes Nat'l Park

- Fieldtrip participants stopped at various locations in the Kua Watershed to learn about natural resources and the creative efforts among federal, state, and private partners to protect them for future generations to enjoy. The trip included a stop at Volcanoes National Park.

Hakalau Tour

- A guide took visitors on a 3 mile tour of the Hakalau National Wildlife Refuge to identify forest birds and plants found in the refuge and discuss the ecology and conservation of the area.

Awards

The USCRTF presented eight awards to regional and local individuals.

Outstanding Management

William Walsh, PhD

Russell Reardon, Lindy Johnson and Derek Campbell

Outstanding Public Awareness and Education

Sara Peck

Judith C. Lang, PhD

David Raney

Outstanding Community Level Participation

Tina Owens

Outstanding Scientific Advancement and Knowledge

Richard Dodge, PhD

Jo-Ann Leong, PhD