

In 2002, the U.S. Coral Reef Task Force identified the need for more focused action at the local level to reduce key threats to coral reefs and called for the development of Local Action Strategies (LAS) in each of the seven states and territories that possess significant coral reef resources.

USVI Local Action Strategy

In January 2003, the U.S. Virgin Islands government established its first marine park, the St. Croix East End Marine Park (EEMP). This is a significant local contribution to U.S. efforts to implement the National Action Plan to Conserve Coral Reefs. To ensure the long-term success of this newly established park, the Virgin Islands chose to continue a bottom-up approach for initiating conservation activities within the boundaries of the EEMP. The USVI government also decided that the EEMP would be the focal point around which development of their local action strategy will occur during the first three-year period. The LAS process began with a kickoff meeting in July of 2003 which was attended by a large number of local stakeholders and officials from the Virgin Islands Government. The LAS document that was drafted by core working groups has been presented to the public for review and further input. Project leads, proposed partners, expected costs and funding sources will be identified for all of the LAS's as the process proceeds.

LACK OF AWARENESS...

Education and outreach efforts that teach adults and youth the importance of coral reef systems are integral to their conservation. Visitors and residents of the islands need to be aware of the threats facing coral reefs and the things they can do to protect them. The aim of the LAS for this focus area is to expand and improve reef awareness and promote behavior change through environmental education.

Goals and Objectives

- Build awareness of the importance of coral reefs and teach and encourage positive behaviors that will protect and nurture them
- Integrate coral reef education into the local school system and increase coral reef education for visitors

Project Examples

- Meet with science coordinators and administrators to integrate coral reef education into schools
- Develop a snorkeling excursion program for local residents in order to increase awareness about coral reefs
- Develop guidelines and written materials for private tour operators about coral resources in the EEMP

Anticipated Outcomes

- Increased coral reef education in schools
- Increased coral reef education for visitors through hotels, cruise ships, etc.
- Increased understanding of the value of coral reefs locally

OVERFISHING...

Marine resources in the USVI are declining as a result of poor fishing practices, habitat degradation, coastal development, lack of enforcement and natural disasters. The purpose of the overfishing LAS is to develop management strategies for the resources within the EEMP, taking into consideration traditional and non-extractive uses and to revise territorial regulations for the conservation and enhancement of the resources.

Goals and Objectives

- Provide EEMP managers with sufficient baseline information to assess the current status of fisheries resources and existing patterns of harvest
- Determine the effectiveness of the EEMP in the conservation and enhancement of fisheries resources

ESTIMATED LAS PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION COSTS

Lack of Awareness
\$298,000

Overfishing
\$1,722,286

Recreational Use
\$159,000

Land-based Sources of Pollution
\$157,000

Estimated costs derived from projects for which cost information is presently available



STAKEHOLDERS

Boating companies

Division of Environmental Enforcement

Division of Fish and Wildlife

Department of Planning and Natural Resources, Coastal Zone Management

Dive shops

Fishermen's United Services Cooperative of St. Croix

McComb Engineering, Inc.

National Park Service

NOAA

Private farmers

Park users and residents

Sport fishing companies

St. Croix Environmental Association

The Nature Conservancy

The Ocean Conservancy

University of the Virgin Islands

USDA, Natural Resources Conservation Service

USEPA

USFWS

Yacht clubs and marina users

contact

Project Examples

- *Establish continuous, long-term monitoring*
- *Improve enforcement within EEMP*
- *Establish long-term fisheries management program*

Anticipated Outcomes

- *Increased and improved enforcement and compliance with regulatory policies and issues*
- *Natural habitats supplemented by habitat enhancement programs*

RECREATIONAL USE...

Marine resources in the USVI are used for recreational purposes by residents and visitors alike. The LAS strives to preserve these basic resources while ensuring consistently enjoyable recreational opportunities for future generations. Engaging the community to assist in developing solutions which minimize damage to coral reef systems enables them to shape their recreational impact today and in the future.

Goals and Objectives

- *Develop and implement management systems and strategies for marine tourism that will protect the reef system from degradation*

Project Examples

- *Establish permanent moorings in high-use areas*
- *Conduct an EEMP vessel use assessment*
- *Develop a solid waste and sanitation initiative*

Anticipated Outcomes

- *Reduced physical damage of EEMP corals due to inappropriate anchoring practices*
- *Improved management of marine recreational activities within the EEMP*

LAND-BASED SOURCES OF POLLUTION...

Waste water disposal has been a chronic problem in the USVI. Increasing point and non-point source discharges are causing declines in USVI water quality as well. Treatment plants do not always attain secondary discharge requirements. The LAS for this focus area aims to address land based sources of pollution through education and increased use of best management practices in coral reef areas.

Goals and Objectives

- *Identify and reduce non-point source pollutants in watersheds contributing to the East End Marine Park*
- *Increase the use of best management practices by homeowners and farmers*

Project Examples

- *Compile information on historic land use, miles of unpaved roads, and construction trends in watersheds and translate into GIS data layers*
- *Hire and train additional CZM permit inspectors*
- *Educate and emphasize best management practices with homeowners and farmers*

Anticipated Outcomes

- *Non-point source pollutants identified and decreased in watersheds contributing to the EEMP*
- *Park map with GIS layers of historic data, unpaved roads, driveways, and construction trends*
- *Increased usage of best management practices by homeowners and farmers*

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