

US Coral Reef Task Force Meeting Summary
Wednesday February 25, 2004
US Dept. of Commerce, H.C. Hoover Building , Washington , DC

INTRODUCTION AND WELCOME

Tim Keeney, Co-Chair USCRTF
Deputy Assistant Secretary for Oceans and Atmosphere with NOAA.
Craig Manson, Co-Chair USCRTF
Assistant Secretary for Fish, Wildlife, and Parks with DOI
Ted Kassinger
General Council, Department of Commerce

WELCOME REMARKS

James Connaughton, Chair, White House Council on Environmental Quality
Congressman Tom Allen (Maine)
Congresswoman Donna M. Christian-Christensen (US Virgin Islands)
Congresswoman Madeleine Z. Bordallo (Guam)

REPORT FROM THE TASK FORCE STEERING GROUP

Roger B Griffis, NOAA, Co-chair USCRTF Steering Committee
Randy Bowman, Dept. of Interior, Co-chair USCRTF Steering Committee

- Agenda/ welcome

Progress Report on Existing Task Force Resolutions/Initiatives

Roger B Griffis

- Overview of Task Force Program Planning and Implementation Process
- Review Puerto Rico Resolution and needs for progress
- Overview of status of Local Action Strategy (LAS) Development and Implementation
- Provide status update and possible next steps for resolutions that are currently in progress.
- Overview of Task Force commitment to LAS implementation and tasks needed
- Members will fully assist and participate in production of a report to congress which evaluates the implementation of the National Coral Reef Action Strategy, including funding.
- Review other tasks ahead

Comments/Question:

Tim Keeney (NOAA): Is the progress report Mandated?

Roger Griffis: Yes, the Coral Reef Conservation Act of 2000 calls for a strategy and a report on report on its implementation.

Craig Manson (DOI): Welcome to Governor Tulafono (AS). Pleased to announce that DOI (through FWS) will support Gov Sunia award in 2005.

Report on Progress to Complete and Implement 3-year Local Action Strategies

John McCaroll, EPA
Jonathan Kelsey, NOAA
Dana Wusinich-Mendez, NOAA

- Federal agencies should consider LAS in outyear planning.
- These reports just show progress since October, there was a significant amount of work prior to the October meeting.

Pacific Region Update

- Progress since October on Local Action Strategies in the Pacific region.
- Every jurisdiction is finished or very close and has begun implementation. One example on progress
- All partners are committed to this process.
- Presented overview of year one priority projects – a set of projects that have been developed to best meet each groups local priorities and abilities
- Identified capacity needs critical to the success of the implementation of LAS.
- Detailed budgets are not yet available, but significant resources have been committed. Direct federal support, federal grant support and local funding going to LAS.
- Significant funds have been redirected to support the LAS. Year 2 and 3 may be more expensive has year 1 has been supported by a number of redirected funds.
- Lessons learned: need to identify additional support to free up redirected funds; non-federal matching requirement on some funds may be a limiting factor; need to diversify portfolio of support sources.

Comments/Questions:

Craig Manson (DOI): Can you develop a matrix showing the portfolio of support? (direct funding, etc. for year 1 and outyears).

Jonathan Kelsey – can provide year 1 info in the next day or so, next steps are to complete the year 2 and 3 lists.

Caribbean/Atlantic Region Update

- Describe progress made since October.
- Showed some examples of priority projects for year one.
- Level of support may increase as new sources/ possible redirections are identified. Funding amounts listed on tables do not include capacity needs. Capacity needs are not just for year 1.
- Next steps: match year one projects with support opportunities (funding, capacity, or direct implementation.)

Comments/Questions:

Craig Hooks (EPA): The unfunded needs are very great. Is there a prioritization of the remaining needs?

Dana Wusinich-Mendez: The priorities presented actually are the year one prioritization.

Craig Manson (DOI): Law enforcement and public awareness seem to be the big needs. Interior has much enforcement capability. I will direct FWS to take lead to develop ways to address these needs with Dept. of Justice and NOAA. FWS and Park Service also have expertise in public awareness and will support these needs as much as possible.

Tim Keeney (NOAA): The National Action Strategy contains 13 focus areas, only working on 6 priority threats right now. Is there any work on the other 7?

Jonathan Keeney – A lot of work is being done on the others. This work is represented in accomplishments report the TF has been working on. However, much of the funding on the other seven areas has been redirected to support these priorities. We need to keep the others in mind as well.

John Mc Carroll: American Samoa added another LAS to address other topics. Dept. of Justice has begun collaboration on enforcement.

George Dunlop (Army Corps): I pledge the full and vigorous engagement of the Corps in these efforts.

Becky Lizama (CNMI): The presentation shows prioritization. The local jurisdictions will present shortly on their status with the hope of receiving specific commitments.

REPORT AND PROPOSAL FROM THE INTERNATIONAL WORKING GROUP

Barbara Best, USAID, Chair of International Working Group

- Background info:
 - U.S. Major consumer for aquarium trade
 - U.S. Major consumer for curio, jewelry trade
 - Trade drives destructive and over-fishing
 - Largely unregulated trade; illegal, unreported.
 - Published report on this in 2000 – International Trade in Coral and Coral Reef Species: The Role of The United States
- Progress
 - Seahorses listed under Appendix II of CITES
 - Convene workshop to discuss sea cucumber
 - Assisted in various projects to address Land-based sources of pollution, overfishing, sustainable tourism, and coral bleaching and coral diseases
- Proposed International Resolution
 - Engage other countries on impacts of coral reef trade
 - Assist exporting countries in sustainable management
 - Support White Water to Blue Water Conference (March)
 - Support 10th International Coral Reef Symposium (June)
 - Support Second Global Conference on Small Island Developing States (September 2004)
 - Participate in a bid by the U.S. to host the 11th International Coral Reef Symposium in 2008

REPORTS FROM NON-FEDERAL TASK FORCE MEMBERS

American Samoa

Governor Togiola Tulafono

- American Samoa is committed to continuing this effort.

- At the October meeting in Guam , I spoke of the problems in American Samoa and the challenges. Today, things are taking place and we have an outline for future activities.
- Tropical cyclone Hetta did a lot of damage and the natural resources will take time to recover. Thank you to all who e-mailed and sent concerns.
- We are near finalization of an economic evaluation of reefs. This report provides managers and villages a way to attach a price to their reefs. We are working with fed partners to figure out how to fund people outside of grants
- We are working with partners on outreach and education. AS conducted an education tour for congressional members to degraded and pristine reefs.
- TF must engage the US Ocean Commission by providing comments. The states and territories must not only submit as individuals but together on impacts to islands/corals.
- The LAS process has been useful in helping prioritize needs. However, it will require collaborations with agencies whose overall missions do not include environmental conservation. We should remember that many hands lighten the load.
- American Samoa thanks the Task Force for its efforts.

Palau

President Tommy E. Remengesau, Jr.

- Palau wishes to express its strong commitment to partner with US to respond to threats to coral reefs.
- In Oct., Palau stated its wish to participate in the Task Force.
- Palau wishes to contribute to a network of MPAs. Palau passed new legislation on MPAs and is implementing it. MPA effectiveness depends on enforcement and economic incentives (i.e. alternative incomes).
- Palau passed a new shark finning law and a law against commercial fishing within 50 miles of islands. Enforcement is important to this effort. Palau has arrested individuals from two fishing vessels with shark fins onboard and they conducted a public burning of the confiscated shark fins.
- Committed to conserving coral reefs and marine resources. Developing capacity of education institutions to ensure capacity to protect coral reefs in the future.
- Thanks for NOAA's visit to Palau after the last TF meeting.
- Palau offered to hold the 2005 TF meeting in Palau .

Guam

Governor Felix Perez Camacho

- the intense media coverage in Guam before and after the last Task Force meeting prompted several villages to start watershed management plans.
- discussed the Local Action Strategy (LAS) issues they've been working on since the last meeting in October. \
- Guam cannot keep redirecting Coral Reef Initiative funds for LAS implementation and requested that federal partners assist with this process.
- shared photos of the successful recovery of fish in Tumon Bay Marine Preserve.

Puerto Rico

Eric Lausten

- successful progress has been made to strengthen coral reef management in Puerto Rico .
- currently have draft Local Action Strategies in 4 areas.
- in January Puerto Rico designated Tres Palmas Marine Reserve in Rincón as a natural reserve
- in February they signed new fishing regulations in to law, which are compatible with the Federal Regulations.
- the DNER signed an administrative order to regulate recreational use in 6 coral reef keys within 5 Natural Reserves.

TASK FORCE AWARDS

- Governor Tause P.F. Sunia Coral Reef Conservation Summer Internship Awards to Ms. Leia LaPlace from the U.S. Virgin Islands and Ms. Aja N.M. Reyes from Guam . The awardees were chosen based on their demonstrated interest in coral reef conservation, exemplary academic achievements, and related work experience.
- The Department of Interior's National Park Service also announced their commitment to sponsor the internships for the summer of 2005.
- Task Force recognized Ms. Lauri MacLaughlin, Resource Manager of the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary, for her exceptional efforts with the U.S. Navy and other partners to rescue and protect corals during harbor dredging and construction projects in Key West , Florida .

REPORTS FROM NON-FEDERAL TASK FORCE MEMBERS (CONTINUED)

US Virgin Islands

Bill Rohring

- The LAS status and priorities were summarized in Dana Wusinich-Mendez's report.
- The USVI's has critical need for capacity building. He reported that they have been participating in the Coral Reef Management Assistant Program and the new assistant is helpful and enthusiastic.
- USVI have been working with NOAA's Biogeography team to do dive training
- USVI's status of the reef report is complete and that they look forward to the Task Force's comments.

Florida

Bob Ballard

- Since the last meeting, Florida has lost Sec. David Struhs as head of the Department of Environmental Protection. They have appointed Colleen Castille as the new Secretary who will start by the end of February. Mr. Ballard remarked that Sec. Castille loves coral reefs and will be a large supporter of the Task Force and its work.
- Governor Bush has included \$18M for sewage treatment for the Florida Keys and \$400K as matching funds for the Local Action Strategy in his budget proposal.

- Florida is working to buy 7000 lots to be set aside as conservation lands. \$100M has been set aside for this project.
- Florida has created a new position to manage all of the Florida LASs. The person will be housed in Ft. Lauderdale rather than St. Pete to be closer to the people and issues the LASs are designed to address.
- Thanks to so many people, Billy Causey etc
- The next CRTF Meeting is in Florida week of Sept 13 th , place and absolute dates TBA.

Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands

Becky Lizama

- Summary of CNMI progress towards the LAS since last meeting.
- Immediate needs are \$7M for the LAS implementation.
- Our LAS is small in that it does not include the multitude of actions we are already undertaking with existing funding to protect our resources and it does not include big ticket or long-term infrastructure needs.
- Our LAS is also small because its 49 projects represent less than 1/3 of all of the proposed projects generated during stakeholder meetings.
- \$4 million is needed for this first year of implementation of the 27 priority projects. Of the 27 projects identified for implementation in year one, 15 are funded, 6 are pending in anticipation of competitive grant awards, and 6 still need support.
- We have written a \$1.1 million dollar proposal to the EPA Watershed Initiative grant program and a \$70,000 proposal to NOAA's Coral Reef Ecosystem Research grant program for the Laulau Bay Improvement project.
- Funding has been secured to enhance our limited human resources and to support 6 positions including: an MPA specialist, full-time coral reef Point of Contact/facilitator, a dedicated coral reef assistant attorney general, and three marine conservation officers.
- Over these next few years we hope and expect to implement all 49 projects in our original LAS.

Comments/Questions :

Tim Keeney (NOAA): Becky is leaving the Task Force. Becky you will be missed. Thank you for all your efforts.

Hawaii

Athline Clark

- The state had a fund shopping meeting to leverage funding for their land-based sources of pollution LAS priority projects.
- They removed 42 tons of alien algae from Waikiki
- They developed a brochure on removing fishing gear from reefs.
- The Living Reef Program, a multi-organization outreach and education program that will include a website containing a game, television and radio advertisements, and a reef stewardship awards program.

Athline shared a sample video from Navigating Change, a 5 part video series for school teachers.

Report from the All Island Committee –

Lelei Peau, Chair of the US All Islands Coral Reef Initiative Committee

- Brief History of the group.
- concern over funding Local Action Strategies from existing multiple pots of money without identifying new sources.
- due to local regulations, many island states might have difficulty including all stakeholders in planning when these same individuals bid on implementation projects. Pacific Islands Regional Ocean Forum was recently held in Fiji at the beginning of February
- thanked the Task Force for their continued support of local management efforts.

PUBLIC COMMENT SESSION

Judy Lang , Sierra Club

Suzanne Giles, Restore Americas Estuaries

Scott Smith, The Nature Conservancy

Stephanie Clark, Cry of the Water

Dan Clark, Cry of the Water

Dr. William Kiene, Reef Check

Dr. Bernhard Riegl, National Coral Reef Institute (NCRI)

Steve Howard, Washington Area Marine Aquarist Society

Dr. Richard Dodge, National Coral Reef Institute (NCRI)

Cheri Recchia, The Ocean Conservancy

Dr. Phil Dustan, College Of Charleston

Jim Porter, University of Georgia

Brenda Lee Chalifour esq., Attorney for Save our Shorelines

Jacques Chauvet, Triton Artificial Reef

HOT TOPIC PRESENTATIONS

Report from the US Commission on Ocean Policy

Dr. Paul Sandifer,

Commissioner: US Commission on Ocean Policy

Update on Ocean Commission Report and Recommendations for Coral Reef Conservation

Comments/Questions:

David P. Smith (Dep. Assistant Secretary of Parks, DOI): How do you view the int'l recommendations and how will they interact with existing CITES work?

Paul S: We haven't looked too closely at how they would interact, but there are a number of possibilities with these two and other work on similar topics.

David Smith (DOI) – Thanks, I think there are a number of ways they can be aligned. NOAA and DOI have worked together to make progress on these trade issues and are actively taking a leadership role.

Paul S: The TF is well set up with DOI and NOAA as leaders.

Status of coral Reefs in the Western Atlantic

Dr. Robert Ginsburg

Rosentiel School of Marine and Atmospheric Science, University of Miami

Review of work by the Atlantic Gulf Rapid Reef Assessment Program

Comments/Questions:

David Hess (USAID) – mentioned multiple causes of decline and return, but what is most important factor in seeing recovery? Is it a natural factor or something we can do?

Ginsburg - Recovery is a natural process, can't accelerate it, could transplant colonies.

Reducing the insults from human impact in coastal areas.

Howard Hankin (USDA) – Was there any connection between the swamp and the healthy reef.

Ginsburg – Don't know the water quality of the area, but perhaps there is an adaptation to the harsh environment.

Hankin (USDA) – perhaps the swamp is assimilating the excess nutrients and creating a more favorable area.

Status of the Coral Reefs at Johnston and Wake Atolls under Dept. of Defense Stewardship

Dr. Phil Lobel

Boston University Marine Program

Main effort is to inventory coral under navy control. underwater it really looks good. .

DoD is leaving and DoI will not be taking over management.

Comments/Questions:

Athline Clark (HI)- Is Navy developing protocols on invasive species and navy species?

Phil – Invasives are important to document to get a baseline

Gerry Davis (Guam) – Good possibilities of contacts to work together.

DoI - compliment DoD on their work in Pacific. Also have worked in Atlantic (Vieques), appreciative of this work. Agree that there are tremendous assets on Johnston and no final decisions on DoI role have been made.

Phil – appreciate, Johnston atoll is a national treasure.

Report from the Feb 24 Task Force Symposium

Miguel Lugo, NOAA

Alissa Barron, NOAA

Presented brief overview of the Education and Outreach and Science Panel presentations from Tues

Coral Reef Management in Australia : New Developments

Terry Done

Australian Institute of Marine Science

Comments/Questions:

Gerry Davis (Guam): What financial commitment is involved?

Terry: It is a voluntary program tied to "every Australian's love for the reef." It uses incentives instead of punishment.

Athline Clark (Hawaii): How much was protected before plan and how much is protected now?

Terry: 6% was protected (idea is protect what you can without angering people) now the reef is 33% protected.

Dept. of Interior: What do you mean by no-take? Commercial? Recreational? Other consumptive use?

Terry: Green zones are no-take, meaning nothing may be removed from the area through any method. There are yellow zones, which allow restricted recreational fishing.

Investigations of Compensatory Mitigation for Coral Reef Impacts in the U.S. Atlantic : Florida and the Caribbean

Cynthia Bohn

Report of the FWS study on compensatory mitigation for Army Corps of Engineers projects. This study was requested through Resolution 4 of the 8 th Coral Reef Task Force Meeting.

Comments/Questions:

Kacky Andrews (FL): The Local Action Strategy for Florida has identified Maritime Industry impacts as a priority threat. Why do only half of the projects require mitigation?

Cynthia: Many were pipeline projects, impact was considered minimal. Some times mitigation was requested, but not required. Some projects had the goal of avoidance, etc so mitigation was not required. Some sites have long term monitoring instead.

DISCUSSION/ACTION ON PROPOSALS

Resolution1: To move forward on on-going actions.

No discussion

Tim Keeney moved to adopt. No objections. Resolution was adopted.

Resolution 2: Proposal on International Leadership, Policy Work, and Management Support to Reduce Impacts on International Coral Reefs

Resolution contains a number of suggestions regarding international partnerships and meetings. It also recommends endorsement for US bid to host the 2008 Int'l Coral Reef Symposium.

Discussion:

Don Schredgardus.(DoD) – Int'l group should coordinate attendance, so that there is representation, but not everyone needs to attend.

Roger Griffis – each conf would have lead, not all expected to attend.

Dept. of Interior suggested changing item #6 from “assist” to “endorse”

Roger Griffis created alternative language

Dept. of Interior accepted new language

USAID strongly supports a bid for 2008 and for attendance at this year's meeting. USAID will continue to support involvement.

Athline Clark (HI) – How much will this cost?

Roger Griffis- the cost is still to be determined

Tim Keeney moved to adopt.

Other Discussion:

Gerry Davis (Guam): The water quality questions on Resolution 1, do these identify the local level as lead?

Roger Griffis – Local level will identify infrastructure needs. It should state “federal and other”, not local. We will correct the wording.

REPORTS FROM FEDERAL TASK FORCE MEMBERS**EPA**

Ben Grumbles

- Lessons on how to deal with these situations can be learned from wetlands restoration projects.
- the Atlantic/Caribbean workshop on Land-based Sources of Pollution will be held in San Juan , Puerto Rico on May 18th and 19th.
- EPA, in partnership with NOAA and the U.S. Geological Survey, is developing a workshop on Indicators of Pollution Stress for Coral Reefs to be held sometime in 2004.
- EPA, in partnership with NOAA and the state of Florida , has completed its ninth year of monitoring long-term status and trends for the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary under the Coral Reef Evaluation and Monitoring Project (CREMP).
- EPA appreciates the opportunity to be a part of this group.

NOAA

Tim Keeney

- NOAA will echo the comments on how pleased we are to work with the Task Force.
- NOAA will commit 1 million in capacity and specific project implementation in 2004 and looks forward to building more partnerships.
- White Water to Blue Water (WW2BW) plans are complete and the meeting is to be held the week of March 22.
- The President has requested 1.2 M to implement WW2BW.
- NOAA will be producing the 2004 *State of the Reefs* report.
- The National Invasive Species Council developed a cross-cut budget to identify common goals, measures, etc. They send this to the Council of Environmental Quality and the Office of Management and Budget as a more efficient way to budget. NOAA suggests that we do cross-cut budget as well. Group agreed.
- Thank you to President Remengesau from Palau for offering to host the 2005 meeting. Should the Task Force consider this? Group consented.

USDA

Howard Hankin

- USDA will make \$3M available this year through NFWF for conservation on private lands and that their grants program will be expanded to include the Pacific Basin . This is the 5 th year NRCS has worked with NFWF.
- the Director in the Caribbean will designate a USVI navigator for the Local Action Strategy.

Dept. of Justice

Eileen Sobeck

- Justice reported that criminal prosecutions regarding shipping of coral reef species were made. Over \$1million in coral had been take from Oahu to California .
- In December there was an indictment in Florida based on cruise ship pollution.
- DoJ is committed to helping with enforcement issues. There is already a fine on the company and this new one made individuals accountable.

USAID

David Hess

- USAID reported that the agency has increased its support to coral reef conservation through the Global Biodiversity Program, which is a partnership between USAID and six U.S.-based conservation organizations. The program addresses the most pressing threats to 17 species-rich land and seascapes around the world. The portion of the program dedicated to coral reef conservation has increased from 8% to 33% over the last year.
- USAID is also supporting excellent work in Mozambique on community-based coral reef protection. Involving local communities is critical to program success.

- USAID will actively participate in the upcoming White Water to Blue Water Conference in Miami and is organizing a plenary and two breakout sessions on governance and sustainable financing.
- USAID will continue to support coral reef and coastal programs to strengthen enforcement of protected areas, as well as to address critical issues in coral reef trade.

Dept. of Defense

Donald Schredgardus

- the DoD had completed marine resource assessments in areas in the Atlantic.
- DoD will add an environmental information management system to ships into a geographic based system, allowing ships to adjust action based on turtles, mammals, corals, etc.
- the U.S. Navy successfully removed 2 million gallons of oil from a naval vessel sunk off Ulithi Atoll during WWII.

NASA

Lawrence Friedl

- NASA announced research opportunities to participate in Earth Science Enterprise core research activities related to ocean and ice. Funding opportunities can be found at <http://www.earth.nasa.gov/> .
- NASA is holding a meeting in DC on April 14 th to 16 th to discuss satellite research ocean color.
- Earth Observations Summit will be held in July to kick off coordination of the 10 year plan for how countries will work together on this issues. contact NASA or visit <http://www.iwgo.ssc.nasa.gov/> if wish to influence what measurements are included.

Dept. of Interior

David P. Smith

- Thank you to all that attended the meeting
- Minerals Management Service has initiated a 3-year, \$1.5 million study of deep sea coral with USGS in the Gulf of Mexico .
- Thank you to the Wildlife Refuge system staff for the job that they do.
- Thanks to NOAA for meeting.

Closing Remarks

Tim Keeney