

Hafa Adai and good morning.

As always, it is a pleasure to be at the U.S. Coral Reef Task Force to discuss our shared commitment to protect the resources that we all rely on. I would also like to take a moment to thank Kacky Andrews and members of NOAA's Coral Reef Conservation Program for taking time to visit our home and learn more about our challenges firsthand. I hope you enjoyed your visit and had a chance to experience the hospitality of the people of Guam.

For Guam, the impending military buildup continues to be our main focus as we work to balance protection of our fragile island home and the needs of the military. I am pleased to report, however, that thanks in large part to the help of task force members, Guam has been making great strides in creating a mitigation strategy that will help us minimize damage and protect our resources for the long- term.

The U.S. Coral Reef Task Force has allowed small local government agencies to more effectively work with our federal partners to make sure our local resources are considered during the buildup process. While the goals of the task force have always included the improvement of federal-local relationships, the military buildup has highlighted just how important the task force is for Guam.

Recent collaborations include a new project at the Masso Reservoir in Piti, above one of Guam's marine preserves. This reforestation project has allowed us to leverage different sources of money and use the resources of a number of agencies to accomplish a "ridge to reef" project that improves upland areas to help protect the coral reefs in the preserve. The Department of Defense, local Department of Agriculture, NOAA and the local Coastal Zone Management Program, and Coral Reef Program are all involved in the work, which also includes participation from the community itself.

The Masso project is just one example of the need to look at our reefs from new perspectives. Rather than just managing fishing, we need to look at coastal development policies. Rather than just encouraging beachgoers to tread carefully around corals, we need to look at the impact of a thousand people entering our waters for recreation. Management of our reefs is a complex and difficult challenge that we must be prepared to approach from a number of different angles and across the region as illustrated by our collaborative initiative The Micronesia Challenge.

Guam is working to update its stormwater rules and regulations and to make the mitigation policies we are developing with DOD into a more broad-based application that will help us steer local government and private development in environmentally responsible directions. With the assistance of federal partners and neighbors in the region, we are looking to involve more people from more segments of the community in this important process.

Again, I would like to emphasize the importance of the task force itself in these efforts. Protection of the environment in general, and coral reefs in particular, cannot be the function of a single entity. Even the combined efforts of a group of agencies with similar mandates cannot achieve all we need – because this approach ignores the reality that the threats to our reefs are complex and diverse.

The CRTF has been an invaluable partner in this process on Guam, and if any changes need to be made as the task force grows over the years, I believe we should seek more active involvement from federal agencies not directly responsible for environmental mandates. The threats that are most difficult to understand – and even more so to effectively address, such as climate change – may be best handled with this collaborative approach.

The face of our island will be changing dramatically when the development and population growth associated with the buildup in a few years, and may change even more dramatically in future years as the effects of climate change manifest themselves. I am counting on the task force members to help us all meet these challenges effectively – so we can find the critical balance that will ensure our fragile environment is protected, while meeting our needs, the needs of DOD, those of the nation and across the globe.