

Final Decisions
U.S. Coral Reef Task Force Meeting
St. Thomas, U.S. Virgin Islands
October 27, 2006

The Following is a summary of decisions by the U.S. coral Reef Task force at its meeting, October 27, 2006 in Washington D.C.

A summary of the meeting and meeting materials (agendas, presentations, etc.) will be posted on the Task force web site (www.coralreef.gov). For information, please contact Beth Dieveney (beth.dieveney@noaa.gov) or roger Griffis (roger.b.griffis@noaa.gov; 301-713-2989x115).

Summary of Decisions

16.1: Establish a new Working Group on Cooperative Conservation

The U.S. Coral Reef Task Force will establish a new Working Group on Cooperative Conservation to help build public-private partnerships for coral reef conservation. Members are asked to provide names of representatives to the working group by December 1, 2006. The Group is tasked with reporting back to the Task Force at the next Task Force meeting on:

- a. the numbers and types of potential non-governmental partners that benefit from healthy coral reefs and therefore should be interested in joining coral reef conservation efforts;
- b. ways in which such partners could be persuaded to join in or contribute to coral reef conservation efforts, including Local Action Strategies; and
- c. how the Task Force can best pursue a systematic approach to cooperative conservation, with the aim of securing additional partners and resources for coral reef conservation and Local Action Strategies.

16.2: Participate in preparing report “The State of Coral Reef Ecosystems of the United States and Freely Associated States”

The U.S. Coral Reef Task Force agrees to support development and production of “The State of Coral Reef Ecosystems of the United States and Freely Associated States: 2008” by:

- a. identifying and directing appropriate personnel to participate in jurisdictional writing teams by Dec 1, 2006;
- b. contributing data and information for use in jurisdiction and national assessments;
- c. assisting in the development and review of the final report.

16.3: Complete Progress Report on Implementation of the U.S. National Coral Reef Action Strategy 2004 - 2006

The U.S. Coral Reef Task Force endorses plans to complete a progress report in 2007 on implementation of the U.S. National Coral Reef Action Strategy (2004 – 2006). Task Force members commit to:

- a. identifying representatives to serve on the steering team by December 1, 2006;
- b. participating and assisting in collection of accomplishments and other required information;
- c. preparing and reviewing drafts; and
- d. production of the final report for distribution to the U.S. Congress and others as required by the Coral Reef Conservation Act.

16.4: Support planning and implementation of the 2008 International Year of the Reef:

The U.S. Coral Reef Task Force:

- a. Reaffirms its support and endorsement of the 2008 International Year of the Reef;
- b. Encourages its members to actively participate in the IYOR Working Group through their designated IYOR POC, and to consider in detail the role of their agency or jurisdiction in IYOR;
- c. Encourages its members to support IYOR through financial contributions (consistent with legal authorities), staff time, and/or content development for coral reef related events, announcements, products and initiatives for 2008;
- d. Requests that its members report on their initial levels of support for IYOR prior to the Spring 2007 CRTF meeting; and
- e. Requests that the Working Group present a IYOR plan of action prior to the Spring 2007 CRTF meeting.

16.5: Support planning and implementation of the 2008 International Coral Reef Symposium:

The U.S. Coral Reef Task Force:

- a. Reaffirms its support and endorsement of the 2008 International Coral Reef Symposium;
- b. Requests members to consider participation and funding (consistent with legal authorities) to help support development and implementation of the U.S.-hosted symposium.

16.6: Request that the Coral Disease and Health Consortium (CDHC) develop and coordinate strategies to address coral disease issues.

The U.S. Coral Reef Task Force requests that Coral Disease and Health Consortium serve as a Task Force Working Group to organize and coordinate scientific resources to address coral health and disease issues and link them to coral reef management (such as Local Action

Strategies), with emphasis on diagnostics, etiology, outbreak investigations, training, and responses.

The Steering Committee is tasked with preparing proposal for creation of a Center to organize and coordinate scientific resources to address and respond to coral health and disease issues.

16.7: Establish new working group to coordinate actions regarding tools for responding to major injury events to coral reef habitats.

The U.S. Coral Reef Task Force will establish a new working group to coordinate efforts to improve tools and capacity for responding to major injury events to coral reefs habitats. Task Force members will provide names/contact information for representatives to this working group by December 1, 2006. The working group is tasked with:

1. Facilitating the development of a coral reef toolbox that gathers lessons learned, defines training needs and serves as a clearinghouse for information such as BMPs and points of contact;
2. Working with the U.S. Coast Guard to consider development of a interagency coral team in appropriate districts within their Regional Response Plan Operations and Planning sections to focus on coral reefs. (Action: USCG coordinate response)
3. Developing proposals for the Task Force to sponsor broadened injury workshops to include governments, institutions, and industry to further define practices, needs, and training required to effectively address injury events on coral reefs;
4. Assessing gaps in authority and capacity to respond to injury events, and proposals for how to address these gaps;
5. Assessing the legal authority and training needs associated with injury events in coastal waters in each jurisdiction;
6. Determining what assistance can be provided to the Freely Associated States in a major coral reef injury event if assistance is requested.
7. Working with USEPA, USFWS, NMFS, ACOE and jurisdictions to develop lists of potential mitigation sites in coordination with interagency coral reef mitigation working groups (Guam has done this already and can be used as a template);
8. Continuing efforts with FEMA and Stafford Act authority to clarify how to address coral reef injury events associated with storms and other natural disasters; and
9. Reporting to the Task Force on these items within one year.

16.8: Support development and implementation of response plans to coral bleaching

The U.S. Coral Reef Task Force reiterates its support for development of Local Action Strategies and other tools and plans to minimize the impacts of coral bleaching and climate change on coral reef ecosystems. The Task Force:

- a. endorses the use of “A Reef Manager’s Guide to Coral Bleaching” and other tools to develop plans for responding to coral bleaching and building reef resilience working with U.S. and international partners;

- b. encourages members to support distribution, training, use and testing of the Reef Manager's Guide;
- c. tasks the Steering Committee with developing review and evaluation of the statement submitted by American Samoa Governor Togiola Tulafono on "Global Climate Change" consistent with national policy and protocols;
- d. Steering Committee to report to the Task Force on this item at the next Task Force meeting.

16.10: Support of Recommendations from the Status of USVI Coral Reef Ecosystem Workshop

The Government of the U.S. Virgin Islands, through the Department of Planning and Natural Resources/Division of Coastal Zone Management, will review and begin implementing as appropriate the recommendations provided by the workshop on Status of USVI Coral Reef Ecosystem held during the October 2006 meeting of the U.S. Coral Reef Task Force in USVI.

Members of the U.S. Coral Reef Task Force agree to support the Government of the Virgin Islands in the review, analysis, development and implement of responses to the recommendations from the workshop.

The Government of the U.S. Virgin Islands will coordinate a report detailing progress on this task to the U.S. Coral Reef Task Force at its next meeting.

Follow-up items for Task Force Steering Committee:

The U.S. Coral Reef Task Force tasks the Steering Committee with follow-up on the following topics:

- a. Explore the utility of additional assistance and training for coral reef protected area managers in the Caribbean;
- b. Review and develop responses to recommendations from the All Islands Committee;
- c. Complete progress report on the Local Action Strategy initiative;
- d. Finalize new guidance for use in evaluating and implementing phase 2 of Local Action Strategies;
- e. Continue work on existing action items.
- f. Plan two 2007 Task Force meetings, one in Washington, D.C. (target = March) and one in American Samoa (fall tbd).