The Status US Virgin Islands Coral Reef Ecosystems Workshop Update

Paige Rothenberger
Marine Resource Ecologist
VI Dept. of Planning & Natural Resources
Division of Coastal Zone Management
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USVI Coral Reefs Workshop Update

- Workshop Goals & Objectives
- Workshop Content
- Workshop Outcomes
- USVI Issues
- Recommendations
Status of USVI Coral Reefs Session

• Target Audience
  – Local policy and decision makers

• Goals
  – Examine state of USVI coral reefs
  – Explore state of knowledge, current challenges, possible solutions and local initiatives
  – Capitalize on the opportunity to highlight territorial issues while federal and local policy makers are at the table
Status of USVI Coral Reefs Session

• Objectives
  – Engage in a solution-oriented discussion about the state of USVI coral reef ecosystems
  – Foster discussion on ecological and management issues facing Caribbean coral reef ecosystems
Status of USVI Coral Reefs Session

USVI Coral Reefs: Issues, Status and Solutions

• Threats to Reefs

• Status of Reefs

• Identifying Needs & Solutions
USVI Coral Reefs: Issues, Status and Solutions

- Threats to Reefs
- Status of Reefs
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Status of USVI Coral Reefs Session

USVI Coral Reefs: Issues, Status and Solutions

- Threats to Reefs
- Status of Reefs
- Identifying Needs & Solutions

Percentage of USVI Conservation Effort

USVI Coral Reef Conservation

- Public Awareness & Volunteerism, 24%
- Marine Protected Area Development, 0%
- Land Conservation acquisition & advocacy, 4%
- Marine Resource Research & Monitoring, 15%
- Natural Resource Technical Advice, 16%
- Marine Resource Management, 7%
- Point and Non-Point Source Pollution, 17%
- Habitat restoration or enhancement, 3%
- Monitoring key programs/projects, 2%
- Enforcement, 5%
Status of USVI Coral Reefs Session

USVI Marine Protected Areas: History, Status and Future

- Understanding MPAs
- MPAs in the USVI
- Are MPAs a Good Strategy for Protecting USVI Coral Reef Resources?

MPA Design Questions
- Why use MPA option? – primary management objective
- What is the resource being managed?
- Protection from what?
- Management for whom?
- Management by whom?
- Will it work?
Status of USVI Coral Reefs Session

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Different Players
- NOAA/NMFS - CFMC
- National Park Service

Big Questions (Roles as MPAs)
- Big/diverse enough to be effective?
- What are the effects of protection within VICR/BUIS? — need local data to satisfy local concerns
- What are the ecological relationships between park units (VIIS/VICR and BUIS/EEMP)? — NOAA, et al starting fish movement study
- What are the benefits of no-take (VICR) to partial-take (VIIS)?
- What are the benefits of no-take (VICR/BUIS) to adjacent waters?

All these questions are being worked on by NPS, NOAA and university researchers.

Types of Territorial MPAs
- Fisheries Closures
- Marine Reserves & Wildlife Sanctuaries
- Areas of Particular Concern (APCs)
- Marine Parks

Challenges to Effectiveness of Territorial MPAs
- Management of various designated areas within multiple governmental divisions
- Mgmt of MRWS not assigned to any particular Division
- Division of Environmental Enforcement authorized enforcement agency for all of DPNR
- Division of Fish & Wildlife operating with very limited support
- Few formally adopted management plans
- Inadequate (nonspecific) goals/objectives for many areas
- Data needs (baseline and continued monitoring)
- Effectiveness evaluations for areas needed
- Adaptive management not realized
- Continued decline of resources
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Did We Achieve the Workshop Goals & Objectives?

- Yes and No
- Generated discussion
- Whole other set of unforeseen issues arose
- Strategies to evaluate management effort were not addressed sufficiently
- Instead perception of inadequate management was discussed
Management Effectiveness

- Current management strategies insufficient
- Disconnect between managers and scientists
- Insufficient understanding of economic value of reefs
Stakeholder Engagement

- Inability to get appropriate messages out to stakeholders
- Need for consistent and meaningful stakeholder engagement
- Need to engage non-traditional stakeholders
Leadership Continuity

- Every 4 years staff changes
- Compromised thread of continuity & institutional memory
- Risk abandoning processes that work
- Risk stalling program progress
Recommendations

- Development of a **Coral strategy for USVI**
  - Interdisciplinary and comprehensive – include research, community engagement, management, enforcement
  - Need for actual funded position(s)
  - Need for facilitation to begin the development of strategy
  - Strategy would address current efforts, vision, gaps
    - VI coral list
    - VI CRAB (technical advisory board/group) formalized
    - Some framework already exists (VINE, VICCC, VI EPSCoR – ed/out, mechanism in place to distribute message)
Recommendations

- Training/Assistance in conducting effectiveness assessments
- Replicate this workshop for decision makers
Acknowledgements

- Workshop co-coordinators
- Workshop presenters and moderator
- NOAA
- DPNR, CZM
- colleagues
Thank You