



Hafa adai, Talofa, Aloha, Hola, and Hello,

It is my great pleasure, on behalf of the U.S. All Islands Coral Reef Committee (AIC) to present this report on our activities and accomplishments since we last met in Washington D.C. in February 2008.

The Committee welcomes Dr. Bob Nishimoto as the new point of contact for Hawai'i and Chantal Collier, point of contact for Florida, as the new Vice Chair. We thank Aida Rosario, point of contact for Puerto Rico for her dedicated service to the AIC as the outgoing Vice Chair.

We would also like to welcome Kacky Andrews in her new role as NOAA's Coral Division Chief and look forward to working with her to implement the Coral Reef Conservation Program's Roadmap for the Future. The Committee also recognizes the outstanding support that Bill Millhouser has provided to the Committee and the USCRTF over the last 10 years.

AIC Workshop on Increasing Science in the management of Coral Reef Ecosystems

The AIC recognizes the need for increased coordination and communication among resource managers, policy makers and scientists who are conducting coral reef monitoring, mapping and research activities in US states, territories, commonwealths, and freely associated states.

Last Friday, immediately preceding the USCRTF meetings, the All Islands Committee took the opportunity to hold a workshop with 28 coral reef managers and scientists to discuss ideas, needs, responsibilities and opportunities for enhanced cooperation and coordination.

The objective of the workshop was to provide jurisdiction resource managers with an opportunity to articulate the management questions they want answered through monitoring, mapping and research, and to provide scientists with an opportunity to identify monitoring activities that could assist in answering priority management questions.

As a result, workshop participants agreed that there is a need to:

- Encourage increased funding for locally based management driven research
- Seek broader funding opportunities using the CRCP funding as a catalyst. Move to site based management and science
- Expand the AIC Advisory committee to have representation from the Atlantic/Caribbean region
- Develop a science advisory committee for the USCRTF
- Submit jurisdictions' science needs to USCRTF members
- Establish a venue such as a peer reviewed, web-based and print journal for coral reef management as a clearinghouse for management based science
- Identify long-term management goals and science needs for the next 10 years
- Establish mechanisms for enhanced communication and cooperation between scientists and managers including activities such as having managers "adopt a scientist" in jurisdictions and each region. Scientists should "adopt a manager" to assist their work on coral reef issues.
- Encourage NOAA laboratories to work more effectively with the jurisdictions.
- Develop a process to translate management questions into science questions.
- Work with universities to encourage their faculty to provide scientific support to management and policy endeavors including participation in public hearings, committees, and community-based efforts by accepting such activities as valuable in the promotion and tenure process.

The workshop was a good start to this renewed dialogue, and highlighted the need to continue the dialogue between resource managers and scientists by holding regular meetings prior to future USCRTF meetings.

NOAA/CRCP Roadmap

The Committee wishes to thank Kacky Andrews for presenting NOAA's Coral Reef Conservation Program's new Roadmap to us at our meeting on Saturday. We fully support the Roadmap's primary objective: "to address strategic coral reef management needs" and appreciate the transparency in which it was developed.

The roadmap calls for the establishment of three advisory panels to address the three priority threats to coral reefs: fishing impacts, land based sources of pollution and climate change. Committee members will be nominating appropriate representatives from their jurisdictions to serve on these panels.

We also appreciate David Kennedy's commitment to the AIC and the time he set aside to meet with us this week.

USCRTF Framework for Action

The AIC supports the USCRTF Framework for Action and looks forward to a report back on implementation of the framework at our next meeting in the spring.

Regional Initiatives

The Committee continues to support the Micronesia Challenge and welcomes the Two Samoa's Initiative for environmental collaboration between American Samoa and the independent state of Samoa.

Water Quality Resolutions

We are pleased to report that as a result of our visits to EPA and USDA in February, these agencies and USGS have provided support for some of Florida's LBSP LAS projects. There are three projects that these agencies are directly funding beginning in spring 2008 are:

- NOAA and EPA funded the Florida LAS Port Everglades Inlet Study to determine the flux of pollutants exiting the inlet and the next flux of pollutants to the reef communities.
- EPA and USGS partnered to conduct the Florida LAS Groundwater Study to quantify the flux and amount of pollutants transported to the reef communities by groundwater.
- EPA funded the Florida LAS Enterovirus study to link land-based pollution in coastal water by using human enteroviruses as an indicator of fecal contamination.

In the Caribbean, the Coral Bay Community Council (CBCC), a nonprofit group in the Coral Bay area of St. John, U.S. Virgin Islands, has received \$300,000.00 through a cooperative agreement under EPA's Community Action for a Renewed Environment (CARE) program to implement priority tasks of the Coral Bay Watershed Management Plan. The primary focus will be to expand efforts to stop sediment and storm water pollution from entering Coral Bay, improve local solid waste management and heighten awareness about other toxic pollution issues affecting the community.

Jurisdictions will be collaborating with regional EPA officials to participate in better defining management needs to be used as a guidance for EPA to conduct science on water quality science needs for watershed management.

We request additional support from EPA and USGS on the water quality resolutions for all AIC jurisdictions, and encourage other federal partners to provide support as well.

Injury Response Tools

The fall 2006 Task Force meeting convened a workshop on injury response and coral reef mitigation. In a follow-up to that effort significant advancement has been achieved in the Federal capability in addressing these issues.

The AIC would like to encourage federal partners to developing training opportunities to build local capacity to conduct data collection and analysis to use habitat equivalency analysis (HEA) as a tool.

Additionally, these advances in approach have determined that more locally based science is needed to accurately apply the HEA tool. The science gaps need to be defined so opportunities through LAS initiatives or other alternatives can be used to target this information.

Task Force Resolution on Climate Change

The AIC is made up of the U.S. and Freely Associated jurisdictions, with direct responsibility for the majority of U.S. affiliated coral reefs. In all that we do, our primary considerations must be for our coral reefs and the people who depend on these precious resources economically, ecologically and culturally. The AIC has always been known for its candor, and in light of the present state of coral reefs, we would be irresponsible if we did not speak as one voice in a straightforward manner.

The 11th International Coral Reef Symposium was held last month in Ft. Lauderdale, Florida, with over 3,500 attendees and a combine 2,632 oral and poster presentations summarizing the most up-to-date scientific findings and management issues. Key findings summarized by the synthesis panel include:

- Coral cover in many locations remains low and is not recovering; This is especially true in areas that have experienced severe bleaching tied to increased seawater temperatures.
- Ocean acidification and ocean warming can be thought of as the 'evil twins' of climate change. It has been suggested that to save reefs, we cannot > 450 ppm CO₂ in seawater; At the present rate of CO₂ emissions we have 8-10 years to turn things around.
- ocean acidification is now shown to reduce the ability of coral larvae and coralline algae to successfully settle and grow, which will affect the ability of degraded reefs to recover.

For those who carry a photo in their wallet or purse of an oil company executive, they can be at ease that all is well. If, on the other hand, your wallet, office and home photos are of children and grand children, you have much to be concerned

about. Global warming and ocean acidification tied to increases in atmospheric CO₂ are real phenomena that are already affecting coral reefs, which if not addressed IMMEDIATELY and adequately, will clearly result in the loss of these precious resources for future generations. As the present U.S. Executive administration comes to a close, all of you sitting at the head table are likely in your legacy phase as well. How will you judge your successes, failures and bequests to your kids and grandchildren?

We, the members of the AIC, share in our collective responsibility and urge all of you to consider how you can affect the following three policy requests:

1. Move forward on alternate energy investments (wind, solar, geothermal, and bioenergy) and establish improved Corporate Average Fuel Economy (CAFÉ) requirements for vehicles.
2. Revise EIA/EIS regulations under NEPA to require a marine component to activities deemed to affect watersheds adjacent to coral reefs, and removed the conflicts-of-interest between those wishing to alter ecosystems and the environmental consultants they employ, with standards for consultants and sanctions against those providing inaccurate information and interpretations.
3. Fulfill the U.S. Coral Reef Task Force goal of 20% of U.S. and U.S. affiliated coral reefs placed under fisheries protection by the year 2010.

The AIC members stand ready to do our part at the local level, and we encourage you to do all you can at the national level.

The Committee reaffirms Governor Togiola's call for action to address the threat of climate change to coral reefs and requests the USCRTF to move forward to implement the resolution.

We acknowledge the need to address this issue by supporting a range of efforts, including strategies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions that significantly contribute to climate change and ocean acidification. We again request that the Task Force amend the National Action Strategy to reflect the Committee's concerns.

Follow up on previous recommendations from the AIC Chair's report

The Committee is concerned that there is little follow up on recommendations from previous reports by the AIC Chair. We find that we still have not had responses to some of these recommendations.

In conclusion, the Committee recommends the following actions by the U.S. Coral Reef Task Force:

- Develop a common goal, vision statement and action plan for the USCRTF and seek commitment from members for a renewed call to action by February 2009;
- Encourage more active engagement by ALL federal agencies in the implementation of each jurisdiction's coral reef management priorities and in the development of their own coral reef conservation implementation plans;
- Call upon individual federal agencies to take action on AIC priorities
- Request the co-chairs to direct appropriate members to provide timely response letters to the AIC chair's report before our next meeting.

Finally, we would like to thank Tim Keeney for his outstanding leadership as Co-Chair of the USCRTF and support of the AIC and we wish him well in his future endeavors.

Evangeline Lujan, Chair