

8/15/18

## **Resolution 40-1: Coral Reef Restoration Urgent Action**

WHEREAS, President Clinton issued (1998) Executive Order #13089 for the Protection of Coral Reefs mandates that the duties of the U.S. Coral Reef Task Force (USCRTF) include “...Conservation, Mitigation, and Restoration. The Task Force, in cooperation with State, territorial, commonwealth, and local government agencies, nongovernmental organizations, the scientific community and commercial interests, shall develop, recommend, and seek or secure implementation of measures necessary to reduce and mitigate coral reef ecosystem degradation and to restore damaged coral reefs,” and;

WHEREAS, Executive Order #13089, Sec 3, requires that “...Federal agencies whose actions affect U.S. coral reef ecosystems, shall, subject to the availability of appropriations, provide for implementation of measures needed to research, monitor, manage, and restore affected ecosystems, including, but not limited to, measures reducing impacts from pollution, sedimentation, and fishing,” and;

WHEREAS, according to its Charter, the USCRTF seeks to use existing agency programs, statutory authorities, competencies and capabilities to promote coral reef conservation consistent with U.S. law and treaty obligations, and;

WHEREAS, healthy coral reefs are among the most biologically diverse, culturally important, and economically valuable ecosystems on Earth, and;

WHEREAS, coral reefs worldwide provide an estimated \$36 billion annually in economic value via tourism, and when including food production and coastal and critical infrastructure protection, global services are estimated at \$172 billion per year. In the US, the estimated economic value of coral reefs is \$3.42 billion annually, not including shoreline protection and hazard reduction values.

WHEREAS, coral reef health globally has been dramatically declining due to various stressors including accelerated ocean warming and changing ocean chemistry, sedimentation, pollution, increased occurrence of disease, and unsustainable fishing practices. Thus, it is imperative to take actions to identify and prioritize the reduction of local stressors such as sedimentation, pollution, and unsustainable fishing, in coordination with strategies to increase resilience across coral reef ecosystems.

WHEREAS, the USCRTF recognizes the need for urgent economic and effective action to address the state of coral reef management practices and supporting science, and to reduce threats to coral reef ecosystem condition to make reefs more resilient in the face of climate change and ocean acidification, increased disease outbreaks, and other stressors. Science has demonstrated that reef communities can trend towards recovery when they are protected and stressors reduced.

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that

The USCRTF acknowledges it must take immediate action to help respond to these threats and, in turn, seek to sustain coral reef ecosystems and the human communities that depend upon them by increasing capacity to improve coral reef ecosystem resilience through various place-based efforts including coral restoration. As such, the USCRTF will act as a leading intergovernmental body contributing to fulfill the intent of this resolution, and in accordance, will create a **Restoration and Intervention Working Group**. Adoption and effective implementation of this resolution will require the expertise of and capacity from across the USCRTF membership and other non-governmental, academic and private partners, in order to successfully increase coral reef resilience at a national level.

The USCRTF Restoration and Intervention Working Group is charged with the following responsibilities:

- a. Provide support and guidance for locally-driven implementation strategies developed by each jurisdiction for coral resilience that include development of coral nurseries for resilient coral colonies of prioritized reef-building species.
- b. Develop a strategy that identifies and prioritizes actions to improve coral reef restoration and propagation actions to improve resilience as well as longer-term strategies. These strategies should be based upon the best available science, including identification and propagation of thermal-, disease-, and/or pollution-resistant coral species, live-coral cultivation facilities, and out-planting designed to recover ecosystem function. Additionally, a comprehensive monitoring and evaluation plan should be developed, which includes a determination of science that is sufficiently robust and replicable to develop effective and economic measures to improve resilience, and tests to determine their efficacy and efficiency.
- c. Identify, through existing programs and within existing authorities, ways to support this resolution, via technical, financial, or other support.
- d. Identify and explore through authorities and programs, and partnerships across federal and state governments, as well as other non-governmental, academic and private partners, alternative pathways for additional support.
- e. Support coordination on priority issues through place-based partnerships, such as the Watershed Partnership Initiative, and via other active support networks, like the Climate Change Working Group.
- f. Develop a list of actions with timelines and milestones to ensure action and measurable progress for the work group for the next 5 years. The Action Plan will be submitted for approval by the working group to the Task Force during the 41<sup>st</sup> U.S. Coral Reef Task Force meeting in February 2019.