

United States Coral Reef Task Force

CHARTER

1. AUTHORIZATION

The United States Coral Reef Task Force (Task Force) was established by Executive Order 13089 on June 11, 1998 (63 Fed. Reg. 32701).

2. OVERVIEW

The U.S. Coral Reef Task Force is an interagency body that works to develop and implement comprehensive, multi-disciplinary, and coordinated approaches to preserve and protect U.S. coral reef ecosystems, and encourage sound coral reef conservation practices globally. The Task Force seeks to use existing agency programs, statutory authorities, competencies, and capabilities to promote coral reef conservation consistent with U.S. law and treaty obligations. The Task Force functions as a clearinghouse and coordinating mechanism for Federal, State, and territorial agencies involved in coral reef ecosystem protection and management efforts. The Task Force also advises members concerning the impact of their actions and programs upon coral reefs, and encourages cooperation and partnerships to conserve coral reef ecosystems worldwide.

3. DUTIES

Under Section 4 of Executive Order 13089 (Order), the Task Force is charged with:

- overseeing implementation of the policy and agency responsibilities set forth in the Order,
- guiding and supporting activities under the U.S. Coral Reef Initiative ("CRI"), and
- working in cooperation with State, territorial, commonwealth, and local government agencies, nongovernmental organizations, the scientific community, and commercial interests.

The Task Force is also charged with specific responsibilities listed in Section 5 of the Order including:

(a) Coral Reef Mapping and Monitoring. The Task Force, in cooperation with State, territory, commonwealth, and local government partners, shall coordinate a comprehensive program to map and monitor U.S. coral reefs. Such programs shall include, but not be limited to, territories and commonwealths, special marine protected areas such as National Marine Sanctuaries, National Estuarine Research Reserves, National Parks, National Wildlife Refuges, and other entities having significant coral reef resources. To the extent feasible, remote sensing capabilities shall be developed and applied to this program and local communities should be engaged in the design and conduct of programs.

(b) Research. The Task Force shall develop and implement, with the scientific community, research aimed at identifying the major causes and consequences of degradation of coral reef ecosystems. This research shall include fundamental scientific investigation to provide a sound framework for the restoration and conservation of coral

reef ecosystems worldwide. To the extent feasible, existing and planned environmental monitoring and mapping programs should be linked with scientific research activities. The implementation of the Executive Order is not intended to interfere with the normal conduct of scientific studies on coral reef ecosystems.

(c) 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. These measures shall include solutions to problems such as land-based sources of water pollution, sedimentation, detrimental alteration of salinity or temperature, over-fishing, over-use, collection of coral reef species, and direct destruction caused by activities such as recreational and commercial vessel traffic and treasure salvage. In developing these measures, the Task Force shall review existing legislation to determine whether additional legislation is necessary to complement the policy objectives of this order and shall recommend such legislation if appropriate. The Task Force shall further evaluate existing navigational aids, including charts, maps, day markers, and beacons to determine if the designation of the location of specific coral reefs should be enhanced through the use, revision, or improvement of such aids.

(d) International Cooperation. The Secretary of State and the Administrator of the Agency for International Development, in cooperation with other members of the Coral Reef Task Force and drawing upon their expertise, shall assess the U.S. role in international trade and protection of coral reef species and implement appropriate strategies and actions to promote conservation and sustainable use of coral reef resources worldwide. Such actions shall include expanded collaboration with other International Coral Reef Initiative ("ICRI") partners, especially governments, to implement the ICRI through its Framework for Action and the Global Coral Reef Monitoring Network at regional, national, and local levels.

4. IMPLEMENTATION.

The Task Force may -

- (a) Establish working groups as necessary to assist in its duties consistent with all relevant authorities.
- (b) Establish a process to fulfill its oversight responsibilities, as outlined in the Executive Order, consistent with all relevant authorities (see Task Force Oversight Policy).
- (c) Receive from each member of the Task Force the member's Coral Reef Protection Implementation Plan and annual reports, as outlined in the Task Force Oversight Policy.
- (d) Receive from each member a list of actions to address the policy in the Executive Order that states, "to the extent permitted by law, ensure that any actions [Federal agencies] authorize, fund, or carry out will not degrade the conditions of [coral reef] ecosystems" and to implement the National Action Plan.

(e) Produce an annual Task Force progress report that consolidates and highlights recent Task Force and member actions on coral reef conservation issues.

(f) Make above mentioned plans and updates, as well as other Task Force documents, available to the public via the Task Force website. Individual member Implementation Plans, updates, and annual reports shall only be posted on the Task Force website with the expressed authorization of the member.

(g) Upon request, assist member and non-member agencies in fulfilling individual agency requirements relating to coral reef conservation.

The Task Force will periodically update its National Action Plan to ensure that this document remains relevant and useful for guiding U.S. policies regarding coral reef resources.

5. MEMBERSHIP.

(a) The Executive Order states that the Secretary of the Interior and the Secretary of Commerce, through the Administrator of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, shall co-chair the U.S. Coral Reef Task Force, whose members shall include, but not be limited to:

1. The Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency
2. The Attorney General
3. The Secretary of the Interior
4. The Secretary of Agriculture
5. The Secretary of Commerce
6. The Secretary of Defense *
7. The Secretary of State
8. The Secretary of Transportation
9. The Director of the National Science Foundation
10. The Administrator of the Agency for International Development
11. The Administrator of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration

* The Army Corps of Engineers is a subset of the Department of Defense and has additional non-voting membership to the Task Force.

(b) The Task Force has added the following members:

12. The Governor of American Samoa
13. The Governor of Florida
14. The Governor of Guam
15. The Governor of Hawaii
16. The Governor of the Northern Mariana Islands
17. The Governor of Puerto Rico
18. The Governor of the U.S. Virgin Islands

(c) Due to the significance of their coral reef resources, expertise in traditional marine resource management, and their unique relationship with the United States, the Presidents of the following nations are non-voting members of the Task Force:

19. The Republic of Palau
20. The Federated States of Micronesia
21. The Republic of the Marshall Islands

(d) The head of any other government agency or other government entity designated by the Task Force may be added to the Task Force.

(e) There is no time limit for the term of any member. A person's membership shall terminate after leaving the office from which that member was appointed or designated. Any of the officials listed above may, at any time, designate an appropriate substitute to serve on behalf of the member.

6. ADMINISTRATION.

(a) Meetings

- i. The Task Force meets at least once annually. Formal meetings of the Task Force shall be open to the public consistent with applicable authorities. Meeting agendas shall provide time for oral public comment, and the public shall also have an opportunity to submit written comments.
- ii. Any Task Force member, combination of members, or working group chair may submit proposals for Task Force action to the co-chairs for Task Force discussion and consideration. Proposals must be submitted at least 30 days prior to formal Task Force meetings.
- iii. Materials for Task Force meetings should be made available to the public, via the Task Force website, prior to the meeting. Meeting summaries will also be available to the public via the Task Force website.

(b) Decisions

- i. The Task Force shall use a consensus-based process to make decisions.

(c) Organization

The current organization of the Task Force is listed below. This structure may be changed by the Task Force to fulfill its mission.

- i. i. Steering Committee - The Steering Committee is comprised of at least one representative from each Task Force member and the Chairs of the Working Groups. The Steering Committee shall be co-chaired by representatives of the Departments of Commerce and the Interior. The function of the Steering Committee is to oversee fulfillment of Task Force duties and be the primary work force for the Task Force. The Steering Committee works closely with the Task Force Working Groups and agency staff to fulfill a variety of duties as assigned by the Task Force including:
 - (A) Coordinating the submission of Coral Reef Protection Implementation Plans by Task Force members;

(B) Coordinating joint planning and development of cross-cutting budget initiatives on coral reef conservation; (C) Reviewing existing legislation to determine whether additional legislation is necessary to complement the policy objectives of the Order;

(D) Coordinating the annual submission of annual agency reports;

(E) Coordinating the process for the public inquiry about, and agency response to, issues or concerns relating to Federal agency actions and coral reef protection.

(F) Working with the Council on Environmental Quality, assist members and other interested entities, when requested by the member or entity, to develop guidance for the inclusion of coral reef protection in environmental documents prepared under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and Executive Order 12114.

(G) Developing and implementing a comprehensive outreach and education strategy for the Task Force.

(H) Implementing specific actions at the regional, State, territorial and local levels to strengthen the cohesive national strategy for coral reef conservation.

- ii. Working Groups - Working Groups are established to develop, coordinate and oversee implementation of the U.S. National Action Plan to Conserve Coral Reefs and other duties of the Task Force. Working groups consist of member staff with expertise in the designated area. Working groups may collect information from a variety of government and non-government sources, and engage a broad variety of stakeholders as they develop coral reef conservation strategies.

The Task Force formed six Working Groups addressing specific theme areas:

- Ecosystem, Science and Conservation
 - Coastal Uses
 - Water & Air Quality
 - Mapping and Information
 - International
 - Outreach and Education.
- iii. All Islands Coral Reef Initiative Coordinating Committee - The All Islands Coral Reef Initiative Coordinating Committee is a team of coral reef points of contact from island State and territorial governments. This group has a long history of collaborative work on local and regional efforts to protect coral reef ecosystems.

- The Task Force and its subgroups shall work closely with the All Islands Coral Reef Initiative Coordinating Committee to fulfill their missions.
- iv. Task Force Interagency Administrative Staff - The Task Force may establish a small, interagency staff responsible for the administrative aspects of coordinating the shared Federal agency tasks of the Executive Order and tracking implementation of Task Force recommendations.

7. TERMINATION. The Task Force shall continue to exist only for so long as it is authorized by Executive Order or other relevant authorities.

Unanimously adopted by the U.S. Coral Reef Task Force, December 5, 2001.