

DECISION HIGHLIGHTS
U.S. Coral Reef Task Force Meeting
February 24-25, 2004
Washington, DC

On February 24 and 25, 2004 NOAA hosted the eleventh meeting of the United States Coral Reef Task Force in Washington , DC . The first day of the meeting included presentations on three important topics: the role of outreach and education in coral reef conservation, efforts to address the effects of land-based pollution on coral reefs, and efforts to address the effects of climate change on coral reef ecosystems. During the second day, the Task Force heard reports from their members and the public on the present state of US coral reef conservation and made several decisions, which are highlighted below. For a more detailed account of the proceedings, please see the meeting summary on the Task Force website.

1. TASK FORCE AGREES TO CONTINUE ACTION ON EXISTING INITIATIVES

The Task Force reviewed progress to date on the seven resolutions and other action items from the 10th US Coral Reef Task Force Meeting in Guam and Saipan and agreed to continue implementing these initiatives. These continuing actions include:

- major action on Local Action Strategy implementation;
- progress on the Pacific Water Quality Resolution, including creating a subcommittee to address Water Quality issues; and
- ongoing efforts to strengthen Task Force outreach and education efforts.

2. TASK FORCE AGREES TO ASSIST WITH PROGRESS REPORT TO CONGRESS

Resolution 1 : Progress Report on Implementation of the National Coral Reef Action Strategy.

During the meeting, the Task Force adopted a resolution directing the Task Force members to fully assist and participate in the development and production of an effectiveness report on all activities undertaken to implement the National Action Strategy. This report, mandated in the Coral Reef Conservation Act of 2000, will evaluate the implementation of the National Coral Reef Action Strategy and assist the Task Force in reevaluating the strategy.

3. TASK FORCE ADOPTS RESOLUTION FOR CONTINUED INTERNATIONAL LEADERSHIP

Resolution 2: Proposal on International Leadership, Policy Work, and Management Support to Reduce Impacts on International Coral Reefs

In response to a presentation by the International Working Group, the Task Force adopted a resolution encouraging the Task Force to participate in international forum and engage other countries on coral reef conservation. Specifically, the resolution calls for the Task Force to:

- engage other nations on the significance of international trade in reef conservation
- assist exporting countries in developing sustainable management plans
- attend and support the upcoming White Water to Blue Water Conference (March 21-26, 2004)
- attend and support the 10th International Coral Reef Symposium (June 28-July 2, 2004)
- actively participate in the 2nd Global Conference on Small Island Developing States (Sept. 2004)
- endorse preparation and submission of a proposal for the US to host the 11th International Coral Reef Symposium in 2008

4. TASK FORCE AWARDS FIRST GOVERNOR SUNIA AWARD

The Task Force awarded the first Governor Tause P.F. Sunia Coral Reef Conservation Summer Internship Awards to Ms. Leia LaPlace from the U.S. Virgin Islands and Ms. Aja N.M. Reyes from Guam. The awardees were chosen based on their demonstrated interest in coral reef conservation, exemplary academic achievements, and related work experience. The Department of the Interior's National Park Service announced that it will sponsor the Governor Sunia Summer Internship Awards for the summer of 2005.

5. TASK FORCE AWARDS FKNMS RESOURCE MANAGER'S EFFORTS

The Task Force recognized Ms. Lauri MacLaughlin, Resource Manager of the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary, for her exceptional efforts with the U.S. Navy and other partners to rescue and protect corals during harbor dredging and construction projects in Key West , Florida .

6. TASK FORCE TO CONSIDER PALAU 'S BID TO HOST 2005 USCRTF MEETING

President Tommy E. Remengesau, Jr. of Palau addressed the Task Force and expressed his strong commitment to partner with US to respond to threats to coral reefs and offered to hold the 2005 US Coral Reef Task Force Meeting in Palau . The Task Force agreed to consider holding the 13 th US Coral Reef Task Force Meeting in Palau .

7. TASK FORCE TO CONSIDER CROSS-AGENCY BUDGET FOR OMB

Following a recommendation from NOAA, co-chair of the Task Force, the Task Force agreed to consider submitting a cross-cut budget to the Council of Environmental Quality and the Office of Management and Budget. Developing a cross-agency budget, like the National Invasive Species Council's cross-cut budget, would be a more efficient way to budget for coral reef conservation.

8. TASK FORCE HEARD MEMBER UPDATES ON NEW COMMITMENTS AND CONTINUING EFFORTS

The Task Force heard highlights from members on their achievements and new commitments since the 10 th US Coral Reef Task Force Meeting. Members shared their major accomplishments to protect coral reef ecosystems, including significant progress on preparing and implementing Local Action Strategies, while still emphasizing the need for additional capacity and funding to fully implement the LAS.