

USCRTF Public Comment

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Thank you Task Force chairs and members of the committee.

I would like to start by reminding ourselves what is lost when corals die. When this happens, the reef structure collapses, losing its value for biodiversity conservation, as a haven for fishes, as a food source, as a tourism destination, and as coastal protection.

This compromises the livelihoods, food and income derived from the reef, and the security of coastal communities. When coastal protection is lost, beaches and whole islands disappear.

My name is Rebecca Cerroni and I am here representing a new partnership, the first of its kind between NOAA's Coral Reef Conservation Program and the Nature Conservancy on coral Reef Resilience. Together with NOAA's CRCP, we are working closely with local non-governmental partners and governments to conserve coral reefs in all seven jurisdictions and around the world.

This new partnership includes conservation initiatives in all seven jurisdictions as well as global outreach, including an upcoming Training of Trainers workshop for coral reef managers from throughout the Caribbean scheduled for this June and a new online course focusing on Resilience, which launches March 1.

The Nature Conservancy continues to support the Caribbean Challenge, Micronesia Challenge and the Coral Triangle Initiative as priority approaches to regional and large-scale conservation of coral reefs.