

Meeting Highlights

U.S. Coral Reef Task Force Meeting
Fort Lauderdale, FL, October 2011

Additional Meeting materials (agendas, presentations, etc.) are available on the Task Force website at www.coralreef.gov. For more information contact Beth Dieveney (Beth.Dieveney@noaa.gov) or Liza Johnson (Liza_M_Johnson@ios.doi.gov).

General Summary:

The U.S. Coral Reef Task Force (USCRTF) held a public meeting in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, October 17-21, 2011. The purpose of the meeting was to share coral conservation efforts, accomplishments, and challenges on a local and global scale, and to discuss progress on Resolution 25.1, which was passed at the February 2011 Task Force meeting.

Pre-Meeting Events:

Reef Resilience Conference, October 18-19

- Presentations covered the current state of coral reef research with regards to resiliency to climate change, fishing impacts, land-based sources of pollution, and recreational use. Topics also included monitoring, economic valuation, and CMSP projects.

Media Panel, October 18

- Four media panelists were given 10-12 minutes each to ask a panel of coral reef scientists and managers about the reality of coral reef health, human impacts, and the likely future of coral reefs locally and globally. This one-hour panel was moderated by Jeff Burnside, *NBC Miami*. Questions included ways to engineer coral resilience, the role of sharks in reef health, and the role of scientists in advocacy and political implementation.
- Media Panelists: Catalina Arevalo, *EFE Spain*; Curtis Morgan, *Miami Herald*; Angela Posada-Swofford, *Muy Interesante Magazine*; Joe Trester, *University of Miami School of Communication*
- Expert Panelists: Bill Causey, *NOAA National Marine Sanctuaries*; David Wachenfeld, *GBRMPA*; Chris Bergh *The Nature Conservancy*; Robert Van Woesik, *Florida Institute of Technology*; Peter Mumby, *University of Queensland*; Eileen Sobek, *U.S. Department of the Interior*; Paige Rothenberger, *U.S.V.I. Department of Planning and Natural Resources*; Jim Bonsack, *NOAA National Marine Fisheries Service*

International Reef Resilience Workshop, October 19:

- This two-part workshop focused on international coral reef resilience. The first part consisted of 10-minute talks from six Caribbean reef and resource managers that have applied knowledge from previous workshops and conferences, highlighting work in the U.S. Virgin Islands (USVI), Cayman Islands, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI), Bonaire, Jamaica, and the Dominican Republic. The second part allowed four expert panelists to discuss their areas of expertise, ranging from climate change to reef restoration and remote sensing as they apply to reef resilience, science, and management.

Benthic Working Group, October 19 (*Invitation Only*):

- Rob Van Woesik, *Florida Institute of Technology*, provided analysis from his lab's benthic habitat assessments in Florida. The working group also discussed spatial frameworks and the Florida Keys Reef Resilience Program's Disturbance Response Plan.

Field Trips, October 20:

- Dagny Johnson Key Largo Hammock Botanical State Park & John Pennekamp Coral Reef State Park – visit aquariums, tour wetland restoration site
- Biscayne National Park and Coastal and Marine Spatial Planning – snorkel through the largest national marine park and view the proposed marine reserve
- Everglades National Park Tour – view ecosystems in the Everglades National Park, learn about local hydrology and current restoration methods
- Coral Reef Restoration Interaction with Coastal and Marine Spatial Planning – view a thriving coral reef nursery and restoration site with out-planting
- Mainland Southeast Florida Coral Nursery Project – view unique stands of the threatened coral species *Acropora cervicornis*
- Coral Reef Management Interaction with Coastal and Marine Spatial Planning – glass bottom boat and snorkel to learn about marine zone demarcation and shared zone use in John Pennekamp Coral Reef State Park
- Water Management for Agriculture, Commerce, and Residents – visit a working farm to learn about agricultural research and sustainability, minimizing impacts, and water management systems.

Meeting Summary, October 21:

- Opening remarks provided by USCRTF Co-Chairs Eileen Sobeck (DOI) and Andy Winer (NOAA)
- State of Florida Host Welcome given by Secretary Herschel T. Vinyard Jr., Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP)

Two USCRTF members gave remarks on behalf of the Task Force:

- *Governor Togiola Tulafono* of American Samoa discussed the recent report of biodiversity in American Samoa and the importance of resilient and protected coral reefs.
- *William Aila*, Chairperson of the Hawaii Department of Land and Natural Resources, spoke about Hawaii's commitment to culturally-relevant, local projects that are based on strong science. He touched on the success of the Kahekili Herbivore Fisheries Management Area and state-wide efforts to control invasive species. His primary message was one of optimism for the future of coral conservation through efforts like the USCRTF, through communication and community-based efforts.

USCRTF Steering Committee Updates given by co-chairs Beth Dieveney (NOAA) and Liza Johnson (DOI/F&WS)

- *Resolution 25.1* (concerning National Ocean Policy) has successfully provided structure for USCRTF initiatives. Current and future work is focused on ecosystem restoration and protection through the Coral Injury and Mitigation working group, as well as impacts from watersheds and land-based sources of pollution and climate change. The current meeting and future Task Force initiatives should continue incorporating Coastal and Marine Spatial Planning (CMSP) as a guiding principle.
- The *Watershed Partnership's* work in Guanica Bay, Puerto Rico and West Maui, HI has been successful at bringing together agencies and local communities. The All Islands Committee proposed American Samoa's Nu'uili site as the Watershed Partnership's Plus One Site for the Pacific. The final site selection will be decided at the next meeting.
- The *Sunia Scholarship* will be reinstated for two students, one each from the Pacific and Atlantic member jurisdictions, for summer 2012. It will be based on field experience in

the jurisdictions and include a week-long program in Washington, D.C. Students will gain experience on ongoing scientific projects and an understanding of the policymaking community.

All Islands Committee Update

- Chair is Fran Castro from CNMI and Vice-Chair is Paige Rothernberger from USVI following an AIC vote.
- All jurisdictions have implemented or made progress on coral reef conservation projects since the last USCRTF, and continue to seek guidance on addressing conservation and stakeholder needs.
- The AIC requested USCRTF consideration of several new initiatives: the Micronesia Regional Shark Sanctuary, the U.S./Hawaii Bid for the 2016 IUCN World Conservation Congress, and the Caribbean Challenge. The AIC supports implementation of the Sunia Scholarship and would like further discussion about natural disaster aid.

Remarks from Dr. Jane Lubchenco

- Dr. Jane Lubchenco (Under Secretary, Oceans and Atmosphere, U.S. Department of Commerce, and Administrator, NOAA) discussed multiple examples of successful coral reef management and the imperative to continue working towards innovative local and global solutions for coral reef conservation.

Public Comment

- The USCRTF heard public comments from eight individuals and organizations.

Business Meeting Panels, October 21:

Coastal and Marine Spatial Planning

- Dr. Charlie Wahle (NOAA CMSP)
- Superintendent Sean Morton (NOAA Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary)
- Chantal Collier (FDEP Coral Reef Conservation Program)
- Stephen Blair (DERM, South Atlantic Fishery Management Council)
- Dr. Brian Walker (NCRI, NSUOC)

Water Management

- Dr. Joseph Boyer (Florida International University)
- Dr. Bill Kruczynski (U.S. EPA)
- Shannon Estenoz (DOI and South Florida Ecosystem Restoration Task Force)
- Dr. Richard Dodge (NCRI, NSUOC)

Coral Reef Restoration and Mitigation

- Tom Moore (NOAA Damage Assessment and Response Program)
- James Byrne (The Nature Conservancy)
- Dr. David Gilliam (NCRI, NSUOC)
- John Hunt (Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission)

Public Comment:

- Representative, 12th International Coral Reef Symposium in July, 2012, Australia
- Representative, Caribbean Coral Reef Institute
- Dan Clark, Cry of the Water
- Stephanie Clark, Cry of the Water
- Dick Dodge, NCRI

- Drew Martin, Everglades Chair for the Sierra Club
- Janet Rider, Special Agent DOI/US F&WS Office of Law Enforcement
- Rhyan Wilcox, Wildlife Inspector DOI/US F&WS Office of Law Enforcement

Going Forward:

- The 27th USCRTF meeting will take place in Washington, DC in February 2012. Focus areas include expanding the Watershed Partnership and discussing the Plus One Site in American Samoa, exploring CMSP pilot projects in the jurisdictions/states, and finalizing draft action for the injury working group on National Ocean Policy.
- The 28th USCRTF meeting will take place in American Samoa in the fall of 2012, and will be Governor Tulafono's final meeting as a member of the USCRTF.

The U.S. Coral Reef Task Force was established in 1998 to lead U.S. efforts to preserve and protect coral reef ecosystems. It includes leaders of 12 Federal agencies, seven U.S. States, Territories, and Commonwealths, and three Freely Associated States.