

10th Coral Reef Task Force Meeting
October 3-7, 2003
Guam & CNMI

Resolution 10-1: Proposal for Implementing Local Action Strategies and other actions from the Puerto Rico Resolution

Background:

In October 2002, the U.S. Coral Reef Task Force (USCRTF) met in Puerto Rico and passed a resolution aimed to improve implementation of the U.S. National Action Plan to Conserve Coral Reefs (NAP). The resolution, now known as the Puerto Rico Resolution, identified four impediments to implementation and recommended solutions to address them. These recommendations included:

- Endorsing six Focus Areas for priority action: land-based sources of pollution, overfishing, lack of public awareness, recreational overuse and misuse, climate change and coral bleaching, and disease.
- Developing Local Action Strategies (LAS) for relevant Focus Areas as determined locally.
- Establishing two regional subcommittees to support local action.
- Identifying methods for tracking progress toward national goals.
- Highlighting needs and opportunities to strengthen human resources for reef conservation.

A center-piece of the resolution was the development of Local Action Strategies to improve coordinated implementation of coral reef conservation efforts. This recommendation was developed from a series of interviews and meetings that highlighted the need to strengthen coordination among and between levels of government. It was expected that greater coordination will improve technical and financial support for local level implementation by:

- Increasing participation of federal Task Force partners targeting those not fully engaged in coral conservation efforts at the local/regional level and providing a venue for developing funding priorities.
- Improving coordination between federal and state/territory priorities.
- Raising the profile of coral reef issues and concerns in related projects (e.g. non-point and CZM initiatives).
- Strengthening national policy and support for coral reef conservation by providing a basis for updating national goals for new and ongoing coral reef management.

Current Status:

In addition to the actions to implement the U.S. National Action Plan and Strategy that were already underway, each state and territory with its federal partners has invested significant effort in developing these draft LAS through a collaborative, participatory process since last October. Each jurisdiction has developed a core group of experts to develop these draft strategies, and has hosted one or more stakeholder meetings to guide crafting and revision of the documents.

To date, most of the LAS are in development and in draft form, exceeding the expectations and schedule established in February 2003. Overall, the process the Task Force set in motion a year ago has achieved many important things, including (1) significantly increased participation and collaboration among government partners at local levels, and (2) engaged hundreds of stakeholders and other partners in helping determine the key actions needed over the next three years to reduce priority threats to reef ecosystems. This process is considered the most rigorous effort taken by the USCRTF to identify the key needs required to achieve tangible improvements in reef quality at the local level.

State and territorial officials with their federal partners have found that there are indeed grant programs that had not been previously tapped to support coral reef management activities in the islands. Most of these grant programs have defined areas of focus that do not usually coincide exactly with the priorities identified in the LAS. Grant proposals need to be developed for each one of these programs and each grant comes with different reporting requirements. Development of grant proposals and fulfilling reporting requirements will require significant amounts of staff effort that cannot be accommodated through existing state and territorial resources.

Continued support and resources are needed to complete and implement the LAS that have already been drafted and to refine and further develop priorities that still need to be addressed from the Puerto Rico Resolution. The Task Force has an important opportunity to review the progress to date and build on the existing momentum to achieve the goals set forth in the Puerto Rico Resolution.

This resolution affirms the Task Force's support for continuing to implement the actions called for in the Puerto Rico Resolution including specific steps, such as LAS completion, implementation and increased federal support, that are required to complete the LAS process.

Resolution:

The Task Force recognizes the significant efforts to implement the Puerto Rico Resolution and the successes already realized in this process to date, including:

- (1) increased participation and collaboration among government partners at local levels;
- (2) engagement of hundreds of stakeholders and other partners in helping determine priority local actions to reduce threats to reefs; and
- (3) development of most of the 3 year Local Action Strategies called for in the Puerto Rico Resolution.

The Task Force affirms the need to continue efforts to complete the draft LAS and implement the completed LAS and other actions from the Puerto Rico Resolution.

The Task Force affirms that all members will actively participate and support the local jurisdictions in implementing their LAS.

(1) Finalize Local Action Strategies:

- Task Force members will assist in finalizing the draft Local Action Strategies as soon as possible.

(2) Task Force members will assist in the development and completion of any additional Local Action Strategies as appropriate.

(3) LAS Implementation

- Task Force members will assist in implementing the draft Local Action Strategies as soon as possible by:
 - inventory existing opportunities to support implementation of the LAS.
 - identify resources committed to support the LAS.
 - identify needs/gaps between the LAS and these existing opportunities and resources.
 - identify lead federal agencies to coordinate and implement regional actions or cross-regional issues identified as key themes in many of the local LAS.
- Task Force members will provide a status report on finalizing and implementing the LAS at the local level during each Task Force Meeting.
- Task Force members acknowledge that the three-year LAS may require several years for development and are dependent upon increased funding and capacity support for initiation and completion.

- Task Force members will evaluate the role, function, and effectiveness of the Regional Subcommittees, providing a preliminary evaluation at the February 2004 Task Force Meeting.

(4) Track implementation of the Coral Reef Initiative Programs and Local Action Strategies

- Members will assist the Steering Committee in developing a database system for Coral Reef Initiative programs, including the LAS and a process for obtaining annual progress reports.

(5) Develop proposal on how to update the U.S. National Coral Reef Action Strategy

- Members will assist the Steering Committee in developing a process and schedule to update the U.S. National Coral Reef Action Strategy in 2004 to incorporate the LAS and other efforts.