In 2002, the U.S. Coral Reef Task Force identified the need for action at the local level to reduce key threats to coral reefs and called for the development of Local Action Strategies (LAS) in each of the seven states and territories which possess significant coral reef resources.

CNMI Local Action Strategy

The Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas (CNMI) *Local Action Strategy (LAS) were developed through a coordinated effort among the CNMI's three principle natural resource management agencies. To initiate the LAS process, several meetings with the CNMI Watershed Group and Local Coral Reef Advisory Group were held to discuss background information relevant to the five focus areas. A series of stakeholder meetings were then held on the CNMI's three main populated islands of Tinian, Rota, and Saipan. Participants brainstormed coral reef protection challenges and needs related to each focus area and potential activities to address them. A lead agency staff person for each focus area guided the effort to develop draft goals, objectives, and projects using the information gathered from the stakeholder meetings. The preliminary LAS drafts then served as a basis for further development and refinement of the strategies during a two-day stakeholder workshop. Over 60 participants from the three islands representing local and federal government agencies, non-governmental organizations, and businesses worked in focus groups to develop a second more refined draft of the LAS.*

LAND-BASED SOURCES OF POLLUTION...

This LAS addresses both point and non-point source pollution that reduce the quality of the CNMI's surface and near-shore coastal waters.

Goals and Objectives

- *Restore three priority watersheds in the CNMI, one each on the islands of Saipan, Tinian, and Rota, to reduce the amount of sediment runoff and erosion*
- *Stabilize soils in the CNMI "badlands" through revegetation of native flora*

Project Examples

- *Conduct intensive near-shore assessments of water quality impairment and likely sources of pollution*
- *Implement road and drainage improvements to reduce erosion and sediment*
- *Map land ownership, activities, and potential non-point source (NPS) pollution sources to the near-shore marine environment*

Anticipated Outcomes

- *Concerned, motivated, and organized stakeholder groups*
- *Decreased sedimentation and non-point source pollution into near-shore marine waters in priority watersheds*

FISHERIES MANAGEMENT...

This LAS addresses the decline of CNMI fisheries, and the need to regulate fishing practices — both traditional and commercial. The projects are intended to foster long-term sustainable use of the CNMI's coral reef fisheries.

Goals and Objectives

- *Establish a monitoring program for near-shore coral reef fisheries*
- *Increase fisherman participation in fisheries management and local capacity for enforcing fisheries regulations*

Project Examples

- *Conduct tagging projects to identify home ranges for certain species*
- *Update the Saipan Lagoon Management Plan to include fisheries management*
- *Develop and implement a comprehensive in-shore creel survey for Saipan Lagoon*

ESTIMATED LAS PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION COSTS

Land-based Sources of Pollution
$3,186,000

Fisheries Management
$1,205,000

Recreational Use
$103,000

Increase Awareness and Involvement
$468,750

Coral Reef Resources Management
$2,490,000

Estimated costs derived from projects for which cost information is presently available

SEPTEMBER 2004

STAKEHOLDERS

CNMI government agencies

Dive associations

DOI, Office of Insular Affairs

Marianas Visitors Authority

Marine Sports Association

NOAA

Northern Marianas College

Office of the Governor

PADI Project Aware

Travel and tourism associations

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

U.S. Coast Guard

USEPA

USDA, Natural Resources Conservation Service

Western Pacific Fisheries Management Council

Anticipated Outcomes

- *Proactive, resource-conscious fishing community*
- *Increased stock and diversity of fish in CNMI*
- *Reduced user conflict and reduced impact on lagoon habitats from all users*

RECREATIONAL USE...

This LAS addresses marine-based tourism and recreational activities and aims to promote best management practices to minimize the detrimental impact of these activities to coral reef health.

Goals and Objectives

- *Develop a sustainable long-term management program to assure tourism and recreational activities are properly regulated*
- *Minimize degradation of coral reefs by increasing a public awareness of secondary and cumulative impacts*

Project Examples

- *Install mooring buoys at popular sites around the islands*
- *Monitor vessel traffic and activities in MPA designated areas*
- *Develop low-impact snorkeling, SCUBA, and recreational videos for play by airlines, hotels, and visitors' channel*

Anticipated Outcomes

- *Regulated recreational activities that are environmentally appropriate and sustainable*
- *Decreased frequency of anchor damage reported around CNMI*

INCREASE AWARENESS AND INVOLVEMENT...

This LAS was written to increase public awareness and involvement in natural resource management in order to improve the effectiveness of coral reef protection initiatives in CNMI.

Goals and Objectives

- *Increase resident, visitor, and guest worker awareness of the need to properly manage watersheds and marine habitats in light of threats to coral reefs*

Project Examples

- *Include coral reef/ecotourism curricula to NMC Tourism Course, schools, and guest workers*
- *Offer a "reef friendly" dive instructor train-the-trainer workshop*
- *Produce multilingual user-friendly fishing regulations handbook for stakeholders*

Anticipated Outcomes

- *Increased public understanding of the current stresses that place these coral reefs at risk, and the need to protect them*
- *Increased public involvement in coral management initiatives*

CORAL REEF RESOURCES MANAGEMENT...

This LAS focus area was developed as a result of analyzing the cross cutting issues and capacity needs of the CNMI natural resource management agencies.

Goals and Objectives

- *Develop and secure adequate staff, training, and technical assistance to manage threats to coral reef resources and implement the CNMI coral reef initiative*

Project Examples

- *Facilitate interagency and agency-stakeholder collaboration*
- *Complete the CNMI coral reef economic evaluation*
- *Develop a long-term CNMI marine management plan and marine monitoring and research plan*

contacts

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