

U.S. Coral Reef Task Force Resolution 25.1

1. **Title:** USCRTF Engagement in the National Ocean Policy and Framework for FY11-14 Priority Action
2. **Responsible Party:** Implementation of this resolution will take full USCRTF Steering Committee staff engagement. The USCRTF Secretariat will serve as lead for coordination. Individual USCRTF member contributions are noted in the specific action items listed below.
3. **Issue Statement:** Healthy coral reefs are among the most biologically diverse and economically valuable ecosystems on earth. The USCRTF recognizes the urgent need for action to address the state of coral reef management and science, and to reduce threats to coral reef ecosystem condition to make reefs more resilient in the face of climate change. Science has demonstrated that reef communities can recover when they are protected and stressors removed. Precious time for coral reef ecosystems can be secured through increased protection from land and marine pollution, unsustainable fishing, development, and other stressors, all of which we know can damage coral condition. It is clear that the USCRTF, with partners, must significantly increase our collective effort to address the factors over which we can exercise control. The USCRTF must take immediate action to respond to these threats and, in turn, seek to sustain our coral reef ecosystems and the communities that depend upon them. In light of the new National Ocean Policy (NOP) and the National Ocean Council (NOC) (see Executive Order of July 19, 2010 on Stewardship of the Ocean, Our Coasts, and the Great Lakes and the Final Recommendations of the Interagency Ocean Policy Task Force), the USCRTF will act as a leading intergovernmental body contributing to implementation of the National Ocean Policy as it pertains to coral reef ecosystems in the Pacific and Atlantic/Caribbean regions. To enhance our effectiveness within the context of the NOP and continued on the ground action, the USCRTF will identify strategic and targeted priorities for FY11-FY14 and commits to conducting more action-oriented meetings.

It is essential that the Federal and State, Territory, and Commonwealth members provide strong leadership and actively engage, providing a vision and a voice for coral reef conservation.

4. **Background:** The USCRTF has worked for twelve years as an effective intergovernmental body promoting a holistic, ecosystem-based approach to coral reef conservation and facilitating coordination and integration across the Federal Government to support Federal, State, Territorial, tribal, local, and regional management of coral reef ecosystems. As such, the USCRTF has exhibited a leadership role in several of the priority areas of special emphasis identified for action in the NOP as it pertains to the stressors and activities impacting the health of coral reef ecosystems: Resiliency and Adaptation to Climate Change and Ocean Acidification, Regional Ecosystem Protection and Restoration, and Water Quality and Sustainable Practices on Land. The USCRTF has an opportunity to further these specific NOP priorities as it continues its efforts to conserve coral reef ecosystems. The USCRTF can play an important role in the Coastal and Marine Spatial Planning (CMSP) process, drawing on past work and providing expertise to ensure that the issues related to coral reef ecosystems are considered. The attached *The U.S. Coral Reef Task Force: Proposal for operation in*

relation to the National Ocean Policy and Strategic Activities for FY2011-FY2014, provides full details.

Statement Decision: To fulfill the intent of this resolution, the USCRTF decides to:

Strategic and Targeted USCRTF Priorities FY11-14

1. Contribute to the National Ocean Policy:
 - a. Contribute distinct interagency and intergovernmental activities related to coral reef ecosystems in the Pacific and Atlantic/Caribbean regions for the following National Ocean Policy priority objectives:
 - i. Resiliency and Adaptation to Climate Change and Acidification
 - ii. Regional Ecosystem Protection and Restoration, and
 - iii. Water Quality and Sustainable Practices on Land.
 - b. Develop USCRTF consensus on priority actions which build on existing efforts related to coral reef ecosystems for inclusion in these three USCRTF priority NOP Strategic Action Plans.
 - c. Contribute to the CMSP process:
 - i. Commit to engaging its members and ensuring participation of both Federal and State/Territory points of contact in the Coastal and Marine Spatial Planning meetings and other associated activities in the Pacific and Atlantic/Caribbean regions.
 - ii. Ensure that issues related to coral reef ecosystems are considered in the CMSP process, will contribute knowledge and staff expertise to the CMSP process, and help provide a mechanism to ensure that the needs and interests of the states and territories are fully represented.
 - iii. Establish two regional working groups (Pacific and Atlantic/Caribbean), charged with compiling by June 2011 the existing capabilities, current state of knowledge (e.g. available maps), remaining gaps, needs and future opportunities related to coral reef ecosystems to inform the CMSP process. Ensure that these efforts are well coordinated and build on existing activities.
 - iv. The Federal USCRTF members and the SC members will regularly confer with State and Territorial members to ensure that their interests are being presented and considered in the CMSP process as they relate to coral reef ecosystems.
2. Take action on priority issues through Place-based Partnerships
 - a. Refine the focus of the USCRTF to address key priority issues related to the improvement of coral reef condition that require or benefit from broad USCRTF engagement and work more effectively to promote coordination across agencies to implement geographically specific and integrated activities.
 - b. Support State and Territory leadership engagement to ensure efforts implemented are complementary and are well integrated with existing State and Territory laws, regulations, and policies.

- c. In FY11, develop a process that effectively allows the USCRTF to identify the issues and specific areas for USCRTF collective action.
 - d. In FY12-14, focus on the following areas: (1) Guanica Bay, Puerto Rico, (2) Ka'anapali, Maui 3) priority watershed in the Pacific Island Territories currently being identified by the USCRTF, and (3) Pacific Ocean Marine National Monuments.
3. Serve to advance information sharing and promote joint action on topics that involve trans-jurisdictional issues.
- a. Develop working groups around trans-jurisdictional issues, or charge existing working groups where applicable, with exchanging ideas and lessons learned on coral reef-related issues that occur in multiple States and Territories.
 - b. Focus discussions at State and Territory-hosted meetings on one or two key issues within that host jurisdiction, and include lessons learned from other jurisdictions in these discussions.
 - c. Support State and Territory leadership engagement to ensure efforts implemented are complementary and are well integrated with existing State and Territory laws, regulations, and policies.
 - d. Specific action for FY11: Determine the current state of knowledge regarding coral reef ecosystem mitigation and restoration and develop a schedule and plan for the USCRTF to address this issue.
 - e. In FY11- FY14, focus on the issues of: Mitigation, Education and Outreach, Climate Change, Enforcement, USCRTF identified National Ocean Policy priorities, and Jurisdictional Coral Reef Management Priorities as they pertain to coral reef ecosystems.
4. Promote the capacity of members and partners to better target and link our science to management action and adaptive decision making.
- a. Promote sharing and alignment of research opportunities and funded / on-going activities among USCRTF members to ultimately improve outcomes, enhance coordination, avoid duplication, identify gaps, and promote joint research activities related to coral reef ecosystems; and identify willing leaders on specific items that will deliver performance-based outcomes.
 - b. Specific Action for FY12: Begin a dialog among USCRTF members that promotes information sharing and develop a plan for how to better coordinate scientific activities across the respective agencies.
 - c. FY2012-FY2014 activities include:
 - i. Host scientific discussions on targeted scientific needs and gaps related to Resiliency and Adaptation to Climate Change and Ocean Acidification, Regional Ecosystem Protection and Restoration, and Water Quality and Sustainable Practices on Land.
 - ii. Ensure that activities undertaken related to place-based partnerships and trans-jurisdictional issues are informed by science.
5. Take advantage of upcoming opportunities to enhance understanding of and consideration of the issues facing coral reef ecosystems.

- a. FY2011-FY2014 activities could include: USCRTF presence at the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Conference to promote conservation activities and funding needs for the Freely Associated States; and participation at Coastal Zone 2011.

Internal Business

1. Organizational Structure:
 - a) The Steering Committee will, on a bi-annual basis, review the status of SC working groups to ensure adequate representation and to establish goals and measures of work products.
 - b) Give working groups a clear purpose and end goal(s). Outcomes should be shared with other SC members, and USCRTF members where and when appropriate. When end goals are completed, the USCRTF members will vote to give the working group new end goal(s) or dissolve the working group.
2. Focus on Decision-Making: Conduct meetings that enhance the decision-making function of the USCRTF; are more action-oriented and better engage key partners and stakeholders in achieving the goals of the USCRTF.
 - a) Develop action and decision oriented meeting agendas that encourage healthy debates.
 - b) As desirable, hold Executive Sessions with USCRTF members to deliberate the actions/decisions.
 - c) Host decision making/working sessions at the SC and working group level.
 - d) Require standing committees to report out to the SC on work conducted since the last meeting, and to provide an update on pending work products.
 - e) Identify and agree upon topics for discussion at USCRTF meetings at least one meeting in advance, which is intended to enhance USCRTF member engagement and potential action.
3. Engage Members: Ensure USCRTF member representatives at business meetings and executive sessions have the appropriate decision making authority.
4. Report on Actions: Track resolutions requiring ongoing action, and formally acknowledge no additional action to be taken on all others.
5. Review Charter: In 2012, convene a working group to review the existing Charter and provide any recommended revisions, or a recommendation for no action, and at least every 3 years thereafter.
6. Assess Progress: In 2013, compile an analysis of USCRTF accomplishments and major actions and develop recommendations to refine focus areas, or to maintain course without change, and every 3 years thereafter.