



# AIC Chair's Report

Fran Castro  
Chair, U.S. All Islands Coral Reef Committee (AIC)

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35<sup>th</sup> U.S. Coral Reef Task Force  
February 18, 2016 | Washington D.C.



# Welcome & introduction

Welcome Governor Ralph Deleon Guerrero Torres of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, Governor Lolo Matalasi Moliga from American Samoa, and principals.

Recognize previous and outgoing POCs Damaris Delgado and Umiich Sengebau

Welcome new and incoming POCs Ernesto Diaz and Yimnang Golbuu, PhD

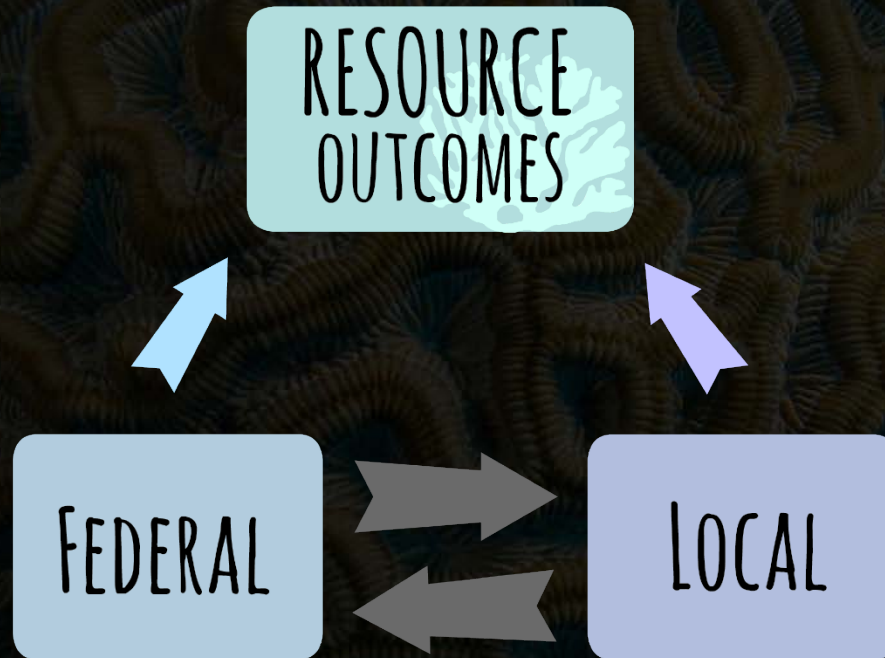




# AIC Priorities

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# AIC Overarching Priorities



1. Achievable and shared site-based and resource-focused outcomes; and
2. Integrated and strengthened federal-local partnerships.



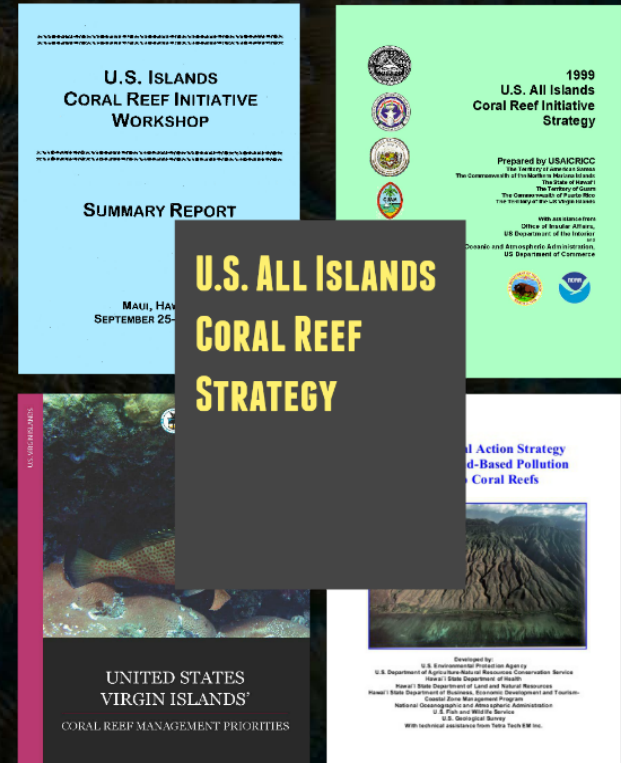
# AIC Priorities

## U.S. All Islands Coral Reef Strategy

- Similar to 1999 *U.S. All Islands Coral Reef Initiative Strategy*
- Fits with USCRTF Strategy and ongoing integration efforts
- Led by jurisdictions
- Input from partners

## AIC Request:

- Task Force and member agency support and engagement





# AIC Priorities

## Coral Reef Management Fellowship Program: Follow-up

- Fellows have begun their positions
- Thank yous: NOAA CRCP, DOI OIA, and Nova Southeastern Univ.
- **AIC vision:**  
USCRTF support + federal agencies + AIC = institutionalized program with sustained funding

### AIC Request:

- Task Force agency engagement, support, and ideas to keep this program going





# AIC Priorities



## Watershed Partnership Initiative: Follow-up

- Thank yous: Steering Committee and Watershed Working Group
- Graduation Plan for USCRTF priority watersheds
- Sunset Clause

### Next steps:

- Look forward to working with team
- AIC SecED to assist in drafting language

# Jurisdictional Updates

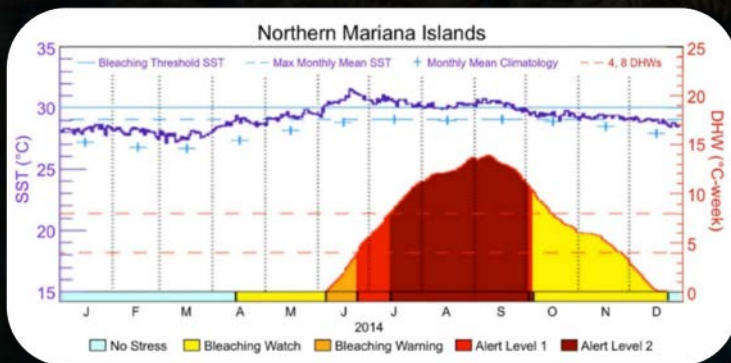
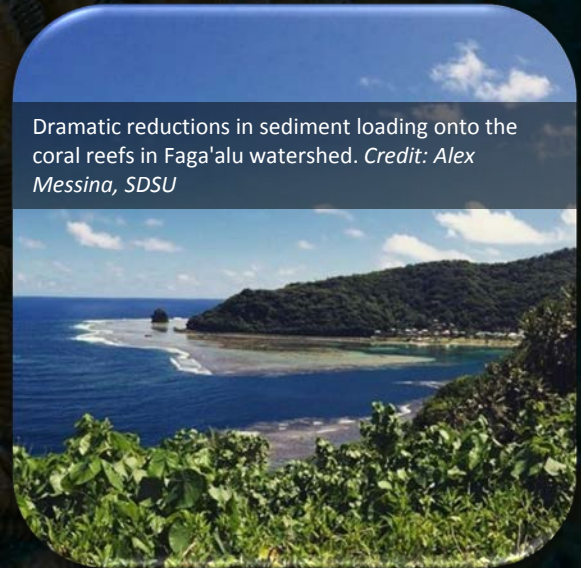
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# Member Updates

## American Samoa

- COTS outbreak, potential bleaching, grounded vessel, cyclone damage
- Faga'alu Quarry BMPs: Sediment reductions!
- Needed: Better mechanism to quickly respond to coral threats



Regional Virtual Station time series for CNMI in 2014. *From Heron et al., 2016.*

## CNMI

- Typhoon Soudelor recovery & resulting delays
- "Validation of Reef-Scale Thermal Stress Satellite Products for Coral Bleaching Monitoring"
- Needed: Interagency coral reef disturbance response plan



# Member Updates

## Florida

- Coral disease outbreak + thermal stress =
  - Death of 330+ year coral
  - >50 large (3+ m) corals diseased
- Needed: Funding for causal research and restoration
- “Our Florida Reefs”: 68 recommendations; formal recognition for northern Reef Tract



## Guam

- Resilience to climate change
- Water quality challenge: Erosion from fires & stormwater runoff
- Guam reef flat mapping and description
- Needed: Conservation officers for increased enforcement capacity



# Member Updates

## Hawai'i

- 2014 & 2015 bleaching events, likely annual by 2050
- Creating a strategy and plan to promote coral growth after damaging events
- Law to prevent sea cucumber overharvesting signed by Governor Ige
- ICRS 2016 in June



The black sea cucumber (*Holothuria atra*) is now protected under the sea cucumber rule. Credit: J. Hoover



Oil spill in Guanica. Credit: C. Lilyestrom

## Puerto Rico

- Capacity is a continued challenge (e.g., human resources)
- Oil spill settlement reached
- Mona Island Natural Reserve bleaching and disease
- Needed: Technical assistance and funding



# Member Updates

## U.S. Virgin Islands

- Challenge continues from invasive seagrass, *Halophila stipulacea*, & Sargassum seaweed
  - Research to better understand and develop management strategies
- Environmental enforcement evaluation and 5 year strategic plan
- Movement and connectivity between MPAs



Credit: University of the Virgin Islands



Pacific Regional Oceanscape Program. From brochure

## Federated States of Micronesia

- Recovery and rehabilitation efforts continue from Typhoon Maysak and Tropical Storm Dolphin
- Pacific Regional Oceanscape Program (PROP) - regional oceanic and coastal fisheries management



# Member Updates

## Republic of the Marshall Islands

- Formal bleaching method utilized
- Conservation GIS accessible to public with integration of traditional Marshallese knowledge
- Reimaanlok field survey implemented
  - Belt Transect Method; Wotho Atoll



Wotho Atoll marine survey. Credit: B. Menke, MICS



Survey team after the completion of baseline monitoring of Medal Ngediull Conservation Area in Arai State, October 7, 2015. Credit: PICRC

## Republic of Palau

- Surveys conducted to inform management and improve and rebuild small local fisheries
- Ecological monitoring of coral reefs and seagrass in MPAs
- Research on recovery potential of eastern reefs from 2012 and 2013 typhoons



# Acknowledgements



- Governor Ralph Deleon Guerrero Torres of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, Governor Lolo Matalasi Moliga from American Samoa, & our principals
- Task Force co-chairs
- Task Force members & member agencies
- NOAA & DOI
- AIC Secretariat



# Questions?