U.S. ISLANDS
CORAL REEF INITIATIVE
GUIDELINES
**MISSION STATEMENT**

The U.S. Islands Coral Reef Initiative fosters innovative cross-disciplinary approaches to sustainable management and conservation of coral reef biodiversity and ecosystems through the development of cooperative relationships among the various stakeholders as an effort to conserve and restore coral reef ecosystems at local levels for the use and enjoyment of future generations.

**VISION STATEMENT**

Coral reef ecosystems are vital natural resources in the American Flag Pacific Islands, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands. These beautiful and diverse systems are essential to residents as sources of food and enhancement for social and cultural activities important to our heritage and tourism, the largest industry in these islands. Moreover, coral reefs protect nearshore areas from storm waves, build new land masses, and are a source of natural products for the food and pharmaceutical industries. The sustainable use of coral reef ecosystems and the perpetuation of their economic, cultural, and environmental functions should be the guiding principles in planning and managing growth in the American Flag Pacific Islands, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands.
GOALS

To maintain the high biodiversity, health, and beauty of coral reef ecosystems, the Coral Reef Initiative Management Program in the American Flag Pacific Islands, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands will:

• Increase public education and support for the perpetuation of coral reef ecosystems and for instilling stewardship for future generations.
• Build effective public-private sector partnerships among regional governments and organizations, educational and research institutions, and non-governmental organizations to plan and manage land and water use activities that affect coral reef ecosystems.
• Promote sound reef preservation projects.
• Develop comparable baseline data on reef status for all islands.
• Document the effects of land-based pollution sources and cumulative and secondary processes affecting coral reef systems.
• Secure adequate financial resources and increase the technical capacity of island governments to manage coral reef ecosystems for sustainable resource use.
This visioning exercise provided the opening to the workshop. Participants answered the following open-ended statement, and came up with statements which fell into the categories of coral reef management, funding strategies, education, public awareness, and lobbying, participation and communication, legislation, and technical support, research and monitoring.

In five years, this is where we would like to see the Coral Reef Initiative in the U.S. Islands:

**Coral Reef Management**

- Coral reef ecosystems are effectively monitored and managed on an effective and continuous basis with sustained funding and involvement of local communities, government agencies, scientists, and other concerned citizens.
- Improve ability to mitigate damage of development.
- Accountability of private sector or developers for their impact on coral reefs.
- Defined agency responsibility. Shared information and technical assistance.
- Flexibility in understanding that resource management extends beyond political boundaries, and there is a great need among the islands to pool their resources and network internationally.
- Demonstration project started and ongoing in each American Flag Island at sites identified by the local governments, which taps local resource knowledge, based on principles defined here.
- Holistic approach to ocean management.
- Comprehensive system of protected areas. Recognize the importance of three separate and important coastal ecosystems: corals, mangroves, and seagrasses.
- Overall management scheme for cumulative management of all stressors.
- Mechanism for closures, recovery, and restoration. Specific actions that lead to these.
- In five years, be able to determine appropriate uses of coral reef areas based on carrying capacities. Recognize competing uses. Identify protected areas; various designations for multiple uses.
- Develop compatible monitoring protocols.
Funding Strategies

- Steady funding stream.
- User fees.
- Funding equity. Clarify specific needs--- especially $, for the islands. The funding, partnerships, and networks need to take into account the resources available in a particular jurisdiction.
- NOAA maintains a budget for domestic CRI. Need funded CRI Coordinator.

Education, Public Awareness, and Lobbying

- Common understanding of the value of coral reefs. Value intrinsic Quality of Coral Reefs.
- Stewardship Ethic among users and managers.
- Coral reef curriculum.
- Develop a better understanding of CRI in Washington D.C. among legislators and agencies.
- USACOE - Have the Army Corps develop a coral reef curriculum and understand the importance of the Coral Reef Initiative. OR no longer have the permit authority for shoreline hardening.

Participation and Communication

- Collaboration and Networking. Effective communication among scientists, communities, and policy makers.
- Local community participation in management, mitigation, and enforcement.
- Identify parameters for gathering baseline information and communicate these parameters, through such means as the Internet.
- Identify one place to store, process, and disseminate information.

Legislation

- Legislation- coherent, providers management tools for effective enforcement.
- Goal: No net loss of resources defined in legislation. Need a better legal framework and legislation to deal with issues, such as alien species introduction.

Technical Support, Research, and Monitoring

- Support and Expertise identified: defined goals in coral reef work.
- Recognize the importance of fishery resources. Return of the goatfish (an indicator species of good coral health).
- Develop CRI-specific protocols for environmental assessments.