INTERNATIONAL CORAL REEF INITIATIVE (ICRI)
27th General Meeting
16 -19 June 2012 – Cairns, Australia

Member's report on activities to ICRI

Presented by Christine Dawson

Reporting period January - July 2012

1. **General Information (**note that this information will be posted on the ICRI website in your member page: http://www.icriforum.org/about-icri/members-networks**)**

Are you an ICRI Member?	Yes
Representation to ICRI (Country / Organization):	United States
Focal Point 1:	
Name:	Christine Dawson
Organization:	U.S. Department of State
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Focal point 2:	
Name:	Janna Shackeroff
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Last meeting attended:	Reunion

For countries only:

National Action Plan / Initiative	
Do you have a National Coral Reef action plan or similar? If so please provide URL:	yes
If you are you engaged in any regional programs / initiatives relating to coral reefs, please indicate which ones:	The Coral Triangle Initiative on Coral Reefs, Fisheries and Food Security. The Micronesia Challenge. The Two Samoas Initiative. The Caribbean Challenge. The United States Coral Reef Task Force.

2. **Updates on your activities (**new initiatives/programs/projects of your government /organization which will be of interest to the ICRI Members**).** Examples include MPA declarations, World Heritage sites status, economic valuation of reefs, policy changes in relation to coral reefs etc.

A. United States Government International Engagement on Coral Reefs

The United States Government (USG) has been a primary and early supporter to the Coral Triangle Initiative on Coral Reefs, Fisheries and Food Security (CTI-CFF). Recognizing the potential of the CTI-CFF to be a truly transformative regional initiative with far-reaching environmental and economic benefits, the United States has offered considerable financial, political, and technical support through both bilateral and multilateral channels. Early USG support included assistance to the six Coral Triangle governments and stakeholders in implementing the CTI Plan of Action; support in establishing and developing the CTI Secretariat; providing access to U.S. science and research capabilities; and sharing best practices among the six countries. The U.S. Coral Triangle Initiative Support Program (US CTI) supports regional coordination through the CTI Secretariat, national coordination in the six countries, and capacity building in ecosystem approaches to fisheries management (EAFM), marine protected area

management (MPA), reduction in illegal fishing, and ecosystem-based approaches to climate change adaptation for strengthened resilience (CCA). (For more information, please go to www.uscti.org and www.coralreef.noaa.gov/coraltriangle)

Through peer-to-peer learning, technical innovation, capacity building, and significant partnership harmonized from local to national and regional scales across the Coral Triangle, the CTI-CFF and US CTI have achieved significant results to date. A few notable examples of achievements include:

- Supporting the development of a Region-wide Early Action Plan (REAP) on climate change adaptation, which is paired with the Local Early Action Plan (LEAP) toolkit for climate change adaptation.
- Developing guidelines for local, national, and regional fisheries managers to incorporate considerations of climate change and ocean acidification into EAFM.
- Supporting the establishment of Coral Triangle System of MPAs, and a management effectiveness system surrounding it.
- Assisting the development of an EAFM regional policy framework, and enhancing the capacity to implement EAFM at local, sub-national, and regional levels (e.g., through "EAFM 101" workshops).
- Development and maintenance of a geospatial decision-making tool for spatial management, the Coral Triangle Atlas.
- Establishing the first ocean acidification baseline and building science-for-decision-making capacity in the region.

In Indonesia, the USG has a large Marine Resource Program under which various contracts, agreements and grants are being implemented to support capacity building for sound management of Indonesia's extraordinary marine resources by the Government of Indonesia, the private sector and communities. Many of these activities also support the Government of Indonesia's commitments to the Coral Triangle Initiative. Activities support capacity building within the Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Affairs, ecosystem-based fisheries management, sustainable fisheries management, marine protected areas management, reduction of illegal fishing, improved legal capacity, and improved port state measures.

In the Pacific, the USG is supporting a new Climate Change Adaptation in the Pacific (CCAP) Program. Responding to challenges posed by climate change to the development and survival of Pacific Islands, the United States Government has made the Pacific a strategic focus by expanding bilateral and multilateral climate change related assistance to the region. The climate change program will support Pacific Island nations to reduce long-term impacts associated with climate change and achieve sustainable climate-resilient development, both of which will strengthen U.S. Government objectives by mitigating the negative impacts of climate change. The CCAP will be a 5-year program with project headquarters located in Suva, Fiji. Activities include support to national adaptation priority projects; mangrove forest rehabilitation in Papua New Guinea, the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu; and support to SPREP and SPC climate programs. The USG continues to support the Micronesia Challenge (MC) and building local capacity in achieving MC goals; recently, MC jurisdictions and partners have developed a cadre of local trainers ('champions') with expertise in MPA management planning, climate change adaptation outreach, and high island and remote atoll MPA enforcement.

Across the wider-Caribbean, the USG is working to build the capacity of MPA managers by supporting a regional learning network, convening peer-to-peer exchanges on technical topics like sustainable financing, MPA enforcement, and providing specific technical assistance on socioeconomic monitoring. In Central America, the USG is supporting regional efforts to conserve marine biodiversity by enhancing coordination and collaboration within the Central American Integration System (SICA), CCAD and OSPECA, municipalities, NGOs, and local communities. The Management of Aquatic Resources and Economic Alternatives (MAREA) Program is developing strategic interventions in places of critical importance for biodiversity, identified in article 18 of the Central American Biodiversity Agreement as "trans-boundary marine coastal

areas in Belize, Honduras, Guatemala, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Costa Rica and Panamá." The two specific objectives of this program are to promote effective monitoring and enforcement of coastal and marine resource policies and legislation; and to foster rights-based and market-based mechanisms as well as management incentives for the conservation and sustainable use of coastal and marine resources and ecosystems, with an emphasis on ecosystem-based approaches to management. Focus species include groupers, spiny lobsters, Queen conch, sharks and sea turtles.

In Honduras, the USG is supporting the Spiny Lobster Initiative to reform the spiny lobster fishery and address environment and labor issues. Social change methodologies are being applied to catalyze change from within the fishery by engaging stakeholders along the value chain, from the fishers, boat owners, processors, exporters, importers, government managers, and major U.S. importers and buyers. Ecosystem-based fisheries management is being adopted along with networks of marine ecological reserves.

In Mozambique, the USG is supporting efforts through the Global FISH Alliance to reform the small-scale fisheries and conserve coral reef biodiversity around Pemba Bay. Activities are supporting capacity building for co-management of the fisheries and the establishment of fishery reserves.

In the Western Indian Ocean, the USG is building the capacity of marine protected areas to incorporate climate change adaptation measures into their management plans.

B. United States Government Domestic Partnerships on Coral Reefs

The U.S. Coral Reef Task Force, established in 1998 in response to the ICRI Call to Action and comprised of 12 U.S. government agencies, two states, five territories, and three Freely Associated States, has succeeded in bringing together government entities with diverse and potentially conflicting mandates and leveraging available expertise to identify common national goals and to foster work at the regional and state / territory level that addresses both local and national coral reef conservation priorities. This approach allows task force members to tailor their goals and activities to address local issues and support on-the-ground action. The following examples highlight specific activities in 2010 and 2011.

National Ocean Policy Engagement

In light of the new National Ocean Policy and the launch of the National Ocean Council (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 U.S. Coral Reef Task Force has focused its activities on effectively engaging with the National Ocean Council to ensure that coral reef ecosystem conservation is an integral part of the National Ocean Policy. Given its twelve-year history of intergovernmental engagement, the U.S. Coral Reef Task Force can provide leadership to the National Ocean Policy for efforts to protect and restore coral reef ecosystems. The U.S. Coral Reef Task Force has identified three National Ocean Policy priority objectives that align with its current priorities and efforts:

- Resiliency and Adaptation to Climate Change and Acidification (priority objective 5);
- Regional Ecosystem Protection and Restoration (priority objective 6); and
- Water Quality and Sustainable Practices on Land (priority objective 7).

The U.S. Coral Reef Task Force identified specific activities that can be undertaken in relation to these three priority objectives, which are proposed for inclusion in the National Ocean Council Implementation Strategy currently under development.

U.S. Coral Reef Task Force Watershed Partnership Initiative

Recognizing that the threat of land-based sources of pollution on coral reef ecosystems crosses multiple jurisdictional boundaries and authority and responsibility to address it falls to a multitude of governmental and jurisdictional levels, the U.S. Coral Reef Task Force initiated a Watershed Partnership Initiative in 2009. The intent of this partnership is to coordinate agency resources and

expertise to implement geographically specific and integrated activities, while also promoting consistent and strengthened application and enforcement of laws and authorities intended to address land-based sources of pollution.

The U.S. Coral Reef Task Force Watershed Partnership Initiative includes two distinct components: (1) individual federal and state/territory agency contributions through direct application of resources, technical assistance, and/or program expertise and (2) a competitive funding opportunity that awards federal funds to local organizations and individuals to implement small to mid-scale projects. This fund is administered through the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation. The U.S. Coral Reef Task Force is implementing this partnership approach in two watersheds, Guanica Bay/Rio Loco in Puerto Rico (2009) and Ka'anapali in West Maui, Hawaii (2010), with a third watershed in American Samoa to be added in 2012.

Guánica Bay Puerto Rico
Since 2009, USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) has contributed Environmental Quality Incentive Program funds for 31 farmers to implement core and supporting conservation measures throughout the lower, mid and upper watershed areas. NOAA Coral Reef Conservation Program is funding work to assess habitat restoration feasibility options, providing capacity and community coordination support, and conducting in-water sediment monitoring. The USFWS is working to support the transition of sun grown coffee plantations to shade grown coffee plantations. Between 2010 and 2011 the USFWS has contributed through the Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program and the Coastal Program to produce 30,000 native trees of which 11,400 have been planted to convert 316 acres of sun coffee production into shade coffee production in 16 private lands. In 2011, 22 new landowners joined the program. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) has conducted water quality monitoring in the bay and is working with other federal agencies and the local community to develop a decision support tool for determining management and restoration strategies. Agencies involved that are directly contributing resources, expertise and other technical assistance include NRCS, NOAA, USFWS and the USEPA.

Ka'aanapali, Maui Hawaii
In the Ka'aanapali watershed, NOAA is developing a watershed management plan that incorporates coral reef protection measures for the two priority watersheds within Ka'aanapali (Honokowai and Wahikuli). Additionally, in the true spirit of a ridge to reef approach to coral reef ecosystem management, NOAA is supporting fisheries research in the Kahekili Herbivore Enhancement Area (see the Fishing Impacts and Marine Protected Areas section for more details on this project). USEPA is conducting a range of water quality monitoring studies, most significantly a wastewater plume tracer study to determine time of travel between injection well and ocean seeps, which includes measurement of groundwater flux and nutrient flux. USDA is working to engage local landowners in volunteer land conservation programs. The U.S. Geological Survey has conducted submarine groundwater discharge efforts and studies of coastal circulation along west Maui, including assessing the location, quantity and chemistry of fresh water discharges in the area. This body of work will contribute to a holistic and adaptive management approach to understanding and restoring Ka'aanapali and the surrounding watersheds.

Next and Future Steps
The U.S. Coral Reef Task Force will continue to promote national programmatic partnerships effectively directed towards on-the-ground conservation actions and solutions and will build on this strong foundation to develop and advance new and innovative opportunities for collaboration among Federal agencies and coral reef jurisdictions. The U.S. Coral Reef Task Force will work to better utilize individual member authorities, programs, and expertise at the national and local level to respond more effectively to those threats that the U.S. Coral Reef Task Force has the capacity to address.

C. C. Status Review of 82 Species of Coral under the U.S. Endangered Species Act

On October 20, 2009, the U.S. government (USG) received a petition from the Center for Biological Diversity to list 83 species of coral in the Caribbean and Indo-Pacific as threatened or endangered

under the U.S. Endangered Species Act (ESA) and to designate critical habitat at the time of listing. The petition asserted the populations of all 83 species have been reduced by at least 30 percent over a 30-year period, and noted that some species are listed as either vulnerable (76) or critically endangered (1) by the World Conservation Union.

On February 10, 2010, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), as the lead agency tasked with overseeing the USG response to the petition, published a determination that the petition presented substantial scientific or commercial information indicating that listing may be warranted for 82 of the 83 petitioned species. A Biological Review Team (BRT), composed of Federal scientists, was established to examine the status of the 82 coral species in question and evaluate, based on the best available scientific information, the extinction risk for each species. The BRT was not charged with making recommendations regarding whether one or more species should be listed under the ESA. In September 2011, NOAA finalized the Status Review Report after it was peer-reviewed by the Center for Independent Experts. Separately, NOAA drafted a Management Report to evaluate management activities affecting coral species across their range, including existing regulatory mechanisms and conservation efforts. Together, these two reports constitute the best available scientific and commercial information that NOAA has compiled to date on the 82 species of coral under review.

This status review is a major undertaking because of the large number and geographically dispersed nature of the coral species involved. Therefore, on April 17, 2012, NOAA announced an extension of the previously-approved deadline for determining whether the petitioned action is or is not warranted. The new deadline of December 1, 2012, will allow additional opportunity for the public to provide NOAA with information that may further inform that determination. NOAA will accept information up to July 31, 2012; during this period NOAA will hold two public listening sessions and two public scientific workshops, which will explain the evaluation process and provide the public and experts a forum to provide information. Further, NOAA is hosting an information session during the International Coral Reef Symposium to engage the international coral reef community.
After reviewing all the relevant information received, should NOAA determine that any of the 82 species warrant listing as threatened or endangered, NOAA will issue a proposed rule on or before December 1, 2012, and open a public comment period. A species may be listed under the ESA if it is threatened or endangered due to any one of the following five listing factors: (1) present or threatened destruction, modification, or curtailment of its habitat or range; (2) overutilization for commercial, recreational, scientific, or educational purposes; (3) disease or predation; (4) Inadequacy of existing regulations; and (5) other natural or man-made factors affecting its continued existence. NOAA will finalize any rule within one year of publishing a proposed rule, if warranted, after considering all relevant information received. If any corals are listed, NOAA may consider developing rules for any threatened species, may consider designating critical habitat, and may prepare recovery plans.

3. Contribution to the ICRI GM

Your responses to the following questions will assist the Secretariat in assessing contributions towards the major themes of the current ICRI action plan and objectives of the general meeting.

a. Management effectiveness

Are you engaged in an assessment of management effectiveness in your marine areas? If so, the ICRI Secretariat invites members to provide a 5-minute presentation on a case study relative to assessing the management effectiveness of an MPA during the management effectiveness workshop that will be held on the Tuesday (17 July). The 5 minute presentation will provide an overview of:

- What kind of assessment was undertaken
- How the results of this assessment are being used.

The presentation can be illustrated with a PowerPoint presentation or not; if a PowerPoint is used than it should not exceed 5 slides.

Please indicate whether you would like to provide a presentation as described above:

☐ **YES** ☒ **NO**

Is there any other aspect of management effectiveness you would like to share with ICRI members?

b. Community stewardship

Are there any activities or initiatives involving community engagement in coastal marine management that you are involved with?

All of the activities listed under question 2 involve community stewardship.

4. Is there any other topic you would like to raise during the meeting?

☒ **YES** ☐ **NO**

If yes, please indicate which topic and the reason why you would like to raise it:

The outcomes of ICRS and upcoming CITES COP.

Proposed listing of 82 coral species on the Endangered Species Act

5. Please list publications, reports you have been released since the last meeting.

Title (incl. author and date)	**Type of publication (Paper, report etc.)**

6. Please indicate upcoming coral reef-related meetings you will attend

International Coral Reef Symposium, 9-13 July, Cairns, Australia ☒

IUCN World Conservation Congress, 6-15 September 2012, Jeju ☒

➔ *Are you planning to organise a side event? Please indicate:*

11th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties on Biological Diversity (COP-11), 8-19 October 2012, Hyderabad, India ☒

Other: