

U.S. CORAL REEF TASK FORCE

Briefing Paper to Highlight Current Activities and Initiatives

Prepared for the Senior Plenary Session of the Interagency Group on Insular Areas

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Issue: The U.S. Coral Reef Task Force (USCRTF) was established in 1998 by Presidential Executive Order 13089 to lead U.S. efforts to preserve and protect coral reef ecosystems. The USCRTF helps build partnerships, strategies and support for on-the-ground action to conserve coral reefs.

HIGHLIGHTS:

- The USCRTF includes leaders of 12 Federal agencies, seven States, Territories and Commonwealths, and three Freely Associated States. It is co-chaired by the Department of the Interior and NOAA.
- The USCRTF adopted the National Action Plan to Conserve Coral Reefs in 2000, the first national blueprint for U.S. domestic and international action to address the growing coral reef crisis. The plan outlines 13 integrated conservation strategies to address the most pressing challenges.
- USCRTF members meet bi-annually to discuss key issues, propose new actions, present progress reports, and update the coral reef community on past accomplishments and future plans. The USCRTF Steering Committee, made up of representatives from each of the participating Federal agencies, states and territories, meets monthly to discuss progress on current USCRTF initiatives and plan new areas for collaboration.
- Since 1994, OIA has worked closely with island governments to identify local and regional priorities for protection and sustainable use of their marine resources, and especially their coral reefs. OIA annually provides \$1million from its Coral Reef Initiative program to support these priority projects.
- The USCRTF convened its 25th meeting on February 24, 2011 at the Department of the Interior.
- Among the topics discussed at the upcoming meeting was the role the USCRTF will play in the implementation of the National Ocean Policy. With a national scope and broad participation, the USCRTF will be a leading intergovernmental body contributing to implementation of the National Ocean Policy. Strong leadership and active engagement by ALL members of the USCRTF in the National Ocean Policy is essential to ensuring that the insular areas' interests are considered in this national effort.

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