

2015 U.S. Coral Reef Task Force Meeting Summary Report

This report was supported by The Nature Conservancy under cooperative agreement award #NA15NOS4820097 from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) Coral Reef Conservation Program, U.S. Department of Commerce. The statements, findings, conclusions, and recommendations are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of NOAA, the NOAA Coral Reef Conservation Program, or the U.S. Department of Commerce.

Report: 2015 US Coral Reef Task Force, October 24 to October 31, 2015 Fajardo, Puerto Rico.

The United States Coral Reef Task Force (USCRTF) was established in 1998 by Presidential Executive Order to lead U.S. efforts to preserve and protect coral reef ecosystems. The USCRTF includes leaders of twelve (12) Federal agencies, seven (7) U.S. States, Territories, Commonwealths and three (3) Freely Associated States. The USCRTF helps build partnerships, strategies, and support for on-the-ground action to conserve coral reefs. Every year they hold two meetings, one in Washington DC and the other one in one of their jurisdictions-states. This year Puerto Rico hosted the 34th USCRTF meeting in Fajardo, October 24 – 31, 2015 (Meeting Agenda can be found in Appendix A).

In partnership with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) Coral Reef Conservation Program, The Nature Conservancy (TNC) supported this year's USCRTF by coordinating and facilitating the following activities:

I. Community Sharing Session – October 28, 2015

TNC Staff supported this year's USCRTF by engaging high level US Federal and local government officials, stakeholders, communities, and partner jurisdictions in sharing lessons learned from Puerto Rico's coral reef conservation efforts. During the USCRTF, TNC hosted the USCRTF Community Sharing Session at the Governor's Beach House, *Finca el Convento*, which was attended by high level government officials, local NGOs and community members. During the event representatives from nine local NGOs presented their work and efforts in the conservation of coral reefs.

II. Contractor Position to support the USCRTF planning process

To support the PR Department of Environmental and Natural Resources (DNER) during the USCRTF planning process, TNC sponsored a contractor position (Ahava Events Puerto Rico) to join the USCRTF meeting planning committee, composed of representatives from agencies and jurisdictions that make the Task Force, such as NOAA (Sherry Simpson, Antares Ramos, Rob Ferguson and Carey Morishige), Department of Interior (Cheryll Fossani) and DRNA (Damaris Delgado and Tania Metz). The contractor was tasked with coordinating between agencies, organizations, and stakeholder groups and bringing local support and connections to the USCRTFM planning committee. During this planning process, TNC's contractor was responsible of the following tasks:

- Frequent in-person meetings and daily communication with local representatives (Tania Metz and Damaris Delgado) to review documents, letters and proposals regarding sponsorship and venue options and provide advice on event logistics and budget management.
- Provide options for venue, vendor proposal analysis, budget management and solicit sponsorship for activities.

- Design and develop the USCRTF 2015 webpage and registration form, including editing of the page and follow up with participant's daily registration for events. (<http://uscrtfm2015.weebly.com>)
- Weekly conference meetings with the Watershed Workshop and USCRTFM planning committee as well as follow up with daily emails and phone calls from representatives of the planning committee, vendors and other participants.
- Meetings and site inspections with El Conquistador and its sales staff (Beatriz Palerm and Betzaida Vélez) regarding negotiations for Room Block, rates and concessions for guests; rates and pricing on meeting rooms, food and beverages for meetings (coffee breaks and lunches), BEOs, AV equipment and meeting room set up and design and contracts based on provided USCRTFM budget, PO and meeting's needs and purpose.
- Planning of nightly events, including logistics, entertainment, set up, menus, agenda and transportation (AIC Dinner, Reception and VIP Dinner)
- Sponsorships (negotiation, communications, proposal and follow up).

III. Field trips and Site Visits

TNC hosted the following 2 field trips to Coral Priority Regions for high level US Federal and local government officials:

- Snorkeling and site visits to Culebra - This trip included visits to sites that include watershed restoration techniques utilized to abate land-based sources of pollution (LBSP), coral nurseries to grow coral fragments for restoration, and areas of coral propagation to expand coral habitat area.
- Diving in *Arrecifes la Cordillera* of the Northeast Reserve - This trip included alternated site visits to the Natural Reserve and the Northeast Ecological Corridor Natural Reserve. Cordillera Nature Reserve consists of a chain system formed by cays, islands and reefs. The Northeast Ecological Corridor is a Natural Reserve that protects over 45 miles of coastal ecosystems that include beaches of national importance for the nesting of marine tortoises. Its marine extension covers important ecosystems of seagrass and reefs that serve as habitat for species of ecological and commercial interests.

IV. 34th USCRTF Logo

TNC sponsored a local graphic designer to design and create the 34th USCRTF logo. An image of the logo is found in Appendix B.

Appendix A. USCRTF Meeting - Weekly Agenda

	Saturday, 10/24	Monday, 10/26	Tuesday, 10/27	Wednesday, 10/28	Thursday, 10/29	Friday, 10/30
7:00 AM					7:00 AM-5:00 PM	
8:00 AM		8:00 AM-12:00 PM Mitigación WO Mtg Flamboyán Ballroom	8:00 AM-11:30 AM Watershed Workshop Magnolia Ballroom	8:00 AM-12:00 PM EPA Caribbean Coral Reef Partnership Meeting Flamboyán Ballroom	7:00 AM-3:00 PM Guayánilla NOAA Restoration Center (Habitat Focus Area)	7:00 AM-6:00 PM Site Visits: El Yunque Culebra La Cordillera Reefs
9:00 AM	2:00 AM-5:00 PM			8:00 AM-3:00 PM Steering Committee Retreat Magnolia Ballroom	'CLOSED' NRCB Guánica Watershed Fieldtrip Guánica overflight	
10:00 AM	AIC Meeting				Beach Day: Palomino Island Individually Coordinated	
11:00 AM	Flamboyán Ballroom					
12:00 PM		Lunch	Lunch	Lunch		
1:00 PM		1-5:00 PM AIC Meeting Strategic Planning Flamboyán Ballroom	1-5:00 PM Federal Meeting Magnolia Ballroom	10-4:00 PM Interactive Watershed Workshop	'CLOSED' NRCB Guánica Watershed Fieldtrip Guánica overflight	
2:00 PM				2-4:30 PM EPA Meeting Invite Only Flamboyán	12:200 PM- Lunch	
3:00 PM				3:00-5:00pm Steering Committee Meeting Magnolia Ballroom	Business Meeting	
4:00 PM			4-6:00 PM Poster Session Poinsettia Ballroom			
5:00 PM						
6:00 PM		6-10:00 PM Kayak Tour of Bio Bay (Individually Coordinated)	6-10:00 PM Evening Site Visit: Cabezas de San Juan - Bioluminescence and light pollution tour	5:30-10:00 PM TNC Welcome Reception: Finca el Convento	5:30-10:00 PM WP Dinner INVITE ONLY	
7:00 PM						

