



NOAA Coral Reef Conservation Program Fiscal Year 2008 Accomplishments

In fiscal year (FY) 2008 the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Coral Reef Conservation Program (CRCP) received over \$29 million to support activities to conserve, manage, and understand coral reef ecosystems in the U.S. and around the world. Below are just a few of the many accomplishments of the NOAA CRCP and its partners in FY08.

Released Its Roadmap for the Future. In response to the recommendations that came out of its FY07 external program review, the CRCP released a 'Roadmap for the Future' to set the program's direction for FY 2010-2015. The Program:

- Will primarily focus its future efforts on addressing coral reef management needs in a cost-effective and efficient manner by understanding and addressing three key threat areas: the impacts of fishing, impacts of land-based sources of pollution, and impacts of climate change; and
- Established three working groups to provide recommendations on the strategic goals and objectives it should work towards to effectively address each of these three threats.



The artist Wyland created a painting in honor of International Year of the Reef 2008. © Wyland 2008

Lead NOAA Activities for IYOR 2008. International Year of the Reef 2008 (IYOR 2008) was a year-long global campaign to raise awareness of the importance of coral reef ecosystems, the threats they face, and additional conservation actions that are still needed. NOAA's participation in IYOR 2008 included:

- Launching IYOR 2008, including a press briefing, an official launch reception, and a half-day symposium;
- Hosting a decision-makers forum and reception at Capitol Hill Oceans Week to broaden Congressional interest in coral reefs;
- Unveiling and dedication of a commemorative painting by the artist Wyland;
- Launching a U.S. IYOR Messaging Campaign;
- Providing \$200,000 in mini grants for CRCP offices to develop and implement education and outreach activities; and
- Participating in and sponsorship of the 11th International Coral Reef Symposium, where over 80 oral and poster presentations were given and three major reports were unveiled.

Celebrated 10th Anniversary of USCRTF. This year marked the 10th anniversary of the U.S. Coral Reef Task Force (USCRTF), which is co-chaired by NOAA via the CRCP. As part of its activities to mark this occasion, the USCRTF:

- Produced a Call to Action outlining a refined focus on adverse impacts of fishing, water quality, and climate change;
- Produced the *Implementation of the National Coral Reef Action Strategy: Report on U.S. Coral Reef Task Force Agency Activities from 2004 – 2006*, a congressionally mandated report providing examples of the activities conducted by USCRTF members and their partners to reduce the threats to these valuable marine ecosystems;
- Released an educational resources CD as a product of the Education and Outreach Working Group; and
- Redesigned the USCRTF Web site.

Increased Deep-Sea Coral Activities. This year the CRCP increased its deep-sea coral activities by:

- Releasing [*The State of Deep Coral Ecosystems of the United States*](#), providing assessment of deep coral ecosystems in seven regions of U.S. waters; and
- Releasing the first biennial report to Congress on the [*Implementation of the Deep Sea Coral Research and Technology Program*](#), called for in the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Reauthorization Act of 2006, providing information on steps taken to identify, monitor, and protect deep-sea coral.

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Bleaching workshop participants conduct a resilience survey in the Florida Keys. Credit: NOAA Coral Reef Watch

Supplied Resources to Help Reef Managers Address Coral Bleaching. The CRCP worked with partners to continue addressing the threat of coral bleaching by providing reef managers with tools to understand climate change and coral bleaching and take action. The CRCP:

- Conducted bleaching workshops in Florida and Hawai'i – over 150 managers from 18 countries have now been trained using *A Reef Manager's Guide to Coral Bleaching*;
- Expanded automated E-mail alerts of potential bleaching conditions to 190 domestic and international reef sites; and
- Launched an experimental seasonal bleaching outlook to predict potential bleaching.

Released Coral Reef Ecosystem Report. The *State of Coral Reef Ecosystems of the United States and Pacific Freely Associated States: 2008* report:

- Includes input from more than 270 scientists and managers to provide 15 jurisdiction-specific chapters that assess the condition of coral reef ecosystems; and
- Grades coral ecosystems on a five tier scale: excellent, good, fair, poor and unknown for which nearly half are considered to be in poor or fair condition.

Awarded \$10.6 Million in Coral Reef Conservation Grants. The CRCP awarded almost \$10.6 million in grants to external partners in support of coral reef research, education, management, monitoring, and conservation. These grants:

- Represented over 32 % of the FY2008 budget, supporting a range of activities and four coral research Institutes; and
- Were awarded through the jointly managed NOAA-National Fish and Wildlife Foundation Coral Fund and NOAA's six-category Coral Reef Conservation Grants Program, Center for Sponsored Coastal Ocean Research, and the Office of National Marine Sanctuaries.

Launched Training Program for Socioeconomic Monitoring in the Pacific.

The SEM-Pasifika Training Program was designed to address end-to-end needs for practitioners conducting socioeconomic assessments in the Pacific region; it:

- Trained 18 individuals from 10 Pacific jurisdictions; and
- Included an intensive workshop, funds to conduct a socioeconomic assessment, and consultation and a site visit from a technical adviser.



SEM-Pasifika training participants conduct a household interview in RMI. Credit: Christy Loper

Assisted Pacific Jurisdictions With Protection of Their Coral Reef Resources Through Monitoring.

Pacific Reef Assessment and Monitoring (RAMP) cruises conduct extensive benthic habitat mapping, ecological and environmental assessment and monitoring, and apply management-relevant research throughout the U.S.-affiliated Pacific Islands. In FY2008 the CRCP:

- Completed RAMP cruises to the Pacific Remote Island Areas and American Samoa (AS);
- Sponsored participation of AS's Governor on the AS portion of the RAMP cruise;
- Published the *Coral Reef Ecosystem Monitoring Report for American Samoa: 2002-2006*, a comprehensive ecosystem assessment of the coral reefs of AS; and
- Influenced resource management efforts to improve the conservation of coral reef ecosystems in the region.

Advanced Field of Cyanide Detection. The CRCP implemented a series of initiatives to address the illegal use of cyanide to capture live reef fish for both the food industry and the aquarium trade, a practice that leads to high mortality rates of the captured fish and also damages or kills corals and other organisms on the reefs. The CRCP:

- Funded and hosted the International Cyanide Detection Testing Workshop for representatives from fisheries and law enforcement agencies, and forensic laboratories; and
- Released the [*Proceedings of the International Cyanide Detection Testing Workshop*](#), providing a framework to implement networks of detection laboratories to advance international efforts to enforce bans on this type of fishing.

Addressed Ocean Acidification. The CRCP is also actively engaged in addressing the rapidly emerging issue of ocean acidification (OA) through monitoring, research, and outreach. In FY2008 the CRCP:

- Created an OA test-bed in Puerto Rico which serves as a nexus of research and monitoring activities, including work to design a Coral Reef OA Monitoring Network; and
- Developed an experimental satellite-based product that monitors OA throughout the Caribbean; and
- Initiated base-line characterization of carbonate chemistry at remote Pacific coral reef ecosystems to help refine OA critical thresholds which could prove severely detrimental to coral reefs.