

National Coral Reef Management Fellowship Newsletter

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2022--2024 Coral Fellows. L to R: Tilali Scanlan (AS), Lara Noren (HI), Ashley Perez (PR) Sam Cook (FL), Erin Bowman (USVI), Elly Perez (CNMI), Camille Quichocho (GU)

Photo: Motu o Manu lagoon, American Samoa. Credit: Tilali Scanlan/CRAG-AS.



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Fellowship Training at NSU Guy Harvey Oceanographic Center

Fort Lauderdale, Florida

Fellows convened for four days at the NSU Guy Harvey Oceanographic Center for their year two training. It consisted of trainings in conflict resolution and leadership, site visits to the Mote Marine Lab, and updates on the Fellows' projects.

This also gave the Fellows important opportunities to reconnect with each other and discuss cross-jurisdictional challenges and successes.



Fellows (above) at the Guy Harvey Oceanographic Center and at the Mote Marine Lab (below)

2023 Professional Development

Elly Perez (CNMI) and Erin Bowman (US Virgin Islands)

In March of 2023, Elly and Erin traveled to the Maldives for a training on Mapping Technologies and Monitoring Techniques in Coral Reef Environments with the Marine Research and High Education (MaRHE) Center. This training brought together scientists from 10 different countries and many different backgrounds to learn about the most advanced techniques used to map coastal and nearshore environments. The main methodologies discussed in the workshop were drone surveys utilizing unmanned aerial vehicles, three dimensional reef mapping using photogrammetry, and acoustic benthic surveys conducted with multibeam echosounder technology.

Both Elly and Erin found the data collection and post-processing methods discussed to be extremely beneficial, but have particular interest in applying photogrammetry techniques to monitoring and restoration efforts in their respective jurisdictions. Underwater photogrammetry has quickly become a popular tool and can be used in many different ways. From coral outplant monitoring to the development of education and outreach materials, the many applications of this particular skill set made this experience extremely valuable as Elly and Erin move forward in their careers.



Elly and Erin posing outside the MaRHE Center on the last day of the workshop

An example of restoration at work! These "spider frames" were installed 3 years ago and are now the home of large thriving corals and tons of fish!



Sam Cook (Florida)

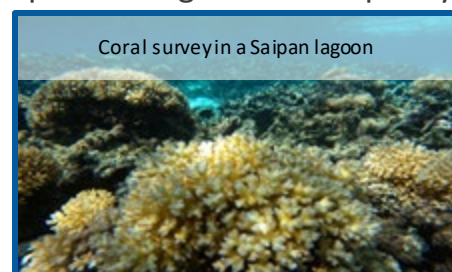
After attending the US Coral Reef Task Force (USCRTF) Meeting in Kona last year, Sam decided to attend the spring meeting in Washington, DC for her professional development. While there, she acted as support staff for the Florida Point of Contact and was able to attend numerous meetings related to coral reef management and policy action. This included a special session on the Coral Reef Conservation Act (CRCA), a new piece of legislation that will support all seven US jurisdictions with coral reefs. In addition, she attended several working group meetings related to coral disease and the end of the week Business Meeting, which included report-outs on the week's progress. Attending USCRTF in DC allowed Sam to participate in and observe conversations she would otherwise never been part of.

Sam also was able to visit Capitol Hill with Florida's Chief Resilience Officer and the Coral Protection and Restoration Program Administrator. They met with five Florida state representatives to thank them for their support of the CRCA and to discuss impact of Stony Coral Tissue Loss Disease on Florida's Coral Reef.

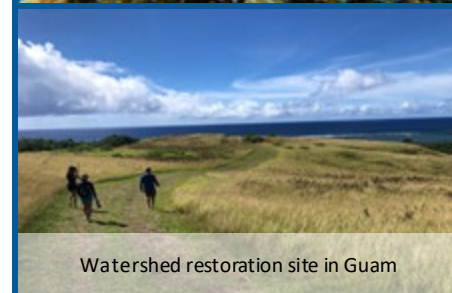
Lara Noren (Hawai'i)

To learn more about coral reef management priorities and challenges throughout the Pacific region, Lara spent two weeks in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands and Guam with the CNMI Bureau of Environmental and Coastal Quality and the Guam Coral Reef Initiative.

On this learning exchange, she learned about planning efforts with coral reef restoration for shoreline protection. She learned how these islands are implementing water quality improvement projects to reduce sedimentation. She also participated in benthic surveys in lagoons to monitor coral habitat health.



Coral survey in a Saipan lagoon



Watershed restoration site in Guam

Coral Fellow Updates

Ashley at an outreach event with children



Ashley Perez (Puerto Rico)

The most gratifying and successful experience to date has been the opportunity to plan and execute PR Coral Week 2023. The week is a chance to showcase and provide a platform for collaborators, managers and scientists working on coral reef conservation to communicate their invaluable projects in an interdisciplinary way with the general public. This year, with the help of all of these amazing groups we were able to host 51 inspiring islandwide events, culminating on June 10th with a Family Symposium. The Symposium was one of the greatest events I had the honor to organize with an attendance of over 600 people, expert panels, interactive activities for children, virtual reality adventures into the reefs, a look into the future of restoration with 3D printing and photogrammetry, poster session and information tables. It was truly the most magical day.



Tilali Scanlan (American Samoa)

During this time period, I have had opportunities to work on various projects in Tutuila, Ofu and Muliava with local partners like the National Park System American Samoa, the National Marine Sanctuary of American Samoa, and the National Fish and Wildlife Service. My main focuses have been on coral restoration projects, coral relocation, coral disease sampling and monitoring, and community outreach. I have thoroughly enjoyed my time with Coral Reef Advisory Group and the Department of Marine and Water Resources and am looking forward to finishing off my Fellowship locally.

Tilali with co-workers after surveying



Tilali Investigating corals of opportunity



Reef flat in American Samoa



Camille Quichocho (Guam)

In April 2023, I led my first stakeholder workshop to discuss the planning process for Guam's Coral Reef Restoration Action Plan, which is outlined in the *Manager's Guide to Restoration Planning and Design*. Many considerations go into each decision, including choosing restoration sites. The workshop was a safe space for stakeholders to ask questions and share their concerns about the sites that the planning teams had chosen for their respective goals. Because the Action Plan is a stakeholder-driven document that will guide Guam's coral restoration efforts for the next decade, we want to ensure that our stakeholders have the opportunity to understand how the teams made decisions and take their input into consideration. Our stakeholders have a plethora of personal and professional experiences that will only strengthen the Action Plan, and their support of our efforts will ensure that we are all doing our part to protect Guam's coral reefs. Moving forward, the planning teams will finalize the selection of restoration sites, and the next step is to choose interventions.

Camille hosting workshops on coral restoration



Former Fellows: Where are they Now?

Cara Lin (Guam)



Cara conducting in-water surveys with co-workers



Cara attending the ISBW14 meeting

After completing her term as the 2020 to 2022 Guam Coral Reef Management Fellow, Cara is continuing to build upon her work as Guam's first Seagrass and Mangrove Conservation Coordinator. During her fellowship Cara was able to successfully obtain funding for creating her new position from the US Department of the Interior's Coral Reef and Natural Resources grant program. She is working on various projects including, seagrass restoration planning, creating educational materials for teachers, growing mangroves for outplanting, and planning art-based outreach events. Cara is excited to continue using skills she learned during the fellowship program, including GIS, science communication, and stakeholder outreach. Especially in light of climate change, she hopes her work can help bolster the resiliency of Guam's coral reefs and marine ecosystems.

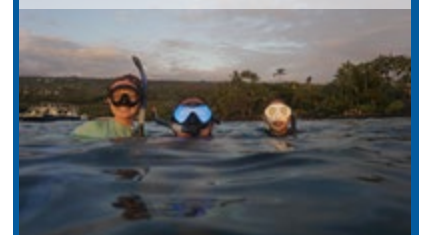
Shallow reef flat in American Samoa



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Fellows snorkel in Kona, HI



The National Coral Reef Management Fellowship was established in 2003 to respond to the need for additional coral reef management capacity in the U.S. coral reef jurisdictions in the Pacific and Atlantic/Caribbean. The fellowship is a partnership between the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Coral Reef Conservation Program, the U.S. Department of Interior's Office of Insular Affairs, the U.S. All Islands Coral Reef Committee, and Nova Southeastern University's Halmos College of Natural Sciences and Oceanography. The program's vision is a thriving collaborative fellowship program that builds excellent next generation leaders and capacity for effective local coral reef ecosystem management.

