



## **Common Wealth of the Northern Mariana Islands Coral Reef Management Fellowship 2013-2014 Position Description**

### **Project Location**

The project will take place principally on the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI), which is a territory of the United States. The fellow will reside and carry out much of the project on the island of Saipan. The fellow will also work closely with partners on the islands of Rota and Tinian, CNMI. The lead host agency for the 2013-2014 Coral Management Fellowship is the Division of Fish and Wildlife (DFW) located in Lower Base, on Saipan. In addition to DFW, the Division of Environmental Quality (DEQ) and the Coastal Resources Management (CRM) Office will co-host the CNMI Coral Management Fellowship.

CNMI consists of 14 islands in the Western Pacific totaling less than 185 square miles, covering a span of over 375 miles north to south. These islands are divided into two distinct geological types, with the southern islands characterized as raised limestone and the northern islands being volcanic. The southern populated islands of Saipan, Rota, and Tinian are populated with approximately 45,000 people on Saipan, 3,000 on Rota, and 3,000 on Tinian. The remaining islands are relatively uninhabited and undeveloped. All the islands have coral reefs, with the southern populated islands being the oldest and most developed, and the remaining northern volcanic islands being relatively young with underdeveloped coral reef systems.

### **Program/Agency Background**

The people of CNMI value coral reef resources and are committed to their protection. Coral reef resources are used by everyone in the community. Other than providing traditional and subsistence use for the CNMI community, coral reefs are also economically important for the tourism industry. Both the public and private sectors of the community are aware and concerned about the conservation and sustainable use of coral reef resources in the CNMI. Additionally, coral reefs are culturally important to the indigenous people of the Marianas. Cultural tradition has been and continues to be perpetuated through the use these resources.

Population and development over the past decade in the CNMI has increased the threats to the coral reef ecosystems and has led to the degradation of coral reefs and associated habitats. These effects are most noticeable on the island of Saipan, where approximately 90 percent of CNMI's population resides. Consequently, the majority of the coral reef management efforts have focused on Saipan. However, the other islands also have important coral reef ecosystems that are threatened by human impacts. This decline may resonate to the CNMI's tourism industry. The CNMI government considers coral reef ecosystem conservation and management a high-priority concern.

DFW, DEQ and CRM are the three primary agencies involved in coral reef-related issues and activities in CNMI. DFW is the primary regulatory agency for natural resources in CNMI. It is responsible for developing, implementing, and enforcing programs and regulations designed to protect, conserve and promote marine and terrestrial resources. DFW is tasked with enforcing regulations that govern hunting, fishing and conservation of fish and wildlife in the CNMI. DFW is tasked with managing all locally established protected areas.

Equally, the Division of Environmental Quality is responsible for developing, implementing and enforcing programs designed to protect human and environmental health. DEQ is task with

monitoring air and water quality in the CNMI. Most of the marine effort is made through DEQ's water quality monitoring program and watershed programs. DEQ is a leader in environmental outreach, providing educational information on coral reefs conservation to the community. CRM was established to promote the conservation and wise development of coastal resources. CRM works to encourage land-use master planning, floodplain management, and the development of zoning and building code legislation. It also promotes, through a program of public education and participation, concepts of resource management, conservation, and wise development of coastal resources, and more efficient resource management.

DEQ, DFW and CRM conduct a variety of coral reef projects and activities, and acquire coral reef funds through collaborative grant proposals generated by three interagency coral reef committees. To address immediate key threats to CNMI's coral reef ecosystems, the coral reef committees, in collaboration with multiple diverse stakeholders, developed a three-year Coral Reef Protection Local Action Strategy (LAS), and supporting Conservation Action Plans (CAP). The LAS provides a road map of projects focused on the four major threat areas of land-based sources of pollution, public awareness and involvement, recreational use, and fisheries management. Historically, the implementation of the LAS and other efforts to reduce threats to coral reef ecosystems have been targeted primarily on Saipan. Rota and Tinian have not received as much attention due to their smaller populations and proportionately smaller resource base. However, Rota has recently been targeted through efforts of a prior coral management fellow, and the incoming fellow will continue engagement in both Rota and Tinian, in addition to Saipan.

## **Project Goals and Objectives**

The main goals for this fellowship are to assist DFW staff coordinate MPA efforts by implementing and advancing select tasks in MPA management plans already developed, and by assisting in the development of new MPA management plans. In addition, secondary goals include assisting watershed conservation efforts by supporting agency implementation of projects listed under Local Action Strategies and Conservation Action Plans in select areas. The fellow will assist in some or all of the following activities:

1. Carry out tasks listed in the select Marine Management Plans
2. Provide a supporting role in the development of a management plan for a Fish Reserve
3. Assist in the DFW in implementation of projects related to coral reef conservation
4. Improve and expand current public involvement in CAP/LAS efforts

## **Project Description**

The fellow will be primarily tasked to work with the DFW director in projects associated with the management plans for the CNMI's marine sanctuaries.

The marine management plans developed for the MPAs are a management tool developed by the CNMI DFW. The management plans allows us to focus our efforts on site-specific marine protected areas addressing targets such as coral reefs, fishes, turtles, vegetation, etc., that are threatened by land-based sources of pollution, poaching, lack of public awareness and habitat destruction. The fellow will focus efforts on the MPAs of Saipan, Tinian and Rota.

Additionally, the fellow will assist in the coordination of a marine management plan for the newly established Tinian Fish Reserve. This position will also assist in the coordination of future CAPs, setting up the workshops and ensuring that the appropriate people from each agency are participating.

Another initiative linked to CNMI's Coral Program and the CAP is the Micronesia Challenge (MC) declared by 5 governments, the Republic of Palau, Federated States of Micronesia, Republic of Marshall Islands, Territory of Guam and the Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas. The Challenge aims to conserve 30% of nearshore marine resources and 20%

forest/terrestrial resources at each jurisdiction. In addition, each jurisdiction is taking a separate approach on how the MC will be addressed. The CNMI is taking a watershed approach linking it with the CAP/LAS efforts. For more information, visit [www.micronesiachallenge.org](http://www.micronesiachallenge.org).

Ongoing projects include:

Implementation of the Laolao Bay Management Plan that includes volunteer-supported revegetation efforts, development of the Tasi Watch program and a social marketing campaign

Through the development of the CAP/LAS plans, the fellow will be involved in:

- Agency-contractor coordination of the workshops on each island of Rota, Tinian and Saipan
- Development of a management plan for each island's CAP following the workshops
- Placement and evaluation of education and outreach materials previously developed by past coral fellows and other LAS projects

The fellow will assist the Point of Contact (POC) in the course of the POC's activities such as developing CAPs, overseeing implementation of projects resulting from the CAP/LAS workshops, assist with packaging grants (i.e. gathering proposals from principal investigators for review and edit by the POC, assist with filling out federal forms) and reporting of LAS/CAP projects via NOAA's LAS web database.

The fellow will communicate and collaborate with DEQ, DFW, CRM, and other partner organizations and agencies to complete these projects. The fellow will be based in Saipan, and will address the above tasks concurrently.

### **Task 1: Orientation (3 months)**

The fellow will be introduced to staff members and management of DEQ, DFW and CRM, as well as other partners on Saipan including non-governmental agencies. The fellow will review background information regarding CNMI's Coral Reef Initiative LAS, CNMI marine protected area management plans, the Laolao Bay Management, the Micronesia Challenge and other coastal management issues. The fellow will participate with program staff members in field visits, interagency meetings, and outreach activities. After participating in these activities, the fellow, with input from the mentor, will write a project work plan that will be reviewed and revised after the first year of the fellowship.

#### **Outcomes/Deliverables:**

- Development of a targeted and detailed project work plan
- Familiarity with staff, operations, and resources of the state coastal program
- Integration into the DFW office and other resource agencies offices on Saipan
- Incorporation into DEQ, DFW and CRM outreach and education programs, marine and watershed monitoring programs, and conservation planning programs

### **Task 2: Research Existing Projects and Plan Coral Reef Protection Efforts (10 percent of time)**

The fellow will identify needs and collaborate with staff members to develop plans for the coordination and implementation of the CAP/LAS stakeholder involvement involving both government staff members and the public. The fellow will also work with the education and outreach coordinators in the natural resource agencies to collaborate with schools and community groups interested in natural resource conservation.

#### **Outcomes/Deliverables**

- Familiarity with existing programs
- Database of potential partners, volunteers, and outreach target audiences
- List of potential fellowship specific projects
- Increased interagency collaboration in outreach efforts

**Task 3: Implementation of MPA management plans (35 percent of time)**

The fellow will assist DFW in coordinating the implementation of the MPA management plans, including the island of Rota, and will require travel (paid by project) and remote coordination. It is not expected that all tasks within the management plan will be completed within the fellowship, but least three tasks within the management plans are required to be completed.

**Outcomes/Deliverables**

- Implementation of select tasks listed in the management plans for the Managaha Marine Conservation Area (MMCA), Bird Island Sanctuary (BIS), Forbidden Island Sanctuary (FIS) and Sasanhaya Bay Fish Reserve (SBFR)
- Increased community involvement and understanding of protecting marine resource

**Task 4: Development of a Management Plan for Tinian Fish Reserve (35 percent of time)**

The Coral Fellow will support DFW agency and staff in the development of a management plan for the Tinian Fish Reserve.

**Outcomes/Deliverables**

- Provide a supporting role to DWF staff in the development of a management plan for the Tinian Fish Reserve
- Participate and assist DWF in the planning process for the Tinian CAP
- Set up workshops related to CAP process, and ensure that the appropriate staff from relevant agencies and groups are participating

**Task 5: Assist in the Implementation of Laolao Bay CAP Management Plan/LAS that link with the Micronesia Challenge and other coral-related projects (20 percent of time)**

Working with input from DEQ, DFW, CRM staff, and other project partners, the fellow will assist with coordination of ongoing CAP/LAS projects. The fellow will further develop appropriate materials and messages for the public and other audiences related to CAP/LAS projects, some of which may include contributing to ongoing awareness campaigns and community participation in watershed projects.

**Outcomes/Deliverables**

- Assist DFW staff in the implementation of select projects outlined in the Laolao Bay CAP Management Plan in Saipan
- Increased community involvement and understanding of the CAP/LAS process and how it links with the Micronesia Challenge
- Completion of a social marketing campaign with agency partners

**Task 6: Evaluate Fellowship Program, Pass on Relevant Information to New Fellow (Last 3 months)**

The fellow will evaluate the successes and challenges of the programs implemented during the fellowship program. (S)he will prepare documents outlining lessons learned, important projects and programs to continue, and information to pass on to partners on Saipan and the next coral management fellow.

**Outcomes/Deliverables**

- Guidance documents for partners and future coral reef fellow
- Evaluation of programs