
US Virgin Islands

2010-2012 Statement of Work Coral Reef Management Fellowship

Project Location

The host agency for the NOAA Coral Management Fellowship in the U.S. Virgin Islands (USVI) is the Division of Coastal Zone Management (CZM) within the Department of Planning and Natural Resources. The Fellow will be located in the St. Croix CZM office.

The USVI are located approximately 1,400 miles south-southeast of Florida. St. Croix, St. John, and St. Thomas are the three largest islands with many offshore cays surrounding them. The islands have steep hills with lush, vegetated valleys that slope gently to the shoreline. Coastal habitats include rocky and white sandy beaches, mangrove wetlands, salt ponds, sea grass beds and coral reefs. The year round warm water temperatures and clarity provide ideal conditions for coral reef growth. Local coral reefs are comprised of fringing, patch, deep reefs and walls. The USVI climate is temperate, with temperatures ranging from approximately 78 °F to 94 °F.



Figure 1: The USVI are comprised of the three main islands of St. Croix, St. Thomas and St. John and numerous smaller offshore cays.

Program/Agency Background

The Virgin Islands Coastal Zone Management Act was passed by the USVI Legislature in 1978, as a mechanism to regulate development and manage territorial coastal resources. Several CZM goals set forth in the Virgin Island Coastal Zone Management Act, Section 903 (b) relate to the protection of coral reefs. In particular, CZM is charged with conserving ecologically significant resource areas for their contribution to marine productivity and valuable wildlife habitats, and preserving the function and integrity of reefs, marine meadows, salt ponds, mangroves, and other significant natural areas. The Governor of the USVI is a member of both the U.S. Coral Reef Task Force and the U.S. All Islands Committee; the Governor has appointed the CZM Director to be the USVI point of contact to these bodies on behalf of the territory. As such, CZM leads territorial efforts to conserve and manage coral reef ecosystems through the marine park, Local Action Strategy, and Territorial Coral Reef Monitoring Program initiatives.

USVI coral reef ecosystems are under heavy pressure. Hurricanes and major storms, increasing sea surface temperatures, and diseases have combined with anthropogenic impacts such as destructive boat anchoring practices, boat groundings and cargo spills, improper land use practices, and impacts from fishing have significantly deteriorated USVI coral reef health. Live coral cover has declined dramatically, particularly after the 2005/06 regional bleaching and subsequent coral disease event, while the abundance of macroalgae has increased proportionately. These changes have, and continue to, negatively affect the ecosystem goods and services territorial reefs provide to the USVI community.

While the USVI Government has taken many important steps to protect and manage its coral reef ecosystems, including establishment of marine protected areas, land use regulations and marine resource monitoring programs, coral reef health is not yet a priority for the community at large. In order to most effectively mitigate stressors to USVI coral reef ecosystems it is necessary to cultivate community ownership and pride in these resources, foster public support for their conservation and management and increase the demand for and interest in existing and future protected areas. In order to accomplish this, CZM has prioritized the creation of ecotourism models for two target areas: the St. Croix East End Marine Park (STXEEMP) and the St. Thomas East End Reserve (STEER), which can be used as a template for the wider territory and/or future marine parks.

The STXEEMP, the first territorial marine park, was established in 2003 and represents the culmination of more than 40 years of vision and several years of collaboration to protect significant coral reef and coastal habitat around the east end of St. Croix. The STXEEMP is a multi-use park encompassing 60 mi² of marine habitat, divided into four management zones: open fishing, recreation, wildlife protection and no-take areas. The purpose of the STXEEMP is to protect the area's natural and cultural resources for present and future generations, and is a first step toward a territorial marine park system. Currently, the park is staffed by five employees (Coral Reef Initiative Coordinator, Education and Outreach Coordinator, two Interpretive Rangers and an Administrative Aide) located at an office within the bounds of the park at Estate Great Pond. The STXEEMP operates a successful and growing outreach and education program, has installed signage throughout the park and is implementing a boundary and management zone marker project so that park rules and regulations may be enforced. While

the park is active in the community and programs are growing, there is a need to foster community support, engagement and appreciation for the park, particularly among the resident adult population. There is also a growing need for the park to increase its financial sustainability. The park is developing a sustainable financing strategy, which will be complemented by the development and implementation of an ecotourism model developed for the park by the coral reef management fellow. Development and implementation of an ecotourism product, associated marketing and communication strategies will dovetail with other park initiatives such as fundraising and traditional outreach education to promote the park as a destination, increase its value and demand with the resident community and achieve the goals and objectives of the park.

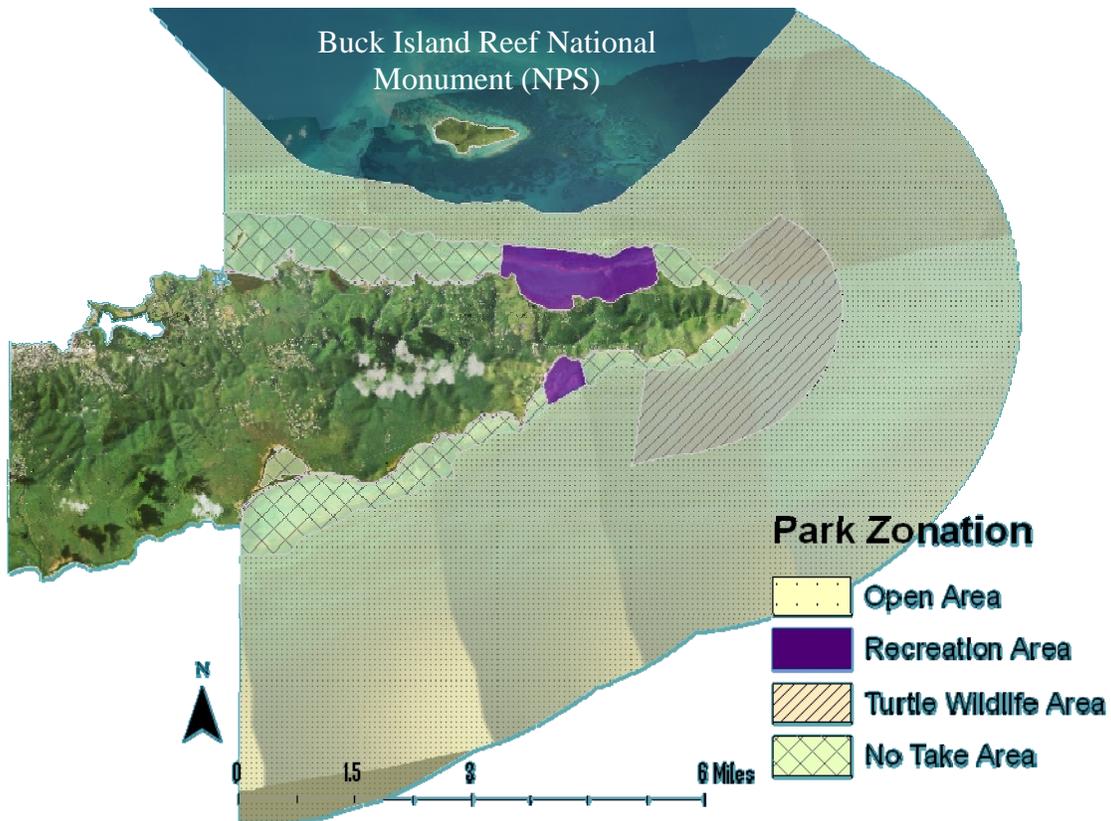


Figure 2: The STXEEMP surrounds the east end of St. Croix from the high water mark out to the 3-nautical mile territorial limit, is comprised of portions of the St. Croix Reef, Southgate, East End and Great Pond APCs and is adjacent to the federal MPA, Buck Island Reef National Monument. The park supports multiple uses and has four management zones.

The STEER is a collection of marine reserves and wildlife sanctuaries on the east end of St. Thomas. While the importance of these areas has been recognized, site management plans do not exist and there is very little active management of the areas. In recognition of the importance of area habitats and imminent threats to them, a collaborative planning process between the community and DPNR-CZM was initiated in May 2008 to develop a management plan for STEER. The intent of the plan is to restore and maintain a functional coastal ecosystem that promotes sustainable recreational opportunities and community engagement through effective

management. The draft management plan will be finalized and submitted for legislative approval in late 2009. A business plan will be developed to complement the management plan and implementation of both is slated to begin in early 2010. Creation of an ecotourism model for STEER will complement this existing process, support the development of STEER and help to generate public and decision-maker support for the area's management and designation of the territory's 2nd marine park.

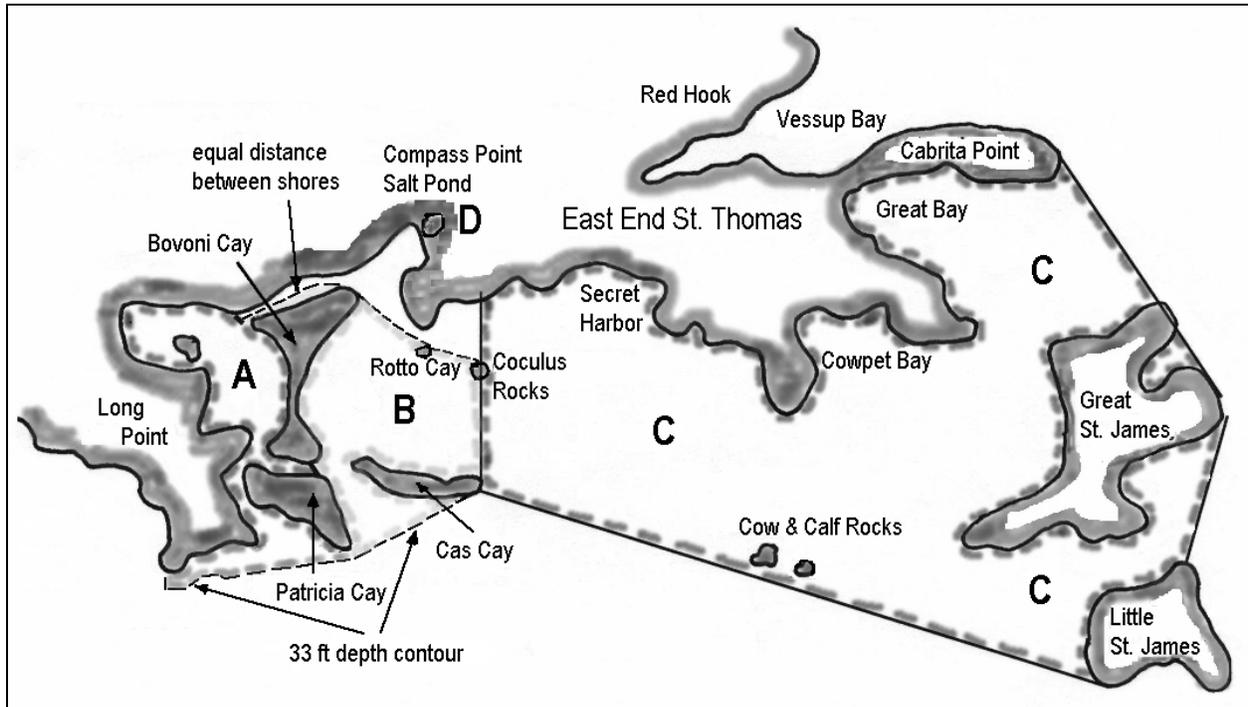


Figure 3: STEER, on the east end of St. Thomas is comprised of Cas Cay Mangrove Lagoon (A & B), St. James (C) and Compass Point (D) Marine Reserves and Wildlife Sanctuaries, and portions of Vessup Bay and Mangrove Lagoon/Benner Bay.

The NOAA Coral Reef Management Fellow will be housed within the St. Croix CZM office and will be expected to work closely with CZM staff and partners from all three islands, and specifically with CZM staff involved in the STXEEMP and STEER and the Division's larger coral reef initiative to support the development of these initiatives and to ensure a coordinated approach to advance community awareness and support for coral reef ecosystem management in general.

Project Goals & Objectives

The 2010-2012 Fellowship has two (2) overarching, related goals, intended to improve coral reef ecosystems: 1) to increase community ownership of coral reefs and support for their management through the creation and strengthening of an ecotourism market; and 2) to increase territorial leadership support for coral reef ecosystem management actions in

the STXEEMP and STEER by demonstrating their value through the development and implementation of ecotourism markets. Specific objectives within the scope of this fellowship include but may not be limited to:

- Develop ecotourism plans for the STXEEMP and STEER
- Develop marketing strategies to build support for and implement the ecotourism plans, and to increase public demand for and interest in the STXEEMP and STEER

Project Description

Below is a description of the project objectives, with general milestones and outcomes. The Fellow will be integrated into CZM, and will network with partner organizations and other agencies, as necessary to complete this project. The Fellow will be involved in each of these tasks and their skills, abilities and background will inform the strategies pursued for development and implementation. The fellowship starts January 2010 and will end January 2012.

Task 1: Orientation

Within the first three months the Fellow will be introduced to DPNR and CZM staff and partner agencies. The Fellow will be provided with pertinent background information on the USVI coral reef initiative, Local Action Strategies, coral reef ecosystem valuation, STXEEMP and STEER for review. The Fellow will participate with program staff in field visits, interagency meetings, and outreach activities as appropriate. After this orientation the Fellow will create a project work plan for the first year of the fellowship with input from the Director and Coral Reef Initiative Coordinator.

Outcomes/Deliverables:

- Familiarity with staff, operations, resources, mission, goals and constraints of CZM program
- Integration into CZM and understanding of project need relevance to program
- Understanding of resource valuation and social dimension data as they relate to USVI coral reef ecosystems
- Assessment of outreach/communication needs
- Development of a project work plan

Task 2: Develop ecotourism plans for the STXEEMP and STEER (year 1) (50% of time)

The Fellow will research and summarize existing ecotourism opportunities within the STXEEMP and STEER and identify new opportunities based on area resources. Utilizing information gained through interactions, document and material reviews the Fellow will identify successful ecotourism strategies, gaps, needs, and potential areas for expansion. The Fellow will prepare draft and final plans for each area, outlining findings and recommendations for the development of ecotourism products as well as a timeline for their development and

implementation. These plans should be specific to the respective areas, but translatable to the territory as a whole or to future marine parks.

Outcomes:

- Summary and evaluation of existing ecotourism opportunities within STXEEMP and STEER
- Gap analysis identifying additional ecotourism opportunities
- Timeline for development and implementation of defined opportunities
- Draft and final ecotourism plans for each area

Task 3: Develop and implement marketing strategies to build support for and implementation of ecotourism plans (year 2) (50% of time)

Based upon the Fellow's research and pulling from his or her background, knowledge, skills and abilities, develop and begin implementation of marketing strategies to facilitate use of the STXEEMP and STEER in accordance with the ecotourism plans. Strategies will be developed to target both intended audiences: general community members and territorial policy/decision-makers. Mechanisms to evaluate the effectiveness of marketing strategies in reaching target audiences, to generate support for coral reef management efforts and to facilitate positive changes in attitude and behavior will also be developed. Strategies will be developed to support, complement and advance existing park education and outreach programs, and as such the Fellow will work closely with relevant staff from each area. Marketing strategies and resulting products will be compiled with the ecotourism plans into a comprehensive ecotourism model for the STXEEMP and STEER.

Outcomes/Deliverables:

- Appropriate, effective marketing and communication strategies for the public on coral reef ecosystems and ecotourism opportunities
- Appropriate, effective outreach content and communication strategies for policy/decision makers on coral reef ecosystems and ecotourism opportunities
- Marketing strategies targeted at intended ecotourism vendors to generate interest in new opportunities
- Handbook or other guide for potential ecotourism vendors to facilitate business creation
- Development of mechanisms to evaluate effectiveness of communication strategies

Supervisor

The Fellow will be supervised by the CZM Director. The Director is based out of the St. Thomas CZM office and is on St. Croix several times per month. The Director is responsible for all CZM programs including the Coral Reef Initiative and St. Croix East End Marine Park, and is the Governor-appointed point of contact for the US Coral Reef Task Force and US All Islands

Committee. The Fellow will be considered part of DPNR and CZM, and will be expected to attend staff meetings and participate in program discussions. The Fellow will also be expected to collaborate and dialog with CZM and STXEEMP project partners.

In-Kind Support

The Fellow will have access to the amenities and services of agency staff, including office space and equipment, personal computer, telephone, fax, and e-mail. Additionally, CZM will support inter-island travel, purchase of supplies and software, as well as printing, photocopying, mailing, and incidental costs to complete work tasks through the coral reef management grant.

Eligibility Requirements

- Bachelor's degree in social, natural, or environmental science or marketing with 4 to 6 years experience in ecotourism development or marketing OR a master's degree in the above with 2 years experience in practical application.
- Valid driver's license

Desired Background and Skill Sets

- Experience, through an internship, fellowship, or employment in environmental science or natural resource management
- Experience, through an internship, fellowship, or employment in social science, marketing and/or ecotourism development
- Experience, through an internship, fellowship, or employment in marine protected area outreach and/or management
- Experience with the human dimension of natural resource management and interpretation of social and economic data to inform development of communication strategies preferred.
- Demonstrated oral, written, and interpersonal communication skills
- A proven ability to be well organized and able to manage and prioritize multiple tasks
- Experience living and working in another culture or in an island community (Caribbean preferred)
- Public speaking, meeting facilitation, and content development experience
- Ability to work independently as well as part of a team
- Proficient in oral and written Spanish
- Creative, flexible, adaptable
- Experience working with different audiences

Salary

The salary for this position will be \$38,000.00 annually during both years of the fellowship.

To Apply

In addition to your resume, please include a cover letter describing how your qualifications meet the needs of this fellowship (as described in this Statement of Work), and contact information for three references by **July 31, 2009**.

Please email application package to jobs@imsg.com with the following subject heading:
NOA09026 USVI Fellowship.

If you are interested in applying to more than one fellowship location, you must send a separate application package (cover letter, resume, and references) with the appropriate jurisdiction's subject heading.