



U.S. Virgin Islands Coral Reef Management Fellowship 2013-2014 Position Description

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 East End Marine Park (STXEEMP) office.

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 (USCRTF) and the U.S. All Islands Coral Reef Committee (AIC); the Governor has designated CZM as the point agency for coral reef ecosystem protection activities and the recipient of NOAA coral reef conservation funds to implement these activities. Further, the Governor has appointed CZM's Coral Reef Initiative Coordinator to be the USVI point of contact to the USCRTF and AIC on his behalf. Given these designations, CZM leads territorial efforts to conserve and manage coral reef ecosystems through the marine park, Local Action Strategy (LAS), and Territorial Coral Reef Monitoring Program initiatives.

The USVI has identified a series of eight (8) strategic coral reef management goals. These goals (five to seven year time frame) and related objectives (three to five year time frame) form the basis of the USVI's Phase II LAS and serve to inform the overall management of territorial coral reef ecosystems. From these, five (5) goals and a series of objectives were prioritized providing increased focus on reducing terrestrial sedimentation, development of comprehensive outreach strategies, increasing enforcement capacity, reducing harmful fishing impacts and managing for resilient coral reef ecosystems. Additionally, four geographic areas were prioritized to focus management efforts, the St. Croix East End Marine Park (STXEEMP), St. Thomas East End Reserve (STEER), and Fish and Coral Bays in St. John. Work to formalize a system of territorial Marine Protected Areas (VI Marine Protected Area Network, VIMPAN) has begun. Common throughout these initiatives is the need to increase both the economic and resource sustainability of existing local marine protected areas. Under the FY10-11 Fellowship, sustainable tourism plans were developed for the STXEEMP and STEER, and the Fellow implemented select projects that were prioritized by area managers and stakeholders. During a one year contractual extension of the Fellow's work, additional progress was made formalizing a Friends group for the STXEEMP and establishing revenue-generating activities. These projects provide for, or demonstrate sustainable resource use potential within these areas while also generating revenue which can be used to support area management activities. These plans are a component of the

greater management strategies for these two areas and complement community outreach efforts, project development and coordination, enforcement, and business planning.

Project Description

The 2013-2014 Fellow will primarily focus on further implementing the sustainable tourism strategies for the STXEEMP. The Fellow will maintain and further develop the Friends of the park organization and provide coordination and leadership for an area watershed stewardship group. For all their activities, the Fellow will work with area managers and project partners to ensure that tasks undertaken dovetail with and support short and long-term management efforts for the STXEEMP. Specific tasks the Fellow will be responsible for are detailed below. Additionally, at the end of the fellowship term, the Fellow is expected to produce a final report documenting their activities, outputs, outcomes resulting from their actions, perceived challenges to success and recommendations to guide future project and program development and implementation.

Task 1: Continued development and coordination of STXEEMP Friends Group (40 percent of time)

The STXEEMP has developed a group of park stakeholders and public who are interested in supporting the park and its activities. Members of this group receive a quarterly park newsletter and have volunteered in the past to assist as chaperones on bayside tours and to monitor park activities through completion of passive surveys. In order to increase the sustainability of the STXEEMP it is necessary to foster an engaged community who feels they have ownership of the park, identify park activities and tasks that can be completed by volunteer Friends and generate revenue through Friends' memberships. A fee schedule for membership in the Friends of the STXEEMP has been developed, as has a website and a mechanism to accept funds. However, the perceived value of such a membership is likely low as a program of activities and incentives has not yet been fully developed. The Fellow will further develop the Friends of the STXEEMP and provide a mechanism for better organization, coordination, engagement and communication with the Friends group.

Outcomes/Deliverables:

- Friends member list and email list; kept current
- Membership solicitation materials/package developed
- Appropriate monthly events and volunteer tasks developed, creation and maintenance of a calendar of events for the Friends
- Friends website maintained
- Friends Facebook page maintained
- Work with park concessionaires to develop discount program on services for Friends members
- Successful implementation of Friends events in collaboration with Park Outreach Coordinator, park staff and project partners (as appropriate)
- Increase number of Friends members by 25%

Task 2: Implementation of Priority Activities within the STXEEMP Sustainable Tourism Plan (30 percent of time)

A Sustainable Tourism Plan has been created for the STXEEMP which identifies potential opportunities to increase both the ecological and economical sustainability of the park. The plan

identifies a range of projects from fundraising events, to underwater attractions, implementing sustainable use practices and expansion of the park's mobile outreach platform, the EcoVan, into new markets.

Under this task, the Fellow will continue implementation of projects such as marine operator guideline trainings, the annual STXEEMP Stand-Up Paddleboard Race benefit event and development of a visitor's center for the STXEEMP. Additionally, the Fellow will plan, coordinate and implement priority activities defined within the STXEEMP Sustainable Tourism Plan that are consistent with building the capacity of, and engaging, the STXEEMP Friends group and/or generating public support and revenue for the park. Potential activities for implementation may include: development of a monthly lunch in the park seminar program; adopt a beach program; investigation of novel venues for the EcoVan program; etc.

Outcomes/Deliverables

- Plan, coordinate and implement the annual Stand-Up Paddleboard Race fundraising event
 - o Creation of an event planning team
 - o Event concept/theme developed
 - o Event location, agenda, marketing plan and tools, sponsors, donations, etc. developed
 - o Revenue to support park from successful event
- Continue and expand partnerships with park business operators/concessionaires and conduct marine operator guideline training activities
- Identification of expanded and innovative uses for the EcoVan in collaboration with the Park Outreach Coordinator
- Develop monthly events for the park (may dovetail with events suitable for Friends group); promote and implement events

Task 3: Creation of Vanity License Plate Program (20 percent of time)

As part of the STXEEMP Sustainable Finance Plan, a suite of potential projects that could be developed and implemented to raise revenue to support the park are presented. One option that holds potential to provide benefits not only for the STXEEMP, but also to future components of a territorial MPA system is the development of a vanity license plate program to promote territorial coral reef ecosystem awareness and conservation.

For this task the Fellow will plan, coordinate and implement in close collaboration with the STXEEMP Coordinator and project partners such as The Nature Conservancy (and others as appropriate) a program to develop and sell vanity license plates in support of territorial coral reef ecosystem conservation. Revenue from plate sales would be deposited into either the Friends of the STXEEMP account or a protected areas trust (to be developed) to benefit management of territorial marine protected areas. The Fellow would need to plan and coordinate plate design, messaging, production and sales as well as collaborate with the VI Motor Vehicle Division to ensure plates can be registered for vehicle use, resulting in a comprehensive stand-alone product to be implemented by the STXEEMP, STEER and/or a future territorial park system. Similar programs are operated by the State of Florida, the Friends of the VI National Park and the VI Fire Service; these could be used as resources in development of the USVI coral vanity plate program.

Outcomes/Deliverables

- Creation of a program planning team
- License plate design(s) developed
- Implementation plan for plate production, marketing, sales, etc. developed
- Initial program implementation (depending on project progress)

Task 4: Provide Coordination and Leadership to a Watershed Stewardship Group for the STXEEMP (10 percent of time)

Watershed management plans have been developed for the six watersheds adjacent to the STXEEMP. These plans highlight priority areas for restoration and mitigation and provide recommended best management practices to implement to reduce land based sources of pollution from entering the STXEEMP. There is a need to develop and coordinate a watershed stewardship group to continue moving forward with implementing the watershed management plans. The watershed stewardship group would be a complementary body to the Friends of the STXEEMP. Likely tasks include: coordination and facilitation of regular meetings, researching funding sources to implement plan recommendations such as BMP installation and assistance in sourcing funding opportunities to agencies for proposals, etc.

Outcomes/Deliverables

- Coordinate and lead quarterly meetings for the community to discuss the watershed plans, progress on projects and potential funding opportunities and collaborations to implement projects
- Develop a watershed stewardship group email list to increase and maintain communication with the community on watershed and STXEEMP issues
- Utilize the email list to communicate on meeting schedules, meeting minutes, project progress and potential funding and collaboration opportunities