



**U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric  
Administration**

**Coral Reef Conservation Program**

**National  
Communications,  
Education &  
Outreach Strategy**

*FY2010-2015*

**FINAL**

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## INTRODUCTION

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Coral ecosystems are valuable resources. They provide food, medicines, recreation, marine habitat, coastal protection and cultural value. They sustain livelihoods and economic development. The health of coral ecosystems is at serious risk due to a variety of human activities both local and global. Protecting and conserving coral ecosystems is an urgent issue that can only be addressed by engaging and influencing people.

NOAA's Coral Reef Conservation Program (CRCP) supports effective management and sound science to preserve, sustain and restore valuable coral ecosystems. The Coral Reef Conservation Act of 2000 charges the CRCP with "...enhancing public awareness, education, understanding, and appreciation of coral reefs and coral reef ecosystems"<sup>1</sup> as one of the six mandates for the Program.

The recommended activities in this CEO Strategy are designed to use education, outreach and strategic communications tools to support the implementation of the *NOAA Coral Reef Conservation Program Goals & Objectives 2010-2015* (CRCP Goals & Objectives).<sup>2</sup> Addressing the root causes of the top three recognized threats to coral ecosystems - climate change impacts, fishing impacts and impacts from land based sources of pollution - is best achieved with an engaged public taking part in the solutions. The strategy outlined in this document, together with the *CRCP Social Science Strategy*<sup>3</sup> and the *NOAA Coral Reef Conservation Program International Strategy 2010-2015*,<sup>4</sup> helps advance the CRCP Goals & Objectives and will become part of the CRCP National Coral Reef Action Strategy.

## PURPOSE

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The *CRCP National Communication Education and Outreach Strategy* (National CEO Strategy) provides overarching guidance to better focus, integrate and synchronize the activities of CRCP and its partners in formal and informal education programs, strategic communications activities, social marketing campaigns and outreach activities. This document will guide the CRCP's national communications, education and outreach programs, activities and initiatives, as well as decisions for funding internal and external partners' activities, including appropriate federal, state, local, and private sector entities, from fiscal years 2010-2015.

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<sup>1</sup> CRCA 2000, Section 207. See [http://coris.noaa.gov/activities/actionstrategy/08\\_cons\\_act.pdf](http://coris.noaa.gov/activities/actionstrategy/08_cons_act.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> See: [http://coralreef.noaa.gov/aboutcrpc/strategy/currentgoals/resources/3threats\\_go.pdf](http://coralreef.noaa.gov/aboutcrpc/strategy/currentgoals/resources/3threats_go.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> CRCP Social Science Strategy: 2010-2015.

<sup>4</sup> See: [http://coralreef.noaa.gov/aboutcrpc/strategy/currentgoals/resources/intl\\_strategy.pdf](http://coralreef.noaa.gov/aboutcrpc/strategy/currentgoals/resources/intl_strategy.pdf)

## SCOPE

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This National CEO Strategy identifies four priority audiences to focus the Program's communications, education and outreach efforts on. The priority audiences selected are those whom the Program needs to engage to address its national objectives.

1. **Educators:** Formal and informal science educators (K-12)
2. **National Policy Makers:** National policy makers and those that influence key policy makers, e.g., NGOs, federal and state agencies and constituents
3. **Resource Managers:** State and territory coral resource managers, including management support staff
4. **Conservation Public:** People who know and care about environmental issues

Overarching goals are listed for each audience and specific activities are recommended for each of the goals. The changes in attitude, awareness or behavior required to support coral ecosystem conservation among members of these audiences are described, along with recommended approaches for promoting the desired actions. Detailed information on how the recommended activities will be carried out and evaluated is contained in a separate implementation plan.

Many important communications, education and outreach activities not addressed herein will be addressed at the jurisdictional level. The development of jurisdictional activities will be informed by the CRCP Goals & Objectives and this National CEO Strategy, but will primarily be guided by management priorities identified in each jurisdiction and will focus on issues and audiences specific to their unique locations. This locally focused work will likely include different audiences and strategies than those identified in the National CEO Strategy. The complimentary communications, education and outreach activities taking place at the national level and the jurisdictional level will assist in changing attitudes and behaviors, and building long-term education and outreach capacity to advance and improve coral ecosystem conditions.

## BACKGROUND

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In 2007, a panel of experts provided an independent assessment of the CRCP's effectiveness in achieving its mandates and made recommendations on how the Program could improve its performance and impact. One of the panel's recommendations was for CRCP to "provide for better general education and outreach on the threats to coral reefs, the likely social and economic consequences of their loss, and the measures that can be taken to ensure their continued survival and productivity."<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> See: <http://coralreef.noaa.gov/aboutcrctp/strategy/reprioritization/exreview/>

In response, the CRCP developed a *Roadmap for the Future* laying out new principles and priorities for the Program. In this roadmap, the CRCP made a commitment to develop “a set of clear, consistent messages to targeted audiences ... focus on the three priority threat areas, and [directed at] two scales: national and jurisdiction-specific.”<sup>6</sup>

In 2009, the NOAA published the *CRCP Goals & Objectives* which stipulates twenty-year strategic goals and five-year objectives the Program will work towards to address the top three recognized threats to coral ecosystems. Communications, education and outreach are integral to accomplishing the CRCP Goals & Objectives: “The CRCP recognizes the value of an informed and engaged public, empowered to act in partnership for coral reef conservation... The CRCP work in communication, outreach and education will expand upon current CRCP activities and will be an integral part of achieving the Goals and Objectives.”<sup>7</sup>

The CRCP has developed this National CEO Strategy in response to the guidance provided above along with input from other key documents (see Appendix B).

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## EVALUATION

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The CRCP is working to more comprehensively track its investments and impacts. As part of this effort, the CRCP has adopted program-wide performance measures to track its progress towards the CRCP Goals & Objectives. The two CRCP performance measures that directly relate to communication and education efforts are:

- Percent of jurisdictional residents who are aware of climate change impacts to coral reefs (addresses Climate Change Objective 2.3) and
- Percent of jurisdictional residents who support management approaches including MPAs that reduce fishing impacts to coral reefs (addresses Fishing Objective 4.1)

These performance measures will be tracked using jurisdictional survey data in accordance with the *CRCP Social Science Strategy*. The Program will also be using data from national surveys, such as *The Ocean Project. America, the Ocean, and Climate Change Key Findings*, to identify changes in attitude and awareness in national audiences.

The evaluation methods for each of the recommended activities in the National CEO Strategy are included in a separate implementation plan. The Program is also incorporating additional education and outreach-specific parameters in its national project database to more thoroughly track activities and outcomes of CRCP-funded projects.

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<sup>6</sup> See: <http://coralreef.noaa.gov/aboutcrp/strategy/reprioritization/roadmap/>

<sup>7</sup> See: [http://coralreef.noaa.gov/aboutcrp/strategy/currentgoals/resources/3threats\\_go.pdf](http://coralreef.noaa.gov/aboutcrp/strategy/currentgoals/resources/3threats_go.pdf)

## CORE MESSAGING

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All activities, products and programs outlined in this strategic plan will have a clear and consistent message which communicates the value of, and primary threats to, coral ecosystems, the social, environmental and economic consequences of their loss, and measures that can be taken to ensure their continued survival and productivity.<sup>8</sup> In all recommended activities, the CRCP will reinforce the core message that coral ecosystems are valuable and at risk. The underlying awareness that humans benefit from coral ecosystems is a necessary foundation upon which to build community support for policy and regulatory measures, and to change individual behavior to support coral ecosystem conservation.

### **Core Message**

*Coral ecosystems are valuable resources and are at risk. We can protect them if we choose to act.*

This message is the idea or concept that the audiences should walk away with; it is not necessarily a tag line or phrase to be expressed verbatim. A sense of urgency is an important component in propelling individuals to take action if balanced with a sense of optimism and empowerment.

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<sup>8</sup> Recommendation from the 2007 CRCP External Program Review

## NATIONAL-LEVEL TARGET AUDIENCES FOR CEO STRATEGY

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The National CEO Strategy has identified four priority audiences on which to focus its efforts at the national level. A description of each audience and the rationale for selecting them is included in each section. The audiences are of equal priority, but the goals and activities listed are presented in order of priority.

### AUDIENCE 1: EDUCATORS

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**Description of audience:** *Formal and Informal Science Educators (K-12).*<sup>9</sup>

**Rationale for selecting audience:** *Educators have the ability to influence children and young adults. Research shows that youth have an immediate and direct impact on the adults with whom they associate.<sup>10</sup> Therefore, targeting youth through educators also reaches adults and can have an immediate impact on behavior.*

**Desired Action:** *Educators understand and include the science and threats related to coral ecosystems in their curricula.*

### GOALS AND RECOMMENDED ACTIVITIES

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**Goal 1:** Connect with educators at training workshops and national conferences.

*Recommended Activities:*

- a. Support educator training opportunities such as symposia, presentations and web seminars, through partnerships and involvement with national educational associations.
- b. Facilitate professional development for educators which support Program education initiatives and encourage the incorporation of coral resources into educator's activities.

**Goal 2:** Produce, collect, and distribute relevant tools and resources to educators, with emphasis on climate change impacts to coral ecosystems.

*Recommended Activities:*

- a. Build scalable, online modules which include lesson plans using real-time data related to coral ecosystems.

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<sup>9</sup> Formal education: learning within a structured education system in which children or adults are required to demonstrate proficiency. Informal education: learning outside the established formal system that meets clearly defined objectives through organized education activities (from *NOAA Education Strategic Plan*).

<sup>10</sup> *The Ocean Project. (2009). America, the Ocean, and Climate Change Key Findings.*

- b. Support the development of educational products on the topic of ocean acidification.<sup>11</sup>

**Goal 3:** Facilitate educator involvement in CRCP-funded research activities.

*Recommended Activities:*

- a. Provide strategic Program support and facilitate outside participation in CRCP-funded research cruises to capitalize on their education and outreach potential.
- b. Explore joining established NOAA programs that link its research activities to educators.

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<sup>11</sup> Ocean acidification and its impacts on coral ecosystems is an emerging topic for which relatively few educational products are currently available.

## AUDIENCE 2: NATIONAL POLICY MAKERS

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**Description of audience:** *National policy makers and those that influence them, e.g., NGOs, federal and state agencies and constituents.*

**Rationale for selecting audience:** *This audience is a priority because of their ability to reauthorize the Coral Reef Conservation Act and strengthen the CRCP and all of its activities.*

**Desired Actions:** *Policy makers reauthorize the Coral Reef Conservation Act and support growth of the Coral Reef Conservation Program.*

## GOALS AND RECOMMENDED ACTIVITIES

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**Goal 1:** Provide objective scientific, socio-economic and management rationale needed to support reauthorization of the U.S. Coral Reef Conservation Act and continued effectiveness of the program.

*Recommended Activities:*

- a. Engage key congressional staff and members in direct communication by developing, maintaining and using a communications toolkit targeted to policy makers, to include fact sheets, talking points, briefing papers, and stories from the field, and providing targeted briefings on Program activities and accomplishments.
- b. Identify key policy makers and participate in outreach, such as Capitol Hill Ocean Week panels, workshops and field visits that expands their knowledge and understanding of the CRCP's activities and current issues facing corals.
- c. Annually determine CRCP views on broader ocean issues in preparation for communication with Congress, NOAA and Department of Commerce leadership, and the Administration.
- d. Identify, support, and share messaging with strategic external partners that share CRCP's conservation goals, e.g., NGOs, federal and state agencies, through regular communications.

### AUDIENCE 3: RESOURCE MANAGERS

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**Description of audience:** *State and territory coral resource managers, including management support staff.*

**Rationale for selecting audience:** *Local resource managers have the ability to influence key audiences, such as policy makers and local residents, who have a direct impact on coral resources. This strategy aims to strengthen local agency capacity for effective management of coral resources by improving their ability to engage key audiences. The CEO Strategy focuses on managers' conservation, education and outreach capacity.*

**Desired action:** *Resource managers improve their capacity to engage and influence key audiences in their jurisdiction such as policy makers and local residents, to support coral ecosystem conservation.*

### GOALS AND RECOMMENDED ACTIVITIES

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**Goal 1:** Facilitate communication and coordination between managers and individuals with technical expertise.

*Recommended Activities:*

- a. Create an organizational communications chart that assigns roles and responsibilities for information exchange between CRCP matrix staff, resource managers and other individuals with expertise.
- b. Build the capacity within the Program to provide guidance and communications expertise to scientists and other topic experts and assist in the development of products and tools to enhance the translation of complex science for managers to use in decision making.

**Goal 2:** Increase managers' capacity to use conservation, education and outreach techniques to engage local stakeholders.

*Recommended Activities:*

- a. Facilitate partnerships with relevant NGOs to build communications, education and outreach capacity.
- b. Provide communication/outreach/social marketing training to key management agencies as a first step toward further developing and implementing communications projects with these agencies.
- c. Produce a tool kit of communication and outreach resources for managers.

## AUDIENCE 4: CONSERVATION PUBLIC

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**Description of audience:** *People who know and care about environmental issues. Examples include: divers, conservation-minded seafood consumers, museum and aquarium visitors, etc.*

**Rationale for selecting audience:** *The conservation public has been shown to be the audience most likely to take action. These individuals are accessible because they prefer to get information about environmental issues from the Internet. This segment of the public expects and trusts aquariums, zoos, museums and other similar institutions to communicate about solutions to environmental and ocean issues and to advance ocean conservation.<sup>12</sup>*

**Desired Actions:** *Targeted individuals take actions to reduce their negative impacts on coral ecosystems and serve as a social reference group for others to emulate. These individuals will be an informed, engaged constituency, empowered to act for coral ecosystem conservation.*

## GOALS AND RECOMMENDED ACTIVITIES

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**Goal 1:** Promote coral ecosystem stewardship by engaging the conservation public directly through innovative online media.

*Recommended Activities:*

- a. Maintain and promote a dynamic CRCP website with consistently updated, accurate content, e.g., text and multimedia in an interesting and publicly accessible format.
- b. Use and promote Web 2.0 resources, such as Facebook and RSS, to facilitate conversations on coral conservation.
- c. Develop, coordinate and promote coral ecosystem applications for mobile technology.

**Goal 2:** Partner with key institutions, e.g., trade groups, associations, and organizations, to promote coral ecosystem stewardship.

*Recommended Activities:*

- a. Provide scientific information to seafood consumer campaigns to highlight coral ecosystems and relevant species in their messaging and products.
- b. Through partnerships with dive organizations and associations, encourage more community engagement on the part of individuals who are passionate about coral ecosystems. Empower these individuals to carry coral conservation messages forward and serve as societal references for their peers.

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<sup>12</sup> *The Ocean Project. (2009). America, the Ocean, and Climate Change Key Findings.*

## APPENDIX A: ACTIVITIES/GOALS & OBJECTIVES TABLE

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## APPENDIX B: SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

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Coral Reef Conservation Act of 2000

[http://coris.noaa.gov/activities/actionstrategy/08\\_cons\\_act.pdf](http://coris.noaa.gov/activities/actionstrategy/08_cons_act.pdf)

Coral Reef Conservation Program Roadmap for the Future

<http://coralreef.noaa.gov/aboutcrpcp/strategy/reprioritization/roadmap/>

CRCP External Review Summary Report

<http://coralreef.noaa.gov/aboutcrpcp/strategy/reprioritization/exreview/>

NOAA Coral Reef Conservation Program Goals & Objectives 2010-2015

<http://coralreef.noaa.gov/aboutcrpcp/strategy/currentgoals/welcome.html>

NOAA Coral Reef Conservation Program International Strategy 2010-2015

[http://coralreef.noaa.gov/aboutcrpcp/strategy/currentgoals/resources/intl\\_strategy.pdf](http://coralreef.noaa.gov/aboutcrpcp/strategy/currentgoals/resources/intl_strategy.pdf)

Loper, C., Levine, A., Agar, J., Hamment, M., Leeworthy, M., Valdes-Pizzini, M., Walmo, K.

NOAA Coral Reef Conservation Program Social Science Strategy 2010-2015. July 2010.

NOAA Education Strategic Plan 2009-2029

[http://www.education.noaa.gov/plan/09\\_NOAA\\_Educ\\_Strategic\\_Plan\\_Color.pdf](http://www.education.noaa.gov/plan/09_NOAA_Educ_Strategic_Plan_Color.pdf)

The Ocean Project. (2009). America, the Ocean, and Climate Change Key Findings.

[http://theoceanproject.org/resources/America\\_the\\_Ocean\\_and\\_Climate\\_Change.php](http://theoceanproject.org/resources/America_the_Ocean_and_Climate_Change.php)

## APPENDIX C: DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

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CRCP set up a CEO Core Team with representatives from each of the CRCP Line Offices, i.e., NESDIS, OAR, NMFS, NOS, most of whom have professional expertise in communications, education, and outreach. The CEO Core Team began the process by taking an inventory of current CEO efforts, including partnerships, products, and programs. This inventory was used to determine gaps in addressing the CRCP Goals & Objectives. The Core team then went through a collaborative process to identify initiatives and projects that advance CEO elements identified in the CRCP Goals & Objectives. In a two-day working session, the team identified target audiences to address each of the three priority threats and recommended activities to engage each audience. Audiences were prioritized and target audiences were selected upon which to focus the Program's national efforts. The group then refined the recommended activities to engage each of the target audiences. As a final step, other communications, education and outreach staff across NOAA reviewed the CEO Strategy.