

The Coral Fellowship Newsletter is published by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Coral Reef Conservation Program (CRCP) to relay information about the fellowship program and provide a forum for information exchange among fellows, mentors, program coordinators and other stakeholders

# Coral Fellowship Newsletter



Volume 2 Issue 1

January 2009

## Special points of interest:

- U.S. Coral Reef Task Force Meeting, D.C. February 23-27
- Fellowship Workshop/Retreat, Guam. June 15-19
- Coral Fellows [Webpage](#)

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## Coral Fellowship Recruitment Begins in 2009 for 2010-2012 Cohort



**Coral Reef Management Fellows at Orientation on Maui in January '08**

Believe it or not, it's time to start preparing for the 2010-2012 round of Coral Fellows!

NOAA Coral Reef Conservation Program will work with each State/U.S Territory to develop a statement of work (SOW)

which will inform the selection process of the incoming fellow.

The SOW will be published on the CRCP Fellowship website in May and an announcement will go out to relevant list serves and academic networks requesting that interested applicants submit their resume and cover letters for review. We're expecting a high volume of applicants. In 2007 we received nearly 200 applications for four positions.

Applications will be accepted between June 1, 2009 and July 31, 2009 and will be reviewed by the Coral Fellowship Coordination Team. Top candidates will be contacted for an interview in September 2009. Due to the expected volume, candidates who are not selected for an interview will not be contacted.

Once interviews have been completed the State/ U.S. Territory will select an individual to extend the fellowship positions to and make arrangements for a site visit, if necessary.

Selected individuals will be confirmed and an offer letter will be sent by November, 2009. The new fellows will make arrangements to begin working in January of 2010. The Coral Fellowship Orientation will also take place in January of 2010. For more information visit the [Coral Fellowship Website](#).

2009	Timeline
January-May	Develop SOW
May	SOW published on CRCP Fellowship website
June-July	Accepting Applications
July-August	Review Applications
September	Interviews/ Selection
October	Site visits
November	Confirm candidate, offer letter sent
January 2010	Orientation/ Fellows begin

## Annual Coral Fellows Retreat: Guam, June 15-19, 2009

The annual Coral Reef Management Fellowship Retreat will be held in Guam on June 15-19, 2009. This will be an excellent opportunity for fellows to learn about the coral conservation initiatives that are taking place in Guam.

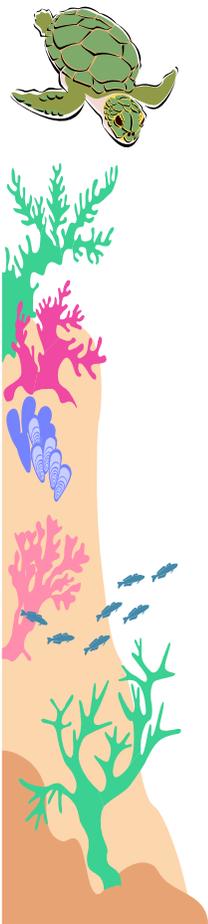
Coral fellowship retreats provide a forum for fellows to share information about coral reef management strategies. Each fellow gives a presentation about initiatives that they are working on in their island followed by a question/answer period that encourages fellows to learn from one another.

Fellows will also receive professional development training that will supplement their technical and professional skills. Training topics are currently being collected and considered. Possible subjects include MPA and watershed management and effectiveness.

Fellows will also visit some of the management project sites in Guam. Our local Guam fellow, Elaina Todd has volunteered to "show us the island" while we are visiting and we're all grateful for her help in coordinating this retreat. We look forward to getting the 2008-2010 cohort of fellows together this summer.



Check Out the Coral Fellowship Website for a complete profile on each of the current [Coral Fellows](#)



Guam: [Elaina Todd 2008-2010](#)



Elaina is working in Guam's Coastal Management Program where she leads several education and outreach efforts including a Rare Pride campaign. She will be in DC for training in Feb. 2009.

CNMI: [Kathleen Herrmann 2008-2010](#)



Kathleen Herrmann is undertaking watershed planning in partnership with local agencies as well as working on several education and outreach projects in CNMI's Division of Environmental Quality.

American Samoa: [Alyssa Edwards 2008-2010](#)



Alyssa is in the Resource Management Division of the Department of Commerce where she assists in the coordination of the Local Action Strategy: Reducing Population Pressure.

Puerto Rico: [Raimundo Espinoza 2008-2010](#)



Raimundo works for the Department of Natural and Environmental Resources. He concentrates his efforts on land-based sources of pollution and outreach programs.

U. S. Virgin Islands: [Karlyn Langjahr 2007-2010](#)



Karlyn is serving as the Education & Outreach Coordinator for the St. Croix East End Marine Park. She also coordinates the Virgin Island Network of Educators.

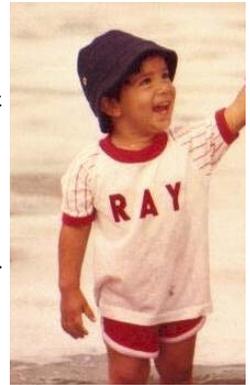
Hawaii: [Petra MacGowan 2007-2010](#)



Petra manages several projects in Hawaii's Division of Aquatic Resources. She is coordinating the Local Action Strategies, the Coral Reef Outreach Network and supports the community based Makai Watch program.

Spotlight on [Raimundo Espinoza, Puerto Rico Coral Fellow](#)

Raimundo was born and raised in Quito, Ecuador. When he was 8 years old he went with his family to the Galapagos to snorkel for the first time. He got into the water and was looking around when he saw a hammerhead shark. "I thought that if there was one there would certainly be hundreds coming soon because that is what you always see on television." He looked for his family but couldn't find anyone. "I freaked out! I was so scared I could barely get back to the boat!" He climbed in and didn't go snorkeling again until he was 15 years old. "I don't recommend shark diving for your first snorkel trip, especially when you're only eight!"



Rai as a child in Ecuador

Rai lived in Ecuador until he finished high school, but he spent every summer in the States. He had family living all over the U.S. so each summer they'd go somewhere new: Florida, Michigan, Louisiana, New York, and Massachusetts. "Our summer destination always depended on two things: family and the basketball camp I would be going to that year." Basketball was all he did as a kid and throughout high school. After many years of playing he started to develop some injuries. "I wasn't very careful with myself and ended up busting both ligaments in my thumbs." He was told that he would need surgery and pins to keep playing so he thought, "Maybe I'll give college a try instead."

He started at the Community College in Daytona Beach, Florida and transferred after one semester to Pace University in New York where he majored in Environmental Studies. "It was a very unique program because it was housed in the Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies so it wasn't your typical science-based environmental program." He liked it there and was planning to stay on and go to law school there once he finished his undergraduate degree, but things don't always go as planned.



Rai with a leatherback sea turtle in Costa Rica

The year before he graduated from Pace he studied abroad in Mexico for six months. "It was the first time I had ever seen sea turtles or done any on-the-ground conservation work. One of my projects was a socio-economic study on whale watching to see what local people could do to complement fishing. We helped to teach the local kids about marine life in the area so that they could help out on the whale watches. In many ways it was a community development program as much as an educational one." He loved the work that he was participating in there. "There was a heavy focus on field conservation and working in the community. It really changed everything for me."

## Spotlight on Raimundo Espinoza, Puerto Rico Coral Fellow (cont...)



Rai with his students in the Galapagos

The turning point was when one of his students gave him a “birthday turtle.” “I was working at night teaching kids English. They knew that we worked to protect turtles so there was always some tension because the kids that we taught had relatives who poached turtles.” In that area turtles were heavily harvested and sold on the black market. “One of the kids in my class told me that his uncle had given him a sea turtle for his birthday and that he wanted to turn it in to us so we could release it.” A week later the student came back with his entire family and a juvenile Hawksbill sea turtle, a rare species in the area. Rai was taken back by the fact that this student trusted *him* with his birthday turtle. “He didn’t want to take it to the scientists or the professors or the other turtle groups in the area. He wanted *me* to take care of the turtle for him. It was one of those experiences where you realize that you’ve made an impact on someone’s life. After that I couldn’t go back to law school. I had found something that I loved doing and was actually pretty good at.”

He graduated from Pace University in 2004 and instead of going to law school as planned; he decided to go to graduate school. He applied to the University of Maryland and started in the fall of 2004 studying Sustainable Development and Conservation Biology. “As I look back there were always teachers who took an interest in me and saw a potential that I didn’t necessarily see in myself. In high school I was so focused on basketball that I didn’t pay attention to much else. My English teacher, Ms. Ildi Ojeda was an especially strict and challenging teachers. She would always get on my case and saying, “Rai,

you’ve got potential, live up to it!” She kept on pushing me to study and apply myself and was a big factor in my graduating from high school.”

Rai heard about the Coral Reef Management Fellowship when he was coming back from a job in Costa Rica where he had been working with sea turtles. “It had just been announced, but I didn’t apply because the deadline was several months away and I had another job lined up in the Galapagos anyway.” He thought he’d keep it in mind, and headed off to the Galapagos.

Rai worked as an instructor with Ecology Project International in the Galapagos for four months. The goal of the organization is to educate high school students both locally and internationally to be able to take an active role in conservation. “It meant a great deal to me because it encouraged Ecuadorian youth, in particular Galapagueños, to get involved in the management of their island.”

When he returned from the Galapagos a friend of his brought up the Coral Reef Management Fellowship and encouraged him to apply for Puerto Rico. “The part I was most excited about was the opportunity to work with both a Federal agency like NOAA and also to get experience working within a Latin American government, and luckily it has proven to be exactly what I expected in that regard.” He has also been impressed with other aspects of the fellowship program. “One of the best parts of the Coral Reef Management Fellowship is the camaraderie between the fellows. I certainly didn’t anticipate the strong friendships that I’d form with these individuals that I only see once or twice a year. I guess that is what happens when you have people who have similar interests working together.”

As a Coral Fellow, Rai has been helping to implement the Guánica Management Plan for watersheds.

Each of the restoration projects outlined in the Plan requires a lot of interaction with stakeholders in the community as well as scientists who provide information on how actions will impact the environment. “I think my biggest strength is my ability work with people from different backgrounds, being able to understand the academic side of the issue as well as the community side.”

The Plan focuses on restoration, specifically through the removal or reduction of legacy contaminants.



Rai at a mangrove nursery in Ecuador

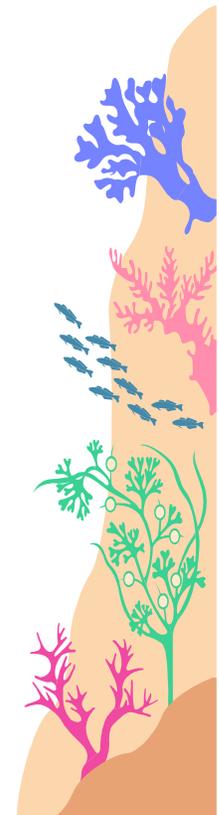
“There has been a lot of nitrogen and sediments coming in through the river over the last 30 years and a lot of erosion in the mountains from agriculture.” The Plan consists of 12 recommendations with priority on three restoration projects. “What I love most about this job is that I’m able to work in the field and in the office. I love being able to get outside and talk with people that are being affected by projects. I enjoy working along side and learning from all the dedicated scientist and staff at the Puerto Rico DNER, especially Mayra Garcia who has given me a lot of guidance. It has been a rewarding experience for me, both professionally and personally.”

When asked where he sees himself in ten or fifteen years, Raimundo responds, “I’d like to stay in the environmental field. Humans have been taking advantage of the planet for such a long time now that environmental crises around the world are creating refugees. Justice for refugees is becoming a critical issue. I believe a healthy environment is a human right and I’d like to work in a field that empowers individuals to take an active role in the stewardship of their environment. This may lead me back to law school, we’ll see.”



*“The fellowship program has been an incredibly challenging and rewarding experience so far and I hope it will continue to be.”*

*-Raimundo Espinoza*



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We're on the web!  
[www.coralreef.noaa.gov/fellowship.html](http://www.coralreef.noaa.gov/fellowship.html)

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Please [email us](#) your questions and suggestions for future editions

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The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Coral Reef Management Fellowship was established in 2003 to respond to the need for additional coral reef management capacity and capability in the U.S. Flag Pacific and Caribbean islands. The fellowship program's mission is two-fold, it provides coral reef management support in each participating island jurisdiction by placing highly qualified individuals whose education and work experience meet each island's specific coral reef management needs, while providing individual fellows with professional training in coastal and coral reef resource management.



### Introducing Paulo Maurin

Paulo Maurin is finishing his one-year Knauss fellowship with the Coral Reef Conservation Program in January 2009, after which he will cover Marci Wulff's portfolio for the Program while she is on maternity leave from mid-February through May 2009.



Paulo obtained his PhD from the University of Hawaii in 2008. Funding from the National Science Foundation assisted him in studying various co-management initiatives on coastal marine resources, with an emphasis on local community involvement.

During his time in Hawaii, Paulo taught kids and general audiences about marine life as a docent at the Waikiki Aquarium as well as with Hanauma Bay's Education Program. He also worked with Hawaii Sea Grant to produce a technical report on the work of Sea Grant and the State Division of Aquatic Resources in supporting various marine stakeholder interactions in the West Hawaii coastal area.

During his Knauss fellowship, Paulo has assisted the U.S. Coral Reef Task Force, and has worked to produce a Coral Profile, a document outlining the recent major coral activities for each Federal member of the Task Force. He is also helping the Coral Reef Conservation Program to produce the Report to Congress for 2007-2009. He can be reached at [Paulo.Maurin@noaa.gov](mailto:Paulo.Maurin@noaa.gov).

### US Coral Reef Task Force Meeting

- Washington DC, February 23-27, 2009
- Fellows may attend at the request of their jurisdiction Point of Contact.
- Coral Headquarters visit will be scheduled
- NGO visits can also be arranged



### CRCP Leadership to Visit Pacific

Members from NOAA CRCP headquarters including Program Manager Kacky Andrews and Program Coordinator Steve Thur, will be visiting Pacific island jurisdictions in January and early February.

With new leadership in the Coral Program and a new emphasis on serving coral reef management needs, the Program would like to meet the individuals doing the on-the-ground work in order to better understand and serve jurisdiction needs in addressing coral conservation.

Steve and Kacky will be meeting with the appropriate individuals in the territorial agencies- both the leadership and the staff- to see what is happening, and get a feel for the challenges, obstacles, and successes of each island. Coral Fellows will be contacted by Steve Thur for a brief meeting during this visit.

#### Travel Schedule

American Samoa: January 25-29, 2009  
Guam: January 31-February 4, 2009  
Saipan: February 4-5, 2009

