

Applicable U.S. Coral Reef Task Force Goals and Objectives for the NOAA CRCP Land-Based Sources of Pollution Working Group

In 2000, the USCRTF adopted the *National Action Plan to Conserve Coral Reefs (National Action Plan)*, the first national blueprint for U.S. domestic and international action to address the growing coral reef crisis. The *National Action Plan* calls for U.S. action towards 13 goals in order to protect and conserve valuable coral reef ecosystems. In 2002, the USCRTF developed the *U.S. Coral Reef National Action Strategy (National Action Strategy)* to further implement the *National Action Plan* as called for in the Coral Reef Conservation Act of 2000 (CRCA) (16 U.S.C. §6401 et seq.). These documents provide the guiding framework for the priorities, strategies, and actions of the USCRTF and its members.

Understand Coral Reef Ecosystems

- Create comprehensive maps of all U.S. coral reefs
- Conduct long-term monitoring and assessments of reef ecosystem conditions (Develop a nationally coordinated coral reef inventory, assessment and monitoring program – NAP)
- Support strategic research to address the major threats to reef ecosystems (Support strategic research focused on the determinants of coral reef health and recovery, including basic ecological processes, bleaching and disease, and best management practices for coral reefs and closely linked marine and terrestrial environments – NAP)
- Increase understanding of the social and economic factors of conserving coral reefs (Conduct socioeconomic studies of the human dimension of successful coral reef conservation – NAP)

Reduce the Adverse Impacts of Human Activities

- Expand and strengthen the U.S. network of marine protected areas
- Reduce adverse impacts of fishing and other extractive uses
- Reduce impacts of coastal uses
- Reduce pollution
- Restore damaged reefs
- Improve education and outreach
- Reduce international threats to coral reef ecosystems
- Reduce impacts from international trade in coral reef species
- Improve coordination and accountability

Reducing the Impacts of Coastal Uses

Goal: Reduce the impact of human coastal activities on coral reef ecosystems.

Objective 1: Develop informal guidance, protocols, and technical assistance programs to reduce the risks of damage to coral reefs resulting from federal agency activities.

Objective 2: Strengthen federal and state permitting and management programs for coastal development activities affecting coral reef habitats to minimize or prevent adverse impacts on coral reef ecosystems.

Objective 3: Initiate actions at the national and international levels to prevent vessel groundings.

Objective 4: Develop standard vessel grounding response, enforcement, and injury assessment guidance and improve the ability to remove grounded and abandoned vessels and restore damaged habitat by enhancing local and regional emergency response capabilities, strengthening and standardizing enforcement and damage assessment actions, and identifying gaps in existing legal authorities.

Objective 5: Strengthen existing and develop new resource management programs and protected areas to address the broad range of coastal activities.

Objective 6: Develop mitigation guidance for coastal development projects deemed essential by federal, state, and territory agencies.

Reducing Pollution

Goal: Significantly reduce the amounts, sources, and cumulative impacts of pollution on coral reefs by fully implementing existing federal and state authorities.

Objective 1: Reduce sedimentation and other land-based sources of pollution by implementing conservation management practices in coastal watersheds through public/private partnerships, incentive-based measures, regulatory measures, technical and financial assistance, habitat restoration, and other activities.

Objective 2: Improve water quality by reducing nutrient discharges from wastewater treatment facilities, vessels, industrial sources, storm water, agricultural sources, and air deposition.

Objective 3: Reduce chemical pollution (e.g. oil, toxins, hazardous materials) from land-based sources and vessel discharges.

Objective 4: Reduce the flow of marine debris and remove existing marine debris from reef ecosystems.

Objective 5: Prevent and control the spread of invasive species (e.g. non-native species) in coral reef ecosystems from ballast water and other mechanisms.

Objective 6: Develop tools to assess and address the impacts of pollution on coral reefs.

Objective 7: Increase awareness and understanding of the ecological health and socioeconomic impacts of land-based and marine pollution on reef resources.

Restoring Damaged Reefs

Goal: Increase the capability of federal and nonfederal managers to efficiently and effectively restore injured or degraded coral reefs.

Objective 1: Review and evaluate existing reef restoration projects to quantify the benefits gained by the restoration effort and expenditure of the restoration compared to scenarios in which no restoration efforts were undertaken and make recommendations for improvements

Objective 2: Develop and test innovative methods and techniques to expedite reef restoration for all major categories of coral reef injury using a hypothesis-driven approach that involves rigorous, quantitative evaluation.

Objective 3: Develop regional restoration plans that identify significant restoration alternatives and weigh the costs and benefits of natural recovery compared with restoration alternatives.

Objective 4: Promote cost-effective pilot restoration of selected degraded U.S. reefs, focusing on habitats of high ecological, economic, and social conservation value.

Objective 5: Rehabilitate degraded fish habitat through the deployment of artificial structures and rapid, inexpensive transplant methods.

Objective 6: Transfer proven restoration tools, techniques, and lessons learned to domestic and international partners.