

Coral Assembly 2011

Puerto Rico, US and British Virgin Islands: Improving Regional Reef Management

On December 8-9, 2011, coral reef stewards from Puerto Rico, USVI and the British Virgin Islands met in San Juan, Puerto Rico for the Coral Assembly. The two-day meeting was designed to bring together coral reef managers from the three jurisdictions along with representation of local community groups, policy makers and researchers from across the region to learn and share ideas that will lead to more effective long-term coral reef management and protection.

Attendees of the Assembly heard from local experts on a variety of topics including economic valuation of coral reefs, regional MPA capacity assessments, climate change adaptation planning, and resilience programs, along with the current status and trends of coral reef management in each respective jurisdiction. Participants later broke out into groups and had lively discussions on the following coral reef management topics:

- Enforcement & Regulation
- Bleaching and Disease Monitoring and Response
- Watershed Management & Land Use Planning
- Reef Fisheries, Spawning Aggregations, Management and Research
- Boating Management (moorings, grounding, pump-out, & cruisers)
- Pollution, Monitoring and Prevention
- MPA Management
- Lionfish Response



Challenges and solutions session notes.



Participants identified the projects and sites where they work. We will digitize this map and provide a means to link associated reports, papers, photos and other materials.

CORAL REEFS in the region have a lot in common, starting with the connectivity of the species that populate these resources, as well as the shared regional and global stressors such as a changing climate and invasive species. What the Assembly *participants* have in common is the motivation and drive to address the local factors affecting the health and vitality of their reefs. By sharing innovations in research, education and outreach, decision support tools, and mechanisms for financing coral reef initiatives, we are finding solutions together. **As a region, we can learn together, capitalize on solutions, and work collectively to forge a better future for our reefs.**

Number in Attendance: 110

Participants from British Virgin Islands: 13
Participants from US Virgin Islands: 17
Participants from Puerto Rico: 60
Regional Partners: 10
Facilitators: 10



Benefits for Attendees:

Participating in this assembly were a variety of individuals and groups who are implementing, researching, planning, funding and learning about coral reef management activities in their jurisdiction and across the region.

The Assembly fostered a spirit of exchange, creative problem solving, and collaboration amongst participants. The participants discussed ideas and solutions, enriched existing collaborations and forged new partnerships. People made connections with others working on similar problems and gained information to take back and apply at home.

Highlights from the Assembly:

“the air of collaboration, coordination, and striving to find a regional approach was truly inspiring”

Sharing opportunities and common interests happened not just across the region, but for people living in the same island jurisdiction, some of whom don't otherwise have a chance to come together and discuss coral reef initiatives.

Just days after the assembly, participants were staying in touch. Emails between participants and across the islands shared important funding opportunities and distributed background information and materials from local watershed projects.

“the organic development of the sessions, and opportunity for all to speak as equals has been a great refreshing change from the regular science symposiums that we are all used to attending.”

Next Steps:

To maintain a network of regional collaboration, The Nature Conservancy will continue to work with local and regional partners to ensure a regional conversation continues. With guidance from the participants, an electronic platform will be developed to provide continued and up-to-date information exchange.

The Assembly highlighted the value of assembling a similar meeting with greater representation from the fishing, tourism and enforcement sectors. Others underrepresented include legislators, agency directors, stakeholders, and citizen groups. With input from participants, local Coral Assemblies for each jurisdiction will be explored and the Coral Assembly 2.0 planned for fall 2012.

Our common goals and regional approaches, as well as Assembly statements of regional collaboration will be disseminated. A roadmap for implementation will be incorporated in the Regional Ocean Partnership.

Around the Corner:

We are in the process of synthesizing the notes from the Assembly and plan to provide materials through an online platform. Presentations, special topic session notes, results from the participant survey and regional solutions will be compiled and made available in early 2012.



The Assembly ended with a Regional Solutions panel discussion. Panelists and the audience discussed solutions to the challenges we face and ways we can work together to help each other out, as a region.

The Assembly was funded through a Cooperative Agreement between NOAA's Coral Reef Conservation Program and The Nature Conservancy.

Name	Title
British Virgin Islands	
Brunn, Kathryn	Business Owner and NGO Director
Dore, Joel	Fisheries Trainee, CFD
George, Pearline	Professional Cadet, CFD
Georges, Esther	Deputy Director, NPT
Gore, Shannon	Marine Biologist, CFD
Hastings, Mervin	Ag. Deputy Conservation & Fisheries Officer
Leoniak, Lain	Conservation Coordinator
Lewis, Lenette	National Coordinator Lecturer
McDevitt, Charlotte	Executive Director, Green VI
Penn, Dylan	Physical Planner
Petrovic, Clive	Director, Econcerns
Smith-Abbott, Joseph	Director, National Parks Trust
Zaluski, Susan	Director, Jost Van Dykes Preservation Society
US Virgin Islands	
Alexandridis, Kostas	Assistant Professor, U.V.I.
Brandt, Marilyn	Research Assistant Professor, UVI
Coldren, Sharon	President and Executive Director, Coral Bay Community Council
Cramer-Burke, Carol	Program Director, SEA
Gyory, Joanna	Postdoctoral Research Associate, U.V.I.
Herlan, James	USGS Biologist
Hibbert, Marlon	NOAA USVI Management Liaison
Hillis-Starr, Zandy	Chief Resource Management & Research, NPS
Murray, January	Fishery Biologist III, VIDFW
Nemeth, Richard	Research Program Coordinator, UVI
Oriol, Jean-Pierre	Director, VI CZM
Ortiz, Lia	NMFS Coral Reef Fishery Biologist
Pemberton, Roy	Director, Div. Fish & Wildlife
Rothenberger, Paige	Coral Reef Initiative Coordinator, VI CZM
Settar, Christine	Marine Stewardship Coordinator & Extension Specialist, UVI
Smith, Tyler	Research Assistant Professor, U.V.I.
Taylor, Marcia	Marine Advisor, U.V.I.
Puerto Rico	
Alejandro, Pedro	Relacionista publico
Aponte, Myrma	Biologist
Archilla, Alberto	NGO Independent Reef Researcher
Ascanio, Eduardo H.	VIDAS
Cabrera, Christina	Special Assistant
Candelas, Frances	SAM Executive Secretary
Carde Cruz, Jennifer	CESAM/Guardarnenas
Castillo, Graham	President, Estudios Técnicos, Inc.
Chaparro, Ruperto	Director, Puerto Rico Sea Grant
Chardón, María	Protected Area Manager
Delgado López, Damaris	Director, Bureau of Coasts, Reserves and Refuges,

Name	Title
Desoto, Ricardo	GuardaMar
Díaz, Ernesto	Director, Coastal Zone Management Program
Diaz Perez, Luis J	NGO Independent Reef Researcher
Echeuarrin, Wilfredo	DRNA
Figuroa, Humberto	
Fonseca, Jaime	Tesoreria
Fuentes, Maryguel	Planning Analist
Galán Kercádo, Daniel	Secretary, DNER
García, Miguel	Director, Fisheries and Wildlife
García-Moliner	FMP and Habitat Specialist
García-Sais, Jorge R.	Researcher
Gonzalez, Carmen	JBNERR Manager
Jacobs, Kasey	Coastal Adaptation Project Coordinator
Julia Pacheco, Mariolga	VIDAS
A.	Affiliate Researcher
Laureano, Ricardo	NGO Independent Reef Researcher
Lilyestrom, Craig	Director, Marine Resources Division
López, Paco	Director, Arrecifes Pro Ciudad Inc.
Lucking, Mary Ann	Director, CORALations
Matos Garcia, Gracelyn	CESAM
Medina, Jeiger	Student
Meery, Alex	
Melendez, Joel	Ecotono, Inc.
Neives, Jose	UPR
Nieves, Miguel A.	Oficial, Manejo Recursos Naturales
Norat, Jose	Professor
Oms, Julio A.	Hydrologic Technician
Ortiz, Rose A.	Planning Analist V
Oten Ceppeels, Eleinie	
Pagán, Francisco	Program Manager
Ramos Álvarez, Antares	NOAA Puerto Rico Coral Management Liaison
Ramos, Marcos A.	Environmental Educator
Rivera Ocasio, Zoelie	CESAM/Guardarnenas
Robles, Eliliet	Ranger
Rodriguez, Angel	Boating Law Administrator
Rodriguez, David	VIDAS
Rodriguez Hernandez, Juan	Project Coordinator
Rosado Pagan, Juliann	Envrionmental Interpreter and Biologist
Rosado Sanchez, Leslie	Membro
Rosario, Aida	Director
Ruiz, Idelfonso	Refuge Manager
Scharer, Michelle	Researcher
Sebastian, Daniel	CESAM
Sierba Rolon, Joshua	CESAM
Suarez, Victor	

Name	Title
Suleiman, Samuel	Director
Tolentino, Annette	Community director
Velazco Domínguez, Aileen	Technical Advisor
Velez, Ernesto	Observador
Regional Partners	
Almodovar, Edwin	Director USDA-NRCS Caribbean Area
Carrubba, Lisamarie	Natural Resource Planner, Caribbean Field Office
Doyle, Emma	Assistant Coordinator, CaMPAM
Griffin, Sean	Habitat Restoration Specialist
Irizarry, Emmanuel	NOAA-CRCP Biologist
Jeffrey, Christopher F. G.	Marine Spatial Ecologist
Kitchell, Anne	Senior Environmental Planner
Silander, Susan	Project Leader
Strum, Paul	Director
Taylor, William Charles	Education and Outreach Coordinator
Coral Assembly Planners and Facilitators	
Brown, Jeanne	Coastal Program Director, TNC
Byrne, James	Marine Science Program Manager, TNC
Daugherty, Collin	Conservation Planner, TNC
Espinoza, Raimundo	Puerto Rico Conservation Coordinator, TNC
Graff, Nancy	Conservation Coordinator, TNC
Hoffman, Anne Marie	STEER Implementation Specialist, TNC
Hutchins, Aaron	Program Representative /Director of Government Relations, V.I. and P.R., TNC
Lewis, Kemit-Amon	Coral Conservation Manager, TNC
Ruffo, Ashley	Graduate Student, UVI
Soto, Francisco	Graduate Student, UPR
Wusinich-Mendez, Dana	NOAA Atlantic and Caribbean Team Lead

Registered, did not attend	
Miller, Jeff	Fisheries Biologist, NPS
Barnes, Alicia	Commissioner, DPNR
Crespo, Wanda	Planner
González, Irmgard	Director, Land Use Planning Subprogram
Mercado, Alex	Grad Student
Méndez-Lázaro, Pablo	Professor
Rosado, Bernard	Ichtiologist
Rosado, Leslie	Associate Member, P.R. Planning Board
Cherubin, Laurent	Associate Scientist
Pittman, Simon	NOAA Coral Reef Conservation Program