



National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
National Marine Fisheries Service
Caribbean Field Office



U.S. Virgin Islands Department of Planning and Natural
Resources Division of Environmental Enforcement

Officer Training Report

March 2010

As part of our on going activities under the NOAA Coral Reef Conservation Program, the National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA Fisheries), Protected Resources Division, Caribbean Field Office, partnered with the NOAA Office of Law Enforcement (OLE) and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) in coordination with the U.S. Virgin Islands Department of Planning and Natural Resources (DPNR) Division of Environmental Enforcement. NOAA Fisheries coordinated with DPNR officers in St. Croix and St. Thomas to determine their training needs and prepare presentations and activities to meet these needs. The trainings were part of a larger project to create educational materials for enforcement officers in the U.S. Caribbean and provide them with reference and training materials. The *Guide for Law Enforcement Officers: Regulations & Biology of Marine Ecosystems in the US Virgin Islands* was presented to the law enforcement officers in order to encourage them to use it in the field.

Trainings were held March 9, 2010, in St. Croix and March 10, 2010, in St. Thomas. In both locations, NOAA OLE Special Agent Lynn Rios offered presentations and materials pertaining to the federal case process and evidence collection, including chain of custody, photo evidence, and biographical data for witnesses and suspects. In St. Croix, Caribbean Field Office staff and USFWS gave presentations regarding federally endangered and threatened species, including plants, seabirds, marine mammals, sea turtles, and corals, and designated critical habitat. The training took place at the Environmental Enforcement office in St. Croix. In St. Thomas, the training by OLE Special Agent took place at the Environmental Enforcement office in St. Thomas, but the portion of the training given by the Caribbean Field Office staff and USFWS took place at Coral World.

In St. Croix, five (5) officers participated in the training. The law enforcement officers had the opportunity to receive information regarding species that are protected under the Endangered Species Act and the Marine Mammal Protection Act. The presentation included pictures of the species and information regarding USFWS and NOAA Fisheries' jurisdiction, including for enforcement cases. In St. Thomas, a total of eight (8) law enforcement officers participated in the training. At the beginning of the training, the officers had to work in groups and create concept maps related to one of three topics: corals, seagrass, and mangroves. The concept maps they created were used to open a discussion and presentations by USFWS and NOAA Fisheries about the species of mangroves, corals, and seagrass in USVI and their importance. After the presentations, the group had the opportunity to see Coral World displays, where they could identify species of corals, mangroves, fishes, and sea turtles.