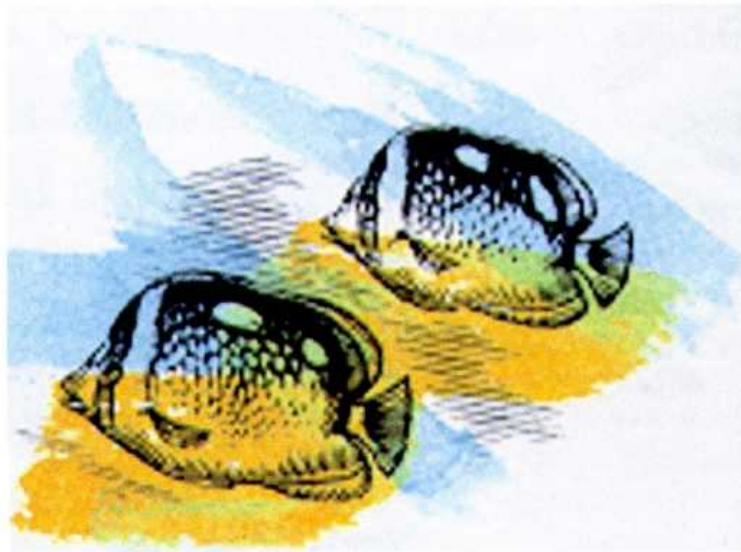


**Development Of A Process Model**  
**For The**  
**United States Coral Reef Task Force**



by

**Dr. Stephen C. Jameson**

**Coral Seas Inc**  
4254 Hungry Run Road  
The Plains, VA 20198-1715  
Phone: 703-754-8690  
Fax: 703-754-9139  
Email: [sjameson@coralseas.com](mailto:sjameson@coralseas.com)

**Mr. Jeffrey R. Benoit**

**J. R. Benoit Consulting**  
2612 North Nottingham St.  
Arlington, VA 22207  
Phone: 703-534-5772  
Fax: 703-534-5778  
Email: [jrbenoit1@aol.com](mailto:jrbenoit1@aol.com)

Submitted  
15 September 2002  
to the  
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration  
Silver Spring, Maryland

**Development Of A Process Model**

**For The**

**United States Coral Reef Task Force**

by

**Dr. Stephen C. Jameson**

**Coral Seas Inc**

4254 Hungry Run Road

The Plains, VA 20198-1715

Phone: 703-754-8690

Fax: 703-754-9139

Email: [sjameson@coralseas.com](mailto:sjameson@coralseas.com)

**Mr. Jeffrey R. Benoit**

**J. R. Benoit Consulting**

2612 North Nottingham St.

Arlington, VA 22207

Phone: 703-534-5772

Fax: 703-534-5778

Email: [jrbenoit1@aol.com](mailto:jrbenoit1@aol.com)

**Submitted**  
**15 September 2002**  
**to the**  
**National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration**  
**Silver Spring, Maryland**

# Table of Contents

## **Executive Summary**

## **I. Introduction**

## **II. Methods**

- A. Information Gathering
- B. Defining What "Local" and "Regional" Mean
- C. Creating a *Process Model* Framework

## **III. Review of the "Strawman" Proposal**

- A. Prioritize Needs
- B. Improve Coordination
- C. Report Progress

## **IV. Recommended "Strawman" Improvements**

- A. The Strategic Vision
- B. Organizational Roles and Responsibilities
- C. How The Preferred *Process Model* Option Works

## **V. Comparison of USCRTF Process Model Options**

## **VI. Discussion of Specific Critical Issues**

- A. Stakeholder Involvement
- B. Human Resource Infrastructure

## **VII. Appendix**

**Appendix 1:** Contacts and Interviews

**Appendix 2:** Recommendations for Strengthening Coordinated Implementation Targeting the US Environmental Protection Agency and the US Department of Agriculture.

## Executive Summary

This report evaluates the *Proposal for Prioritizing Needs, Improving Coordination, and Tracking Progress* ("strawman", dated 8 August 2002) and recommends improvements. A preferred *Process Model* based on the overall evaluation is presented for United States Coral Reef Task Force (USCRTF) consideration.

The strawman was designed as an effective way to help the USCRTF "focus-in" on a few areas where they could be successful. The strawman option uses threat-based focus areas to drive an unspecified number of action plans, which are developed by thematic "regional" (undefined) workshops. The strawman is not clear on what locations will actually receive USCRTF support as a result of the process and is largely silent on how international issues are integrated into the *Process Model*. The strawman maintains a fairly strong Federal role in the overall process by using National working groups to create and update action plans. Overall, the strawman provides an appropriate foundation for a *CRTF Process Model* for which additional improvements are recommended.

The preferred *Process Model* was designed to clearly get the USCRTF focus out of Washington, DC and into the field. Focus areas are used mainly for driving important national responsibilities, such as; increasing budgets, addressing human resource needs, garnering political support for national, regional, and local coral reef programs, and providing support for local implementation. The preferred *Process Model* uses eleven Coral Reef Groups to create action strategies (local extensions of the National Coral Reef Action Strategy), which include intermediate benchmarks, timelines and performance measures, and which drive USCRTF implementation support. The eleventh, International, coral reef group is used to fully integrate this important role into the *Process Model*. In the preferred *Process Model* all eleven Coral Reef Groups receive USCRTF implementation support to help build capacity and increase management momentum. The preferred *Process Model* also ensures support for important "resilient reef" programs in remote Pacific Island locations. To help engage critical regional government decision makers with the eleven Coral Reef Groups, the preferred *Process Model* incorporates an annual Regional Policy Forum, to review accomplishments, discuss future planning needs, develop cooperative projects, and transfer technology. Finally, the preferred *Process Model* includes an all-important USCRTF evaluation aspect, which is not addressed in the strawman.

Finally, two critical issues are identified. First, the final USCRTF *Process Model* should maximize stakeholder participation at every possible level. Second, human resource needs, both nationally and in the field, is a critical factor in determining the ultimate success of the *Process Model* and resultant USCRTF initiatives. They should be given the highest priority for USCRTF action.

# I. Introduction

The U.S. Coral Reef Task Force (USCRTF) has a unique opportunity to make a historically significant difference in coral reef conservation if it effectively manages implementation of the National Coral Reef Action Strategy.

To successfully implement this strategy, the USCRTF must fully integrate its activities and interests by establishing an efficient *Process Model* to ensure effective coordination and progress.

To date, the USCRTF has been a very insular "government to government" organization with minimal non-governmental stakeholder interaction or support. Individual USCRTF members addressed coral reef issues within the confines of their respective agency mandates with little coordination or support from other agencies. In the summer of 2002, NOAA published the *National Coral Reef Action Strategy* that established qualitative goals and objectives to address critical National coral reef issues. Recognizing the need to take the USCRTF to a higher level of management effectiveness, on 8 August 2002, NOAA circulated a *Proposal for Prioritizing Needs, Improving Coordination, and Tracking Progress* (strawman) to solicit comments on a draft *Process Model*. Table 1 outlines the important functions of this *Process Model*.

It is clear that the USCRTF is at a point where it needs to transition from start-up planning, to improving implementation. The transition needs to consider a number of important factors such as focusing limited resources, strengthening capacity, and improving coordination. Equally important is the need for the Task Force to generate a strong sense of urgency to deal with the many threats facing coral reefs by obtaining clear and unequivocal commitments from its political leaders, and conveys a compelling story of needs and accomplishments.

The purpose of this consultancy is to provide the USCRTF with recommendations for improving the *Process Model* outlined in the strawman and to draft a preferred *Process Model* that reflects these recommendations (the preferred option) for endorsement by the USCRTF at its October 2-3, 2002 meeting. A specific task assigned by NOAA was to address three important questions related to the strawman including: *Prioritizing Needs, Improving Coordination* and *Reporting Progress* (Section III).

Several guiding principles have been adopted for the review of the strawman and in producing the preferred *Process Model* option. The adopted principles are:

- Be driven from both the bottom-up (local) and the top-down (USCRTF members);
- Be relatively simple;
- Minimize additional workloads and staff/funding requirements;
- Increase stakeholder participation; and
- Fully integrate an international role into the process.

Initiating a *Process Model* for the USCRTF is a very ambitious undertaking considering the large number of stakeholders, both government and non-government, and the numerous wide-spread geographic locations of the various coral reefs under United States jurisdiction. As such, no matter which option or variation is adopted, the process should start slow and USCRTF leadership should take every opportunity to improve the *Process Model* as it builds momentum and achieves successes.

**Table 1.** Important functions of the USCRTF *Process Model*

<b>Important Functions of the USCRTF Process Model</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Serves as the main highway into the USCRTF for stakeholders to broadcast resource management priorities.</li> <li>• Ensures that stakeholders assess their capabilities and needs in an effective and consistent way before sending them to the USCRTF..</li> <li>• Provides a regional "learning forum" for state, territory and federal managers to develop cooperative opportunities, trade experiences and build capacities.</li> <li>• Identifies priority projects for action and funding on an annual basis.</li> <li>• Creates a mechanism to evaluate and document progress on priority projects.</li> <li>• Provides the USCRTF with a consistent operational methodology, with respect to process and reporting requirements that will be clear to managers in the field.</li> <li>• Enables the USCRTF to develop a comprehensive understanding of national and local coral reef management needs, priorities and capabilities that can be used for national and agency budget justifications, as well as for congressional reporting.</li> <li>• Shows progress in coral reef management that can be used in educational, outreach and public relation activities.</li> <li>• Provides a meaningful role for stakeholders to assist with improving the implementation of the National Coral Reef Action Strategy.</li> <li>• Builds upon the success of the International Coral Reef Initiative (ICRI) regional meetings and their recommendations.</li> <li>• Demonstrates the effectiveness of the ICRI process by evaluating it on a national level.</li> </ul>

## II. Methods

### A. Information gathering

In order to adequately respond to the three questions (Section III) and develop a preferred *Process Model* option, information was obtained by:

**Reviewing other process models:** Process models used in the planning and implementation of Coastal America, The Chesapeake Bay Program, The Invasive Species Task Force, and Quality New Jersey (AT&T) were thoroughly reviewed. In addition, the generally accepted international process model used for developing Integrated Coastal Management Programs was considered.

**Conducting interviews:** Interviews were conducted with representatives who worked with, and were very familiar with, the various process models. Representatives from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the U. S. Department of Agricultural were also interviewed. A complete list of individuals contacted during this study is included in Appendix 1. Interviews were initially based on the same set of questions for consistency purposes, and in some cases follow-up interviews were conducted on specific aspects of a model.

**Reviewing written comments:** Several individuals and organizations provided written comments on the strawman that were very helpful throughout this assessment. These comments were reviewed and taken into consideration.

**Participating in discussion meetings:** Numerous conference calls and meetings were conducted by NOAA to discuss the strawman. These discussions provided important insight and direction for this assessment.

### B. Defining What "Local" and "Regional" Mean

The strawman does not define what "local" or "regional" mean. This makes it difficult to visualize how the strawman totally works. Defining these terms is critical because it determines the geographic focus of the *Process Model* (i.e., bi-regional, multi-regional, island specific, etc.) and can affect the balance of the top-down/bottom-up approach (i.e., weighted more towards top-down, equally balanced, or weighted more towards bottom-up).

For the purpose of this assessment we are defining "regional" as the two geographic areas of the Pacific and Caribbean (includes Florida and Flower Gardens Banks). Local refers to place-based locations that generally make up a coral reef system and reflect similar issues, general priorities, needs and resources. We propose they include:

1. Florida;
2. Flower Gardens;
3. Navassa Island\*;
4. Puerto Rico;
5. Virgin Islands;
6. Hawaiian Islands;
7. Wake Island and Line Islands (Palmyra, Kingman, Johnston, Baker, Jarvis)\*;
8. American Samoa;
9. Guam;
10. CNMI; and
11. International (includes the International Working Group and other stakeholders)

\*Note: We recommend this group should be represented by the Department of Interior.

### C. Creating a Process Model Framework

Before conducting this assessment, we established a general framework for a *Process Model* based upon a combination of the fundamental elements typically adopted for Integrated Coastal Management, and those used in the successful AT&T quality model that was applied to the Quality New Jersey - Water Quality Improvement Project and explained and discussed in the 1998 book *The Dolphins are Back* by Phillip Scanlan (AT&T Vice President for Quality) and used by the Center for Marine Conservation in improving the process of their National Beach Clean-Up Program (Table 2).

**Table 2.** Process model frameworks used for the USCRTF preferred *Process Model* option.

Integrated Coastal Management	AT&T Quality Model
Integrated coastal management is generally described as a continuous cycle having the following 5 steps:	AT&T Process Quality Management and Improvement Methodology (PQMI)
Step 1. Identification and Assessment of Issues	1. Establish process management responsibilities.
Step 2. Planning and preparation	2. Define the process and identify customers' requirements.
Step 3. Formal Adoption	3. Define and establish measures.
Step 4. Implementation	4. Assess conformance to customer requirements.
Step 5. Evaluation	5. Investigate process to identify improvement opportunities.
	6. Rank improvement opportunities and set objectives.
	7. Improve process quality.



### III. Review of the "Strawman" Proposal

We were tasked by NOAA to examine three important questions related to the strawman including: *Prioritizing Needs*, *Improving Coordination* and *Reporting Progress*. Based on the analysis of other process models and interviews of key informants; strengths, weakness, and recommends were identified for each question. A summary of all references in the strawman to each question topic is also presented as "The Strawman Says".

#### A. Prioritize Needs

**Question 1:** The USCRTF has said it wants to set threats-based priorities. It has identified that threats should be reassessed every 3-5 years. It has recommended holding thematic regional workshops to develop annual action strategies needed to address these threats. The strawman process model lays one option for achieving these goals. *The consultants will analyze other models to identify strengths and weaknesses in the strawman and recommend changes to improve the USCRTF process for setting priorities. The Chesapeake Bay model will be examined as part of answering this question.*

#### "The Strawman Says"

There is no prioritization across the 13 goal areas (in the Coral Reef Action Strategy) and that some goal areas lack specific targets (Table 1). The USCRTF will identify 3 top threats to become the focus of thematic workshops (Figure 1 legend) and based on the results of the thematic regional ("regional" is undefined) workshops, the USCRTF will set 2-3 specific threats-based goals (Table 1) that will appropriately emphasize local and regional management needs (Section III). Task force goals that identify targets and timelines for addressing 2-3 key threats would: facilitate prioritization of management activities; serve as a foundation for coordinated implementation; and strengthen oversight of implementation by providing clear targets (Section II, 2). There are two existing goals adopted by the USCRTF (one related to establishing additional no-take ecological reserves and the other involves producing comprehensive digital maps of all coral reefs in the U.S. states and territories before 2007 (Table 3). The USCRTF Steering Committee synthesizes the regional workshop recommendations into a series of options for national-level goals (with targets and timelines) for consideration by the task force (Section V, 1). Every third year (in February), the USCRTF will review the goal options presented by the Steering Committee and adopt, via resolution, 3 threats based goals based on the thematic regional workshops that include all stakeholders (Table 4; Section V, 1).

#### *Discussion*

Setting priorities has been used by other programs that are faced with multifaceted or complex issues, as an effective way to focus their efforts. A lack of adequate focus (i.e., trying to address everything equally) can result in nothing being done very well, and the

effectiveness of the program is greatly diminished. How a program goes about setting priorities can vary and often depends on the purpose of the program as well as how the priorities will be used. For example, Coastal America only really sets "priorities" at its regional level by choosing particular projects that the federal agency representatives, with input from state and local organizations, agree are important and achievable. The Chesapeake Bay Program (CBP) on the other hand, has established a set of clear quantitative goals that, for all practicable purposes, represent "priorities" for the program. Each goal identifies dates when specific actions or results will occur. The goals are agreed upon and committed to by the participating Governors, the EPA (on behalf of the US government) and the Bay Commission. These individuals then focus their efforts and resources on achieving the stated goals. This has been a successful way of setting priorities for the CBP because the reason for setting goals is understood, the goals are specific so everyone knows what the expectation is, the goals are meaningful but aggressive so progress is achieved, and the most senior political officials of the CBP commit to the goals.

#### Weaknesses

- Establishing threats-based goals with targets, timelines and indicators would help focus USCRTF activities.
- A better focus would improve overall effectiveness including, opportunities for partnerships, better coordination, measuring progress, enhancing budget opportunities and supporting implementation needs.
- Setting specific goals with targets, timelines and indicators embraces outcome-based management.
- How or why the 2-3 key threats and goals would be used lacks clarity.
- There is no discussion of how the new goals relate to the existing goals and objectives in the National Action Strategy.
- The strawman process for goal setting is process heavy and sometimes poorly defined.
- Identifying only 3 key threats and resultant goals could constrain work in other important threats.

**It is the conclusion of this assessment that the USCRTF strawman proposal to establish priorities by identifying 2-3 key threats and setting specific, threats-based goals is appropriate, but requires clarification and further definition.**

#### *Recommendations for Prioritizing Needs*

- **Refer to three threats as "focus areas".** So as not to imply, that the three threats identified in this process preclude actions on other equally important threats, the three threats should be diplomatically referred to as USCRTF "focus areas".

- **Criteria are needed for selecting focus areas.** Some criteria to consider when identifying the three "focus areas" include:
  - **Severity of threat:** Addressing this threat will make a significant contribution to reef ecosystem health.
  - **Scale of threat:** The threat is of national significance and common to most locations or particular to one region.
  - **Management response:** There are clear management actions that can be implemented SUCCESSFULLY on the ground to address this threat.
  - **Need for partnership/coordination:** Working together will make a big difference in our ability to address this threat.
  - **Constituency:** This is a threat people care about, will receive strong political support, and success can be communicated effectively.
  - **Leveraging:** Addressing this threat will also help address other threats simultaneously, and reinforces other goals of the USCRTF. It will give the most bang-for-the-buck.

Sufficient information currently exists (threat matrix information, various "state of the reef" type reports) that the three "focus areas" can be identified directly by the Implementation Committee. The three "focus areas" should not constrain states, territories or federal agencies from addressing other threats or issues critical to their specific management situation.

The purpose of identifying three "focus areas" is to focus federal agency efforts on:

- Increasing budgets;
  - Addressing human resource needs;
  - Garnering political support for national, regional, and local coral reef programs; and
  - Providing support for local implementation.
- **Establish quantitative USCRTF goals with targets, timelines and indicators.** Five year quantitative goals with targets, timelines and indicators need to be established for each focus area. This should be accomplished via a national workshop that engages stakeholders.

Each "focus area" goal should include three important elements:

- 1) a key threat;
- 2) a clear QUANTITATIVE goal statement for addressing the "focus area"; and,
- 3) specific aggressive targets, timelines and indicators for achieving the goal.

The *qualitative* goals and objectives established in the National Coral Reef Action Strategy should be used to focus development of these new *quantitative* goals. In

doing so, the new quantitative goals refine and build upon the goals and objectives established in the National Coral Reef Action Strategy. Goal targets should also spring from the goals and objectives identified in the National Action Strategy to ensure consistency with, and relate "focus areas" back to this important guidance document.

Any goal area in the National Action Strategy that is selected to build on will require additional quantitative specificity in order to be used to create timelines and indicators to measure progress against. An example of this specificity can be found within the USCRTF mapping effort. The National Action Strategy goal is to "Map all U.S. coral reefs". The target and timeline for that goal is to "produce comprehensive digital maps of all coral reefs in the U.S. States and Trust Territories within 5 to 7 years [2005-2007]." This target is clear, specific, can be measured by intermediate and final performance indicators — and relates directly back to the National Action Strategy. Each goal and target should be determined based on reliable information and should be aggressive to make progress and not simply maintain the status quo.

- **Adopt focus areas and goals for five-year period.** The quantitative goal statements should be transmitted to the USCRTF for consideration and endorsement via a signed directive (preferably at a public ceremony with appropriate press releases generated by the USCRTF and principal implementing agencies).

## B. Improve Coordination

**Question 2:** Addressing key threats to coral reefs will require coordinated implementation by a number of agencies working at the state, regional, and national level. To date, some agencies, particularly US Agriculture and US EPA, have been constrained in the extent to which they can address coral reefs. The strawman process model lays several mechanisms for improving coordinated inter-agency implementation for coral reef management. *The consultants will analyze other examples of interagency coordination and conduct interviews to suggest mechanisms for strengthening coordinated implementation. This analysis will target US Agriculture and US EPA to identify specific processes and mechanisms (e.g. different roles, budget support, etc). If successful, other agencies might be targeted by a future analysis. The consultants will recommend whether the strawman process mechanisms are the best approach to strengthening coordination or whether better mechanisms exist.*

### "The Strawman Says"

There is a need to better: synchronize state/territory and federal priorities and activity implementation; engage the regional level; and need for better inter-agency coordination to address key threats (Table 1). The strawman proposes to hold annual thematic regional workshops to develop and update coordinated three-year action plans (Tables 1 & 4).

For each of the threats identified (Section V, 1), action plans will be produced (by threat-orientated National working groups i.e., Extractive Uses, Pollution, and Coastal Uses) (Section V, 1) based on discussions and decisions from thematic regional workshops and will appropriately emphasize local and regional management needs (Section III, 2). In order to coordinate implementation of task force action plans with federal spend plans, task force working groups should update action plans before October (Section IV).

The three-year action plans will achieve the goals articulated in the task force resolutions (Section III, 2). These threats-based plans should specify how task force goals will be achieved and what support is required, in terms of: 1) mapping and monitoring; 2) outreach and education; 3) MPAs; 4) biophysical and socioeconomic research; 5) coordination between agencies and partners (e.g. financial leveraging or capacity building); and 6) international involvement and other areas discussed in the National Coral Reef Conservation Action Plan (Section III, 2).

Action plans refer to and coordinate between state/territory management plans (e.g. coral reef management plans, CZM plans, non-point plans, etc) and federal agency spend plans (Section V, 2). Action plans provide specific guidance to the other task force working groups (e.g. Research Working Group, Outreach and Education Working Group, etc) on how working groups can best support threats-based action plans (Section V, 2).

Three federal task force members detail staff to serve as a secretariat for regional, thematic workshops and coordinators for subsequent plan implementation (Section V, 2).

## Discussion

To date the USCRTF has largely been an insular organization with government agencies interacting with other government agencies. Coordination and participation among the government agencies has not been consistent and there is a need to enhance this effort. Both Coastal America and CBP have used similar approaches to ensure coordination and participation among the government agencies and/or states involved with their programs. Both programs support specific efforts to engage senior political representatives of federal agencies at the Secretary and Assistant Secretary level, and state Governors and Environmental Secretaries. Each program orchestrates "an opportunity" for these

individuals to meet (at least annually), discuss policy and goal setting issues, and commit their support (and resources) through a public event (i.e. signing Proclamations, etc.). Having issues recognized as important to constituents, aligned with their own agendas, and that communicates well for their public image, are factors that help garner their support. Once these commitments are declared, the senior representatives then communicate directions "down the chain of command" to make sure they are met.

There is also a great need to reach out, improve coordination with, and synchronize implementation between the great variety of local, regional and national stakeholders who are eager to play a role in the process. The Invasive Species Task Force, Coastal America and CBP all have dedicated efforts to reach out to citizens, environmental organizations and/or industry interests through effective communication strategies. In addition, the Invasive Species Task Force and CBP have established Advisory Committees to help guide their activities. Effective outreach requires a significant effort, particularly due to the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA) requirements if an Advisory Committee is established (the Invasive Species Task Force, who created an NGO advisory board, revealed that it takes a full time staff person to coordinate the advisory board), but the importance of involving stakeholders in a meaningful way can not be overstated.

Coordination is improved in the proposed goal setting or "focus area" step of the strawman via several thematic regional workshops, in the action strategy step of the strawman via National threat-orientated working groups who consider discussions and decisions from the thematic regional workshops. This regional thematic workshop proposal is similar to one held by the USCRTF for vessel grounding's and one conducted in conjunction with the USCRTF meeting held in Hawaii several years ago. Having one or more annual workshops that bring stakeholders and the USCRTF together in such a way has merit.

In response to the specific Task of the USCRTF, interviews were conducted with representatives of the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the US Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) to explore mechanisms for strengthening coordinated implementation. Appendix 1 includes the results of these interviews. Recommendations identifying specific processes and mechanisms to improve interagency coordination are provided below as well as in Appendix 1.

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The requirement for three-year action plans is an excellent process for identifying "regional" priorities and focusing efforts of projects that can be successful. The longer (3 year) time horizon is more realistic with respect to personnel requirements and budget requirements.</li> <li>• Support required for "international involvement" would be requested in each "regional" action plan.</li> <li>• Action plans refer to and coordinate between state/territory management plans (e.g. coral reef management plans, CZM plans, non-point plans, etc) and federal agency spend plans.</li> <li>• Three federal task force members detail staff to serve as a secretariat for regional thematic workshops and coordinators for subsequent plan implementation.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "Regional" is not defined so it is hard to visualize how the strawman process actually works.</li> <li>• The three threats based goals drive are the focus for the regional action plans and thus restrict local implementation support.</li> <li>• It is not clear how the existing International Working Group would fit into the overall strawman process and the action planning process.</li> <li>• It is not clear how the new action plan priorities relate back to the National Action Strategy.</li> <li>• The number of "regional" (not defined) secretariat staff for thematic workshops and subsequent action plan implementation is not defined.</li> </ul>

**It is the conclusion of this assessment that the mechanisms proposed by the USCRTF to improve coordination are appropriate, but can be improved through further clarification and definition.**

### *Recommendations for Improving Coordination*

- **Target Better Integration of State and Federal Agencies at Local-Level Planning and Implementation.** The majority of the actions taken to address threats to coral reefs will occur at the local level and therefore there is a need to seek out and invite stakeholders and local representatives of relevant state and federal agencies to participate in planning and implementation activities. In addition, Coral Reef Groups are encouraged to reach out and explore opportunities for collaboration with existing organizations such as Coastal America, USDA State Technical Committees, and other established committees.

- **Obtain Commitments From Senior Level Agency Representatives.** Create an opportunity for the most senior level representatives of the USCRTF to meet at least annually to discuss policy and goal setting issues, and commit their support (and resources) through a public event (i.e. signing Proclamations, etc.).
- **Engage Regional Officials and Create Cooperative Opportunities.** On an annual basis the USCRTF should host two regional policy forums (Pacific and Caribbean) where government and non-governmental stakeholders are invited to participate. The purpose of these forums is to gather regional agency representatives to meet with appropriate coral reef group representatives to review accomplishments, discuss future planning needs and requirements, develop cooperative projects, and transfer technology and ideas. The results of these forums will help guide regional agency support for local coral reef priorities. These commitments should be endorsed in writing at public events.
- **Assign Federal Agencies Responsibility at the National Level to Oversee or Lead Specific Activities.** Requiring agencies to be accountable for specific responsibilities engages the agency in USCRTF activities in between meetings, and makes it more difficult for the agency to simply to walk away until the next meeting.
- **Provide Agency Personnel to Staff USCRTF.** Assigning agency personnel to the USCRTF Secretariat represents an investment by the agency, and provides a better opportunity for the agency representative to seek out and identify opportunities for collaboration.
- **Engage Stakeholders In a More Meaningful Way.** Stakeholder involvement needs to be more meaningful and better integrated into the USCRTF. The USCRTF should explore options for providing stakeholders with a formal role.
- **Improve Coordination Mechanisms With the U.S. Department of Agriculture.** One or more Assistant Secretary or Deputy Assistant Secretary of the CRTF should host a meeting with their USDA counterparts to discuss potential opportunities of collaboration with USDA programs.

Contact should be made at the state or territory level to explore ways *USDA* programs can be engaged in coral reef planning and implementation activities.

NOAA should work with local Coral Reef Groups to identify agriculturally dominated watersheds that drain into adjacent coral reef areas and refer these watersheds to USDA State Technical Committees.

- **Improve Coordination Mechanisms With the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.** The USEPA representative should be designated as "the responsible party" for certain USCRTF interagency priority projects. This would increase their long-



term attention, creating more interest in coral reef management issues in USEPA and increase the effectiveness of USEPA on the USCRTF.

The USCRTF should make a concerted effort to identify and market crosscutting issues where coral reef health and human health intersect (i.e., coral disease and water quality issues) as a way to strengthen existing USEPA budgets for coral reef activities and potential new budget initiatives.

## C. Report Progress

**Question 3:** The USCRTF has determined that it is important to track accomplishments and "tell our story." The specific audiences, products, and tracking mechanisms were not agreed upon by all steering committee members. The Steering Committee did agree that a web-based system should be used to collect information from all Task Force members. The strawman model suggests mechanisms and products for communicating progress to key audiences. *The consultants will analyze other examples of reporting to recommend changes to improve the USCRTF process for setting priorities.*

### "The Strawman Says"

Reporting is inefficient and taxes available human resources and unclear goals and indicators make reporting difficult (Table 1). To effectively serve its oversight role, the task force needs to communicate progress in addressing the coral reef crisis to key audiences, such as Congress and the concerned public (Section II, 3). The current reporting, based on project implementation, can be strengthened by tracking indicators of progress toward strategic goals (Section II, 3). The strawman proposes the production of annual task force and working group reports supported by a web-based database (Table 1).

The task force annual report will cover progress toward goals, other accomplishments, and next steps in implementation (Section III, 3). Thematic regional workshops (annual) provide options on specific intermediate and end-outcome indicators that the task force can track to demonstrate progress toward its goals (Section V, 3).

The USCRTF steering committee develops a coordinated web-based system for tracking progress and accomplishments (Section V, 3). It is further recommended that each federal agency take responsibility for populating the system with relevant data prior to the October USCRTF meeting each year (Section V, 3). The working groups synthesize the data in the web-based system each year between October and December into appropriate formats for the task force annual report (Section V, 3).

The USCRTF Steering Committee collates the working group reports each January into an annual report that is published prior to and delivered to the February USCTRF meeting (Section IV; Section V, 3). In addition, the February USCRTF meeting should focus on synthesizing member accomplishments and plans into coherent task force goals

and policies that amplify member agendas effectively into the Congressional debate (Section IV). It is recommended that one Federal task force member detail staff to serve as a secretariat for managing data collection and production of the annual report (Section V, 3).

Reporting is inefficient and taxes available human resources and unclear goals and indicators make reporting difficult (Table 1). To effectively serve its oversight role, the task force needs to communicate progress in addressing the coral reef crisis to key audiences, such as Congress and the concerned public (Section II, 3). The current reporting, based on project implementation, can be strengthened by tracking indicators of progress toward strategic goals (Section II, 3). The strawman proposes the production of annual task force and working group reports supported by a web-based database (Table 1).

The task force annual report will cover progress toward goals, other accomplishments, and next steps in implementation (Section III, 3). Thematic regional workshops (annual) provide options on specific intermediate and end-outcome indicators that the task force can track to demonstrate progress toward its goals (Section V, 3).

The USCRTF steering committee develops a coordinated web-based system for tracking progress and accomplishments (Section V, 3). It is further recommended that each federal agency take responsibility for populating the system with relevant data prior to the October USCRTF meeting each year (Section V, 3). The working groups synthesize the data in the web-based system each year between October and December into appropriate formats for the task force annual report (Section V, 3).

The USCRTF Steering Committee collates the working group reports each January into an annual report that is published prior to and delivered to the February USCRTF meeting (Section IV; Section V, 3). In addition, the February USCRTF meeting should focus on synthesizing member accomplishments and plans into coherent task force goals and policies that amplify member agendas effectively into the Congressional debate (Section IV). It is recommended that one Federal task force member detail staff to serve as a secretariat for managing data collection and production of the annual report (Section V, 3).

## **Discussion**

Although the CRTF is interested in establishing more efficient reporting mechanisms it remains undecided what information should be reported, for what purpose information is being collected (e.g., telling a story, measuring progress, etc.), or who it is being collected for (the audience). Answering these questions is critical because it will, in large part, determine what type of information is needed and how the information might be collected. One approach to reporting accomplishments that is currently used by Coastal America is to generally describe the various projects they are involved with, such as; what the project will accomplish (i.e., habitat restoration), agencies involved, and how it

was completed. This approach omits reporting on specific metrics and therefore it is difficult to quantify the results of the project. On the other hand, the reporting is simplified and basically requires a short written description of the project.

The Chesapeake Bay Program uses a more quantitative reporting process. They track and report on specific indicators used to measure progress toward achieving their goals using a web-based system. In this way they are using the information not only to tell a compelling story by explaining their progress on goals, but it also provides the Program with a management tool to make program adjustments. This form of reporting is much more resource intensive, from identifying appropriate indicators to collecting, analyzing, and synthesizing the information for different uses. The CBP has a full-time staff person responsible for collecting and analyzing the information.

In keeping with the top-down and bottoms-up philosophy of the USCRTF, there should be two tiers of activities that will need to be reported on. One tier represents information, measures and timelines tailored to the action strategies created by the Coral Reef Groups. For this tier, the USCRTF reporting requirements should not be perceived as burdensome or simply "bean counting" — otherwise they become meaningless. Reporting requirements should be easy to comply with, and generally consistent with existing agency reporting requirements. The other tier of reporting requirements, that the local tier should feed into, is at the national level where specific quantitative goals should be established, and appropriate indicators measured to gauge progress toward achieving the

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creates single centralized web-based system for reporting and collecting information.</li> <li>• Provides quantitative information that can be used to demonstrate accomplishments as well as for improved management</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Thematic regional workshops could become time-consuming and not necessarily well coordinated with each other</li> <li>• Proposes multiple efforts to synthesize information and generate reports by Working Groups and USCRTF</li> </ul>

**It is the conclusion of this assessment that the USCRTF proposal for tracking and reporting progress is based on sound reasoning but needs further definition.**

*Recommendations for Reporting Progress*

- **Define the CRTF Audience.** The CRTF needs to identify its audience in order to effectively communicate the right message.
- **Create a Web-based Reporting System.** The USCRTF should proceed with developing a simply, easily accessible web-based reporting system that becomes the central repository for data and information.

- **Oversight and Synthesis of Information.** One way to simplify the process is to have each coral reef group responsible for making sure their reporting data is provided to the web-based reporting system in a timely fashion.
- **Create a Two-tiered Reporting System That Reflects Reporting Requirements of Each Coral Reef Group Action Strategy and That Also Feeds Into National Goals and Indicators.** It is important to ensure the reporting requirements adopted by the USCRTF recognizes existing reporting requirements that the Coral Reef Groups may already have in place through their respective agencies. Efforts should be made for this tier to use the existing reporting requirements as much as possible. The coral reef group tier of reporting requirements should also be consistent with, and feed into, a National tier of reporting requirements for the National goals and indicators.

## IV. Recommended "Strawman" Improvements

The following section integrates all of the recommended improvements to the strawman into a preferred *Process Model* framework. Included in this preferred option are recommendations for a strategic vision, organizational roles and responsibilities, and a description of how the preferred *Process Model* would work.

### A. Create a Clear Strategic Vision

The purpose of the strategic vision is to outline, in a clear and concise manner, the guiding philosophy of the USCRTF using the preferred *Process Model*.

Strategic Vision:

This strategic vision reflects an understanding of the latest scientific information on coral reef survivability, understanding of the historical political and economic limitations on coral reef conservation success and an understanding of socio-economic factors.

The USCRTF will give top priority to coral reef group action items that *CAN BE SUCCESSFUL* — considering environmental, political and economic realities. IF WE CAN NOT be successful in critically important areas, an evaluation, of whether THE COSTS (not only in dollars) of ineffective management are WORTH THE BENEFITS (not only in dollars), will be conducted to guide USCRTF action. All Coral Reef Groups will get some USCRTF support every year to build capacity and program momentum.

### B. Define Organizational Roles and Responsibilities

#### Executive Committee (EC)

Role

Sets overall policy and direction for the USCRTF.

Who

Composed of those most senior representatives of the member states, territories and federal agencies identified by the USCRTF Charter dated December 5, 2001.

#### Steering Committee (SC)

Role

Provides general oversight of USCRTF activities and direction to the Secretariat, promotes and facilitates coordination, acts as liaison to the Executive Committee, and develops recommendations and options as needed for the Executive Committee. The Steering Committee will review synthesized coral reef group action strategies and cooperative opportunities (submitted by the IC) and will recommend to the USCRTF Co-

Chairs what agencies should be responsible for ensuring multi-agency cooperation for implementation.

### Who

Composed of senior-level representatives appointed by each member of the Executive Committee. Each representative appointed to the Steering Committee should be senior enough to have decision making authority for their state, territory or agency, and have reasonable access to their designated Executive Committee member.

## **Implementation Committee (IC)**

### Role

The IC will be the primary operating unit of the USCRTF and will have the following responsibilities:

**Coordinate Development of Threat-based Focus Areas.** Using existing information (i.e., threat matrix data, "State of the Reefs" type reports, etc.) the IC will recommend focus areas for USCRTF consideration. These focus area recommendations will be updated every five years.

**Coordinate Drafting of Goal Statements.** The IC will host a national workshop to develop quantitative goal statements for focus areas with benchmarks, timelines, and indicators for measuring and reporting progress.

**Coordinate Assistance for Producing Action Strategies.** The IC will be responsible for providing assistance to produce the action strategies. This includes, but is not limited to, funding, staff (contractor, government, or NGO), ongoing management and logistical support (i.e., meeting rooms, transfer of funds), ensuring government and stakeholder participation in the action strategy process, and preparing grant requests.

**Synthesizing action strategies and development of focus area implementation plans.** The IC will synthesize the eleven coral reef group action strategies and develop an implementation plan for delivering technical support to the Coral Reef Groups, with special emphasis on the focus areas.

**Coordinate Annual Regional Policy Workshop.** On an annual basis the IC will coordinate Pacific and Caribbean regional policy workshops on behalf of the Regional Policy Committee. All government and non-government stakeholders will be invited to attend. The purpose of these workshops is to gather the senior regional agency representatives to meet with appropriate coral reef group representatives to review accomplishments, discuss future planning needs and requirements, develop cooperative projects, and transfer technology and ideas. The results of this meeting will help guide regional agency support for local coral reef priorities. These commitments should be endorsed in writing by the Regional Policy Committee at public events.

**Produce USCRTF Annual Report.** The IC produces the USCRTF annual report drawing from information on the web-based system.

**Overseeing Working Groups.** The IC will oversee the operation of Working Groups.

Who

Representatives of the member states, territories and federal agencies identified by the USCRTF Charter dated December 5, 2001. Each representative should have appropriate knowledge and expertise and have reasonable access to their Steering Committee representative.

**Coral Reef Groups**

Role

With logistical support from the IC, they will hold stakeholder action strategy workshops, write action strategies, and implement action items.

Who

Eleven Coral Reef Groups are proposed as resource-based locations that generally make up a coral reef system and reflect similar issues, general priorities, needs, and resources. Each group should have a membership that includes local scientists, NGO's, state and federal agency representatives and citizens. The proposed groups are:

1. Florida;
2. Flower Gardens;
3. Navassa Island\*;
4. Puerto Rico;
5. Virgin Islands;
6. Hawaiian Islands;
7. Wake Island and Line Islands (Palmyra, Kingman, Johnston, Baker, Jarvis)\*;
8. American Samoa;
9. Guam;
10. CNMI; and
11. International (International Working Group and stakeholders)

\*Note: We recommend this group should be represented by the Department of Interior.

**Regional Policy Committee (RPC)**

Role

Provide regional program support and commitments for the planning and implementation of coral reef action strategies.

Who

The RPC is composed of the regional representatives of federal agencies in the Pacific and Caribbean areas.

## **Coral Reef Initiative Coordinating Committee**

### Role

This group has a long history of collaborative work on local and regional efforts to protect coral reef ecosystems. The Task Force and its subgroups shall work closely with the All Islands Coral Reef initiative Coordinating committee to fulfill their missions.

### Who

The All Islands Coral Reef Coordinating Committee is a team of coral reef points of contact from island State and territorial governments.

## **Working Groups**

### Role

Working Groups should be able to wrestle with emerging issues and provide recommendations, advice, or service to the USCRTF. Working Groups can be established permanently or "as needed", for the purpose of focusing on particular issues and providing advice to the USCRTF. Such issues may consist of a variety of interests like coordinating the delivery of support tools (mapping, education, research, etc.), exploring new policy areas, coordination of budgets, or outreach and communication.

### Who

Based on the current activities of the USCRTF, the following two Working Groups are recommended:

### **Technical Assistance Working Group**

Includes mapping, monitoring and assessment, science, and regulatory (air and water) issues.

### **Education and Outreach Working Group**

Increases awareness and understanding of the ecological, cultural and socio-economic importance of coral reef ecosystems among the widest possible audience.

## **USCRTF Secretariat**

### Role

Acts as a central point of contact for USCRTF activities, carries out direction provided by the USCRTF, and provides support to Committees and Working Groups.

### Who

Staff hired or detailed to a central office (location to be determined). It is recommended that the Secretariat be composed of positions to meet the following needs. At a minimum, the Secretariat should include a full-time: Executive Director; Administrative Assistant, Secretary; 3 Program Coordinators (general staff support); Education and Outreach Coordinator; Data Management Specialist; and Communication Specialist.



## C. How The Preferred *Process Model* Option Works

The preferred *Process Model* option uses a bottom-up approach to generate priorities for the USCRTF and a top-down approach to support local implementation of action items. Adoption of national focus areas by the USCRTF should generally reflect those needs, threats or issues identified through local planning and assessment activities via the Coral Reef Groups. Consideration may also be given to special needs identified by the USCRTF Executive Committee.

### 1. Improving the National Focus

One way to more effectively and strategically implement the National Action Strategy is to adopt some threats-based focus areas at the national level to focus on for a period of several years. Focus areas are used mainly for driving important national responsibilities, such as:

- increasing budgets;
- addressing human resource needs;
- garnering political support for national, regional, and local coral reef programs and;
- providing support for local implementation.

Adopting threats-based focus areas should not be construed as those threats being the only ones that are important. Selecting the threats-based focus areas is done for a specific purpose and based on specific criteria. Each local coral reef group will need flexibility to work on the threats they deem necessary. At the National level there may be threats that do not meet the selection criteria but are important for agency mission or coral reef health. There are other mechanisms to highlight the importance of these threats such as creating a special Working Group to further investigate the threat or conduct special studies. Another option might be for the USCRTF to adopt a Resolution highlighting the extent of the threat.

**a. Establish focus area selection criteria.** Agreeing on the criteria for selecting the focus areas would provide a clear and common basis for making the selection.

It is suggested that the selection criteria include:

- **Severity of threat:** Addressing this threat will make a significant contribution to reef ecosystem health.
- **Scale of threat:** The threat is of national significance and common to most locations or particular to one region.
- **Management response:** There are clear management actions that can be implemented SUCCESSFULLY on the ground to address this threat.
- **Need for partnership/coordination:** Working together will make a big difference in our ability to address this threat.

- **Constituency:** This is a threat people care about, will receive strong political support, and success can be communicated effectively.
- **Leveraging:** Addressing this threat will also help address other threats simultaneously, and reinforces other goals of the USCRTF. It will give the most bang-for-the-buck.

**b. Selection of focus areas.** In combination with the selection criteria, sufficient information (threat matrix data, State of the Reefs Report, Reefs at Risk Report, etc.) currently exists for the Implementation Committee to identify and recommend several focus areas for the Executive Committee to adopt for a period of 5 years.

**c. Adoption of focus areas.** Based on recommendations from the IC, the Executive Committee will adopt several threats—based focus areas for a period of 5 years. Following adoption of the focus areas, an individual member/agency should be requested to act as the responsible lead for each priority area to ensure appropriate actions occur such as increasing budgets, addressing human resource needs; garnering political support for national, regional, and local coral reef programs, coordinating technical support, and tracking progress. The lead for each focus area should report on progress at each USCRTF meeting.

**d. Establish goal statements.** The IC will host a national workshop to develop quantitative goal statements for focus areas with benchmarks, timelines, and indicators for measuring and reporting progress.

## 2. Creating Local Implementation Strategies

**a. Creating local action strategies.** With logistical support from the IC, each coral reef group should develop a written action strategy that identifies those key threats and actions that the group will focus on for a five-year period. Action strategies should include a timeline with intermediate benchmarks and performance measures (see below). The first step in creating the action strategy should be a local stakeholder workshop that includes participation by customers (see below).

Action strategies should pay particular attention to:

**Identifying customer requirements.** These requirements should also be periodically re-evaluated. Customers include: beach-goers, sport and commercial fishermen, pleasure boating enthusiast and boating industry, shore tourism industry, Scuba divers and diving industry, shore municipalities and counties, state governments, national government, Congress, NGO's, general public/taxpayer, scientific research community, and marine life living in the coral reefs.

**Recommending local action items that can be SUCCESSFUL considering:**

- Uncontrollable terrestrial, atmospheric and oceanic stressors;
- Institutional capacity (political support, ability of government agencies to provide goods and services and ensure laws and regulations are enforced); and
- Community capacity (rules, procedures and values people hold which predispose them to work collectively for mutual benefit).

**Creating performance measures.**

Intermediate benchmarks and performance measures, with verification data programs, shall be included for each action item within action strategies. Performance measures will need to be compatible (as much as possible) with existing state or territorial reporting requirements.

**b. Submitting local action strategies.** The coral reef action strategies should be provided to the Implementation Committee.

### 3. Engaging Regional Officials and Creating Cooperative Opportunities

**a. Regional policy forum.** On an annual basis the IC will host two regional policy forums (Pacific and Caribbean). All government and non-government stakeholders will be invited to attend. The purpose of these workshops is to gather regional agency representatives to meet with appropriate coral reef group representatives to review accomplishments, discuss future planning needs and requirements, develop cooperative projects, and transfer technology and ideas. The results of this meeting will help guide regional agency support for local coral reef priorities. These commitments should be endorsed in writing at public events.

**b. Coordination with other local organizations.** Each coral reef group is encouraged to reach out and explore opportunities for collaboration with organizations such as Coastal America, USDA State Technical Committees, and other established committees.

### 4. USCRTF Support for Implementation

**a. Synthesizing action strategies and development of focus area implementation plans.** The IC will synthesize the eleven coral reef group action strategies and develop an implementation plan to deliver technical support to the Coral Reef Groups, with special emphasis on the focus areas.

**b. Identifying responsible agencies.** The Steering Committee will review coral reef group action strategies and cooperative opportunities (that are submitted by the IC) and will recommend to the USCRTF Co-Chairs what agencies will be

responsible for ensuring multi-agency cooperation for implementation.

**c. Reporting progress.** At each USCRTF meeting, the lead agency for each action strategy should report on the status and progress of Federal agency cooperation, specifically identifying any unmet needs.

## 5. Report Progress on Action Strategies

**a. Web-based reporting system.** The USCRTF will provide a web-based reporting system that reflects individual actions, intermediate benchmarks, performance measures, indicators, and other important accomplishments, as well as difficulties/challenges.

**b. National performance measures.** In addition, the web-based reporting system will include the National performance measures and indicators, and show how the national indicators relate to accomplishments among the coral reef groups.

**c. USCRTF annual report.** The Steering Committee should be responsible for producing an annual progress report (drawing from information on the web-based system).

## 6. Evaluation of the USCRTF

Evaluation is an important management tool to help determine how well the USCRTF is meeting its stated goals and objectives. To be most effective, the evaluation process should occur both as an on-going basis to assess annual progress and as a periodic comprehensive review of the entire USCRTF.

**a. Annual assessment of progress.** The annual evaluation should be conducted as an internal exercise that collects and synthesizes local and national measures of performance and compares that information against stated goals of the USCRTF to judge progress toward those goals. The results of the annual evaluation should be provided to the public in a USCRTF Annual Report that includes a report on progress toward achieving the stated goals, highlights of important accomplishments, and identification and explanation of any programmatic adjustments that need to be made. The Implementation Committee should be responsible for conducting and reporting on the annual assessment.

**b. Periodic assessment of the USCRTF effectiveness.** The periodic evaluation should be conducted every 5 years by an outside group to provide an independent assessment of how well the USCRTF is addressing its charge under Executive Order 13089. This evaluation should include the national, regional and local activities of the USCRTF. Issues that should be included in the periodic evaluation include progress toward achieving goals, the process of discharging

USCRTF responsibilities effectively, conformance with customer requirements, major accomplishments, obstacles encountered, and recommendations for improvements. Improvements should be prioritized based on the overall costs and benefits to determine the best use of limited time and funds. The results of the evaluation should be made available to the public in the form of a report.

**c. Establishing performance measures (quantitative goals) and indicators.**

Well-crafted performance measures provide a clear indication of how well a program is achieving its goals. Thoughtful design, use, and adaptation are critical to their usefulness as a management tool. Most models use indicators to determine if the performance measures are being met.

A good combination of indicators can be fed into a model that efficiently identifies what, where, how, and why change is occurring within the system. Performance-based management frameworks tend to organize indicators into groups that will be useful to the users. One widely accepted approach is the "Pressure-State-Response" model that expresses the cause and effect relationship between humans and the environment (Table 3). Input, output, outcome and impact measures are classified according to the programmatic goals of the management action. Indicators can also be grouped according to the type of information that they are reporting on (economic, ecological, budgetary). The following sections provide brief explanations and offer examples of ways to classify indicators.

**Table 3.** Description of the "Pressure-State-Response" model.

**The "Pressure-State-Response" Model**

The Pressure-State-Response Model simplifies environmental problems and solutions into indicators that stress cause and effect relationships.

Pressure indicators measure activities that exert a stress onto the natural environment.

Example: "tons of fertilizer per sq. mile applied to adjacent land".

State indicators measure the condition of the resource or situation.

Example: The actual nitrogen levels at a coral reef.

Response indicators measure actions taken to change the pressure or the state.

Example: Reduce nitrogen by 20% by the year 2015.

**d. Choosing indicators.** Once a clear strategic vision and goals have been established, the selection of USCRTF indicators and performance measures, begins. Selecting indicators can start with brainstorming the steps towards the goals that could be measured, and what type of information would be required to determine a change. It is important for the people working directly on the program to participate in this exercise and they should be encouraged to come up with as many indicators as possible. Each potential performance measure should

then be considered against a set of criteria that are prioritized by their importance to the USCRTF. Most importantly, indicators should reflect the interactions between humans and the environment. The indicators that are chosen to reflect this relationship will shape the questions asked and the programs implemented, and therefore the direction of the organization. A perfect indicator would be reliable, quantitative, easy to interpret, inexpensive, directly reflective of the goal, and practical to administer. Techniques used to collect and interpret indicators should be up to date, accurate, precise and repeatable. Good quality, meaningful data is essential to developing and using indicators in management. Sets of indicators should change over time and be edited continuously to keep pace with new knowledge of coral reef systems and management approaches.

Designing and using performance measures requires a creative vision of how, what and why change can be affected by a program. Dissecting the goal into tiny, tangible steps is specific to individual strategic plans and skill sets. The selection of indicators and creation of performance measures must come from those who will be doing the work to improve the organization. Realistic, useful, and practical measures must adapt to new initiatives, standards, and conditions. Performance measures should feed into new strategic goals by showing the strengths and weaknesses of the program and the measures should be flexible to change as soon as new targets are identified. The most important aspect of an indicator is that it will be easily and eagerly used by the management and staff of an organization to promote change. A system should be in place to use the measures to alter the objectives, actions, and public image of the organization and inspire every person involved to expand his or her expectations for the future.

## V. Comparison of USCRTF *Process Model* Options

Table 4 compares the strawman and preferred *Process Model* options to assist USCRTF members in understanding the differences between the two approaches. Each option has its own strengths and weaknesses and the perfect Process Model may lie somewhere in between. This of course is for the USCRTF to study, debate and decide.

**Table 4.** Summary comparison of strawman and preferred *Process Model* options.

<b>"Strawman Process Model</b>	<b>"Preferred" Process Model</b>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Overview</b></p> <p>Designed to help the USCRTF "focus-in" on a few areas. Threat-based focus areas drive an unspecified number of action plans, which are developed by thematic "regional" (undefined) workshops. This does not preclude working on other priority projects. What locations will actually receive USCRTF support is unclear and is silent on how international issues are integrated into the <i>Process Model</i>. The strawman maintains a fairly strong Federal role in the overall process by using National working groups to create and update action plans.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Overview</b></p> <p>Designed to clearly get the USCRTF focus out of Washington, DC and into the field. Local 5 year action strategies and action items drive USCRTF support. All eleven Coral Reef Groups get some kind of USCRTF support (integrates International into entire process). National "focus areas" (5 year) drive national responsibilities (i.e., increase budgets, address human resource needs, garner political support and provide support for local implementation). Designed to build capacity and momentum in all coral reef areas. Allows for important "resilient reef" conservation programs to be supported in remote coral reef locations that might be neglected in the strawman option.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>"Local"</b></p> <p>Local is undefined.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>"Local"</b></p> <p>Eleven Coral Reef Groups are created based on the similarity of issues, general priorities, needs and resources.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>"Regions"</b></p> <p>Regions are undefined.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>"Regions"</b></p> <p>Pacific and Caribbean.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>International Component</b></p> <p>Strawman is essentially silent on how the International Working Group fits into the process model. Strawman casually mentions that action plans should specify</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>International Component</b></p> <p>International coral reef group produces their own action strategy and action items are delivered directly to USCRTF for implementation. International coral reef</p>

what support is required with respect to international involvement.

**Purpose of Focus Areas**

National "focus areas" drive the regional action plans.

**Focus Area Goals**

Steering Committee synthesizes thematic regional workshop recommendations into a series of options (with targets, timelines and indicators) for USCRTF consideration.

Goal options will be reviewed every third year by the USCRTF at February meeting.

**Action Plans**

An unknown number of action plans are produced (because regional is undefined).

Action plans and resultant USCRTF support only focuses on the three national "focus areas".

Action plans produced by working groups.

Action plans updated annually.

**Performance Measures for Action Items**

Not addressed in the strawman.

group representative participates in annual regional policy forum for development of cooperative opportunities.

**Purpose of Focus Areas**

National "focus areas" (5 year) drive national responsibilities to increase budgets, address human resource needs, garner political support, and provide support for local implementation.

**Focus Area Goals**

Specific draft quantitative goals, timelines and indicators are established using a national workshop with breakout groups.

**Action Strategies**

Eleven Coral Reef Groups produce action strategies.

Action strategies and resultant USCRTF support locally focused.

Action strategies produced by Coral Reef Groups with staff and logistical support from Implementation Committee.

Action strategies updated every five years.

**Performance Measures for Action Items**

Intermediate benchmarks, performance measures and timelines produced locally as part of the action strategy.



### **Regional Policy Forum**

Not included in strawman.

### **Evaluation Process**

Annual report required.

### **Working Groups**

Eight working groups created to:

- serve as secretariat to produce 3 year action plans.
- annually evaluate and update action plans.
- synthesize annual report data.

### **Reporting Progress**

Via web-based system populated by USCRTF members.

### **USCRTF Annual Report**

Steering Committee collates Working Group reports into final annual report.

### **Personnel and Funding**

Three USCRTF members detail staff to serve as a secretariat for regional thematic workshops and coordinators for action plan implementation. Four USCRTF members

### **Regional Policy Forum**

Regional agency representatives meet with appropriate Caribbean and Pacific coral reef group representatives and stakeholders to review accomplishments, discuss future planning needs and requirements, develop cooperative projects, and transfer technology and ideas. The results of these two forums will help guide regional agency support for local coral reef priorities. These commitments will be endorsed in writing at public events.

### **Evaluation Process**

Annual report required.

Local evaluation integrated into periodic 5 year USCRTF National unbiased third party (NGO) evaluation.

### **Working Groups**

Two Working Groups are recommended:

1. Technical Assistance Working Group - includes mapping, monitoring and assessment, science, and regulatory (air and water) issues.
2. Education and Outreach Working Group. Working Groups can be established, permanently or "as needed", for the purpose of focusing on particular issues and providing advice to the USCRTF.

### **Reporting Progress**

Via web-based system run by full time staff person.

### **USCRTF Annual Report**

The Implementation Committee produces annual action strategy progress report (drawing from information on the web-based system).

### **Personnel and Funding**

The USCRTF should create a Secretariat, with a centralized office structure, to support the USCRTF. At a minimum, the Secretariat should include a full-time (hired

will detail staff to support action plan development and production of USCRTF annual report.

### **Stakeholder Involvement**

- Consult with Steering Committee and USCRTF in developing threat-based goals.
- Thematic regional workshops.
- Synchronize activities to strengthen action plan implementation.

### **Strengths**

- Comprehensive process to identify consensus among agencies:
- Maintains strong Federal role.
- Integrates threats with National implementation.

### **Weaknesses**

- Focused more on process rather than implementation.
- Places significant workload on individual Working Groups.
- National support may drive local efforts.
- Does not address how to engage senior agency representatives.
- Does not integrate the International role into the process.

or detailed): Executive Director; Administrative Assistant, Secretary; 3 Program Coordinators; Education and Outreach Coordinator; Data Management Coordinator; and Communication Coordinator.

### **Stakeholder Involvement**

- Consult with Steering Committee and USCRTF in developing threat-based goals.
- Become members of Coral Reef Groups.
- Participate in action strategy workshops.
- Participate in annual regional policy forum.
- Establish formal role at national level.

### **Strengths**

- Focus is more on implementation rather than process.
- Encourages integrated local management.
- Builds capacity and momentum in all coral reef areas.
- Ensures USCRTF support for "resilient reef" conservation programs in remote locations.
- Maximizes stakeholder involvement.
- International role integrated into entire process.

### **Weaknesses**

- Successful implementation of model depends on staff support to USCRTF.
- Places significant responsibility on the Implementation Committee.

## VI. Discussion of Specific Critical Issues

Several important issues surfaced during this assessment that require particular attention by the USCRTF. Specifically, how can non-governmental interests be better integrated into USCRTF activities, and second, what are human resource needs of the USCRTF. Although beyond the scope of this project, the following suggestions are provided to stimulate thinking about how they might be addressed.

### A. Stakeholder Involvement

Currently the involvement of stakeholder interests has been marginal. Stakeholders play an important role in many of the program models that were evaluated including, advocacy for the issues, identifying customer needs and satisfaction, and knowledge. Stakeholders can also play an important role in implementation by effectively reaching out to a broad network and perhaps most importantly, they typically have less constraints than government agencies.

In keeping with the bottom-up and top-down principle, there are essentially three levels where stakeholder involvement could be most meaningful. First is at the local level during the planning, implementation and evaluation of action strategies. Stakeholders should be fully and equally engaged as partners on each coral reef group. Second is at the regional level through full participation in the Regional Policy Workshops. The third level of engaging stakeholders is national. Engaging stakeholders in a meaningful way at the national level is more difficult for federal agencies or institutions like the USCRTF. Specific provisions exist through the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA) that must be complied with. Generally these provisions apply when stakeholders are providing direct advise on decisions being made to the government agencies. When Coastal America explored the issue of NGO involvement, they obtained a legal opinion that can be obtained by contacting them directly (attorney/client privileged). The Chesapeake Bay Program has an exemption from the FACA requirements, which is one avenue the USCRTF could pursue. Above all else, the USCRTF needs to explore mechanisms for engaging stakeholders in an effective and meaningful way.

**Recommendation.** The USCRTF should engage stakeholders as full and equal partners through participation on Coral Reef Groups and participation in annual regional policy forums. The USCRTF should examine options for providing a formal role for effective stakeholder involvement at the national level as well, by establishing either an Advisory Committee or positions directly on the Executive Committee.

## B. Human Resource Infrastructure

It became apparent as this assessment was conducted that perhaps the greatest real threat to the success of the USCRTF is the lack of a human resource infrastructure (e.g., staff) to make it all happen. From the local coral reef efforts to the national level, everything that happens within the USCRTF is left up to members of committees or working groups to follow through on and in most cases actually do the work. This not an effective way to operate and has led to "burnout" and inactivity of several Working Groups. Lack of staff has also prevented maintaining a consistent level of implementation activity across the USCRTF resulting in periods of inactivity followed by rushed preparation for the next meeting. A central staff, in the form of a Secretariat, needs to be established to provide support to the USCRTF including certain of its sub-units and activities. Coastal America has successfully created a staff office composed of 4 or 5 individuals on temporary assignment or "Detail" from their agency to work exclusively for Coastal America. The Chesapeake Bay Program employees approximately 80 individuals using a combination of "details" and permanent hires.

At the local level the human resource problems are further complicated in some of the Island jurisdictions by the difficulty to hire and retain staff largely because of low pay scales, a high cost of living and the need for multi-year funding awards. These issues are particular problems that the USCRTF needs to address as soon as possible.

**Recommendation.** The USCRTF should create a Secretariat, with a centralized office structure, to support the USCRTF. At a minimum, the Secretariat should include a full-time (hired or detailed): Executive Director; Administrative Assistant, Secretary; 3 Program Coordinators (general staff support); Education and Outreach Coordinator; Data Management Coordinator; and Communication Coordinator.