

National Coral Reef Management Fellowship Newsletter

2024–2026



**Volume 5
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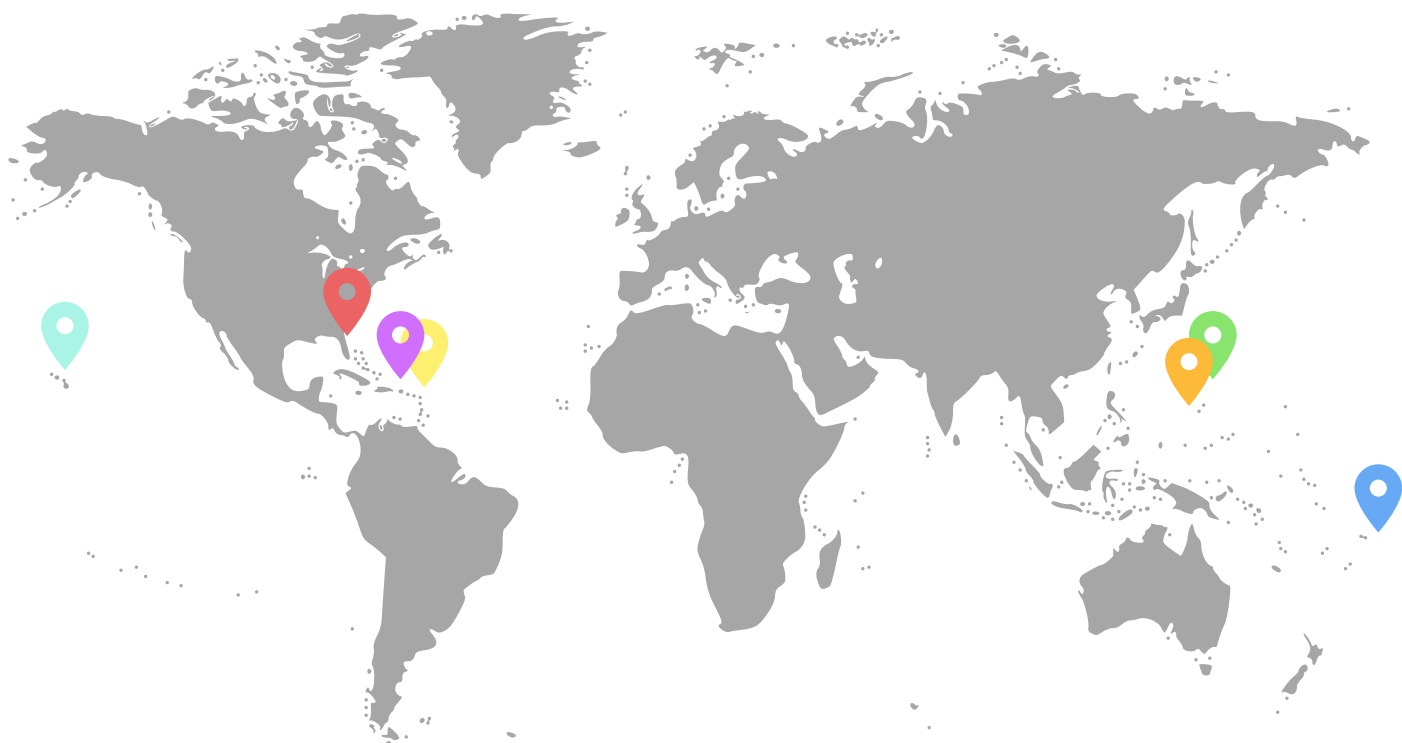


ABOUT THE FELLOWSHIP

The National Coral Reef Management Fellowship was established in 2003 as a response to the need for additional coral reef management capacity in the seven jurisdictions. A new vision was created for the Fellowship in 2016, and since then, 29 Fellows have made up four cohorts supporting coral initiatives in American Samoa, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, Guam, Hawai'i, Florida, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands.



Where are the Fellows?



MEET THE FELLOWS

Join us as we tell you a little bit about ourselves by playing Two Truths and a Lie



Florida - Allison Holevoet



As the Coral Fellow in South Florida, Allison will draw upon her background in marine ecology, coral restoration, and mangrove restoration to help manage Department of Environmental Protection funded projects for the expansion of Florida's coral restoration and propagation efforts. This includes working with state and federal partners, as well as universities and non-government organizations, to help translate ongoing research into management practices.

Two Truths and a Lie:

I have been to all 50 states, I have two sea urchin spines stuck in my body, and I know how to drive stick shift.



Puerto Rico - Roxana Aslan



Roxana brings a background in Environmental Science and Health, Urban and Regional Planning and Marine Biology and Ecology. As the Puerto Rico Coral Fellow, Roxana will be working with the Department of Natural and Environmental Resources Coral Reef Program to develop and implement the Puerto Rico Coral Restoration Plan. She will promote continual collaborations between research, education, rescue, and management groups to promote successful coral rescue and restoration efforts on the island.

Two Truths and a Lie: I love hiking, my favorite animal is a cat, and the best diving spot that I've been to is in Palau.



U.S. Virgin Islands - Alex Fireman



Alex brings her background in endangered marine species conservation to St. Croix, where she will work with the Division of Coastal Zone Management in the St. Croix East End Marine Park (EEMP). Alex will primarily be helping to implement coral restoration work in the territory including onboarding tracking software, mapping restoration sites, and group facilitation. She will also assist with EEMP community engagement initiatives such as Coral Reef Week, sea turtle patrols, seagrass surveys, and management of the park's demonstration coral restoration site.

Two Truths and a Lie:

I've never broken a bone, I was born in Finland, and I prefer nighttime to daytime fieldwork.

CAREER



Hawai'i - Ellie Jones

Ellie values work that benefits both coral reefs and the people who depend on them, and applies this to her work as a science communicator and marine researcher. As the Coral Fellow, Ellie will be working with the State of Hawai'i Division of Aquatic Resources to incorporate water quality data into Hawai'i's management of nearshore reefs, using a collaborative mauka to makai approach.

Two Truths and a Lie:

I love cold water diving, I am an only child, and Ted Lasso is my favorite TV show.



Guam - Sabrina Medina

Sabrina grew up in Orange County, California. Her studies in marine biology led her to the Pacific where she gained experience in coral reef conservation and outdoor education. In Guam, she will be assessing Guam's education and outreach programs to develop educational strategies, identify best practices, and foster community engagement. She will also be assisting Guam Coral Reef Initiative in their various education and outreach efforts around the island.

Two Truths and a Lie:

I have been on a episode of CSI, I've electrocuted myself, I am a black belt in karate.



Commonwealth of Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI) - Bailey Warren

Bailey grew up in California where she studied marine biology and ocean and coastal policy. In Saipan, the largest of the CNMI islands, Bailey will develop a comprehensive communications plan for the CNMI Coral Reef Initiative to provide guidance to managers on how to effectively structure outreach programs. Upon completion, Bailey will work with stakeholders to implement this plan throughout the community.

Two Truths and a Lie:

I rode horses growing up, I've ran two marathons, I'm a pescatarian

American Samoa - Riley Garvey



Riley grew up in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina along the Atlantic and is excited for this opportunity to expand his knowledge to the Pacific! He will spend the next few months responding to coral bleaching in American Samoa, then will shift focus to redeveloping a coral restoration plan for the territory.

Two Truths and a Lie:

I once spent 35 days straight at sea, I have eaten more iguana meat than pork or beef, I have never had a paper cut.



FELLOWSHIP TRAINING AT NOVA SOUTHEASTERN UNIVERSITY

February 12–16



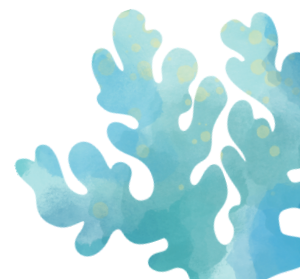
Coral fellows, jurisdictional leads, and NOAA staff at Nova Southeastern University Guy Harvey Oceanographic Center.



Above: Coral fellows at University of Miami Rosenstiel School of Marine and Atmospheric Science
Right: Coral fellows in a workshop on meeting facilitation



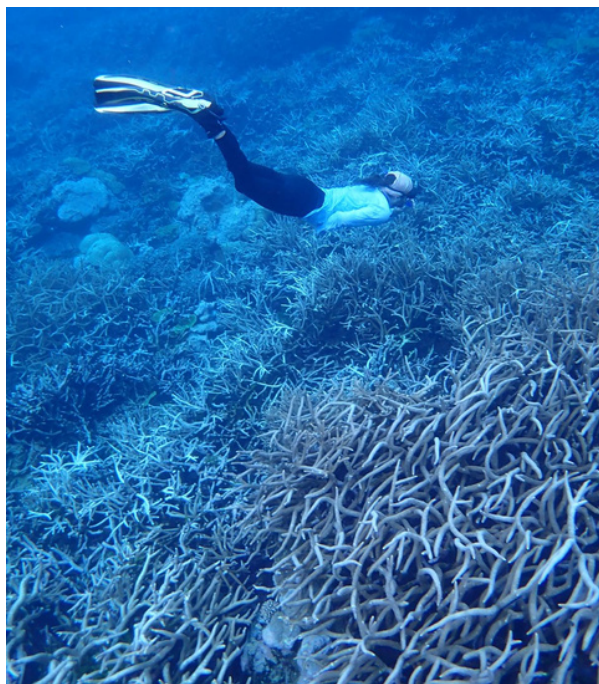
To kick off this new cohort, Nova Southeastern University hosted the fellows and their supervisors for an in-person orientation to the fellowship program. Throughout this week of workshops, presentations, and conversations, the fellows had the chance to network with National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) staff, jurisdictional leads, and each other. The work inside the classroom was enriching and informative. Outside the classroom the fellows enjoyed seeing the amazing work being done in Miami at NOAA's Atlantic Oceanographic and Meteorological Laboratory, Rosenstiel School of Marine and Atmospheric Science, and Frost Museum of Science. After a week of hearing from previous fellows and developing work plans, the group of seven new friends all parted ways feeling inspired and empowered to work in different parts of the world. Although they're far apart (up to ten time zones apart in some cases!), the fellows look forward to experiencing this new adventure together!



SPOTLIGHT



Tutuila is a highly-eroded island, so it's common to see sea stacks (above), or arches (below) along the coast.



Getting a look at corals in Fagatele Bay.



AMERICAN SAMOA

Talofa, everyone! This is Riley, the fellow in American Samoa. I wanted to take some time in this newsletter to highlight American Samoa and talk about the work that I will be doing here over the next two years.

So, what (and where) is American Samoa?

American Samoa is a US Territory made up of seven islands: five volcanic islands (Tutuila, Aunu'u, and the Manu'a islands of Ofu, Olosega, and Ta'u) and two coral atolls (Rose atoll and Swains Island).

Geologically, Swains is the only part of the territory that is not part of the larger Samoan Archipelago, being instead part of the Tokelau Island Chain.

The main island, Tutuila, is located about 14 degrees South and 170 degrees West. For my fellow cartographically challenged friends, that means that we are quite close to the equator (though likely on the opposite side of it from nearly everyone reading this), and very close to the international dateline (if you take the 30 minute flight between American Samoa and Independent Samoa, you land 23 hours later than when you started)!

Some interesting facts about American Samoa include:

- Rose Atoll contains the southernmost point in the United States.
- The National Park of American Samoa (Paka Fa'asao o Amerika Samoa) is the only US National Park in the southern hemisphere.
- Fa'asamoa, or the Samoan way of life, is the oldest set of cultural traditions in Polynesia.
- 'Big Momma', a colony of massive *porites* off Ta'u, is one of the largest (and may well be THE largest) single coral heads in the world.
- It's, like, REALLY beautiful here.

Amazing! So what am I doing here?

Let me start by saying that I've only been here since February 29th, and I've absolutely loved my time so far. Everyone I've met has been extremely kind, welcoming, and supportive, and getting to explore the islands has been magic.

Because we're in the Southern Hemisphere, my arrival coincided with the hottest part of the year. For that reason, we've been spending the past few weeks conducting various monitoring regimens to capture and track bleaching on the reefs around the island. My role in this process has involved spearheading some aerial surveys of our reef flats using a drone, and contributing to some in-water surveys along our reef flats and slopes.

My experience up until this point has been in the Caribbean (specifically in the Florida Keys), so I've been spending a lot of time learning Pacific species. My primary focus has been on coral, but I have also been delving into other benthic organisms and the occasional fish or invertebrate when I just can't help myself.

As we move through this bleaching season, I expect my focus to turn more toward developing some coral restoration infrastructure in the territory. I have already spent some time in conversations about possible paths for developing a restoration program here. In the coming weeks, I intend to compile the priorities of various agencies and entities around the territory, and use that information to guide the development of restoration projects.

I wish I had the space to tell you more, but please feel free to reach out to me with any questions (advice and criticism are always welcome). For now, wish me luck. Two years is going to fly.

Coral-dially,

Riley



King tides, coupled with El-Nino, have led to incidents of extremely low tides in American Samoa, with shallow-water corals (and entire reef flats) being exposed to the air for up to several hours a day, as shown above.

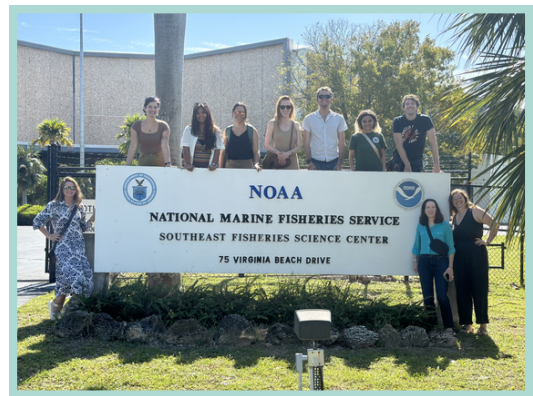


Aerial photos, such as those seen above and below, are one method we are using to capture and monitor bleaching in the territory.



Because of its relation to the International Date Line, American Samoa is one of the last places on Earth to see the sun set each day

TWO TRUTHS AND A LIE



Coral fellows at NOAA's Atlantic Oceanographic & Meteorological Laboratory.

Allison

Contact me to find which are the truths and what is the lie...

Roxana

While I do love cats dearly, my favorite animal is a dolphin. (Sorry corals! I love you too.) Hiking in Puerto Rico is incredible so I have been really enjoying my weekends here and while I still have many places where I would like to dive, Palau will always hold a special place in my heart.

Alex

I, unfortunately, have broken multiple bones, mostly while playing soccer in high school. I was born in Finland (alas, no dual citizenship), and I am always down to strap on a head lamp and get outside once the sun is down. I love that you can see wildlife in a different state: turtles come to the beach to lay their eggs, frogs fill the air with sound, and marine predators come out to hunt in the dark. I think it's the best time to be outside, especially in hot climates like the Caribbean.

Ellie

I do love cold water diving! I grew up in Oregon and learned how to dive in the magical kelp forests there. Ted Lasso is my favorite TV show, it never fails to make me happy. Thank goodness my lie is I am an only child; I have one younger sister and she is the best person on the face of the planet, as far as I am concerned.

Sabrina

I have been on an episode of CSI, I used to work as a background actor as a kid (you'll contact me to find out which episode!). I have also electrocuted myself—when I was five years old I stuck a metal headband into an outlet and sent the beads flying across the whole kitchen. While I did karate growing up, I got up to a brown belt, not a black belt.

Bailey

I regret to inform that I have not ran two (or even one) marathon, running is not my forte. I did grow up riding horses competitively in the Central Valley of California where I'm from. My horse, older now, lives a happy retired life on 40 acres with her geriatric horse family. I also am a pescatarian and always have fun learning new vegetables to cook with.

Riley

My lie was that I had never had a paper cut. I have had exactly 1 paper cut in my life. I also once spent 35 days at sea on a sailing voyage from the Galapagos Islands, Ecuador to Nadi, Fiji. I've also been vegetarian for as long as I can remember (except for a dark time in college when I ate fried chicken every single day), but I ate Iguana when I lived in Florida (hey, it's invasive).

THE FELLOWS GETTING SETTLED IN THEIR JURISDICTIONS

Roxana with thickets of *Acropora palmata* during a citizen science field training.



Allison and her girlfriend kayaking down the Loxahatchee River in Jupiter, Florida.



Alex and EEMP volunteers during seagrass patrol.



Bailey enjoying a post snorkel beach day with her dog.



Riley visits Pola Island off Vatia Village.



Sabrina snorkeling in one of Guam's Marine Preserves.



Ellie assisting with castnet fish sampling in the He'eia muliwai.

For Questions, please contact

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The National Coral Reef Management Fellowship was established in 2003 to respond to the need for additional coral reef management capacity in the U.S. coral reef jurisdictions in the Pacific and Atlantic/Caribbean. The fellowship is a partnership between the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Coral Reef Conservation Program, the U.S. Department of Interior's Office of Insular Affairs, the U.S. All Islands Coral Reef Committee, and Nova Southeastern University's Halmos College of Arts and Sciences. The program's vision is a thriving collaborative fellowship program that builds excellent next generation leaders and capacity for effective local coral reef ecosystem management.

