

National Coral Reef Management Fellowship Newsletter

2024 – 2026



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THE FELLOWSHIP



The National Coral Reef Management Fellowship was established in 2003 as a response to needed additional coral reef management capacity in seven jurisdictions in the Atlantic/Caribbean and Pacific.

A year into the fellowship, and the fellows are working in their respective jurisdictions on projects varying from communications to reef restoration to water quality! Read on to hear more about how each project is progressing.

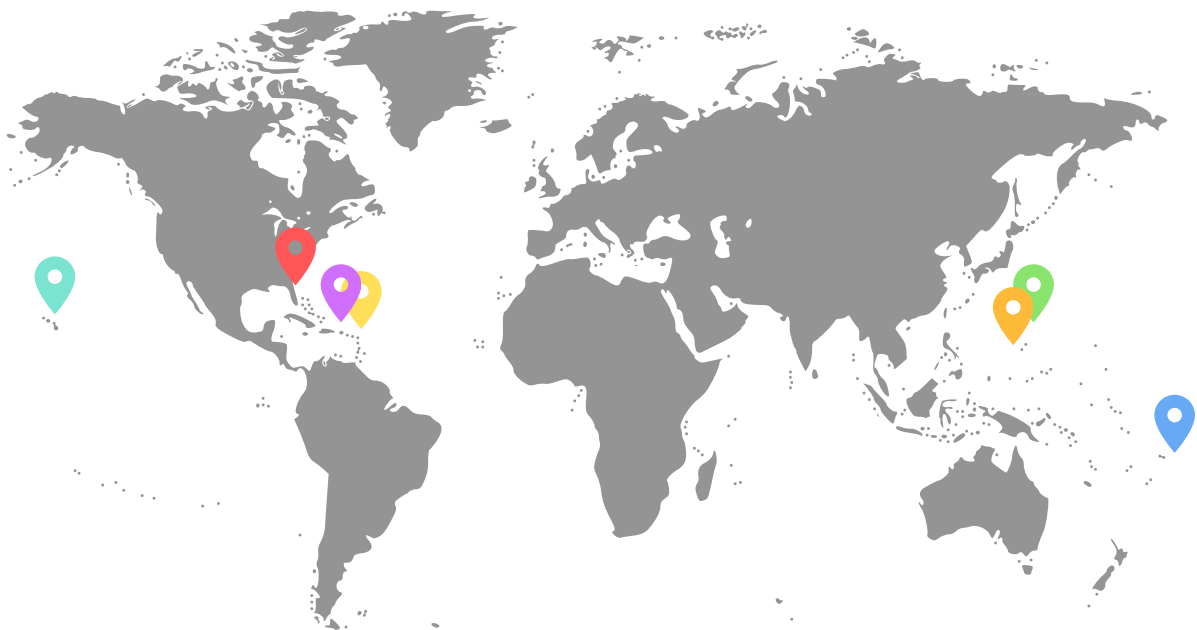


Fellow supervisors with generations of past fellows at the US Coral Reef Task Force meeting. From left to right: John Tomczuk, Whitney Hoot, Cara Lin, Ellie Jones, Bailey Warren, Sabrina Medina, Camille Quichocho, Samantha Cook, Maurizio Martinelli, Wendy Wood-Derrer

IN THIS ISSUE

- Project updates from the fellows in each jurisdiction
- Spotlight: US Coral Reef Task Force in Saipan and Reef Futures in Mexico
- Fun Corner: Fellow Guess Who

WHERE ARE THE FELLOWS?



CORAL FELLOW UPDATES

We hit the halfway point for the fellowship!

Read on to see what we've been up to during our first year.



Florida - Allison Holevoet



I've been shaping Florida coral reef conservation efforts by revamping the Coral Protection and Restoration Program's FY25-26 research priorities and preparing for the next project selection cycle. We are basing our priorities off the FCRRP priorities, adjusting them as necessary for management needs and research interests. I've been busy reviewing deliverables, co-facilitating a coral propagation technical meeting, and contributing to strategic planning documents to drive restoration and recovery initiatives.



Puerto Rico - Roxana Aslan



As a proud core planning team member for the Puerto Rico Coral Restoration plan, I helped finalize the site selection process, the selection of interventions and the setting of objectives for the final restoration plan. I continued to serve as a team lead on the Stony Coral Tissue Loss Disease (SCTLD) Affected Jurisdictions monthly meetings, as well as a participant in the monthly Puerto Rico SCTLD meetings. I also led many outreach and educational activities, where I taught community members about coral conservation and management and continued to hold citizen science trainings, growing the number of eyes on the water. We recently celebrated the one-year anniversary of the launch of the citizen science efforts in Puerto Rico. Finally, I helped plan the 2025 U.S. Regional Caribbean Disturbance Workshop which will take place in February in Puerto Rico.



U.S. Virgin Islands - Alex Fireman



In the past year, I've facilitated the Virgin Islands Restoration of Coral Squad with the intent to implement the goals set in the Virgin Islands Coral Restoration Plan. I've helped to plan a spawning learning exchange, permit writing workshop, and a Caribbean regional workshop at the Reef Futures symposium. I trained and managed a cohort of both new and returning East End Marine Park (EEMP) sea turtle patrol volunteers, participated in lizard and bird surveys, completed a report on conch and lobster surveys, hosted schools and community groups at the EEMP visitor's center, and helped to maintain the coral nursery at the restoration priority site managed by the EEMP. I ended the year by attending Reef Futures in Cancun, Mexico and met other regional marine conservationists working towards the same goals.



Hawai'i - Ellie Jones

Since the last newsletter, I presented on my project at the American Fisheries Society in Honolulu, organized a workshop on integrating water quality and marine monitoring data at the U.S. Coral Reef Task Force in Saipan, and kickstarted regular meetings for a strengthened relationship between the Division of Aquatic Resources (DAR) and the Department of Health, the two state agencies responsible for regulating reefs and water quality. I continue to work towards creation of a Water Quality Action Plan for DAR, and remain optimistic about its potential to drive priorities to improve water quality for Hawaii's reefs.

Guam - Sabrina Medina

During the last year of participating in outreach and education on Guam, I have compiled a report to share with stakeholders across island on the best practices for ocean education. Through the success of localized virtual field trips in Guam, I presented at Reef Futures in Cancun, Mexico on the benefits of place-based learning. There I shared a toolkit I developed to help others create similar resources that highlight their community. I've also worked closely with partners to revamp the Guardians of the Reef educational program in which high schoolers teach 5th graders on coral reefs threats they face. Additionally, I've worked to improve the Eyes of the Reef citizen science program to help practitioners identify threats to local reefs. Finally, I attended the 49th U.S. Coral Reef Task Force Meeting and contributed to an information brochure on coral reefs in the Marianas.

Commonwealth of Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI) - Bailey Warren

Within the past year, I have focused on understanding community culture regarding how various groups contribute to and benefit from the surrounding coral reef ecosystem by participating in outreach and education efforts. As part of this endeavor, I have distributed surveys across the CNMI to gain a deeper understanding of the needs of various audiences, with the goal of promoting greater community involvement in sustainable practices. Additionally, I was part of the CNMI delegation planning team for the 49th U.S. Coral Reef Task Force Meeting and contributed to an information brochure educating others on coral reefs in the Marianas. I was also able to contribute to the drafting process for an Executive Order 2025-01 to declare Coral Reefs as Natural Infrastructure in the CNMI.

American Samoa - Riley Garvey

This past year I have spent most of my time focused on learning new coral restoration and monitoring methods to implement in American Samoa (AS). I attended a coral larval propagation training in Guam and led a project team in AS to document coral spawning in order to develop an AS larval propagation program. I also spent some time learning how to utilize photogrammetry to monitor reef flats more efficiently and safely, and have begun developing a protocol to use a drone to map changes to AS reef flats over time. Most recently, I have partnered with the AS Reef Resilience Coordinator to begin developing a plan to restore a section of reef damaged by a 2015 ship grounding.



49TH US CORAL REEF TASK FORCE

November 11-15, 2024



The 49th U.S. Coral Reef Task Force meeting was held in Saipan in November 2024, and fellows Bailey Warren, Ellie Jones, and Sabrina Madina attended the meeting. Highlights from the busy week included a watershed tour and tree planting, a visit to Managaha Island, meetings with the Task Force working groups, and participation in a biosecurity workshop.

During the Business Meeting, the fellows gave an update on their fellowship projects. They also attended lunch with Nicole LeBoeuf, the Assistant Administrator for NOAA's National Ocean Service, to discuss their projects and potential career paths. Ellie organized a workshop on water quality and marine monitoring and Bailey was part of the CNMI delegation planning team for the meeting. We are grateful to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and the Department of the Interior, the Task Force co-chairs, for hosting and planning the meeting.



Wendy Wood-Derrerr, Ellie, Bailey, and Sabrina (left to right) gave a presentation on the fellowship during the Business Meeting.



CNMI fellow Bailey and past fellow Ilan Bubb with the Governor of Saipan, Governor Arnold Palacios.



Bailey, Nicole LeBoeuf, Ellie, and Sabrina (left to right) at a lunch discussing shared goals and insights.



REEF FUTURES 2024

December 9 - 13, 2024



Hosted by the Coral Restoration Consortium approximately every two years, Reef Futures is a global symposium dedicated to discussing and advancing interventions and strategies to support the health and resilience of coral reefs into the next century. The five-day program was designed to engage participants of all experience levels in shaping the future of coral reef conservation and resilience. It featured numerous speaker sessions and workshops tailored to the needs of various regions and community groups.

The fellows participated in a variety of workshops and sessions specifically tailored to the needs and challenges of their respective island regions and fellowship goals. Additionally, Guam fellow, Sabrina Medina co-facilitated a workshop focused on exploring new community engagement opportunities. During this session, she highlighted Guam Coral Reef Initiative's latest development of virtual field trips, an innovative tool designed to engage students and community groups with the underwater world around them in a virtual format. The conference provided the fellows with an invaluable experience in collaboration, knowledge sharing, and connections within the world of coral reef conservation and management.



Sabrina presenting the concept and design behind virtual field trips during her presentation: "Let's take a trip! Promoting Place-Based Learning with Virtual Ridge-to-Reef Field Trips"



Fellows Sabrina, Bailey, Riley, and Alex (left to right) reconvening to reconnect with other fellows in person



REEF
FUTURES



Coral
Restoration
Consortium

THE FELLOWS IN THEIR JURISDICTIONS

Alex assessing
Acroporids during a
snorkel survey in St.
Thomas.



Bailey & CRI
Communications
Coordinator, Joe Nekaifes
at NOAA PIFSC's Marianas
Stakeholder Meeting.



Sabrina at a biosecurity
site visit to Tinian during
the US Coral Reef Task
Force week.



Allison and restoration
practitioners at a Propagation
Technical Meeting this spring.



Riley on the way to change
temperature loggers on the
South of Tutuila, AS.



Ellie and Sabrina in Guam on a snorkel
excursion to GCRI's ocean-based coral
nurseries with NOAA staff after USCRTF.



Roxana during a field training
for citizen science efforts.

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.

