

National Coral Reef Management Fellowship Newsletter

2024 - 2026

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CORAL FELLOW UPDATES

We've been in our jurisdictions for about 6 months.
Check out what we've been up to!



Florida - Allison Holevoet



When asked "What do you do?", I tell people "I manage the back end of research projects so others can focus on saving the world". After all, some heroes wear capes while others wear office attire. My heroic training thus far has involved setting up state funded research projects and co-writing strategies for coral restoration and communication approaches. I've also been a fly on the wall for various meetings, learning more about the site selection process for restoration initiatives. In addition, I've helped to edit internal documents regarding the 2023 and potential 2024 bleaching season details and talking points.



Puerto Rico - Roxana Aslan



I have participated in the U.S. Caribbean Stony Coral Tissue Loss Disease workshop, multiple virtual and field trainings for the citizen science program, and monthly Coral Disease and Coral Restoration Working Group meetings. I also serve as a core planning team member for the Puerto Rico Restoration Plan and am responsible for assisting with developing a resilience assessment and site selection matrix. Additionally, I have created a decision tree tool to help managers and restoration practitioners better understand the permitting process for implementing restoration projects. In June, I helped plan and execute the annual Coral Reef Week with over 40 activities throughout the week.



U.S. Virgin Islands - Alex Fireman



Every day of my fellowship has been different from the last. I am the facilitator for the Virgin Islands Restoration of Coral Squad helping to execute and implement the Coral Restoration Plan. I've been assisting in planning meetings and workshops for the group in everything from permitting to a spawning learning exchange. With the help of the East End Marine Park Coordinator, I planned and carried out the Virgin Island's first annual Coral Reef Week. I've also been assisting with maintaining the East End Marine Park's coral nursery, supporting outreach endeavors, and planning for the upcoming sea turtle nesting season monitoring.

CARIBBEAN



Hawai'i - Ellie Jones

What a whirlwind the water quality world is in Hawai'i! I've thrown myself headfirst into this world by meeting with key stakeholders and other state agency partners, reading current literature on water quality impacts on nearshore resources, and attended workshops for setting water quality standards. I formed Mauka to Makai Water Quality Working Group, which is made up community members, scientists, and resource managers to help guide creation of a Water Quality Action Plan for the Division of Aquatic Resources. To guide our decision-making for the action plan, we are in the process of creating a map of water quality and aquatic resources data. I am looking forward to seeing how this plan take form over the course of my fellowship!



Guam - Sabrina Medina

I have filled my time with integrating myself in the community to grow my understanding of Guam's education and outreach landscape. In addition to these efforts, I have conducted a series of informational interviews and surveys to better understand Guam's needs in ocean education. Using this knowledge I have helped create place-based ocean educational resources that were shared with local teachers and librarians. I have also participated in public outreach events during World Oceans Day and Mes CHamoru, or Chamoru heritage month, and attended the Pacific Islands Coral Restoration Network and the U.S. Coral Reef Task Force Communications Working Group meetings.



Commonwealth of Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI) - Bailey Warren

Since the start of my fellowship, I have focused my attention on learning the local ecology and community culture. As part my work for CNMI's Coral Reef Initiative, I have been updating the communication plan. This includes identifying needs of various audiences via surveys and meetings with partner agencies such as the Department of Fish and Wildlife and the Mariana Islands Nature Alliance. Additionally, I have been involved with numerous outreach events, including CNMI Snorkels, Eyes of the Reef, and Ocean Month on the islands of Saipan, Tinian, and Rota! Lastly, building on the efforts of previous fellows, I've updated a coral bleaching information guide for distribution CNMI wide.



American Samoa - Riley Garvey

Since I've started, I've worked alongside the Coral Reef Advisory Group (CRAG) Benthic Ecologist to conduct bleaching surveys of the reefs around Tutuila. This includes in-water reef flat snorkel surveys and reef slope manta tows, as well as aerial surveys of reef flat areas using a drone to assess the conditions of the reef. I have also worked with several federal and local agencies to gather information about past and proposed restoration projects in the territory. This information will allow CRAG to better coordinate territory-wide restoration activities into the future.



PACIFIC

PUERTO RICO CORAL REEF WEEK

June 1 - 8, 2024

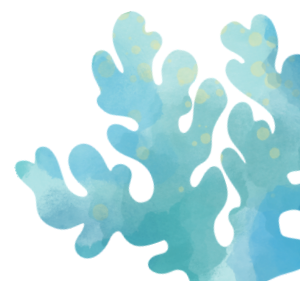


In Puerto Rico, we celebrated Coral Reef Week 2024 - Let's Save the Colors of the Sea with a total of 40 events. The week included underwater and beach cleanups, tours of coral transplant areas, coral reef and citizen science snorkeling tours, water quality workshops, educational talks related to coral reef conservation, restoration and watershed management, tours of land-based coral nurseries, museum tours, a Puerto Rico Restoration Action Plan Update, discussions on lessons learned from the bleaching of corals in 2023 and projections for 2024, a presentation on the spatial variation in regenerative capabilities of coral reefs after the impact of Stony Coral Tissue Loss Disease and a presentation on coral disease management strategies.

The week concluded with a Closing Symposium which offered a wide range of activities designed to highlight the importance of coral reefs in an interactive and educational manner, suitable for all ages.



At the closing symposium, participants view the winning entries of the photography and design contests from the past three years.



USVI CORAL REEF WEEK

June 29 - July 6, 2024



The first annual Coral Reef Week aimed to engage community members in the marine and coral conservation work being done in the territory. The week consisted of eleven outreach events on St. Croix with over 600 community members engaged throughout the activities. In 2025, we plan to expand activities to St. Thomas as well!

The week began with a kickoff event and community created ocean-inspired art gallery. The US Fish and Wildlife Service sponsored free kayak tours throughout the week, and the St. Croix Environmental Association ran a snorkeling clinic. The East End Marine Park hosted 100 summer campers for an outdoor field day. Community members were able to tour The Nature Conservancy's Coral Hub, youth SCUBA divers were signed up for a free guided dive at the Frederiksted Pier, citizens came together for a beach cleanup, and the Department of Planning and Natural Resources' signature Eco-Van popped up in Christiansted for an outreach day. The week concluded with a coral talk and an outdoor movie night. Through challenges such as thunderstorms, strong winds, and high tides, overall this week was a big success!



Community members participate in a free kayak tour of Salt River.



Alex takes summer campers through an activity to learn about marine food webs.



THE FELLOWS IN THEIR JURISDICTIONS

Alex speaking with community members during Coral Reef week on St. Croix



Bailey and staff at the closing of Saipan's Ocean Fair and Ocean Month activities



Ellie and past Coral Fellow Lara Noren at a community work day with the Maunaloa Fishpond Heritage Center



Roxana at the closing symposium of Coral Reef Week in Puerto Rico



Sabrina at a community event for World Ocean's Day



Riley taking photo quadrats for bleaching assessments in Onesosopo

JURISDICTION TRIVIA

1. Which jurisdiction is made up of 14 islands total?
2. Which jurisdiction has the unofficial slogan "Where America's Day Begins"?
3. This jurisdiction, the smallest inhabited US territory, has a total land area less than 1/10th the size of Rhode Island.
4. The bananaquit is which jurisdiction's official bird?
5. Which jurisdiction is home to the indigenous Coquí frog, named after the unique sound it makes and the claim that it "rains" frogs during heavy rainfall?
6. Over 20% of this jurisdiction's reef fish species are endemic (found nowhere else in the world.)
7. Which jurisdiction has over 350 miles of reef?

1. CNMI; 2. Guam; 3. American Samoa; 4. US Virgin Islands; 5. Puerto Rico; 6. Hawaii; 7. Florida

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.

