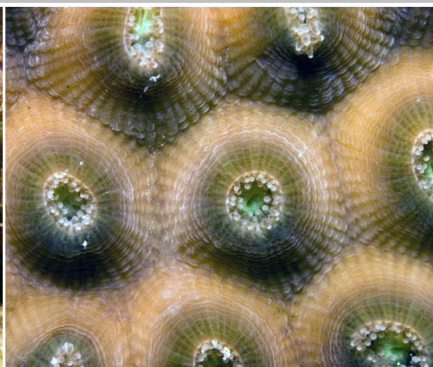




CARIBBEAN REGIONAL OCEAN PARTNERSHIP



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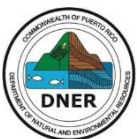




TABLE OF CONTENT

Background Information 3

Goals and Objectives 4

Accomplishments and Timeline 5

CROP Data Portal 6

CROP Marine Planner 7

Future Vision 8

Message to Stakeholders 8



BACKGROUND

In June 2010, President Obama convened the Interagency Ocean Policy Task Force with the objective to fulfill the United States responsibilities to support sustainable and productive uses of the ocean, the coasts, and the Great Lakes. The Task Force was established to promote compatibility among different uses, avoid conflicts and reduce environmental impacts by an implementation strategy that identifies nine priorities, including Coastal and Marine Spatial Planning (CMSP). The Ocean Policy Task Force defines CMSP as *a comprehensive, adaptive, integrated, ecosystem-based, and transparent planning process based on sound science, for analyzing current and anticipated uses of the coastal areas*. Through CMSP, areas suitable for different types of activities are identified to facilitate compatible uses, reduce conflicts among users and preserve critical ecosystem services to meet economic, environmental, security and social objectives.

A central objective of CMSP is to foster partnerships to promote coastal adaptation and resiliency. In May 16, 2012, the Governors of the Territory of the U.S. Virgin Islands (USVI) and the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico (PR) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for the establishment of a Caribbean Regional Ocean Partnership (CROP). Pursuant to this collaborative agreement, both jurisdictions proactively plan for multiple uses of coastal, marine and trans-boundary areas, as well as identify areas that are compatible with development and ecologically less vulnerable to impacts.

In order to meet current and future demands on our oceans, the CROP will take a comprehensive look at shared marine regions and take into consideration the wide array of stakeholders who use it and the complex diversity of life that depends on it. This coordinated approach will reduce conflicts, maximize the ocean's benefits to people, and help maintain healthy marine habitats. The CROP will enhance transparency and accountability of decision-makers while evaluating the best way to balance marine uses, such as providing access for recreation, conservation, fishing, renewable energy facilities and electrical grids. This Partnership will incorporate sound science, best available information and technical tools into the decision-making process.



GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The CROP establishes mechanisms to improve regional collaboration on ocean management in order to reduce user conflicts, improve cohesive regional planning, and support healthy communities and ecosystems for present and future generations. The CROP will address cumulative effects from anthropogenic activities to ensure the protection, integrity, maintenance, resilience, and restoration of ocean and coastal Caribbean ecosystems, while promoting multiple uses.

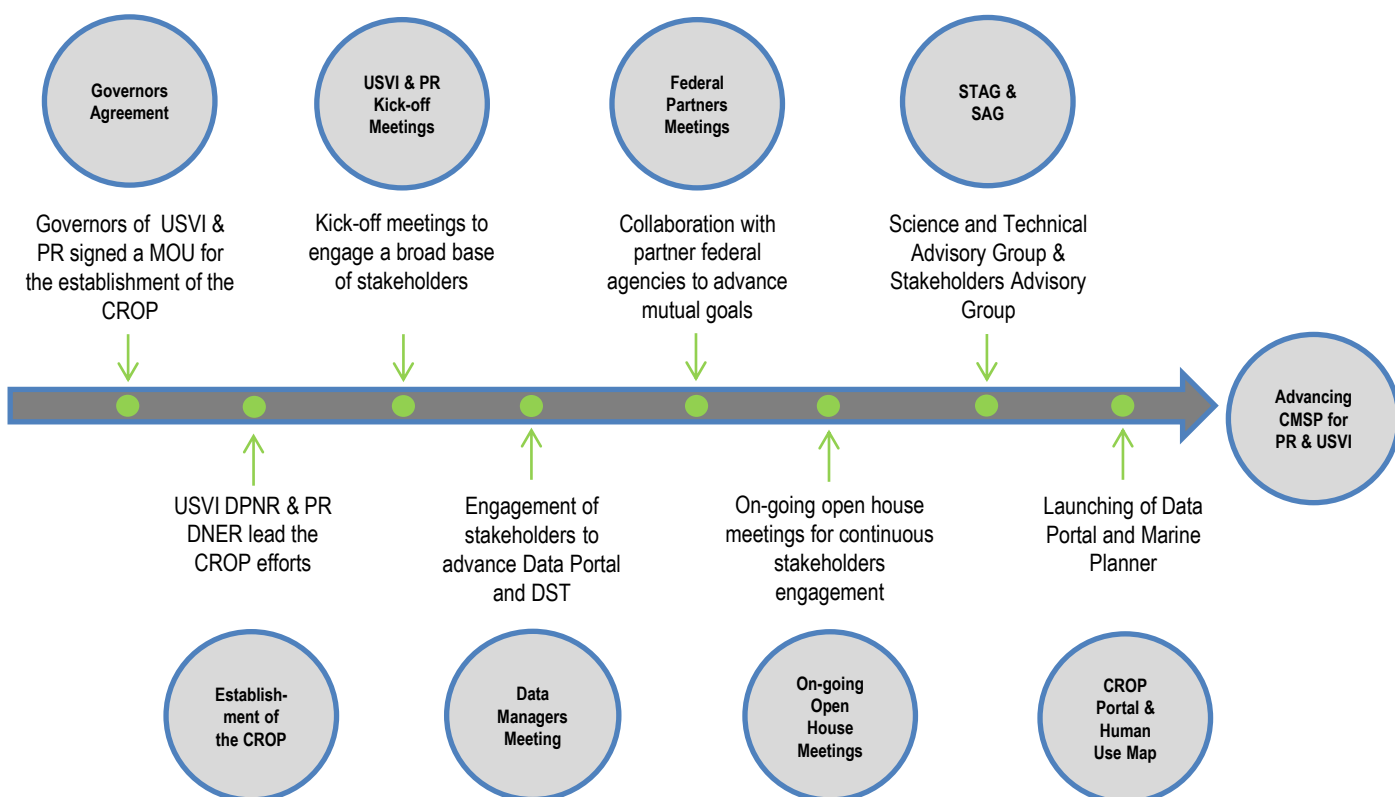
MAIN OBJECTIVES OF THE CROP

1. *Strengthen regional ocean governance mechanisms to improve our understanding of ocean and coastal ecosystems.*
2. *Define local and marine use objectives.*
3. *Address fragmented planning and management of societal uses of coastal ocean lands and waters.*
4. *Facilitate the effective management of ocean and coastal resources across jurisdictional boundaries by improving communications, aligning priorities, and enhancing resources sharing.*
5. *Promote collaboration among governments, communities, NGOs and the private sector of the participating jurisdictions in order to facilitate sustainable marine and coastal uses.*
6. *Coordinate with existing regional organizations.*
7. *Provide an enhanced voice and point of access with Federal agencies regarding ocean and coastal issues.*
8. *Support efforts to harmonize policy, legal and institutional frameworks among the participating Caribbean jurisdictions including our neighbors to the east and west.*
9. *Enlist and seek the assistance of non-governmental organizations to provide facilitation and project management services in order to effectively fulfill the intent of this partnership.*



ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND TIMELINE:

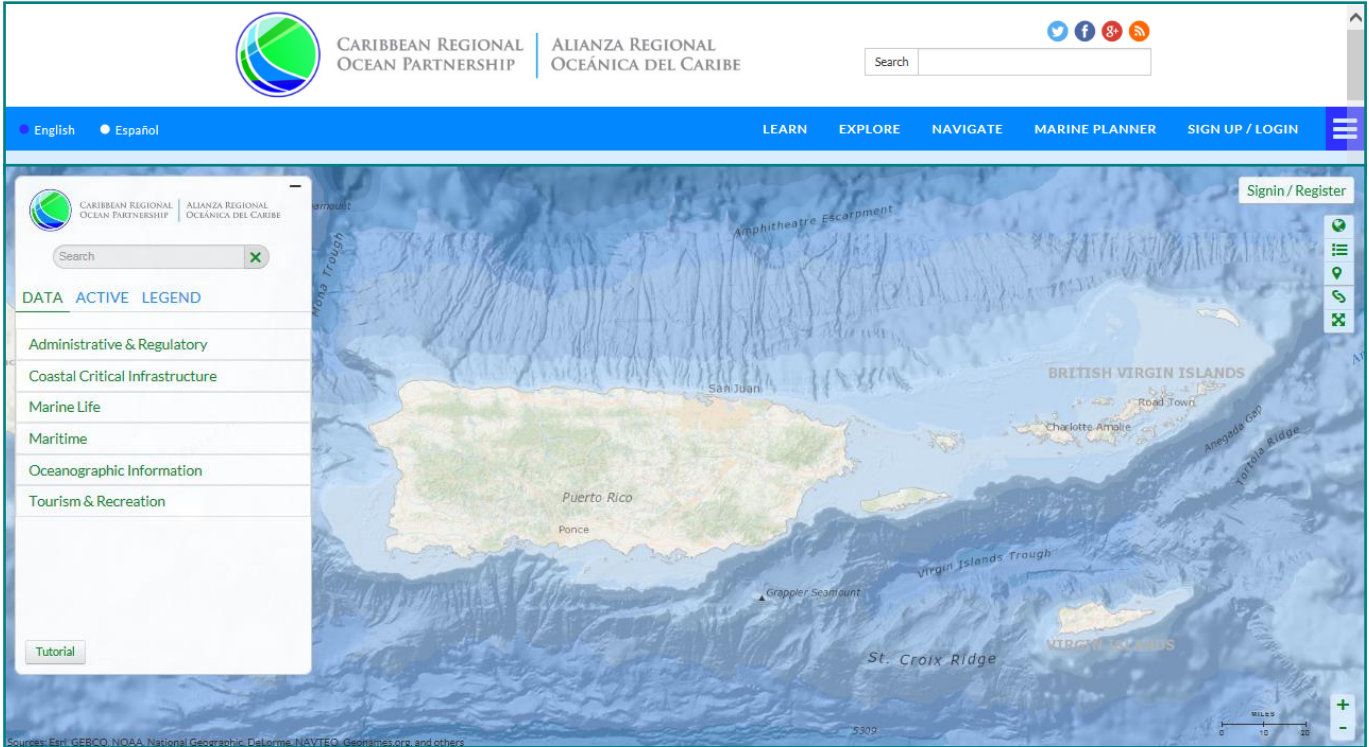
- Governor's Agreement to support the CROP
 - In May 16, 2012 the Governors of the Territory of the U.S. Virgin Islands and Governor of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for the establishment of a Caribbean Regional Ocean Partnership.
- Establishment of the CROP initiative
 - The CROP initiative was strengthened at the ministerial level in July 2012 when the Commissioner of the U. S. Virgin Islands Department of Planning and Natural Resources and Secretary of the Puerto Rico Department of Natural and Environmental Resources committed their agencies in leading these efforts.
- In December 2012 USVI and PR hosted kick-off meetings to engage a broad base of stakeholders and ensure their participation, collaboration and commitment in these efforts.
- To increase collaboration from the diverse set of data providers across both jurisdictions, in March 2013 the CROP initiative engaged these stakeholders to advance the CROP Online Portal and decision support tool.
- The CROP has consistently collaborated with partner federal agencies to advance mutual goals and objectives.
- The CROP continuously hosts open house meetings and GIS Participatory Mapping workshops in USVI and PR to further promote stakeholders engagement and participation.
- The CROP is currently working to establish a Science and Technical Advisory Group (STAG) and a Stakeholders Advisory Group (SAG).
- The CROP has officially launched the Data portal and Marine Planner: caribbean-mp.org.



Frequent and continuous stakeholder and public participation is necessary to provide an informed and inclusive foundation for Marine Spatial Planning. The CROP establishes mechanisms to improve regional collaboration on ocean management in order to reduce user conflicts, improve cohesive regional planning, and support healthy communities and ecosystems for present and future generations.

CARIBBEAN REGIONAL OCEAN PARTNERSHIP MARINE PLANNER: CARIBBEAN-MP.ORG

The CROP's state-of-the-art, Marine Planner, engages all stakeholders in ocean planning — putting all of the essential data and state-of-the-art mapping and visualization technology into the hands of the agencies, industry, and community leaders engaged in ocean planning. Users are able to visualize and analyze ocean resources and human use information such as fishing grounds, recreational areas, shipping lanes, habitat areas, and energy sites, among others.





FUTURE VISION

The CROP will continue identifying marine management priorities that require a coordinated regional response. In order to reduce user conflicts and support healthy communities and ecosystems for present and future generations, the CROP will foster cooperation and increased collaboration between stakeholders. We will work to implement an effective CMSP program in PR and the USVI and promote multiple ocean uses based on sound science and the best available information in the wider Caribbean.

MESSAGE TO STAKEHOLDERS

The CROP will ensure frequent and continuous stakeholder and public participation to provide an informed and inclusive foundation for CMSP. Our goal is to share information about what CMSP is or could be, to hear stakeholder views and concerns and to foster better understanding between those who depend on ocean resources for their livelihood and ocean conservation advocates. The CROP will seek effective engagement of stakeholders in the CMSP through an open and transparent process and with the establishment of a Science and Technical Advisory Group (STAG) and Stakeholder Advisory Group (SAG).

SCIENCE AND TECHNICAL ADVISORY GROUP

Science and up-to-date data are needed to support the CROP's planning effort. Through the STAG the CROP will ensure that the CMSP process takes into account a full range of perspectives and is grounded in the most accurate and relevant information possible. The STAG will help ensure that the CROP is using the most up-to-date data available and will help in decision support, conservation and management tools identification.

STAKEHOLDER ADVISORY GROUP

The stakeholder advisory group represents a diverse range of interests affecting coastal and marine spatial planning, including individuals representing fishing interests, non-profit conservation organizations, recreational users, business, scientific and educational interests, and others dedicated to habitat conservation and protection of public marine and coastal resources.



CARIBBEAN REGIONAL OCEAN PARTNERSHIP

CONTACT INFORMATION

Policy Leadership

HON. CARMEN GUERRERO PÉREZ
Secretary, PR DNER

HON. DAWN L. HENRY
Commissioner, USVI DPNR

Coordinators

ERNESTO L. DIAZ –Director CZMP
Dept. of Natural and Environmental Resources
PO BOX 366147, San Juan PR 00936
Phone: (787) 999-2200 X 2729/2730
Email: ediaz@drna.gobierno.pr

JEAN-PIERRE ORIOL, Director CZMP
Dept. of Planning and Natural Resources
8100 Lindberg Bay Ste. #61 Cyril E. King Terminal
St. Thomas, VI, 00802
Phone: (340) 774-3320 Email: jp.oriol@dpnr.vi.gov

AURORA JUSTINIANO, PHD
The Nature Conservancy, Caribbean Program
Phone: (787) 464-1710, Email: ajustiniano@tnc.org

AARON HUTCHINS
The Nature Conservancy, Caribbean Program
3052 Estate Little Princess, Christiansted, VI
00820
Phone: (340) 718-5575, Email: ahutchins@tnc.org

RAIMUNDO ESPINOZA
The Nature Conservancy, Caribbean Program
Phone: (787)-902-7760, Email: respinoza@tnc.org



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*This material was developed with funding from NOAA's
Regional Ocean Partnership program under grant award
NA13NOS4730099*



Document Prepared by: Aurora Justiniano, Ph.D.

Pictures courtesy of : USVI DPNR, PR DNER, Ernesto L. Díaz & Raimundo Espinoza

