

Note: November 2022.

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COMDTINST 16000.2

3 APR 2002

COMMANDANT INSTRUCTION 16000.2

Subj: THE COAST GUARD CORAL REEF PROTECTION IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

Ref: (a) The National Action Plan to Conserve Coral Reefs (NOTAL)

1. PURPOSE. To establish the Coast Guard's Coral Reef Protection Implementation Plan.
2. ACTION. Area commanders, district commanders, and assistant commandants for directorates shall ensure compliance with the provisions outlined in paragraph seven of this instruction.
3. DIRECTIVES AFFECTED. None.
4. BACKGROUND.
  - a. Executive Order 13089, Coral Reef Protection (E.O. 13089) requires all federal agencies whose actions may affect U.S. coral reef ecosystems to:
    - (1) Identify actions that may affect coral reef ecosystems,
    - (2) Use their programs and authorities to protect and enhance such ecosystems, and
    - (3) Ensure any actions they authorize, fund, or carry out will not degrade such ecosystems.
  - b. E.O. 13089 allows the heads of federal agencies to make exceptions to these requirements:
    - (1) During time of war or national emergency,
    - (2) When necessary for national security, as determined by the President,

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- (3) During emergencies posing an unacceptable threat to human health or safety or the marine environment, or
  - (4) In any case that constitutes a danger to human life or a real threat to vessels, aircraft, platforms, or other man-made structures at sea, such as cases of force majeure caused by stress of weather or other act of God.
- c. This instruction provides guidance to areas, districts, and headquarters directorates responsible for ensuring compliance with E.O. 13089, which is attached as enclosure (1). This instruction supports the following Coast Guard strategic goal:

**PROTECTION OF NATURAL RESOURCES:** Eliminate environmental damage and natural resources degradation associated with all maritime activities, including transportation, commercial fishing and recreational boating.

## 5. DISCUSSION.

- a. Coral reefs around the world are in decline. In some areas, once thriving reef systems are essentially dead. The causes are numerous, complex and not completely understood, but human activities are clearly a major contributing factor. Included in these human factors are sediment run-off from agriculture and construction, non-point source discharges such as storm water run-off carrying oil and chemicals, nutrient loading and waste water discharges (possibly including vessel discharges), anchoring on coral, groundings, oil spills, destructive fishing practices, etc.
- b. Coral reef habitats are among the most diverse and valuable of the world's ecosystems. They are sources of tremendous biological and economic wealth, providing shoreline protection, critical habitat for living marine resources, opportunities for recreation and tourism, pharmaceuticals, and jobs. Recognizing the United States has a significant interest in protecting the nation's coral reefs, on June 11, 1998 the President enacted E.O. 13089 to preserve and protect the biodiversity, health, heritage, and social and economic value of U.S. coral reef ecosystems. This Executive Order established U.S. policy for coral reef protection and created the U.S. Coral Reef Task Force (to which the Coast Guard has been designated as the Secretary of Transportation's representative) to oversee Federal agency responsibilities. In March 2000, the U.S. Coral Reef Task Force (CRTF) issued reference (a), which outlines a science-based road map for coral reef conservation, and lists priority recommendations to be undertaken by federal agencies. For more information on the CRTF and the National Action Plan to Conserve Coral Reefs, see enclosure (2) and <http://coralreef.gov>.
- c. The Coast Guard is involved in several mission areas that help reduce threats to coral reef ecosystems, such as servicing aids to navigation, regulating anchorages, enforcing fisheries laws, responding to oil spills, and conducting search and rescue operations. Conservation of coral reef ecosystems is consistent with the Coast Guard's Ocean Steward initiative to help the nation recover and maintain endangered and protected marine species.

6. **EXCEPTIONS.** E.O. 13089 provides for heads of agencies to prescribe, in specific situations, exceptions to the requirement that agencies not authorize, fund, or carry out actions that degrade coral reef ecosystems. In accordance with section two of E.O. 13089, the following exceptions are authorized:
- a. During time of war or national emergency. Questions remain regarding the policy and procedures for obtaining determinations to allow actions that may degrade coral reef ecosystems during times of war or national emergency. Until further guidance is provided, operational commanders should refer questions on wartime or national emergency scenarios to the Commandant via the chain of command. In time-sensitive situations, questions should be referred to the Headquarters Command Center; otherwise policy questions shall be directed to the Director of Operations Policy (G-OP).
  - b. When necessary for reasons of national security, as determined by the President. As above, time-sensitive questions regarding actions during national security scenarios should be referred to the Headquarters Command Center; otherwise policy questions shall be directed to Commandant (G-OP).
  - c. During emergencies posing an unacceptable threat to human health or safety or to the marine environment and admitting of no other feasible solution. The following actions, which have the potential to degrade coral reef ecosystems, are authorized:—
    - (1) Search and Rescue (SAR) Operations. Should the Search and Rescue Mission Coordinator (SMC), the On Scene Commander (OSC), or Search and Rescue Unit (SRU) conclude the only course of action with an acceptable probability of success in a life threatening SAR operation requires action that would damage or threaten a coral reef, that action should be executed. Damage mitigation strategies, such as selection of “least impact” intentional grounding sites and execution of vessel recovery operations, should be considered and executed as appropriate. While environmental concerns must be considered when evaluating alternatives for dealing with such emergencies, purely environmental considerations shall not take precedence over safety of life or health. Because of potential scrutiny of operations that result in damage to coral reefs, the SMC must document the situation, course of action, options considered, and basis for final decision as soon as practical.
    - (2) Safety of the Marine Environment. Under certain circumstances it may be necessary to take action that would damage or threaten a coral reef to prevent greater harm to the marine environment. For example, conducting potentially damaging cleanup operations on a coral reef may be preferable to risking contamination of nesting beaches used by critically endangered sea turtles. Appropriate response measures for mitigating the adverse environmental impact of such incidents will be determined by prevailing conditions, limitations of response equipment, and pre-incident planning documented in Area Contingency Plans (ACP). Environmental response operations should be planned with the assistance of the Scientific Support Coordinator (SSC) and other appropriate stakeholders with the objective of minimizing the negative impact of the incident. Coral reefs cannot automatically receive preferential treatment; they should be prioritized along with the other natural resources at risk. Should action that would damage or

threaten a coral reef be required to prevent greater harm to the marine environment, that action should be executed. Because of potential scrutiny, units involved shall document the situation, course of action, options considered, and basis for final decision as soon as practical.

- d. In any case that constitutes a danger to human life or a real threat to vessels, aircraft, platforms, or other man-made structures at sea, such as cases of force majeure caused by stress of weather or other act of God. In certain situations, it may be necessary to take action that would damage or threaten a coral reef to save lives or prevent the loss of Coast Guard or other vessels, aircraft, or man-made structures at sea. Should such action be required, that action should be executed. While environmental concerns must be considered when evaluating alternatives for dealing with such emergencies, purely environmental considerations shall not take precedence over safety of life or the need to protect vessels, aircraft, or man-made structures at sea. Because of potential scrutiny, units involved shall document the situation, course of action, options considered, and basis for final decision as soon as practical.

7. RESPONSIBILITIES. As the principal federal maritime law enforcement agency and a leader in the effort to protect the nation's marine environment, Coast Guard involvement is essential to the conservation of our coral reef ecosystems. The following actions shall be taken to ensure the Coast Guard complies with E.O. 13089 and fully supports reference (a):

- a. Area Commanders shall:

- (1) Ensure coral-focused enforcement requirements are included in Regional Strategic Assessments.
- (2) To the extent possible within resource constraints and consistent with training policy, ensure Regional Fishery Training Centers whose areas of responsibility include coral reefs provide coral-focused enforcement in their curricula and provide training assistance to other federal, state, and local agencies.
- (3) Ensure navigational guidance is sufficient to prevent accidental groundings and other navigational mishaps by Coast Guard vessels that could damage or threaten coral reefs.

- b. District Commanders whose areas of responsibilities include coral reefs shall:

- (1) Determine coral-focused enforcement priorities in coordination with the regional offices of the National Marine Fisheries Service, the National Marine Sanctuaries, Regional Fishery Management Councils, and state and local law enforcement agencies.
- (2) Submit quarterly resource requests for coral-focused enforcement operations via the planning and assessment system.
- (3) Subject to the availability of resources, conduct coral-focused enforcement operations.

- (4) Ensure Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) contain sufficient navigational guidance to:
  - (a) Prevent accidental groundings and other navigational mishaps by Coast Guard vessels that could damage or threaten coral reefs.
  - (b) Avoid unnecessary anchoring in coral areas; when anchoring in coral areas is necessary, ensure every effort is made to avoid anchoring on or near known or visible coral formations.
- (5) Ensure SOPs contain sufficient guidance to minimize potential damage to coral reefs during aids to navigation (ATON) operations. Some short-range aids to navigation must be erected (fixed aids) or placed (floating aids) on or near coral reefs to warn mariners of navigational hazards and define safe passages. These aids, together with their construction, placement, and maintenance operations, may necessarily create some risk or actual damage to small portions of coral reefs. These potential impacts are considered necessary to reduce the risks associated with maritime activity in coral reef areas. The protection afforded to coral reefs by appropriately placed and maintained short-range aids to navigation far outweighs the local impact. Routine inadvertent damage to reefs resulting from ATON operations conducted in accordance with standard operating procedures will not be considered a violation of E.O. 13089.
- (6) Engage regional stakeholders and designated coral reef management authorities to determine the adequacy of current short-range aids to navigation and the cost-benefit of establishing additional short-range aids in coral reef areas. However, short-range aids to navigation should not be considered stand-alone safeguards that protect coral reefs from potential harm associated with maritime activity. Also, there is no intent for the Coast Guard to mark vast expanses of remote coral reefs. Because of the potential for spilled oil or hazardous chemicals to spread widely, aids in coral areas which are relied upon by vessels carrying large quantities of liquid cargo or fuel oils shall be given special attention, even if not immediately adjacent to a coral reef. Needed improvements that cannot be made shall be placed in the ATON Acquisition, Construction, and Improvement (AC&I) backlog.
- (7) In conjunction with cognizant federal, state, and territorial agencies, survey anchoring regulations and practices in coral reef areas to identify needed improvements to Coast Guard anchorage regulations and develop appropriate anchorage management practices.
- (8) In coordination with the Office of Vessel Traffic Management (G-MWV), establish "No Anchoring" areas and other vessel traffic management measures (Areas to be Avoided, Traffic Separation Schemes, Regulated Navigation Areas, etc.) where appropriate.
- (9) Ensure marine event permitting processes include procedures to fully consider the impact of proposed marine events on nearby coral reefs.
- (10) In coordination with the Office of Response (G-MOR), modify ACPs to include guidance on response operations in or near coral reefs. Any modifications should be in keeping with the

National Contingency Plan's provision to maximize net environmental benefit and be consistent with the scientific principles in pre-approved decision protocols published in the sensitive area annex of the Area Contingency Plan.


- c. The Assistant Commandant for Operations (G-O) shall, through Commandant (G-OP):
- (1) Act as the Coast Guard and Department of Transportation representative to the CRTF and ensure appropriate Headquarters staff elements to participate in CRTF working groups or special project teams.
  - (2) Maintain the Coast Guard's Coral Reef Protection Implementation Plan and ensure it is posted on the CRTF website.
  - (3) Provide agency reports to the CRTF as required.
  - (4) Incorporate participation in the CRTF into the Coast Guard's annual performance report.
  - (5) Subject to availability of funds and priority of other missions, allocate resource hours for enforcement of regional fisheries management regulations in coral reef areas.
  - (6) In coordination with the National Marine Fisheries Service and the Office of Vessel Traffic Management (G-MWV), investigate the potential for using vessel monitoring systems (VMS) or the Automatic Identification System (AIS) to conduct surveillance and enforcement in coral reef areas.
  - (7) In coordination with the Office of Cutter Forces (G-OCU), ensure Commandant Instruction 3530.2, Cutter Navigation Standards and Procedures, contains sufficient operational guidance to prevent accidental groundings and other navigational mishaps by Coast Guard vessels that could damage or threaten coral reefs.
  - (8) In coordination with Directorate of Governmental and Public Affairs (G-I) and the Office of Auxiliary Affairs (G-OCX), ensure coral reef conservation and protection information, including awareness of damage caused by groundings, poor anchoring practices, and badly executed refloating efforts, is included in Coast Guard Auxiliary and United States Power Squadron education materials and courses.
  - (9) Through the Office of Aids to Navigation (G-OPN), work with the CRTF working groups to evaluate existing navigational aids, including daymarkers, beacons and charts, to determine if navigational safety can be improved through use, improvement or revision.
- d. The Assistant Commandant for Marine Safety and Environmental Protection (G-M) shall:

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- (1) Through Commandant (G-MWV) and in coordination with Commandant (G-OP), investigate the potential for using AIS or VMS to conduct surveillance and enforcement in coral reef areas.
- (2) Through Commandant (G-MOR) and the Office of Compliance (G-MOC), and in coordination with Commandant (G-I), ensure coral reef conservation and protection information, including awareness of damage caused by groundings, poor anchoring practices, and badly executed refloating efforts, is included in Coast Guard Sea Partners and Commercial Fishing Vessel Safety Program education materials and courses.
- (3) Through Commandant (G-MOR), provide planning guidelines on environmental sensitivities, salvage and lightering operations, and wreck and debris removal to Captains of the Port pre-designated as Federal On-Scene Coordinators in areas where coral reefs are found.
- (4) In conjunction with Commandant (G-MOR) and the National Pollution Funds Center, work with the Department of the Interior, the Department of Justice, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Agency (NOAA), and the Federal Emergency Management Agency to study the feasibility of establishing a contingency fund to support otherwise un-funded wreck and debris removal operations in coral reef areas.
- (5) In conjunction with the Office of Investigations and Analysis (G-MOA) and the Office of Boating Safety (G-OPB), assist NOAA in assembling casualty data for coral reef areas from Coast Guard and state recreational boating accident databases.
- (6) Through the Office of Operating Standards (G-MSO), participate in the inter-agency process that creates U.S. proposals concerning vessel discharges and present U.S. proposals to change regulations governing vessel discharges that affect coral reef ecosystems to the International Maritime Organization (IMO).
- (7) Through Commandant (G-MWV) and in conjunction with other Federal agencies, serve as lead office for coral reef related maritime safety and marine environmental protection issues and:
  - (a) Work through the Safety of Navigation Sub-Committee of the IMO to improve navigational performance and technical standards embodied in International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea and other IMO instruments that have a clear effect on coral reef ecosystems.
  - (b) Work through IMO to establish appropriate vessel traffic management measures such as Areas To Be Avoided, Traffic Separation Schemes, and No Anchoring Zones, where such measures will clearly contribute to improved coral reef protection.
  - (c) Work with States and Territories to ensure the existing system of federal and state/territorial pilotage does not have any gaps in coverage.
  - (d) Establish Federal pilotage regulations for unincorporated territories.



- (c) Work with States and Territories to ensure the existing system of federal and state/territorial pilotage does not have any gaps in coverage.
  - (d) Establish Federal pilotage regulations for unincorporated territories.
- e. The Assistant Commandant for Systems (G-S) shall, through the Office of Civil Engineering (G-SEC) and in concert with Maintenance and Logistics Commands:
- (1) Evaluate Coast Guard shore facilities in coral reef areas for conditions that could degrade nearby reefs or reef-related ecosystems, giving particular attention to oil and hazardous material storage and potential point and non-point source discharges.
  - (2) Ensure future facility construction activities near coral reefs incorporate measures to reduce sediment and other discharges to the maximum extent practicable.
8. **FUNDING.** E.O. 13089 provides that agency actions to protect coral reefs will be undertaken "subject to the availability of appropriations." Further, the National Action Plan notes that many of the Plan's recommended actions were not funded at the time the plan was written. However, a number of recommended actions either do not require additional funding or could be accomplished within our existing base funding through internal reprioritization/reprogramming. For example, establishment of revised anchorage regulations can be accomplished within existing program funding. Other potential Coast Guard actions, such as Marine Protected Area patrols in remote areas or significant ATON enhancements, would require either new funding or reprogramming. In carrying out the actions listed in paragraph seven, Commandant (G-O), Commandant (G-M), and Commandant (G-S), in concert with operational and support commanders, shall identify any new funding required for successful implementation of this initiative and submit appropriate budget requests. Operating beyond sustainable levels on a long-term basis in support of this initiative is neither intended nor desired.
9. **REQUESTS FOR CHANGES.** Area commanders, district commanders, and assistant commandants for directorates may recommend changes to this Instruction or to the National Action Plan via the chain of command to Commandant (G-OP).



T. W. JOSIAH  
CHIEF OF STAFF

- Encl: (1) Executive Order 13089, Coral Reef Protection  
(2) Summaries of Executive Order 13089, Coral Reef Protection and the National Action Plan to Conserve Coral Reefs

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**THE WHITE HOUSE**

**Office of the Press Secretary**

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**For Immediate Release . . . . . June 11, 1998**

**EXECUTIVE ORDER 13089**

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**CORAL REEF PROTECTION**

By the authority vested in me as President by the Constitution and the laws of the United States of America and in furtherance of the purposes of the Clean Water Act of 1977, as amended (33 U.S.C. 1251, et seq.), Coastal Zone Management Act (16 U.S.C. 1451, et seq.), Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (16 U.S.C. 1801, et seq.), National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended (42 U.S.C. 4321, et seq.), National Marine Sanctuaries Act, (16 U.S.C. 1431, et seq.), National Park Service Organic Act (16 U.S.C. 1, et seq.), National Wildlife Refuge System Administration Act (16 U.S.C. 668dd-ee), and other pertinent statutes, to preserve and protect the biodiversity, health, heritage, and social and economic value of U.S. coral reef ecosystems and the marine environment, it is hereby ordered as follows:

Section 1. Definitions. (a) "U.S. coral reef ecosystems" means those species, habitats, and other natural resources associated with coral reefs in all maritime areas and zones subject to the jurisdiction or control of the United States (e.g., Federal, State, territorial, or commonwealth waters), including reef systems in the south Atlantic, Caribbean, Gulf of Mexico, and Pacific Ocean. (b) "U.S. Coral Reef Initiative" is an existing partnership between Federal agencies and State, territorial, commonwealth, and local governments, nongovernmental organizations, and commercial interests to design and implement additional management, education, monitoring, research, and restoration efforts to conserve coral reef ecosystems for the use and enjoyment of future generations. The existing U.S. Islands Coral Reef Initiative strategy covers approximately 95 percent of U.S. coral reef ecosystems and is a key element of the overall U.S. Coral Reef Initiative. (c) "International Coral Reef Initiative" is an existing partnership, founded by the United States in 1994, of governments, intergovernmental organizations, multilateral development banks, nongovernmental organizations, scientists, and the private sector whose purpose is to mobilize governments and other interested parties whose coordinated, vigorous, and effective actions are required to address the threats to the world's coral reefs.

Sec. 2. Policy. (a) All Federal agencies whose actions may affect U.S. coral reef ecosystems shall: (a) identify their actions that may affect U.S. coral reef ecosystems; (b) utilize their programs and authorities to protect and enhance the conditions of such ecosystems; and (c) to the extent permitted by law, ensure that any actions they authorize, fund, or carry out will not degrade the conditions of such ecosystems.

(b) Exceptions to this section may be allowed under terms prescribed by the heads of Federal agencies:

- (1) during time of war or national emergency;
- (2) when necessary for reasons of national security, as determined by the President;
- (3) during emergencies posing an unacceptable threat to human health or safety or to the marine environment and admitting of no other feasible solution; or
- (4) in any case that constitutes a danger to human life or a real threat to vessels, aircraft, platforms, or other man-made structures at sea, such as cases of force majeure caused by stress of weather or other act of God.

**Sec. 3. Federal Agency Responsibilities.** In furtherance of section 2 of this order, Federal agencies whose actions affect U.S. coral reef ecosystems, shall, subject to the availability of appropriations, provide for implementation of measures needed to research, monitor, manage, and restore affected ecosystems, including, but not limited to, measures reducing impacts from pollution, sedimentation, and fishing. To the extent not inconsistent with statutory responsibilities and procedures, these measures shall be developed in cooperation with the U.S. Coral Reef Task Force and fishery management councils and in consultation with affected States, territorial, commonwealth, tribal, and local government agencies, nongovernmental organizations, the scientific community, and commercial interests.

**Sec. 4. U.S. Coral Reef Task Force.** The Secretary of the Interior and the Secretary of Commerce, through the Administrator of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, shall co-chair a U.S. Coral Reef Task Force ("Task Force"), whose members shall include, but not be limited to, the Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency, the Attorney General, the Secretary of the Interior, the Secretary of Agriculture, the Secretary of Commerce, the Secretary of Defense, the Secretary of State, the Secretary of Transportation, the Director of the National Science Foundation, the Administrator of the Agency for International Development, and the Administrator of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration. The Task Force shall oversee implementation of the policy and Federal agency responsibilities set forth in this order, and shall guide and support activities under the U.S. Coral Reef Initiative ("CRI"). All Federal agencies whose actions may affect U.S. coral reef ecosystems shall review their participation in the CRI and the strategies developed under it, including strategies and plans of State, territorial, commonwealth, and local governments, and, to the extent feasible, shall enhance Federal participation and support of such strategies and plans. The Task Force shall work in cooperation with State, territorial, commonwealth, and local government agencies, nongovernmental organizations, the scientific community, and commercial interests.

**Sec. 5. Duties of the U.S. Coral Reef Task Force.** (a) **Coral Reef Mapping and Monitoring.** The Task Force, in cooperation with State, territory, commonwealth, and local government partners, shall coordinate a comprehensive program to map and monitor U.S. coral reefs. Such programs shall include, but not be limited to, territories and commonwealths, special marine protected areas such as National Marine Sanctuaries, National Estuarine Research Reserves, National Parks, National Wildlife Refuges, and other entities having significant coral reef resources. To the extent feasible, remote sensing capabilities shall be developed and applied to this program and local communities should be engaged in the design and conduct of programs.

(b) **Research.** The Task Force shall develop and implement, with the scientific community, research aimed at identifying the major causes and consequences of degradation of coral reef ecosystems. This research shall include fundamental scientific research to provide a sound framework for the restoration and conservation of coral reef ecosystems worldwide. To the extent feasible, existing and planned environmental monitoring and mapping programs should be linked with scientific research activities. This Executive order shall not interfere with the normal conduct of scientific studies on coral reef ecosystems.

(c) **Conservation, Mitigation, and Restoration.** The Task Force, in cooperation with State, territorial, commonwealth, and local government agencies, nongovernmental organizations, the scientific community and commercial interests, shall develop, recommend, and seek or secure implementation of measures necessary to reduce and mitigate coral reef ecosystem degradation and to restore damaged coral reefs. These measures shall include solutions to problems such as land-based sources of water pollution, sedimentation, detrimental alteration of salinity or temperature, over-fishing, over-use, collection of coral reef species, and direct destruction caused by activities such as recreational and commercial vessel traffic and treasure salvage. In developing these measures, the Task Force shall review existing legislation to determine whether additional legislation is necessary to complement the policy objectives of this order and shall recommend such legislation if appropriate. The Task Force shall further evaluate existing navigational aids, including charts, maps, day markers, and beacons to determine if the designation of the location of specific coral reefs should be enhanced through the use, revision, or improvement of such aids.

(d) **International Cooperation.** The Secretary of State and the Administrator of the Agency for International Development, in cooperation with other members of the Coral Reef Task Force and drawing upon their expertise, shall assess the U.S. role in international trade and protection of coral reef species and implement appropriate strategies and actions to promote conservation and sustainable use of coral reef resources worldwide. Such actions shall include expanded collaboration with other International Coral Reef Initiative ("ICRI") partners, especially governments, to implement the ICRI through its Framework for Action and the Global Coral Reef Monitoring Network at regional, national, and local levels.

Sec. 6. This order does not create any right or benefit, substantive or procedural, enforceable in law or equity by a party against the United States, its agencies, its officers, or any person.

**WILLIAM J. CLINTON**

**THE WHITE HOUSE,**

**June 11, 1998.**

**Summaries of Executive Order 13089, Coral Reef Protection  
and the  
National Action Plan to Conserve Coral Reefs**

**Executive Order 13089 Coral Reef Protection**

In response to the growing awareness of the threat to coral reef health, the International Coral Reef Initiative (ICRI) was established, with U.S. participation and support, in 1994. On the domestic front, the "U.S. Islands Coral Reef Initiative," made up of those U.S. states and territories whose waters include coral reefs, was formally established in 1997. In June 1998, Executive Order 13089, Coral Reef Protection (E.O. 13089), established the U.S. Coral Reef Task Force under the co-chairmanship of the Secretaries of Commerce and Interior. The Secretary of Transportation was also named as a member of the Task Force. Since the U.S. Coast Guard is the agency within the Department of Transportation with the greatest responsibility for and involvement with the marine environment, the Director of Waterways Management (G-MW) was initially designated as the lead DOT and lead Coast Guard representative to the Task Force. In July 2001, the Director of Operations Policy (G-OP) was designated the lead Coast Guard representative to the Task Force. (for the text of E.O. 13089 see <http://coralreef.gov/execorder.html>; for more information on the Coral Reef Task Force, see <http://coralreef.gov/membership.html>)

Under Section Two of E.O. 13089, all federal agencies are required to identify their actions that may affect U.S. coral reef ecosystems; to utilize their programs and authorities to protect and enhance the conditions of such ecosystems; and, to the extent permitted by law, ensure that any actions they authorize, fund or carry out will not degrade the conditions of such ecosystems. Exceptions to the above requirements may be allowed under terms prescribed by the heads of Federal agencies:

- (1) during time of war or national emergency;
- (2) when necessary for reasons of national security, as determined by the President;
- (3) during emergencies posing an unacceptable threat to human health or safety or to the marine environment and admitting of no other feasible solution; or
- (4) in any case that constitutes a danger to human life or a real threat to vessels, aircraft, platforms or other man-made structures at sea, such as cases of force majeure caused by stress of weather or other act of God.

Under Section Three of E.O. 13089, "federal agencies whose actions affect U.S. coral reef ecosystems, shall, subject to the availability of appropriations, provide for implementation of measures needed to research, monitor, manage, and restore affected ecosystems, including, but not limited to, measures reducing impacts from pollution, sedimentation, and fishing. To the extent not inconsistent with statutory responsibilities and procedures, these measures shall be

developed in cooperation with the U.S. Coral Reef Task Force and fishery management councils and in consultation with affected States, territorial, commonwealth, tribal, and local government agencies, nongovernmental organizations, the scientific community, and commercial interests.”

Section four of E.O. 13089 provides that the Coral Reef Task Force “shall oversee implementation of the policy and Federal agency responsibilities set forth in (E.O 13089).” While the Task Force’s oversight policy and procedures have yet to be fully developed and adopted, the envisioned policy will not give the Task Force control or “veto power” over agency authorities or actions. Rather, the intent of the Task Force’s oversight policy will be to ensure decisions affecting coral reefs are made with full stakeholder input and effectively coordinated between agencies.

Subsequent to the Coral Reef Task Force actions described above, additional Executive Orders were issued on Marine Protected Areas (E.O. 13158) and the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands Coral Reef Ecosystem Reserve (E.O. 13178). Both of these Executive Orders begin implementation of action items contained in the National Action Plan. In addition, in December 2000, Congress passed the Coral Reef Protection Act of 2000 (P.L. 106-562), which requires the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration to develop a national strategy to preserve coral reef ecosystems and, in effect, provides a statutory basis for the Coral Reef Task Force’s efforts.

The following is a summary of the Coral Reef Task Force’s National Action Plan to Protect Coral Reefs. It recaps the core principles, the broad strategies and specific actions contained within the National Action Plan, including 31 specific action items for which the Coast Guard is identified as a lead or participating agency.

### **The National Action Plan to Conserve Coral Reefs**

The Coral Reef Task Force, with significant participation by the Coast Guard, has developed a National Action Plan to Conserve Coral Reefs. The National Action Plan, which can be found at <http://coralreef.gov>, provides an easily understood, comprehensive and multi-disciplinary approach for dealing with the threats facing coral reefs. This capstone document is built on the work of six Task Force working groups: Coastal Uses, Mapping and Information Synthesis, International, Education and Outreach, Ecosystem Science & Conservation, and Air & Water Quality. The individual working group reports (<http://coralreef.gov/wgr.html>) provide the details and substance behind the National Action Plan.

#### **Core Conservation Principles**

In addition to the specific strategies and actions outlined below, the Coral Reef Task Force member agencies developed a suite of 8 core principles to guide coral reef conservation and protection measures under the National Action Plan and its future revisions:

- to adopt a **science-based ecosystem approach** to coral reef conservation that recognizes and builds upon important linkages among adjacent and remote habitats associated with coral reefs.
- to employ **adaptive management** approaches that track and respond to environmental change and emerging threats.
- that scientific uncertainty shall not prevent taking **precautionary measures** as appropriate to protect coral reefs.
- to incorporate the **human dimension** into coral reef conservation strategies by ensuring that management measures reflect, and are sensitive to the local socio-economic, political and cultural environment, and that they build an informed public engaged in choosing alternatives to activities that harm coral reefs.
- to apply **marine zoning – including marine protected areas and no-take ecological reserves** – in order to protect and replenish coral reef ecosystems by minimizing harmful human impacts and user conflicts in important habitats.
- to fully and proactively use **existing management authorities and programs** at the federal, state and territorial levels, and develop, where needed, new legal mechanisms that protect, restore and enhance coral reef ecosystems.
- to develop and support strong **domestic partnerships** among governmental, private and scientific interests to meet the complex cross-jurisdictional challenges of coral reef conservation.
- to provide global leadership to **reduce global threats** to coral reefs through international technical and development assistance, capacity building and collaboration.

### **Broad Strategies and Action Areas**

(the numbering below corresponds to Project Summary tables in Appendix C to the National Action Plan)

#### **A. Understand Coral Reef Ecosystems**

1. Map All U.S. Coral Reefs
2. Monitor, Assess and Inventory Reef Health
3. Conduct Strategic Research
4. Understand the Human Dimension

#### **B. Reduce the Adverse Impacts of Human Activities**

1. Expand and Strengthen the Network of Coral Reef Marine Protected Areas
2. Reduce Impacts of Extractive Uses



3. Reduce Habitat Destruction
4. Reduce Pollution
5. Restore Injured and Degraded Habitats
6. Reduce Global Threats to Coral Reefs
7. Reduce Impacts of International Trade In Coral Reef Resources
8. Improve Government Coordination and Accountability
9. Create an Informed Public

**Specific Actions/Projects with Identified Coast Guard Tasking or Involvement**

(Extracted from the Project Summary Tables in Appendix C, to the National Action Plan to Conserve Coral Reefs)

<u>Table #</u>	<u>Strategy</u>	<u>Action Item #/Description</u>	<u>Participating Agencies</u>
A2	Inventory, Assessment & Monitoring	8. National Marine Debris Monitoring Program	DOI, USCG, NOAA, EPA
B1	Marine Protected Areas (MPAs)	1. Strengthen Protection Within Existing MPAs	NOAA, DOI, USCG, EPA, States & Territories
B1	Marine Protected Areas	2. Establish Additional No-Take Reserves	NOAA, DOI, USCG, States & Territories
B1	Marine Protected Areas	5. Employ Marine Zoning To Balance & Partition Uses	NOAA, DOI, USCG, EPA States & Territories
B1	Marine Protected Areas	6. Establish and Manage (Enforce) MPAs in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Is.	CNMI Agencies (CRMQ & DEQ), NOAA, USCG
B1	Marine Protected Areas	7. Evaluate Existing MPAs & Develop New Resource Management Strategies	NOAA, DOI, USCG
B2	Reduce Extractive Uses	1. Establish & Enforce No-Take Reserves	NOAA, DOI, USCG, DOJ
B2	Reduce Extractive Uses	3. Apply Fishing Gear Restrictions	NOAA, FMCs, DOI, USCG, DOJ

B2	Reduce Extractive Uses	4. Reduce Fishery Damage to Deep Reefs & Species	NOAA, FMCs, DOI, USCG
B2	Reduce Extractive Uses	5. Enhance Fishery Enforcement/Add Resources/Increase Education Efforts	NOAA, DOI, DOJ, USCG
B2	Reduce Extractive Uses	6. Reduce Coral & "Live Rock" Extraction	NOAA, FMCs, DOJ, USCG
B2	Reduce Extractive Uses	7-11. Cooperative Enforcement & Education Efforts of Various Types	States & Territories, USCG
B3	Reduce Habitat Destruction	8. Create Database of Vessel Groundings/Other Problem Hotspots	NOAA, USCG*, State Agencies
* USCG erroneously omitted from list of Participating Agencies for the above action item in Appendix C to the National Action Plan.			
B3	Reduce Habitat Destruction	10. Education & Outreach Program for Boaters, etc.	NOAA, USCG, DOI, DOJ
B3	Reduce Habitat Destruction	11. Engage Shipping Interests & Maritime Safety Agencies – Educate Commercial Mariners	USCG, NOAA, DOJ
B3	Reduce Habitat Destruction	12. Develop Standard Enforcement Protocol for Coral Damage Due to Vessel Impacts (Groundings)	NOAA, USCG, DOI, DOJ
B3	Reduce Habitat Destruction	14. Evaluate the Need for an Emergency Response Trust Fund & Liability Regime for non-OPA Events	USCG, NOAA DOI, DOJ
B3	Reduce Habitat Destruction	15. Improve Vessel Traffic Management Measures as Needed (ATON, TSS,, etc.)	USCG, NOAA, DOJ

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B4	Reduce Pollution (Nutrient Loading)	15. Encourage Establishment of Boat Pump-Outs & No Discharge Zones	EPA, NOAA, USCG
B4	Reduce Pollution (Chemical Loading)	21. Explore Partnerships w/ Cruise Industry to Reduce Vessel Discharges	EPA, NOAA, USCG, DOJ
B4	Reduce Pollution	23. Strengthen Coral Reef Protection under MARPOL, etc.	EPA, NOAA, USCG, DOJ
B4	Reduce Pollution (Marine Debris)	24. Eliminate Pacific Fishery Debris as Threat – Removal & Source Elimination	NOAA, DOI, USCG, Hawaii State Agencies
B4	Reduce Pollution (Invasive Species)	27-31. Invasive Species Actions Under E.O. 13112 (various)	NOAA, USCG, DOI, EPA
B5	Restore Damaged Reefs (Response)	15-16. Create Emergency Response Team & Capabilities (non-OPA ) for Groundings, etc.	DOI, NOAA, USCG, DOI State Agencies
B6*	Reduce Global Threats	13. Improve Navigation Safety via – IMO & Regional Organizations	USCG, NOAA
* USCG was erroneously included as a Participating Agency under Item 1 of Table B.6. This item deals with ecosystem science (international coral reef monitoring networks) for which the Coast Guard has no expertise.			
B8	Improve Governmental Coordination & Accountability	1-8 Miscellaneous Admin Support & Planning Activities	All CRTF Agencies
B9	Informed Constituency	1. Develop Educational Campaign	NOAA, DOI, USAID, USCG, NSF, States and Territories
B9	Informed Constituency	4. Summarize Assistance Programs for Air & Water Quality Issues	EPA, USCG

B9	Informed Constituency	5. Develop Coral Reef Info Packet	NOAA, USCG
B9	Informed Constituency	19. Develop Vessel Impact Focused Education & Outreach Campaign	NOAA, DOI, DOJ, USCG
B9	Informed Constituency	20. Collaborate with industry to educate commercial mariners about coral reef impacts	NOAA, DOI, DOJ, USCG