

## COMMERCE DEPARTMENT ANNOUNCES \$34 MILLION FUNDING FOR CORAL REEF CONSERVATION U.S. Coral Reef Task Force Recognizes Outstanding Achievements



December 5, 2001 — At today's annual meeting of the [U.S. Coral Reef Task Force](#) in Washington, D.C., Commerce Deputy Secretary Samuel Bodman announced \$34 million for coral reef conservation through [NOAA](#). Bodman underscored the importance of coral reefs to the nation's economy and the need to protect and conserve these fragile ocean resources for all generations. **(Click NOAA image for larger view of coral reef in Tarawa, Kiribati.)**

"Although coral reefs cover less than 1 percent of the earth's surface, they are some of the most valuable marine resources on the planet," Bodman said. "The Bush Administration strongly supports this task force and is firmly committed to the conservation of our coral reefs."

Four groups were honored for significant contributions towards coral reef conservation. "The awards recognize outstanding achievements in the conservation and sustainable use of coral reefs in the United States and internationally," said [Scott Gudes](#), NOAA acting administrator. "The persistent dedication of groups such as the Reef Check Foundation, the U.S. Virgin Islands Coastal Zone Management Program, the government of Guam and The Nature Conservancy is helping to reverse the coral reef crisis and ensure healthy coral reef ecosystems."

Gudes and Joseph Doddridge, acting assistant secretary for Fish, Wildlife and Parks, Department of the Interior, co-chaired the meeting.

The Reef Check Foundation was honored for its education and outreach efforts to implement a volunteer-based coral reef monitoring program to help track reef health in the U.S. The U.S. Virgin Islands Coastal Zone Management Program was recognized for leadership and commitment in developing its first Marine Park Area and a system of coral reef marine protected areas. The government of Guam was honored for 10 years of leadership in marine resource conservation, resulting in a system of coral reef protected areas that includes more than 20 percent of Guam's coral reefs. The Nature Conservancy was recognized for international leadership and innovation in coral reef conservation through the use of marine protected areas, debt-for-nature swaps, coastal watershed management and efforts to stop destructive fishing practices.

The U.S. Coral Reef Task Force, established in 1998, leads the U.S. response to conserving U.S. coral reefs, as well as U.S. government efforts to promote coral reef conservation internationally.

The task force includes the heads of 11 federal agencies and governors of seven states and territories within their jurisdiction (Florida, U.S. Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico, Hawaii, Guam, American Samoa and Northern Mariana Islands). The Freely Associated States of Micronesia, Marshall Islands and Palau are non-voting members. The task force raises awareness of serious threats to coral reefs and helps develop solutions.

Coral reefs are among the most diverse and biologically complex ecosystems on the planet, providing food and jobs for billions of people world-wide. Yet coral reefs are rapidly being degraded by pollution, overfishing, marine debris, coastal development and other impacts. An estimated 25 percent of the world's reefs have already been destroyed and, if there is no action to reduce threats, another 30 percent may be lost within 10 to 30 years.

Today's meeting also focused on advancing the task force's agenda, which includes tracking the implementation of the U.S. National Action Plan for Conservation of Coral Reefs.

**Relevant Web Sites**

[NOAA's Coral Reef](#)

[NOAA's Global Coral Reef Monitoring Network](#)

[WHAT ARE CORAL REEFS — AND WHY ARE THEY IN PERIL?](#)

[NOAA's Coral Kingdom](#) — coral reef photos

[U.S. Coral Reef Task Force](#)

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