

CNMI Coral Restoration WG Agenda and Notes 5/8/23

Agenda

1. Introduce new Coral Restoration Coordinator
2. Government Nursery Update (Kylie Hasegawa)
3. JAMS Nursery Update (Lyza Johnston)
4. Bleaching Response Plan (Elly Perez)
5. Renaming nursery (Robbie Greene)
6. Any other comments

Attendees

DCRM: Kylie Hasegawa, Elly Perez, Pheona David, Rich Salas

JAMS: Lyza Johnston, Richelle Ramon, Sydney Madden, Anthony Tenorio

NOAA: Steve McKagan

MINA: -

PCRP: Robbie Greene

OPD: -

DLNR/DFW: Nick Robie

NMC: Kelsey McKlellan

Notes

Government Nursery Update (Kylie Hasegawa)

- Permitting documents in process in order to scale upwards
- SM commented on permitting docs from Hawaii/NOAA

JAMS Nursery Update (Lyza Johnston)

- Rochelle Ramon, new restoration technician under JAMS
- Sydney Madden, from FL and new JAMS research associate, formerly NOAA's virtual Hollings associate
- Admin assistant also hired
- Massive coral collection and microfragmentation (*Porites lutea* and *Gonastrea*(?))
- Donor colonies are being monitored and wounds covered in epoxy and seem to be recovering well
- Coral seed beads have been outplanted at 5 sites in Paupau and La Fiesta (from 2021; currently growing out on reefs) and monitored for progress
- SM working on photomosaics in order to map/track beads thru time to observe retention and survival
- Photogrammetry being used to track fish, benthic cover, coral diversity
- 4 new tables installed and older tables mesh replaced (galvanized steel, lasted 2 yrs before rusting; will use stainless steel in future projects)
- Regular maintenance on nursery
- Training & capacity building done at JAMS using MINA rangers and JAMS staff

- introduced new settlement substrate design can be rapidly nailed onto high energy environments (mushroom-looking vs original seed beads which do not retain well)
- Last two nights looking for acropora spawning; no spawning observed yet, will continue to look for spawning

Coral Bleaching Response Plan (Elly Perez)

- CNMI coral reef response team presentation from Elly
- CNMI's first current coral reef conditions report -a way to communicate onset of bleaching risk, etc. as away to communicate bleaching season to the public
- Current outlook: El Nino watch; conditions favorable for El Nino in the next 6 months
- Models are predicting very large El Nino but models tend to overestimate esp during springtime
- After springtime, more accuracy can be expected
- For CNMI, past El Nino events have not increased SST
- 2017 was the worst bleaching, however in 2015 and 2016 had El Nino events which did not result in coral bleaching
- Global warming makes the degree to which these events affect the CNMI difficult to estimate
- A recent surge in SST worldwide also confounds data/circumstances since early March
- Currently CNMI's SST is a little above the mean SST, so no bleaching watch predicted for now, however in the future we may reach Watch status (12 weeks)
- Based on climate predictions and field observations, the CNMI bleaching threat is set at moderate as of May 5th 2023 (for the next 4 months)
- The conditions will be reassessed in the summer

For the government nursery renaming, high school students may have input and needs an outreach campaign; some potential names pulled from ChatGPT

Steve McKagan from NOAA:

- Call with the Navy and their installation of the magnetic array in Apra harbor which includes translocation with porites rus, moved 6000 coral colonies at large scale
- Working with folks in HI for scientists to go to Vogue Trader (former ship grounding) and finalized report for early restoration efforts there
- Reports created for coral collaboration and production of as report which may influence others in the Pacific
- Oversettlement funds from the Paul Russ (monies are in escrow account ~ \$300K) which requires an OPA restoration plan to use the funds
 - Must have alignment with OPA (not TNC, NOAA)
 - Metrics
 - Costs
 - Menu of various restoration activities

- Plan can get finalized then goes into public review followed by restoration efforts and signed off on and agreed upon by DLNR and BECQ before monies can be spent
- References other documents: CNMI Restoration Action Plan, Bleaching Response Plan, JAMS reports, DCRM reports, etc.
- RG: initial work done after the grounding, has anyone checked on the dozen installed habitats near the grounding. Response: no.
- RG: But may be able to make the site a part of the long term monitoring by MMT. Would like to deploy more of them if successful.
- KH: how can we spend the money?
- Response: May need to hire someone to write the plan before implementation
- SM: its a viable cost
- KR: will corals be spawning this month?
- LJ: yes, acropora usually spawns in May full moon, may spawn in June but will be monitoring to see. Spawning expected to occur in June/July
- SM: new secretary of finance ready to have discussions, but no concrete news
- LJ: use existing restoration plan (in development) to fund projects in the plan

Kalani: bring in press, more people from Tinian/Rota

- Do we want to bring in more parties? Specifically press
- Most of the group agree to take notes, publish notes, etc. instead of having press directly involved
 - Keep the WG more a safe space to discuss ideas and next steps
- WG notes and website link can be shared with public
- Until we can identify parties in Tinian and Rota, Kalani can act as liaison (public)