



GOVERNMENT OF THE UNITED STATES VIRGIN ISLANDS

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**DPNR PARTICIPATES IN US CORAL REEF TASK FORCE MEETING IN HAWAII
U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS TO HOST MEETING IN 2023**

Commissioner Jean-Pierre L. Oriol of the Department of Planning and Natural Resources announces that DPNR recently attended the 45th United States Coral Reef Task Force (USCRTF) Meeting in Kona, Hawaii. Established in 1998 by Presidential Executive Order 13089, the USCRTF leads U.S. efforts to preserve and protect coral reef ecosystems and includes leaders of Federal agencies, U.S. States, territories, commonwealths, and Freely Associated States.

In addition to his role as the Point-of-Contact for the USVI to the Task Force, U.S. Commissioner Oriol serves as the Chair of the U.S. All Islands Coral Reef Committee (AIC) which represents the combined voices of coral reef jurisdictions of the U.S. and Freely Associated States. AIC member jurisdictions include American Samoa, Commonwealth of

the Northern Mariana Islands, Florida, Guam, Hawai'i, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. AIC affiliate members include Federated States of Micronesia, Republic of the Marshall Islands, and Republic of Palau. As the AIC chair, Commissioner Oriol presented high level jurisdictional updates and priorities to the Task Force during the meeting.

“The USVI’s longstanding involvement with the USCRTF and the AIC is critical to the success of coral reef conservation and management in the territory. We appreciate the support of all of the participating federal agencies and their continued investment into local jurisdictional efforts as well as the incredible learning opportunities gained from working with our counterparts in other jurisdictional government agencies,” Commissioner Oriol said. “We look forward to hosting this event next year and welcoming our partners to embrace the warm and friendly culture of the U.S. Virgin Islands” Oriol concluded.

During the week-long meeting, the DPNR team participated and presented in sessions ranging from coral reef disease and restoration to watershed management and environmental enforcement. They also attended site visits to relevant natural resource sites in and around Kona and Maui to learn about some of the ongoing efforts there that are broadly applicable to other coral reef jurisdictions.

As a culmination of the week's activities, Commissioner Oriol officially announced that the USVI will be hosting the 47th United States Coral Reef Task Force Meeting in the fall of 2023. Because each territory hosts this annual event about once every seven years, this will be a great opportunity for the territory to showcase the local culture and community of the USVI, as well as highlight all the groundbreaking coral reef research and management activities occurring throughout the territory. The USVI last hosted the 2013 Task Force Meeting in St. Croix, so plans are in place to host the meeting next year in the St. Thomas/St. John district. In preparation for this event, DPNR staff will work closely with our regional partners in Florida and Puerto Rico as well as the rest of the AIC to highlight the challenges and successes of coral reef management activities in the USVI and abroad.



DPNR Commissioner Jean-Pierre Oriol and Coral Reef Initiative Coordinator Matthew Warham participate in the ceremonial opening of the U.S. Coral Reef Task Force Meeting in Kona, Hawaii.