

## **Coral Reef Alliance (CORAL) Final Report for Grant #NA06NMF4630104**

*Maui Voluntary Code of Conduct and CORAL Reef Leadership Network:*

*A Model for Sustainable Marine Recreation in Hawaii*

### **Accomplishments and Summary**

This section will detail specific accomplishments in the following key areas: 1) Development of *Best Practices and Voluntary Standards for Marine Tourism*; 2) Implementation of *CORAL Reef Leadership Network*; 3) Point-of Rental Tourist Outreach; and 4) Monitoring and Evaluation.

### **Development of Best Practices and Voluntary Standards**

After over a year and a half of dialogue and working meetings, the project resulted in a draft standard for Maui-based SCUBA diving operations. Due to a number of factors, the SCUBA Standard, MSMT1, was not voted affirmatively in its first balloting (March 2008) and the project period ended with the third working draft awaiting balloting. Furthermore, the project seemed to stall in its final stages due to many operators' persistent and pervasive fears of regulation by the state. Despite our attempts to make a case for standards, in terms of avoiding regulations or having a say in what regulations would look like, this concern continued to arise, so that many operators accepted as fact that regulations were imminent and that the state would regulate around the standards. We attempted to convey the message that if regulation were to become a reality, participating in the process allowed the industry to help define the terms of the regulation and that the standards therefore had to be rigorous enough to be considered adequate by the regulatory agency. While these key themes were repeated numerous times in various contexts, the standards were taken in a direction that resulted in minimal performance measures being outlined and the ongoing fear of regulation caused many to question and disengage from the process.

We made a concerted effort to assuage concerns, and were able to solicit the following comment from the State of Hawaii Department of Land and Natural Resources (DLNR)/Division of Aquatic Resources (DAR) Special Projects Manager Athline Clark:

*"I have spent a significant amount of time talking to a number of folks within DLNR to make sure that we are all on the same page regarding the development of voluntary standards. Please be assured that DLNR through its Divisions of Aquatic Resources and Boating and Ocean Recreation are in full support of the development of these standards. We welcome the potential for these standards to be used as guidelines by the ocean tourism industry as industry standards for operation. There appears to be a concern from a number of operators that these standards will be used to create regulations or a regulatory package. We would like to assure you that neither Division has plans to create regulations from these codes of conduct/standards in the foreseeable future. I have obtained permission from both Division Administrators to send this on their behalf so that this issue can be laid to rest."*

However, the concerns persisted and other external factors that occurred only added to operators' assumptions that standards-based regulations were an inevitability. First, the County of Maui proposed new rules surrounding the regulation of beach parks, and then the State proposed increased administrative fines for coral damage as a result of the sinking of a dive boat in Molokini crater. Recognizing the implications, we made a subsequent attempt to solicit an additional statement from DLNR Chairperson Laura Thielan addressing the likelihood of regulation and support of the State for the voluntary standards development process.

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Unfortunately, we were unable to obtain a statement of clarification from the DLNR administration.

The operators' concerns took other forms, such as fears about liability, and several operators had indicated their desire to vet the draft standards with the Hawaii commercial operations' insurance underwriters; we were awaiting a response when the project period ended. Finally, another issue that arose focused on "ownership" of the document and several Maui operators failed to recognize or accept their own role in adopting, implementing, and field-testing the standards.

However, despite the disappointing outcome wherein a standard has not yet been published, the process itself and associated dialogue has resulted in many key topics being discussed, attitudes being changed, and practices on the water being changed as well. For instance, anchoring procedures that were outlined in working meetings were implemented on charters shortly thereafter. Also, at least two companies ceased the sale and practice of fish feeding during the project period; these companies' management had been made aware of many stakeholders' attitudes towards this practice via the comment periods for the standards. Other outcomes are harder to define but the collective dialogue has certainly resulted in greater awareness and improved practices through word-of-mouth amongst operators.

We feel that the experience on Maui has served as an excellent case study and the lessons learned can assist the process of standards development in Kailua-Kona. For instance, it is critical that operators recognize the value of all stakeholders' input and the long-term benefits of participating in an inclusive process. Operators and other participants should also be constantly reminded that standards development is *their* process, with CORAL as the facilitating agency, and that the outcomes will depend entirely on their level of involvement, participation, and support of the process. It would also be beneficial to have more explicit support by the State regulatory agency in order to adequately assuage concerns and maintain buy-in to the process.

**Implementation of CORAL Reef Leadership Network**

In August 2008, CORAL conducted the *CORAL Reef Leadership Network* Training on Maui and enlisted seven individuals who have consistently demonstrated their commitment to coral reef conservation and were already considered to be community leaders. The training focused on the *Sustainable Marine Recreation* (SMR) curriculum and how to present its themes and components. The training was originally slated to involve outreach strategies concerning the voluntary standards and the associated *Environmental Walk Through* Program outlined as part of Phase II of the project, but due to the standards not yet being available (as mentioned above) we focused solely on the SMR components.

Much of the development of the program itself and its approaches will occur following the training. The Leaders posed creative ideas on integrating outreach within the community and we will continue to explore these ideas as the program develops. For instance, there is expected to be a lot of interest within hotels and their staff and different leaders have offered to conduct targeted outreach to different local communities across the island. We are also partnering with the Ocean Awareness training and the Hawaiian Islands Humpback Whale National Marine Sanctuary in

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order to offer volunteer outreach and naturalist services to vessels in exchange for participation of their management and staff in *Sustainable Marine Recreation Training*.

Leaders will employ a large focus on disseminating the Point-of-Rental outreach materials and conducting training in their use. These include the interpretive flip chart, reef etiquette bag tags, *Take a Bite out of Fish Feeding* materials, and the poster version of the “Respecting Coral Reefs” interpretive sign.

### **Point-of-Rental Visitor Outreach**

Towards the end of this project, we were able to consult with the dive shops that had been field-testing the bag tags with reef etiquette messages. We found that in terms of durability, the tags had maintained their structure and readability. However, while the staff supported their use, it seems they found it difficult to find the time to point out the product and its purpose to clients renting gear. This assessment has led to new ideas that may be field-tested to improve the visibility of the tags and the staff’s ability to provide an educational service to their clients regarding the tags. This provides an excellent opportunity to enlist the Leaders in directed outreach tailored to each dive shop’s individual context and needs.

The *Take a Bite out of Fish Feeding Campaign*, jointly coordinated by CORAL, DAR, and Project S.E.A.-Link, became a successful endeavor. The “Fish-Friendly Establishment” decal can now be seen in shops on Maui and onboard vessels. The website (<http://www.coral.org/fishfriendly>) has over 30 participants and hyperlinks draw web visitors to their sites. Several new businesses on Maui and Oahu have recently ceased the sale of fish food, notably Wal-Mart. CORAL Leaders will be able to continue promoting the program and offering the materials to shops with which they conduct outreach.

The interpretive flip chart that was developed as part of a CORAL-sponsored microgrant is also being disseminated beyond the company (Prince Kuhio) which initially assisted in its development and field-testing. This 11”x17” laminated, full-color flip chart thematically presents reef etiquette messages, ecological concepts, and site-specific information while incorporating a script that guides can use to assist in their briefings to passengers on snorkel or dive charters. Now, Trilogy Excursions on Maui has adapted and developed their own version and produced a copy for all six of its vessels. One of the improvements made by Trilogy was the addition of Hawaiian names for the reef fish highlighted on the chart. The flip chart files have also been given to The Nature Conservancy on Hawai’i Island, whose representative Chad Wiggins as well as CORAL’s Kona Field Representative Kara Osada will help adapt it for use with operators on Kona. With increased visibility through the *Leadership Networks* on Maui and in Kona, we expect more businesses will want to make use of this product, thereby enlisting our help in adapting it for and training their staff in its use.

An additional product has been incorporated into a Point-of-Rental application—the “Respecting Coral Reefs” interpretive sign that was developed as a community project on Maui, funded in part by CORAL. This educational sign presents stewardship messages in a positive manner and also highlights coral reef inhabitants and their ecological roles. The “Adopt-a-Sign” program allows third parties to sponsor the installation of these signs statewide. Over 20 signs

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have been sponsored by Maui businesses and organizations and have been placed at high-use sites across Maui where many unguided visitors are directed by gear rental shops. Furthermore, after the signage was created, Community Work Day sponsored the printing of a 24"x36" poster version of the sign, which has been made available to dive and snorkel shops. A laminated version has also been given to large snorkel vessels to post onboard. CORAL Leaders will also help in supplying the poster to dive shops and vessels in order to promote the "Adopt-a-Sign" program.

Finally, CORAL also assisted in the development of a new statewide publication, "*Making a Difference: An Action Guide to Marine Conservation in Hawai'i.*" This booklet provides key information, guidelines, and contact information for marine resource conservation. It outlines important rules and regulations on a variety of topics and provides general ecological information and guidelines to follow, such as actions to take, if any; what information to record; what agency to contact; and where to go for more information and guidance. This booklet is being presented to dive shops and vessel staff as a useful resource and reference that CORAL Leaders will be enlisted to disseminate and provide guidance regarding its use.

### **Lessons Learned**

Based on the outcomes of the project, we have identified several lessons learned that will assist us in moving forward with other projects, particularly work in Kailua-Kona. First, we found that the approach we took of offering a "sponsorship" opportunity to the community via the "Adopt-a-Sign" program really expanded the scope and impact of the product that was developed. The option for businesses and organizations to have their logo placed in a special area on the signs was perceived as a meaningful incentive. The importance of identifying incentives and making them available also became apparent through the "Fish Friendly Business Alliance" hosted on CORAL's websites. Companies approached us, wanting the online listing and link to their website, in order to be a part of the initiative and declare themselves as not among those who sell fish food or promote the practice of fish feeding.

As far as standards development goes, a lesson that will be applied toward the Kona project is developing more visible and meaningful incentives for participation and making them explicitly known to operators at the outset. It became more and more clear that the marketing potential of sustainability was less of a motivating factor for participation than we had anticipated, so CORAL will now focus significant effort on developing creative and significant incentives and methods of promoting the businesses participating in the standards development and assessment process in Kona. While we have witnessed positive attitudes and more initiative by businesses in Kona than on Maui, we feel that this approach will help ensure that there is more widespread participation in and support of the project.

Another lesson learned is in regards to the use of technology. We found that many people had a difficult time using the Underwriters' Laboratories' online system, so much so that it ultimately detracted from the project and resulted in considerable time and energy being expended in training and "work-around" approaches. Our response was to stop using that particular system and shift to a more user-friendly one. This was appreciated by the Maui Taskforce and the problem can therefore be avoided altogether in Kona.

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A final lesson that we were unable to overcome was the pervasiveness of certain misperceptions about the project and the impact of external factors that reinforced the belief of many that regulation on Maui was inevitable. It is our impression that Kona does not suffer from the same regulatory climate as Maui, but our experience on Maui has underscored the need to address any such misperceptions or community rumors in a more preemptive and preventative manner.

### **Summary**

While the voluntary standards development process did not result in the outcomes we had anticipated, we nevertheless feel that there has been a significant foundation created upon which to build and significant lessons learned that are assisting in subsequent efforts. In addition, many intangible outcomes have resulted from the process itself, which have manifested as changes in attitudes and practices among members of the marine recreation community. Many ideas for future projects and products to support sustainability have been suggested and may become reality thanks to microgrants in support community-driven conservation projects going forward.

Considerable effort was expended in developing new and innovative outreach tools and strategies, which are also helping to improve practices and promote sustainability. We have full confidence that the *Leadership Network* will provide a positive force in the community for further disseminating educational strategies and training to reduce negative impacts to Maui's coral reef ecosystem.

### **Monitoring and Evaluation**

CORAL collects baseline data in all project sites prior to CRSD work as a benchmark by which to measure conservation gains. Baseline data consists of MPA gap analyses (evidence of management plans, perceptions and attitudes of resource managers, evidence of MPA business plans, identification of local reef threats), sociological data collected from private sector and local communities (perceptions and attitudes of stakeholders to reef management efforts, evidence of sustainable behavior), as well as compiling existing data and estimates from national and NGO reports of relative reef health and stressors.

CORAL identifies local groups that conduct biophysical surveys of reef health (REEF Check, Reef, etc.) and secures agreements to share data. These key CORAL partners provide excellent baseline data for quantifying reduction in damage as a result of our project. In addition to direct biophysical sampling, a growing body of scientific literature supports the value of indirect measures (or proxy indicators) of reef health. Examples of such proxy indicators collected by CORAL include: evidence of standards of practice among marine recreation sector, evidence of professional development opportunities for resource managers, evidence of enforcement of protected area regulation, and presence of mooring buoy installation and management plans.

Programmatic evaluation is incorporated from the beginning of projects. Both formative and summative evaluations are used to document both the development process and the impact of conservation initiatives. CORAL administers a comprehensive pre- and post-survey to acquire baseline information on current management practices of resource managers and environmental performance of the marine recreation industry. Formative evaluation instruments are created to

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guide project development and summative evaluation—formulated to gather evidence of the impact of each initiative—addresses multiple levels of program impact. Both qualitative and quantitative methods are collected in order to capture the broad spectrum of program effects.

The following are examples of performance indicators that we track to document and measure the performance of our projects:

- The number of educational workshops offered; number of attendees
- The number and type of educational resources distributed
- The number and type of operators agreeing to adopt sustainable operation
- The number and type of new operators adopting
- The number and nature of new conservation collaborations resulting from projects
- The increase in success of conservation messages reaching stakeholders

In addition to internal programmatic evaluation, CORAL has secured the services of the Center for Research, Evaluation, and Assessment (REA) at the University of California, Berkeley to assist in program evaluation. REA provides professional consultation and assistance in the evaluation of informal education programs for clients nationwide. As an external evaluator, REA provides front-end, formative, and summative evaluation of methodology and implementation of professional development and informal educational outreach projects.

REA's Director, Dr. Rena Dorph, serves as coordinator of our external evaluation. Dr. Dorph received her Ph.D. from the University of California, Berkeley in Educational Policy, Organization, Measurement, and Evaluation and her M.A. in the Sociology of Education from Columbia University/Teachers College. Her research efforts and writing grapple with equity and access to education in several interrelated ways. CORAL works with REA in developing and monitoring formative evaluation as well as for evaluation design, assistance with data collection and management, data analysis, and reporting.

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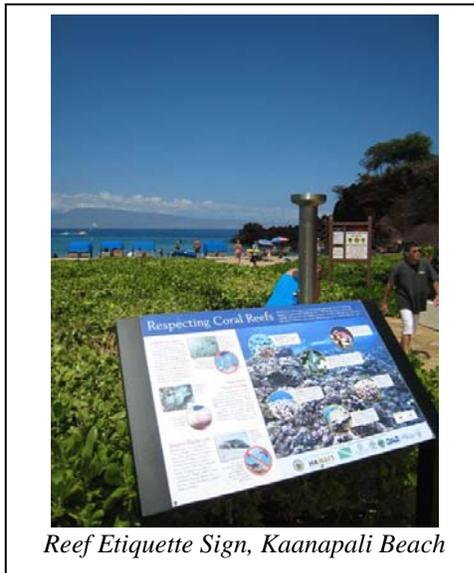
*Reef Etiquette Sign, Ahihi Kina'u Natural Area Reserve*



*Reef Etiquette Sign, Wailea Beach*



*Reef Etiquette Sign, Kapalua Bay*



*Reef Etiquette Sign, Kaanapali Beach*



*Reef Etiquette sign sponsorship box*



*Reef Etiquette & Site Orientation Signs, Honolua Bay marine Life Conservation District*



*Kihei Community Association Board members by the Reef Etiquette Sign they sponsored, Kamaole III Beach Park*

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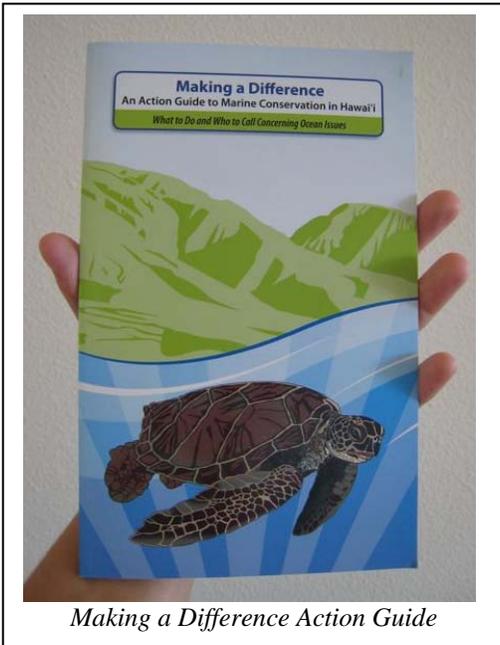
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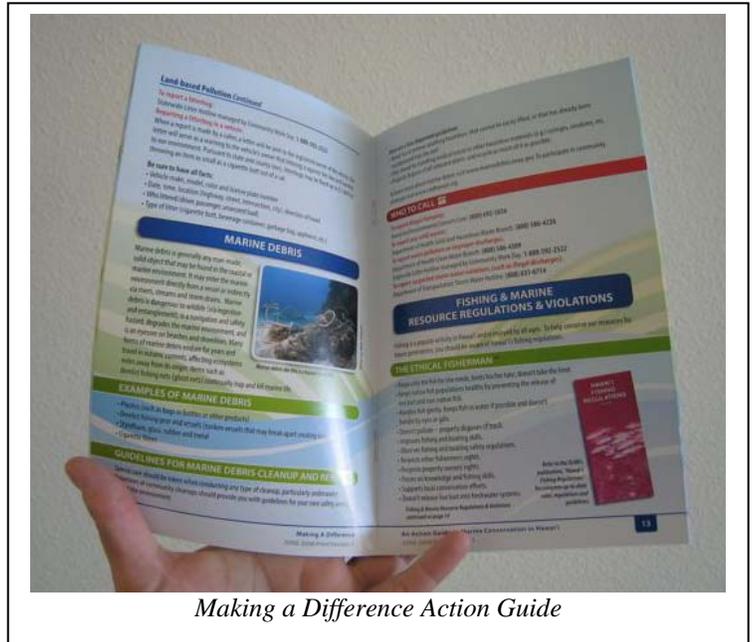
*Bag Tag containing Reef Etiquette messages*



*Visitor viewing bag tag*



*Making a Difference Action Guide*



*Making a Difference Action Guide*