

Coral Reef Alliance (CORAL) Final Report for Grant #NA07NMF4630107
*Kailua-Kona Voluntary Code of Conduct and CORAL Reef Leadership Network: A
Model for Sustainable Marine Recreation in Hawaii*

Final Report for Grant #NA07NMF4630107

Accomplishments and Summary

This section will detail our summarized accomplishments for the following four objectives: 1) Development of *Best Practices and Voluntary Code of Conduct*; 2) Implementation of *CORAL Reef Leadership Network*; 3) Point-of-Rental Tourist Outreach; and 4) Monitoring and Evaluation.

Development of Best Practices and Voluntary Code of Conduct

A. Research existing best practices and standards: Completed.

Prior to the launch of NOAA-funded standards development work, CORAL had conducted preliminary stakeholder outreach to Kailua-Kona marine tourism providers through funding from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. During this time (early 2007) CORAL began interviewing Kona operators about existing best practices or codes of conduct. Very little in the form of codified guidelines existed outside of loose “best practices” for kayakers compiled by the Kayak Alliance of the Islands (KAI) and “Manta Viewing Guidelines” compiled by the Pacific Manta Foundation.

B. Coordinate outreach and recruit stakeholders to participate in a voluntary code of conduct Task Force: Completed.

CORAL’s Hawaii Program Manager, Liz Foote, and CORAL Director of Conservation Programs, Rick MacPherson, both conducted outreach and education from December 2007 to March 2008 in Kona to recruit stakeholders for the voluntary standards task force and steering committee. In addition, newly hired Field Representative Kara Osada provided much-needed on-the-ground assistance. These activities are detailed below.

Based on the initial outreach and recruitment, CORAL hosted a preliminary meeting in early December at the Hawaii Division of Aquatic Resources (DAR) office in Kona. At this meeting, CORAL discussed the project, the outreach strategy, standards that could be developed, and the potential steering committee composition. We decided on a launch date of February 27 and hosted the first steering committee meeting on February 28. Meeting attendees included: Bill Walsh, Steve Cotton, Laura Livnat (Hawaii Division of Aquatic Resource), Brent Carman (DAR), Kara Osada (Jack’s Diving Locker), Teri Leicher (Malama Kai Foundation and Jack’s Diving Locker), Jill Komoto (DAR and Malama Kai Foundation), Rebecca Most (National Parks Service), and Sara Peck (University of Hawaii Sea Grant).

CORAL also produced outreach material that was distributed to partners from DAR, Malama Kai Foundation, and Sea Grant. These partners then disseminated the outreach material throughout the community via hard copy and email.

Material developed during the first stage of the project includes:

- Attachment 1: Dec 2007 Steering Committee Press Release and Flier
- Attachment 2: Feb 2008 Steering Committee Flier
- Attachment 3: West Hawaii Standards Full Prospectus
- Attachment 4: West Hawaii Standards One-Page Overview

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C. Customize voluntary code online forum with Underwriters Laboratory: Adapted.

Drawing from the lessons learned during our standards project in Maui, CORAL determined that the Underwriters Laboratory system was too technically confusing and labor intensive for busy operators to learn. Instead, CORAL used *SurveyMonkey*, an online user-friendly system in order to gain feedback and determine consensus. Kara Osada also created a website to foster online discussion prior to voting. This user-friendly system has proven more effective in eliciting participation from the Kona community.

D. Conduct site-based facilitation and training on code of conduct development process: Completed.

CORAL's Hawaii Field Manager and Director of Conservation Programs conducted site-based training in the standards development process. The CORAL Kona Field Representative continues to facilitate site-based trainings and outreach as needed.

For the project's launch date and the first steering committee meeting, CORAL's Conservation Programs Director, Rick MacPherson, traveled to Kona. The February 27 launch meeting was conducted at Kealahou High School. Agenda items included: 1) an overview of CORAL's mission and approach to marine conservation, 2) an overview of CORAL's work in Hawaii, and 3) an overview of the standards development process. Considerable time was reserved for questions and answers, as well as a discussion to gauge the Kona stakeholders' interest in the project and their initial thoughts about which standards should be developed locally. The response from participants was positive and enthusiastic, and this project was overwhelmingly supported by stakeholders, including representatives from marine recreation businesses, NGOs, and state and federal agencies.

- Attachment 5: February 27 Standards Launch Meeting Attendees

The following day, on February 28, CORAL hosted the first steering committee meeting. Agenda items included 1) proposed standards, 2) potential challenges, and 3) responses to obstacles.

On April 24, Field Manager Liz Foote traveled from Maui to conduct the next steering committee meeting. In anticipation of the significant time and resources the standards project would demand as it progressed, CORAL recruited and hired Kara Osada as our Kona-based Field Representative. Kara and Liz led the April 24 steering committee in its effort to define subcommittees. Agenda items included 1) the review of standards to be developed, 2) the establishment of subcommittees, and 3) the adoption of standard operating procedures for the project.

Identified Subcommittees:

- 1) Wildlife Interactions
- 2) General Boating
- 3) Snorkeling, Scuba, & Snuba
- 4) Fishing (consumptive)

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- 5) Kayaking
- 6) Surf Schools
- 7) Tidepooling/Wading/Swimming

- Attachment 6: Subcommittee Leaders and Members
- Attachment 7: *West Hawaii Today*: Voluntary Rules Sought for Reef Protection

A follow-up meeting was held by Liz and Kara on May 2. During this meeting, the subcommittees began to break down their approaches to identifying and implementing their standards projects. Following the meeting, Kara continued to coordinate with the subcommittee members, and helped them plan additional meetings. Kara created a website and online forum system to help the group members communicate with each other and posted drafts of their work online via Google documents.

E. Code of conduct development and comment period: Final Drafts Ready for Implementation.

As we transitioned into the development and comment period, CORAL realized that significantly more time and resources would be required to complete the project. Accordingly, Kara Osada increased her time commitment to CORAL in order to meet the needs of the project. Kara facilitated online forums and meetings in which committee members drafted and evaluated codes of conduct. These meetings include local stakeholders, community volunteers, and representatives from marine recreation companies.

- Attachment 8: Task Force Members

The original seven subcommittees were reformed into four standards:

- Scuba, Snorkel, and Snuba
- Wildlife Interactions
- General Boating (including surfing and kayaking)
- Shoreline Activities

Fishing was dropped (after much time had been spent in meetings and discussions with fishermen and key stakeholders) when the subcommittee determined that the fishing community was already actively creating rules through the West Hawaii Fisheries council.

Safety considerations will be included in an Annex compilation of applicable rules and regulations, which may also be adapted into an outreach tool for marine recreation providers.

The Wildlife Interactions subcommittee spent considerable time in developing several options for spinner dolphin exclusion zones to be a part of the voluntary standards. The committee identified locations for exclusion zones and proposed defined time periods during which the dolphins would be allowed to rest.

- Attachment 9: Exclusion Zones

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Proposed dolphin exclusion zone success over time will, to a great degree, will also hinge on installation of marker buoys to visibly define exclusion areas. Marker buoys would be the best option to delineate the area as a means of promoting awareness and encouraging voluntary compliance with enforcement. A community team, additionally supported by the Recreational Impacts to Reefs Local Action Strategy, will deliver decisions on buoy installation by September 2009.

During the formulation of each subcommittee's standards, it became apparent that several areas existed where consensus could not yet be determined (including the handling of organisms and the dolphin exclusion areas), so the course of action was to:

- Continue to facilitate discussions within the steering committee and subcommittees, followed by discussions with the task force.
- Create an online voting forum so that the emergent issues could be voted on by all participants.
- Tally the results of the voting to inform the creation of the final version of the Committee Drafts, which would then go to a 30-day comment period.

CORAL presented all final subcommittee drafts to Bob Toth, our standards consultant. Mr. Toth then processed the comments, concerns, and suggestions from all subcommittee members and issued Committee Draft Standards, which have undergone stakeholder-wide balloting.

There remains the possibility that in the long term, similar concerns about liability and regulations as occurred on Maui may arise within the Kona marine operator community and these concerns will affect the rigor of the final document. We are taking this into consideration, and have developed an assessment tool that identifies a wide range of levels of environmental sustainability. This may provide a middle ground that will promote a high level of rigor and best practices, while at the same time allowing the standards themselves to reflect the reality of operators' support. Generally speaking, operators have persistent and pervasive fears of regulations being imposed by the management agencies and of the perceived legal implication of voluntary standards.

Based on our experiences in achieving successful adoption of voluntary standards along the Mesoamerican barrier Reef, CORAL is confident that our assessment process currently underway in Kailua-Kona under National Fish and Wildlife Foundation funding will provide a similar comfort zone for operators in standards implementation.

F. Final approval and publication of best practice guidelines and voluntary code of conduct: Modified.

As has been our previous experience in standards development along the Mesoamerican Barrier Reef, voluntary standards implementation and marketing benefited considerably from a published version of the standards documents. This document was both copyrighted and registered with the Library of Congress (ISBN registered).

Decision on publication of West Hawaii Voluntary Standards, however, became a point of contention with stakeholders. As was experienced in the voluntary standards development

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process on Maui, marine recreation operators expressed considerable caution and concern that any “published” version of the standards (i.e., in print) could be construed by the State of Hawaii to be an official document or “regulations” that are no longer voluntary but compulsory.

Despite numerous attempts to assuage stakeholder concerns that a print version of the standards is only a tool to facilitate their implementation, we were unable to secure firm commitment as of this report that the standards would be printed and published in a form similar to the Mesoamerican standards.

Regardless, CORAL has secured approval and buy-in from stakeholders to create a series of laminated instructional flipcharts that will allow CORAL Leaders to socialize the West Hawaii standards with tourism businesses in the standards testing phase. CORAL will submit a PDF of these instructional tools to NOAA upon their completion.

- Attachment 10: West Hawaii Standards – Boating
- Attachment 11: West Hawaii Standards – Scuba Snorkel
- Attachment 12: West Hawaii Standards – Surf School
- Attachment 13: West Hawaii Standards – Wildlife Interaction

G. Produce and distribute best practices checklist for operators based on voluntary code of conduct: Completed.

A checklist, or adaptation of the ICRAN-MAR environmental walk-through, has been compiled that will assist marine recreation stakeholders in West Hawaii to self-evaluate, conduct peer-to-peer evaluation, and submit to anonymous “secret shopper” assessments of their compliance with the West Hawaii voluntary standards.

- Attachment 14: Best Practices Checklist

H. Adoption of voluntary code of conduct: Pilot Adoption and Testing Ending 1 July, 2009.

Because the standards development process experienced delays in the public comment and balloting phases, we were unable to begin the full standards adoption and implementation phases in the scope of funded work. However, funding from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) has allowed us to add a full testing protocol into the West Hawaii standards development process. NFWF funding has allowed us to incorporate a more robust standards assessment than originally proposed through NOAA. CORAL will submit assessment findings upon completion of the NFWF segment of the project on June 30, 2009.

Implementation of CORAL Reef Leadership Network

A. Conduct outreach and raise awareness; recruit participants: Completed.

During the early stages of the project, Hawaii Field Manager, Liz Foote, spent considerable time recruiting members for the Leadership Network and engaging in community outreach and awareness initiatives. Liz was successful in recruiting participants for the first Conservation in Action workshop during phase one of the program.

B. Conduct Sustainable Marine Recreation (SMR) trainings: Modified and Ongoing.

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CORAL did not conduct Sustainable Marine Recreation trainings in Kona in the fall of 2008 due to the standards development process and time constraints. Given the saturation of marine recreation training along the Kailua-Kona coast that CORAL provided in 2006 and 2007, we decided the community could be better served if we diverted resources to more pressing needs, such as the formulation of standards.

We also decided that we could forego the formal SMR training in part because we were afforded the opportunity during the U.S. Coral Reef Task Force (USCRTF) meeting in August 2008 in Kona to both develop and facilitate a workshop for local West Hawaii marine tourism stakeholders focused on sustainable marine recreation and the Recreational Impacts to Reefs Local Action Strategy. The workshop was attended by approximately fifty stakeholders representing the USCRTF, local Kailua-Kona community, marine recreation providers, NGOs, and state and federal agencies. Outcomes included strategic discussion on sustainable marine tourism issues in Kailua-Kona, role-playing scenarios to address problem areas (lack of education, intervention, effective environmental briefings, conflict resolution, and enforcement), and the development of a set of guidelines to inform sustainable, responsible, and honest environmental marketing by tourism operators.

C. Conduct Conservation in Action trainings: Completed.

CORAL scheduled the Conservation in Action (CIA) workshop to coincide with the 20th U.S. Coral Reef Task Force Meeting in Kona (August 26–30) to capitalize on having CORAL’s Hawaii Field Manager, Kona Field Representative, and Director of Conservation Programs on site simultaneously. The CIA workshop was conducted on August 27, 2008, at the Outrigger Keahou Resort in Kona.

Several project ideas were proposed during the workshop; CORAL Field Representative Kara Osada is communicating directly with stakeholders to coordinate a series of follow-up meetings to assist with project development and build on the relationships established during the CIA workshop.

D. Award microgrants: Disbursed.

CORAL selected two main projects for funding. The first project involved the purchase of four “Respecting Coral Reefs” interpretive signs and the support of a community process to determine appropriate locations for the signs. The second project supported the Malama Kai Foundation’s day-use mooring program. CORAL’s microgrant provided financial assistance for the purchase of a replacement mooring drill.

In addition, CORAL used a small percentage of microgrant funds to co-support costs associated with the USCRTF Recreational Impacts to Reefs workshop during the August meeting.

- Attachment 15: Respecting Coral Reefs

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Academy for Leaders: Completed.

Model Workshops: Postponed.

As we mentioned in our last progress report, standards development in Kona was unavoidably delayed. While there is a smaller, more cohesive marine recreation community in Kailua-Kona than on Maui, many people are already involved in multiple volunteer efforts. As the voluntary standards process was already extremely time consuming and the very real threat of stakeholder burnout is present under these conditions, we chose not to push stakeholders on further volunteer responsibilities at this time. We decided to proceed with standards development as our primary focus, because this aspect of the program will most comprehensively benefit the reefs and the community.

We delayed launching the CORAL Reef Leadership academy until completion of the standards. We are currently implementing a more realistic model for sustainable marine recreation outreach using these newly-graduated leaders. A CORAL Reef Leadership Network academy was held in March 2009. Nine Kailua-Kona residents received intensive training in CORAL's standardized Sustainable Marine Recreation education program. In addition, these leaders were also trained in voluntary standards assessment and the principles of informal education and outreach.

Leaders represent a broad cross-section of the marine recreation community in Kailua-Kona: tourism operators, resource managers, NGOs, and local community members.

Training modules consisted of:

Module I

Ecology and Economy of Coral Reefs
Current Status of Reefs
Global and Local Threats to Coral
Solutions through Local Action

Module II

Marketing and Promoting Sustainable Practice
Ecological Best Practices
"Do as I do."
Promoting Your Best Practices

Module III

Outreach: Spreading the Word
Fundamentals of Informal Education
Delivering SMR
Evaluating Knowledge

Our rationale for adopting this train-the-trainers approach to institutionalized learning is straightforward. Conventional educational outreach to the marine recreation community has limitations based on simple arithmetic. Within Hawaii's recreational dive industry alone, there are hundreds of coral reef dive destinations, more than 100 dive operations, and close to 1,000 full- and part-time dive employees. These totals grow significantly when one factors in all other

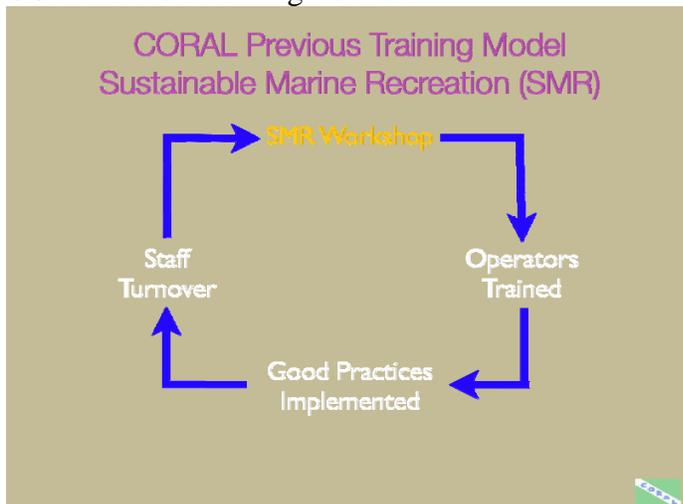
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marine recreation operations (snorkel, SNUBA, kayak, boating, nature tours, etc.). The situation becomes even more complex when one considers the disproportionately high personnel turnover rate within the marine tourism industry. As most marine recreation operations lack an infrastructure for maintaining an institutional memory of collective wisdom and lessons learned, motivation and knowledge gained from conventional outreach opportunities is lost as staff departs.

CORAL has successfully addressed this problem by developing a network of qualified local CORAL Reef Leaders to fulfill and sustain educational outreach goals and disseminate best practices. This CORAL Reef Leadership Network has the local credibility and background knowledge necessary to inspire trust. Moreover, their onsite presence ensures a system of continuity to address the high turnover of tour operator staff.

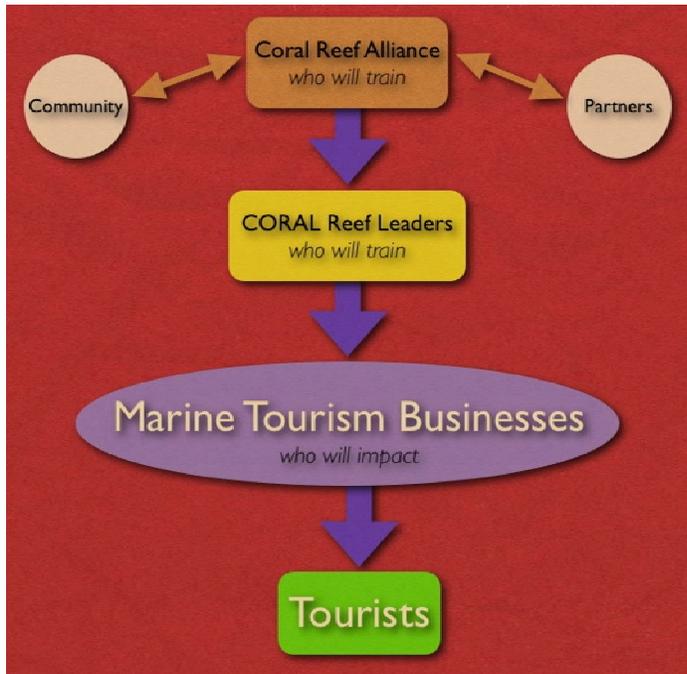
With the successful graduation of nine new CORAL leaders on the Big Island, they join a global network of other CORAL Reef Leaders in Mexico, Belize, Honduras, Maui, and Fiji. Within the next four months, Leaders will also be trained in Papua New Guinea and Indonesia. Our hope is to link Leaders around the world to share lessons-learned for even more effective outreach to the marine tourism sectors in coral reef destinations.

CORAL Prior Training Format



CORAL Reef Leadership Network Training Format

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CORAL Reef Leaders on Hawaii's Big Island have been charged with socializing the voluntary standards with marine tourism operators along the Kailua-Kona coast. This socialization, coordinated by CORAL's Kona Field Representative, includes customized training sessions with businesses to ensure their understanding of the components of each of the standards. This support as businesses adopt the voluntary standards will be critical before CORAL launches a standards testing protocol over the next several months.

Point-of-Rental Tourist Outreach

A. Identify point-of-rental venues: Completed.

CORAL began outreach using a master list of Kailua-Kona operators; this list was then narrowed based on individual interest and availability.

B. Develop and print point-of-rental outreach tools: Completed.

CORAL tested the snorkel rental bag-tag (photo and evaluation attached) in our point-of-rental outreach along the Kailua-Kona coast. Feedback from Maui-based operators where this project was piloted was valuable in better implementing this outreach in Kona. We are developing an environmental pledge in conjunction with the Recreation Impacts to Reefs Local Action Strategy (RIRLAS), as mentioned below.

- Attachment 16: Snorkel Rental Bag-Tag
- Attachment 17: Bag-Tag Assessment

C and D. Schedule and conduct point-of-rental outreach: Completed.

As a core activity for this objective, CORAL worked with stakeholders to create environmental outreach bag tags for use on snorkel rental gear in Kailua-Kona. These tags (Attachment 16) were distributed to Kailua-Kona marine tourism operators to place on gear bags that contain

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rental equipment. The final tags feature reef-safe environmental messaging on one side and images of native Hawaiian reef species on the opposite side. Images were selected through a community photo contest and final images chosen through online balloting.

CORAL Leaders assembled all tags and served as distribution points to operators. What we did not anticipate was that tourists would be willing to donate money to purchase them to put on their own gear bags and luggage as souvenirs.

This unexpected outcome has generated sustainable revenue that can be reinvested into ongoing conservation outreach and educational needs along the Kailua-Kona coast. CORAL is currently working with the Big Island Reef Fund, a community organization in Kona, to assume fiscal oversight of this revenue stream.

In addition to the successful point of rental tags, the RIRLAS has collaboratively adapted the environmental waiver (now called a “pledge”) and is disseminating it to marine recreation companies who also agree to distribute bookmarks with reef etiquette and stewardship messages printed on them.

Objectives: Monitoring and Evaluation

A. Gather and compile industry contacts: Completed.

- Attachment 18: Industry List

B. Create pre- and post standard industry surveys: Completed.

C: Administer post-standard industry survey: Postponed.

Post-standards implementation surveys were not conducted during the duration of the NOAA-funded standards development process. As described previously, resistance from the tourism sector led to delays in standards development and insufficient time to socialize the standards with operators. As a result, as of this report the process of standards adoption is still underway.

However, funding secured from NFWF for a formal standards testing process will allow for a robust testing protocol consisting of self, peer-to-peer, and anonymous “secret shopper” assessments. The assessments will measure the attainability, affordability, and effectiveness of the Kailua-Kona voluntary standards as effective tools for MPA effectiveness.

D. Compile and analyze pre and post standard industry surveys and disseminate findings: Modified.

In lieu of pre-standards surveys, CORAL was able to reference the research of Carlie Wiener, a Master’s degree student who conducted a comprehensive analysis of practices of marine tourism on the island. Based on this research, CORAL was able to establish a baseline from which the success of our standards will be measured. Below is a summary of the issues addressed and assessed in Wiener’s research.

Carlie Wiener, former RIRLAS Coordinator for the State of Hawaii, completed her thesis entitled “IMI O NA ALA O KE MOANA “LEARNING THE WAYS OF THE OCEANS” AN

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EVALUATION OF OCEAN EDUCATION AND MARINE TOURISM PRACTICES IN HAWAII” (YORK UNIVERSITY, TORONTO, ONTARIO, CANADA), which presents many insights into the practices of marine recreation companies statewide. The study compiled fieldwork (through “secret shopper” assessments) and interviews as well as a review of advertising materials pertaining to marine tourism.

Research questions included: 1) What is effective for education? 2) What messages are impacting tourists most? 3) When are environmental briefings done? 4) What are tourists exposed to (i.e., signage)? 5) What is the ratio of divers to divemasters? and 6) What rules are being broken?

While it was acknowledged that tour and interpretation practices varied significantly between boat companies and by geographic area in Hawaii, some emergent issues of concern were identified. For instance, observations showed that some practices such as waste dumping, fish feeding, and harassment of marine life were occurring. “Inappropriate interaction” with marine species was observed on “numerous occasions.” In particular, noted interactions with dolphins indicated that harassment was occurring. Such harassment includes operators dropping people directly into the middle of a pod to swim with the dolphins, and engaging in the practice known as “leapfrogging,” whereby a boat positions itself ahead of a group of traveling dolphins (and may drop swimmers into the water), and then continues to reposition itself in the same manner to initiate continued interactions with the animals.

In addition, a large effort was made to evaluate the content of environmental briefings and information provided during a charter tour. The research found that more than half of the tour companies offered some form of interpretation but environmental concepts were often overlooked in favor of safety practices. Fewer than half offered any interpretation referring to natural history, ecological concepts, endemic species, and the marine life expected to be encountered. A significant finding was that not one activity or tour company offered any environmental awareness concepts or suggestions for visitors to get involved in marine conservation.

These results indicate that gaps exist in both in-water practices and on-board interpretation, and the West Hawaii standards development process has attempted to address as many of these issues as possible.

As delays in voluntary standards development in Kona precluded securing MOUs with marine tourism businesses for standards testing (and as a result, direct implementation of the standards during this grant period), CORAL was unable to conduct a post-standards survey of impacts/benefits of standards in tourism operations. However, a NFWF-funded formal standards testing process is currently underway and will allow for data collection to contrast with existing business practices summarized above.

Lessons Learned, Next Steps, and Management Recommendations:

CORAL’s work on the standards project in both Maui and Kona provided useful insight into how

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best to structure the implementation and operation of similar programs in the future. Steps that we imagine would facilitate a smoother process concern: 1) the early establishment of clear communication between all stakeholders and 2) substantial investment of time and resources in laying the early groundwork of the project. Below are some specific examples of lessons learned, next steps, and management recommendations.

CORAL encountered somewhat significant delays both in Maui and in Kona, largely as a result of hesitation and misunderstanding of the standards. In order to smooth the process of successfully implementing and adapting standards, it would have been beneficial to have more meaningful incentives in place *before* the launch of the project. We believe this would have allowed us to focus attention on recruiting, engaging, and securing commitments from key stakeholders.

Meaningful incentives could include partnerships with marketing companies (locally and online), tourism associations, and other mechanisms of social marketing. We are still working on exploring some possibilities in conjunction with the standards assessment. We have also heard some support among operators for incentives in the form of tax breaks or other considerations regarding permitting, as outlined in the Recreation Impacts to Reefs Local Action Strategy. Others strongly oppose this. CORAL recommends that the resource management agency properly vets this idea. Having such an incentive in place would certainly promote buy-in to standards development, particularly if accountability were part of the arrangement.

CORAL also struggled to secure dedicated support from high levels of DLNR management. When we specifically asked for the chairperson's support (during the latter stages of the Maui project and the initial stages of the Kona project), we were unable to obtain it. We specifically wanted to indicate the resource management agency's support of the process, and to provide an indication of what was being done and when. Part of the problem was the difficulty we faced in determining who, among many individuals with many different roles and responsibilities in DLNR, could speak for the agency. The rigid protocol that is in effect for securing "official" agency support proved to be a largely unsuccessful tax on CORAL's already-limited resources.

Another local setback CORAL faced concerned the advertising and marketing practices that many businesses employ. These companies often use language, images, and guarantees that raise expectations and devalue and disrespect the local culture and natural resources. The fact that these practices, which run contrary to a low-impact, sustainable approach to ecotourism, often succeed in promoting businesses intensifies our challenge in recruiting businesses to adapt truly eco-friendly approaches. Many businesses who would be interested in our standards and our goals are concerned that by partnering with us they will lose customers to businesses whose advertising principles are less responsible.

In an effort to combat this threat, we recommend that agencies such as the Hawaii Tourism Authority and the Hawaii Visitors Bureau examine current practices and promote more responsible advertising and marketing practices that promote a genuinely sustainable and realistic visitor experience. Operators who demonstrate true sustainability and a genuine commitment to environmental stewardship should be highlighted and rewarded through

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meaningful marketing incentives.

We also could have used more clarity early on with regard to NOAA's intentions to impose regulations on dolphin/human interactions in Hawaii. We found it was difficult to promote the meaningfulness of our process when there was a perception by many that regulation by NOAA was a foregone conclusion. We attempted to encourage participants to consider adopting the most stringent standards necessary in light of the possibility of regulation. We also sought NOAA input on the "minimum acceptable" options. However, when we did obtain and transmit this information to the task force, the information elicited a negative response by many who felt the options were too stringent. We nevertheless continue to promote the community-developed standards as a middle ground or a stepping stone, and communicate the importance of best practices from the standpoint of improving conditions for the reef ecosystem and the wildlife associated with it.

Finally, the concept of certification or eco-labeling has arisen many times throughout both the Maui and West Hawaii standards processes. It seems that this is an essential component to the ongoing effectiveness of any process to implement and maintain best practices. A third party entity is needed to administer the certification and monitor compliance in order to ensure true accountability as opposed to a mechanism to promote greenwashing. We attempted to start this dialogue on many occasions with various organizations and entities, but not one has stepped forward yet. However, there is a current effort underway by a University of Hawaii graduate student to compile recommendations for an appropriate eco-certification program for Hawaii. We are hopeful that an organization that can and will undertake this effort is identified.

Most of our efforts to improve the design of standards implementation center on improving communication between stakeholders and establishing a strong presence and reliable support as early as possible. Improvement in both of these areas will help CORAL earn the trust of the community and will provide for more significant incentives.

- Attachment 19: CORAL Annual Report