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Community Monitoring Program Coordination for Guam PI: Valerie Brown

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:: COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

**Guam Establishes Community Coral Reef Monitoring Program**

The Guam Community Coral Reef Monitoring Program officially started in July with a training event in the village of Piti. Participants gathered at the Santos Memorial Park to learn about Guam's coral reefs and techniques for monitoring coral reef health.

"This program is designed to fill a critical gap in Guam's coral reef management activities," says Valerie Brown, a Fishery Biologist with the NOAA Fisheries Pacific Island Regional Office, "Residents have frequently asked to be more involved, but we didn't have any hands-on programs for the community. Now we do." Brown and community coordinator, Marybelle Quinata, train Guam residents in coral reef monitoring techniques for benthic cover and macroinvertebrates. This includes coral, algae, giant clams, sea cucumbers, starfish, and sea urchins. As the program evolves, fish surveys will be added. Once individuals complete the training, they may then assist in coral reef surveys on Guam's reef flats.



Brown teaches monitoring program participants how to identify common marine algae during the Piti training event held on July 25, 2012.

The overall goal is to help residents get involved with coral reef management. The data will be shared with the community so that they can see how the reefs are doing. "Government agencies collect a lot of data, but there are limits to what these agencies can accomplish. With the community involved we can look at more sites and residents can learn about the reefs in their own village," says Brown. The project started in Piti to monitor the effects of restoration efforts in the Masso Watershed, one of Guam's Priority Watersheds. But the program is not limited to just one site, interested groups are invited to adopt a site in their village and the program will help them. "We're really interested in getting the youth and families involved," says Quinata, "It's the youth that will really see the impacts to the reefs and fisheries if we don't take care of these resources now." If you or your group are interested in joining this effort, please contact either Val Brown or Marybelle Quinata at 671-646-1904 or [marybelle.quinata@noaa.gov](mailto:marybelle.quinata@noaa.gov) for more information. Keep an eye out for a facebook page in the near future.