



## PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

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### **U.S. Coral Reef Task Force to Fund Projects in Guánica-Rio Loco Watershed, Puerto Rico**

Guánica, PR (3 June, 2011) – The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF), in partnership with members of the U.S. Coral Reef Task Force (USCRTF), specifically the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), announces the availability of grant funding for projects that will help restore natural resources in the Guánica/Rio Loco watershed in Puerto Rico. Since 2009, member agencies of the USCRTF have invested in conservation and restoration projects in the Guánica-Rio Loco Watershed to address the loss of live coral on the reefs of Guánica Bay, a result of land-based sources of pollution.

The loss of coral reefs, which are highly productive and diverse tropical ecosystems, threatens marine life as well as local tourism and recreation industries. The USCRTF is addressing factors that have contributed to their decline in Guánica Bay, including sediment and nutrient runoff from storms, intensive agriculture further upstream, and heavy use of coastline for development and housing. USCRTF partners award grants for projects to cultivate long-term capacity of local stakeholders, raise awareness about watershed issues in the region, and protect and conserve coral reef ecosystems through the implementation of local conservation projects.

Priority categories of projects include, but are not limited to:

- On-the-ground restoration to reduce runoff of contaminated water and improve water quality;
- Non-governmental institutional capacity building for long-term watershed protection; and,
- Awareness building and incentives for increasing environmental stewardship within the watershed through engagement of local businesses and communities.

In 2010, seven grants were awarded through the U.S. Coral Reef Task Force Partnership Initiative to local non-governmental organizations, individuals and academic researchers. When leveraged by \$145,000 of

matching contributions from the recipients, a total of \$346,000 went to support on-the-ground conservation and capacity building in the Guánica/Rio Loco watershed.

Previous grants have included awards to:

- **An independent contractor** to work with farmers on using compost to reduce the flow of nutrients from farms to water bodies.
- **The University of Puerto Rico** to implement a capacity-building program on conservation buffers for farmers throughout the watershed. Two permanent demonstrations of conservation buffers on farms will be built.
- **The Conservation Trust of Puerto Rico** to provide educational field trips to the public on the importance of the watershed as well as continuous cleanup activities at Punta Ballenas.
- **University of Puerto Rico Agricultural Extension Service** to use soil testing to guide and modify nutrient management recommendations to reduce nutrients and sediments harming coral reefs in Guanica Bay.

For more information on the U.S. Coral Reef Task Force Partnership Initiative Grant Program, including guidelines for applications, visit [www.nfwf.org/coralreefs](http://www.nfwf.org/coralreefs). Pre-proposal applications are due July 1, 2011 online at [www.nfwf.org/easygrants](http://www.nfwf.org/easygrants). A workshop on how to submit a competitive application will be hosted on June 7<sup>th</sup> at 1 p.m. via webinar. Prospective applicants should contact [erin.duggan@nfwf.org](mailto:erin.duggan@nfwf.org) to register.

Established by Congress in 1984, the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation sustains, restores and enhances the nation's fish, wildlife, plants and habitats. Through leadership conservation investments with public and private partners, NFWF is dedicated to achieving maximum conservation impact. In 26 years, NFWF has funded 3,800 organizations and leveraged \$529 million in federal funds into \$1.8 billion for conservation. For more information, visit [www.nfwf.org](http://www.nfwf.org).

The U.S. Coral Reef Task Force (USCRTF) was established in 1998 by Presidential Executive Order to lead U.S. efforts to preserve and protect coral reef ecosystems. The USCRTF includes leaders of 12 Federal agencies, seven U.S. States, Territories, Commonwealths, and three Freely Associated States. The

USCRTF helps build partnerships, strategies, and support for on-the-ground action to conserve coral reefs.

The United States Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) works with landowners through conservation planning and financial and technical assistance designed to benefit the soil, water, air, plants, and animals that result in productive lands and healthy ecosystems. Originally established by Congress in 1935 as the Soil Conservation Service (SCS), NRCS has expanded to become a conservation leader for all natural resources, ensuring private lands are conserved, restored, and more resilient to environmental challenges.

The NOAA Coral Reef Conservation Program (CRCP) supports effective management and sound science to preserve, sustain and restore valuable coral reef ecosystems for future generations. CRCP also serves as the Secretariat for the USCRTF. NOAA's mission is to understand and predict changes in the Earth's environment, from the depths of the ocean to the surface of the sun, and to conserve and manage our coastal and marine resources.