

# National Coral Reef Management Fellowship Newsletter

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Black tip reef shark in Muliava, American Samoa. Credit: Tilali Scanlan



2022--2024 Coral Fellows. L to R: Tilali Scanlan (AS), Lara Noren (HI), Ashley Perez (PR) Sam Cook (FL), Erin Bowman (USVI), Elly Perez (CNMI), Camille Quichocho (GU)

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## About the Fellowship

*A thriving collaborative fellowship program that builds next generation leaders and capacity effective for coral reef management*

The National Coral Reef Management Fellowship was established in 2003 as a response to the need for additional coral reef management capacity in the seven jurisdictions. A new vision was created for the Fellowship in 2016, and since then, 22 Fellows have made up four cohorts supporting coral initiatives in American Samoa, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, Guam, Hawai'i, Florida, Puerto Rico, and U.S Virgin Islands.

The Fellow Newsletter is published by the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), the United States Department of the Interior, (DOI) and Nova Southeastern University (NSU) to relay information related to the fellowship program.

## Tilali Scanlan

*American Samoa*



The coral restoration trials and marine invasive species management projects I have assisted with to gathering more information on corals in American Samoa. During my time as a Fellow, I have completed coral outplant trials in Aua village with the American Samoa Coral Reef Advisory Group and local partner agencies. Additionally, I have expanded my expertise in local coral taxonomy and work with renowned coral expert, Dr. Douglas Fenner to add more descriptions of coral species in sites around the Samoan archipelago.

## Elly Perez

*Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands*



The CNMI Coral Bleaching Response Plan is officially complete! Finishing this plan is a bittersweet feeling, as I know my time as a Fellow is coming to an end but I hope this plan is something that will genuinely benefit the the territory as a whole.

## Sam Cook

*Florida*



During my time as the Florida Fellow, I helped to establish Florida's Coral Reef Resilience Program - a merger between two

existing groups in the state. I also supported coordination and facilitation of various coral initiatives, attended the US Coral Reef Task Force, and helped to develop and manage a number of coral disease and restoration research projects. Looking forward, I am excited to stay in Florida and continue my work supporting the recovery and restoration of Florida's Coral Reef!

## Camille Quichocho

*Guam*



As the Guam Fellow, I've learned from local natural resource managers and community members who have shared a plethora of knowledge about the island's resources and how we can best protect them. With their help, we have made much progress on the Guam Coral Reef Restoration Action Plan and it is 70% complete. I have also created educational and outreach materials with the Guam Coral Reef Initiative to teach the local community about coral reefs and marine conservation.

## Lara Noren

*Hawai'i*



My current project focuses, like the mitigation bank and the Ocean Stewardship User Fee, have a long-term timeline beyond my fellowship. Other projects like the reef insurance feasibility report will continue to contribute to long-term reef management goals in the State.

## Erin Bowman

*U.S. Virgin Islands*



The final big project of my fellowship has been co-leading the planning effort for the 47th US Coral Reef Task Force Meeting which was held during the last week of October and was a huge success! Partners from all 7 jurisdictions and federal representatives came together for a week of productive conversations!

## Ashley Pérez

*Puerto Rico*



The Puerto Rico Coral Reef Health Citizen Science Efforts have officially been launched with a focus group! As opposed to the rest of the Fellows, I still have until April to complete my fellowship during which time I will be working on launching these efforts with the general public and assisting in Coral Reef Week 2024 planning.



# Highlights



"My highlight was without a doubt my learning exchange in Guam and the CNMI. I learned so much and it shaped how I think about coral reefs at the Pacific regional scale."



Lara Noren  
(HI)

"Everyday I learn something new about our wonderful coral reef ecosystem!"



Tilali Scanlan  
(AS)

"Traveling to the Maldives for a workshop was a truly unforgettable experience. Meeting ocean lovers from all around the world reminded me that we really are all in this together."



Ely Perez  
(CNMI)

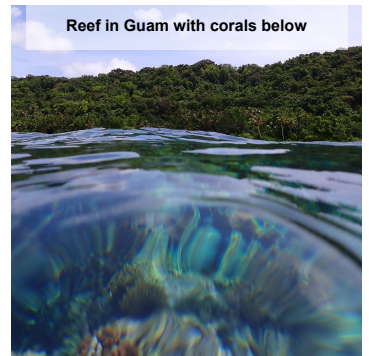
"The highlight of my time as a Fellow has been all the passionate people I've met and worked with. Work feels like play when you love what you do."



Camille Quichocho  
(GU)

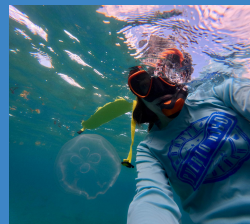


Coral fellows during a diving excursion in Florida in May 2023



Reef in Guam with corals below

"I had the privilege of attending the 47th U.S. Coral Reef Task Force Meeting in St. Thomas, U.S.V.I., and I can attest that it was a profoundly enriching experience. The opportunity to meet and engage with numerous colleagues in person left me thoroughly inspired."



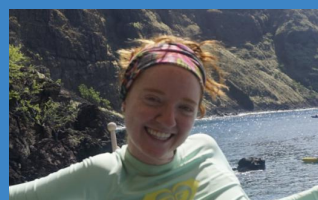
Ashley Pérez  
(PR)

"Being able to be a member of the small but mighty Coral Restoration and Protection Program has allowed me to really understand what coral reef management looks like!"

"My Professional Development trip to the Maldives was a remarkable experience. I learned mapping and monitoring strategies for reefs that can be applied anywhere, and I got the chance to see coral cover I've only dreamed about!"



Sam Cook  
(FL)



Erin Bowman  
(USVI)



# 47th US Coral Reef Task Force

## What does it take to plan something like the US Coral Reef Task Force?

**Erin:** Hosting this meeting was a huge effort for the local planning team! We started working about a year before the meeting was held and are still wrapping things up now. Getting to participate in the Kona meeting last year, and that team's willingness to share their tips and tricks was a big help in even knowing where to start. Between funding restrictions for federal travel and a very near-miss of a government shutdown, we were all a little surprised to find ourselves welcoming people to St. Thomas that week. The event itself was a whirlwind and found the planning team working around the clock to sort out last minute logistics, but we were delighted to hear that participants saw the week as having run quite smoothly.



Leslie Henderson



Courtney Tierney



Erin Bowman

## What was the USCRTF like as a professional development opportunity?

**Ashley:** Attending the meeting in St. Thomas marked a significant stride in my professional growth within the realm of coral reef management. The week commenced with insightful All Islands Committee meetings as well as visits where we delved into both land-based and in-water mangrove and coral nurseries, culminating with productive discussions during climate and restoration working group meetings. A coral disease identification and treatment site visit, led to discussions about the profound bleaching affecting the Caribbean and Florida. These discussions seamlessly tied into the core themes deliberated upon during the business meeting later in the week. Wrapping up the week was the Stony Coral Tissue Loss Disease workshop, designed to facilitate the exchange of knowledge, best practices, and lessons learned concerning the disease between Atlantic and Pacific stakeholders. Notably, this exchange was particularly valuable for Pacific stakeholders who have not yet faced the brunt of this challenge. The week was brimming with workshops, working group meetings, enriching professional interactions, opportunities to immerse ourselves in the local culture, and insightful site visits that harmoniously interconnected all aspects of our agenda.

Land-based Reef Response Coral Nursery Visit at University of Virgin Islands



SCTLD Workshop



# Professional Development in Fiji



Coral restoration work in Malolo-lalai. Credit: C4C/C4C

## Professional Development in Fiji

In June, the AS Fellow, Tilali Scanlan, joined two Coral Reef Advisory Group (CRAG) coworkers on a one week coral restoration training at Plantation Island (Malolo-lalai, Fiji) with Dr. Austin Kirby and the Corals for Conservation (C4C) team. They learned how to deploy and set up “A-frame” coral outplant devices, and practiced harvesting bleaching resilient corals for attachment onto frames and coral tables in the nursery. Tilali and the CRAG team also got to sit down with the C4C team and share knowledge about coral restoration in the Pacific, which has a different place and set-up in comparison to the mainland US and Hawai’i. Photo credit: CRAG/C4C Fiji

## Fellowship Snapshots



USVI Fellow Erin Bowman collects sediment samples to test for heavy metal content within East End Marine Park bays. Photo credit: John Farchette



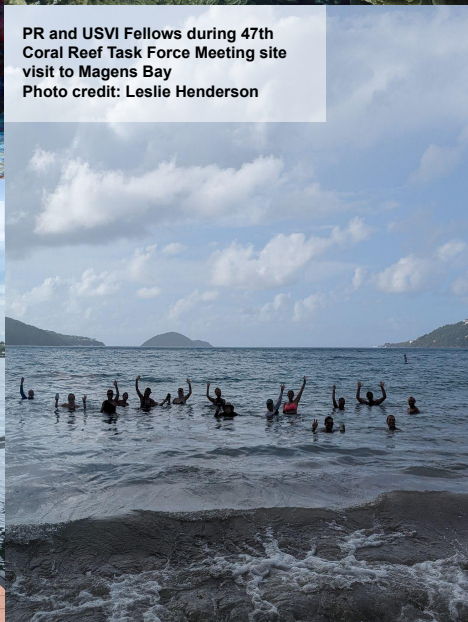
‘Ōpae kai (Banded Coral Shrimp)  
Photo Credit: Lara Noren



Coral Fellows at their Year 2 training in Ft. Lauderdale, FL



Giant field of *Porites rus*, Saipan.  
Photo credit: Ely Perez



PR and USVI Fellows during 47th Coral Reef Task Force Meeting site visit to Magens Bay  
Photo credit: Leslie Henderson



Coral Fellows visiting NSU Halmos College of Arts & Sciences.



CNMI Fellow Ely Perez checking out corals that were affected by low tides, Long Beach, Tinian.  
Photo credit: Kaeli Swift



Camille and Tilali at the Indo-Pacific Coral Restoration Workshop on Guam.