

# National Coral Reef Management Fellowship Newsletter

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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)



## ***In this issue:***

- Reflections from US Coral Reef Task Force Meeting and Reef Futures Symposium
- Puerto Rico Fellow - Welcome Ashley!
- Updates on Fellowship Projects
- Where Are They Now? Fellow Alumni
- Fellow Trivia!

## **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, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, Guam, Hawai'i, Florida, Puerto Rico, and U.S Virgin Islands.

# US Coral Reef Task Force Meeting Kona, Hawai'i



The fellows met for the first time in person in Kona Hawai'i for the US Coral Reef Task Force (USCRTF) meeting. This meeting offered many opportunities to discuss cross-jurisdictional coral reef management challenges and solutions with federal partners.

During the meeting, the fellows participated in the All Island Committee meetings, attended site visits to see Hawai'i natural resource management in practice, and attended various working group meetings on coral disease, coral restoration, and watersheds.

Prior to the USCRTF meeting, the fellows attended an action packed fellowship training hosted by Nova Southeastern University (NSU) and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) tailored to the fellow's unique interests. This included trainings in education, communication, grant writing, and nature-based solutions.

The fellows made sure to carve out time for some fun as well. They dove with Manta Rays off of the Kona coast, snorkeled in Kealakekua Bay, and toured a coffee farm!



Coral fellows with NSU Program Director and NOAA coordination team



Manta Ray on a Manta Dive in Kona



Coral fellows on a coffee farm tour in Kona



Coral fellows participating in meetings



Coral fellows with the All Islands Committee at Kaloko-Honokōhau National Historical Park

## Highlights from the meeting:

"For me, I enjoyed sharing the unique coral-related practices and significance of coral reefs in Hawai'i with the other task force members!"

Camille Quichocho (GU)



"We met some of the most important people in coral conservation and it was encouraging to hear their support for us in our projects and careers."



Lara Noren (HI)



Elly Perez (CNMI)

"Getting the chance to hear about each of the jurisdiction's ongoing coral reef initiatives made me hopeful for the future!"

"I enjoyed the sharing of knowledge and culture from each jurisdiction/group."



Tilali Scanlan (AS)

"I enjoyed hearing different perspectives from the seven jurisdictions and seeing how those influenced their approach to coral reef conservation."

"I enjoyed learning about the nuances of issues reefs face in each jurisdiction and comparing practices used to combat them - particularly in Hawai'i where we could see these efforts in person."

Sam Cook (FL)



Erin Bowman (USVI)

# Reef Futures Symposium Key Largo, Florida



REEF  
FUTURES

@CoralRestorationConsortium @CoralConsortium @CoralRestorationConsortium

Reef Futures is a global symposium focused on the interventions and actions needed to ensure resilient reefs worldwide. The conference brings together coral reef scientists, managers, and restoration practitioners to share the latest coral reef restoration techniques, technologies, and science.

The symposium was hosted in the Florida Keys and brought together four of the seven fellows for a joint professional development opportunity. While there, they attended a series of workshops and presentations with the central theme of restoration.



Coral Fellows with NSU  
Program Director

## Reef Futures

Camille attended a Holistic Approach to Education Workshop where she learned how to use outdoor excursions, small group learning, outreach, and education to promote reef stewardship. She hopes to use what she's learned to educate the community and build capacity on Guam.

Erin was able to attend a coral rescue workshop defining practices aimed at furthering coral restoration on reefs decimated in recent years by stony coral tissue loss disease. Topics discussed in the workshop are directly applicable to work that is currently ongoing in the Virgin Islands, and should be useful in drafting the territory's restoration action plan.

Sam was able to attend a series of talks on technological advancements useful for supporting coral reef restoration. As restoration efforts continue to evolve in Florida, including new technologies and methodologies will be key!

Tilali was able to attend a series of plenary talks on monitoring techniques currently being used for coral reef restoration tracking and measurement. Additionally, she was able to share concerns and priorities for American Samoa with other restoration practitioners to assist with developing a long term monitoring plan for coral restoration efforts in AS coral restoration sites.

## Impacts from Hurricane Ian

Reef Futures 2022 was underscored by the Category 4 hurricane bearing down on the the Florida coast for much of the event. Though it hit Key Largo as a tropical storm before moving west, much of the event's agenda was reorganized due to flooding concerns and travel restrictions. Despite these challenges, presenters and attendees rallied together to make the most of the conference!





**Ashley Pérez**  
*Puerto Rico*

## Meet the New Fellow: Icebreaker Edition

### What is your favorite dish to cook?

*In fleeting moments when I do decide to cook, I enjoy cooking Asian dish recipes. I am inspired to cook when making food for loved ones, though.*

### If you had to choose a song title to describe your life, what would it be?

*Adventure of a Lifetime by Coldplay. It's about embracing life in spite of its pressures. It compels me to look at life for its beauty. Plus it always puts me in a good mood and makes me think about love, wanderlust and my wife. Since it's a mix of adventure and love, I think it's a good fit for my life song.*

# Warmest welcome to our new Puerto Rico Fellow!

## What will be the main focuses of your fellowship?

For my fellowship I'll be concentrating on creating a long-term, sustainable citizen science project that can assist in monitoring efforts for Stony Coral Tissue Loss Disease (SCTLD) cases and general coral reef health. My goal is to increase awareness through education, engage community members with coral reef managers, aid conservation efforts and inspire a sense of stewardship amongst Puerto Ricans and visitors, alike.

I will also be working on planning and executing a whole week dedicated to celebrating coral reefs with the community. Coral Reef Week will include activities related to art, science, community action and management, all highlighting the ecosystem services and magic that reefs bring.

PR Coral Fellow volunteering for a Reef Check Survey at Palomino Island, Puerto Rico

## Why do you feel passionate about coral reefs and natural resource management?

Coral reefs have always been a source of inspiration, clarity and tranquility for me. There is something magical and curious about the complexity of animals that can actually sustain around 25% of all marine life. My time in the ocean is always filled with wonder, discovery and deep introspection. Therefore, I feel that if I am equipped with the knowledge and understanding to actually communicate conservation around reefs and natural resources, then it is my life's purpose to do just that.





**Tilali Scanlan**  
*American Samoa*

**You are halfway through your fellowship, can you share some updates from your projects?**

Community outreach and support has picked up momentum again as COVID-19 restrictions on island have eased in August. Progress has been made towards updating the coral restoration action plans with the help of assisting researchers from The Nature Conservancy (TNC) and NOAA Coral Restoration Center. In addition, intervention trials are currently being tested in Aua village for coral restoration. Coral fragments of opportunity are being transplanted to areas of the reef flat in need of restoration using marine epoxy and cement mixtures. These fragments are being measured for growth rates to track success rates.

Additionally, long term monitoring transects for invasive species have been set out in Aua and Onesosopo villages located in the surrounding harbor area as part of the marine invasive species projects and Pacific Preparedness Action Plans.



MIS survey, Utulei reef



Acropora globiceps, Aua



Acropora fragment, Aua



Aua Pilot Study update for CRAG agencies November 2022



**Elly Perez**  
*Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands*

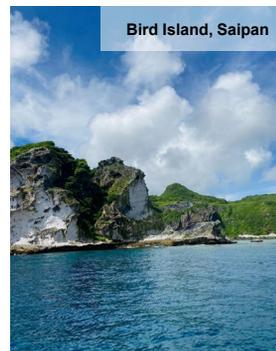
**You are halfway through your fellowship, can you share some updates from your projects?**

The first draft of a Commonwealth of Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI) Coral Bleaching Response Plan is being written and will be sent out for review by Spring 2023! I recently held a workshop with local and federal partners to discuss bleaching response actions in the CNMI. Advice and input from these experts will help guide me in writing a response plan that is specifically tailored to the needs of the island.

This was the first of a number of workshops and trainings I will be holding with different stakeholder groups. As this was my first time hosting a workshop, I learned so much about what goes into planning such an event and how to manage stakeholders to meet certain goals and objectives. I definitely feel confident as I move forward in planning more!



Coral Bleaching Response Plan Workshop hosted by CNMI Coral Fellow.



Bird Island, Saipan



Acropora thickets in San Antonio Lagoon, Saipan



CNMI Reef Managers and Coral Fellow at USCRTF Meeting in Kona, HI.



**Sam Cook**  
*Florida*

**You are halfway through your fellowship, can you share some updates from your projects?**

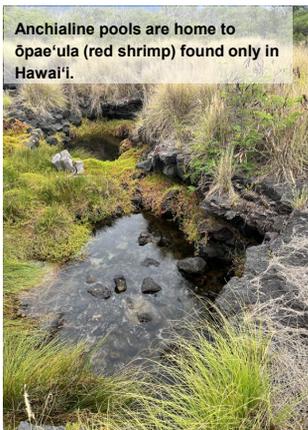
My main project is helping to coordinate the Stony Coral Tissue Loss Disease Response in Florida. I work daily with disease researchers and have learned so much about the project management side of things. It's exciting to see how rapidly things can change with just a little knowledge... I can't wait to see where this next year takes me!

**What was your favorite part of the fellowship so far?**

It was great to have the opportunity to attend Task Force and see natural resource management from the larger jurisdictional scale. Going to Hawai'i and seeing the beautiful landscape was just a bonus!



A sign showing the direction and distance to countries around the world.



Anchialine pools are home to ōpae'ula (red shrimp) found only in Hawai'i.



Aerial of lava fields on Kona, HI



Cliffs at Kealakekua Bay



**Camille Quichocho**  
*Guam*

**You are halfway through your fellowship, can you share some updates from your projects?**

I've been working with teams of fisheries experts, coral researchers, and natural resource managers since June. They've been helping me to write a restoration action plan for Guam, and in the process I've learned about the state of Guam's reefs through their eyes and how much it has changed over the years.

**What is something you want to accomplish before the end of the fellowship?**

I want to share my experiences as a Fellow with the community to encourage more locals to apply to be the next Coral Fellow.



A Holistic Approach to Reef Education workshop at Reef Futures.



Camille and her supervisor, Whitney Hoot, at the USCRTF Meeting in Kona, HI.



Visiting Volcano National Park on Big Island (Hawai'i).



**Lara Noren**  
*Hawai'i*

**You are halfway through your fellowship, can you share some updates from your projects?**

I can't believe that I am already half-way through my fellowship! I completed the reef insurance feasibility report and sent it off to the Hawai'i State Legislature. Now that the feasibility report is complete I am focusing on the Coral Reef Mitigation Bank, the Ocean Stewardship Fund, and assisting with the Shoreline Protection Coral Reef Restoration Action Plan. In addition, I am working with other state agencies in Hawai'i to include coral reef management goals in various long-term State plans.

**What are your goals for next year?**

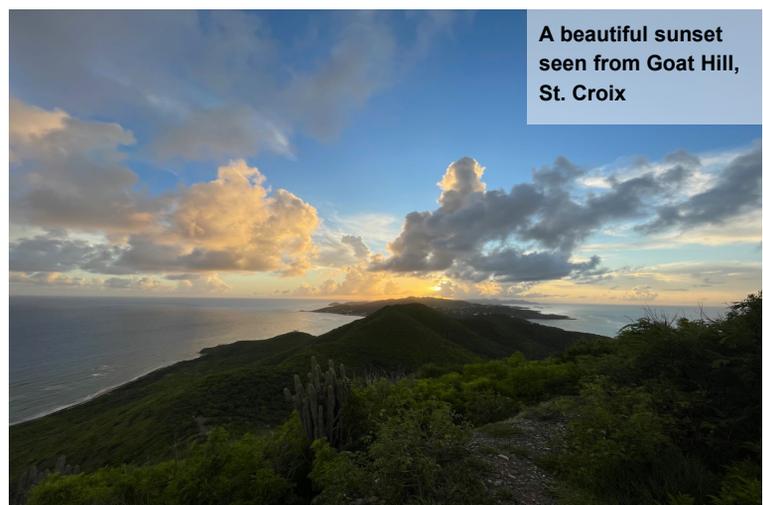
In addition to my projects outlined in my work plan, I would like to learn more about fisheries. Fisheries is always a hot topic in coral reef management and something that I would like to add to my holistic understanding of coral reef management! Holomua 30x30, the State of Hawai'i plan to effectively manage 30% of nearshore waters by 2030, could provide some opportunities to learn about adaptive fisheries management in Hawai'i.



**Erin Bowman**  
*US Virgin Islands*

**You are halfway through your fellowship, can you share some updates from your projects?**

This year has flown by and I can't believe we're heading into 2023 already! The Stony Coral Tissue Loss Disease Strike Teams are still doing regular dives to treat infected corals throughout the US Virgin Islands and the Virgin Islands Coral Disease Advisory Committee and sub-teams continue to meet several times monthly to discuss progress, issues, updates, and next steps. We're also currently in the early stages of planning for the Task Force meeting being held in St. Thomas late next year. Knowing how quickly this year has gone by, the meeting will be here in no time and I'm looking forward to beginning in-depth planning early in the new year. Having access to Lara's resources from the 2022 meeting in Kona and having been able to participate myself will definitely be huge assets in this endeavor!



A beautiful sunset seen from Goat Hill, St. Croix

# Former Fellows: Where are they Now?

## Matt Davies

*US Virgin Islands*



Matt works to remove algae and sediment from coral arrays in one of TNC's four in-situ nurseries.

Since finishing his Fellowship, Matt has been working as a Coral Conservation Practitioner at The Nature Conservancy's (TNC) Coral Innovation Hub in St. Croix. As part of the field team at TNC, he assists with monitoring, coral collections and propagation, nursery maintenance, and outplanting for two ambitious restoration projects focused at Buck Island Reef National Monument and St. Croix East End Marine Park. Matt has also become the proud father of a happy and healthy baby girl named Ffion, who has given him a new source of motivation to continue to protect and restore coral reefs.

## Fellow Trivia

### ☆ World travelers! How many Fellows have visited more than 5 countries?

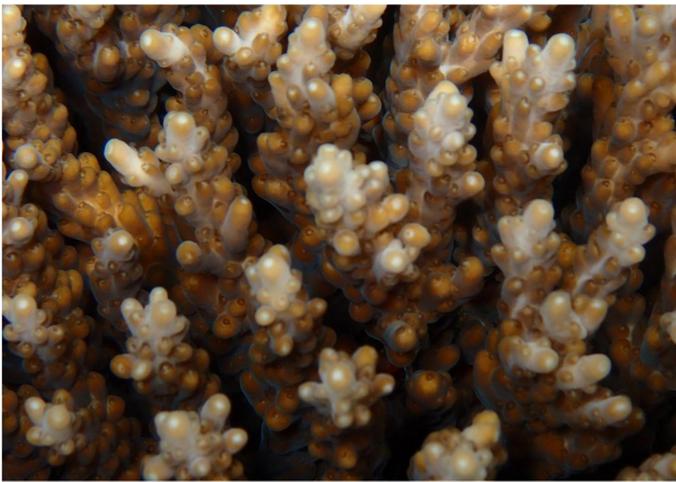
*Ashley's been blessed with the opportunity to visit more than 20 countries for work, education and pleasure. Camille has visited 18 countries so far, and her favorite places to visit were Costa Rica, Yap, and France. Lara had the opportunity to live abroad in Sweden in college, this provided ample travel opportunities throughout Europe! Of the 20+ countries Elly has gotten the chance to visit, her favorites were Bali, Finland and Curacao. Erin spent some time studying in Europe, Central America, and the Caribbean, but couldn't get enough of the scenery in Switzerland.*

### ☆ How many Fellows speak more than one language?

*Ashley is fluent in both English and Spanish.*

### ☆ How many Fellows worked with some aspect of coral reef conservation before starting the fellowship?

*Ashley is a Reef Check Ecodiver and had worked on treating reefs for SCTLD. Lara, Elly, Erin and Sam all spent time as interns in the Florida Keys for different conservation organizations including REEF, Coral Restoration Foundation and Mote Marine Lab but somehow, none of them had ever met before!*



Acropora thicket in American Samoa. Photo Credit: Tilali Scanlan



Yellowfin Goatfish in Kona, HI. Photo Credit: Tilali Scanlan



Kealakekua Bay in Kona, HI. Photo Credit: Erin Bowman



Queen Conch in St. Croix, USVI. Photo Credit: Erin Bowman

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The National Coral Reef Management Fellowship was established in 2003 to respond to the need for additional coral reef management capacity in the U.S. coral reef jurisdictions in the Pacific and Atlantic/Caribbean. The fellowship is a partnership between the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Coral Reef Conservation Program, the U.S. Department of Interior's Office of Insular Affairs, the U.S. All Islands Coral Reef Committee, and Nova Southeastern University's Halmos College of Natural Sciences and Oceanography. The program's vision is a thriving collaborative fellowship program that builds excellent next generation leaders and capacity for effective local coral reef ecosystem management.

