

NOAA Caribbean Strategy Approved by Administrator

Estrategia Caribe NOAA Aprobado por Administrator

Stratégie Caraïbes NOAA Approuvé par Administrator

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Objective

The primary objective of the NOAA Caribbean Strategy is to develop and better align NOAA's engagement and leadership in the Caribbean. NOAA has many faces in the Caribbean (e.g., fisheries data collection and management, hurricane forecasting, tsunami warning, climate prediction and adaptation, coastal and marine protected area management, mapping and monitoring of marine ecosystems), executed in over 150 programs and projects, so it is important that NOAA's presence in the region be well integrated and coordinated internally, as well as with our constituents and partners.

Major Messages

Healthy marine ecosystems are critical to supporting the local economy —

- i) The diverse cultures and economies of the Caribbean rely on healthy and productive coastal and marine ecosystems for food security, income, protection from hazards, recreation and tourism, and other vital services.
- ii) Services provided by Caribbean reef ecosystems are valued at over \$4 billion per year alone, with fishing and tourism playing a dominant role.
- iii) About 40 million tourists visit the region annually.
- iv) Fisheries provide employment and livelihood opportunities for approximately 182,000 persons in the Caribbean states of the ACP (African, Caribbean and Pacific) block, many of whom are socio-economically disadvantaged.

NOAA is working to address the particular challenges of the Caribbean region including natural and human-induced stressors —

- i) The people and economies of Caribbean countries are vulnerable to natural and anthropogenic stressors such as climate change and changes in sea level, extreme weather and geologic events, and rapid growth and development.
- ii) Impacts of these stressors among countries may include: loss of human life, property and livelihoods; degraded and polluted watersheds and near-shore waters; congested ports; and unsustainable fishing practices. Development and land alteration in watersheds and coastal areas, including estuaries, destabilizes beaches resulting in reduced shoreline protection from waves, storm surge and tsunamis, and reduces the vitality of near-shore habitats such as mangroves and seagrasses.
- iii) Over 75% of Caribbean coral reefs are threatened by human activities (with overfishing rated as the most pervasive threat), and it is estimated that continued decline could cost the region, by 2050, between \$350 million and \$870 million per year in lost revenue across the fisheries and tourism sectors, combined with the net value of lost benefits from reef-associated shoreline protection.

The Caribbean Strategy is designed to advance three primary goals related to marine ecosystems, climate, and hazards, specifically —

- i) Improved Conservation and Management of Ocean and Coastal Ecosystems and Resources,
- ii) Strengthened Understanding of, and Adaptation to, a Changing Climate, and
- iii) Enhanced Multi-Hazard Monitoring, Forecasting, and Risk Management

Objectives of Goal 1

- i) Promote ecosystem-based, sustainable management of marine resources,
- ii) Reduce the negative impact of human activities on watersheds and coastal waters and build capacity for improved marine and coastal resources management practices,
- iii) Assist the conservation and recovery of protected species,
- iv) Increase the understanding of ecosystem connectivity to improve the management of living marine resources,
- v) Increase abilities of Caribbean region nations to maintain the flow of ecosystem goods and services to sustain and improve their economies and well being, and
- vi) Develop and enhance partnerships to advance regional governance and the sustainable management of Caribbean marine resources.

Objectives of Goal 2

- i) Improve scientific understanding and prediction of changing climate in the Caribbean,
- ii) Improve scientific understanding of how Caribbean resources and ecosystems are impacted by a changing climate,
- iii) Support adaptation and mitigation options through sustained, reliable, and timely climate services, and
- iv) Foster a climate-literate public that understands its vulnerabilities to a changing climate and is able to make informed decisions.

Objectives of Goal 3

- i) Build technical capabilities to use sea level, meteorological, hydrographic, and spatial positioning services,
- ii) Increase technical capacity for environmental monitoring and forecasting to increase resilience of Caribbean communities,
- iii) Assist governments in integrating social science and socioeconomic factors into disaster and emergency planning, and
- iv) Enhance the capacity for multi-hazard disaster preparedness in the Caribbean region.

Regional and International Partnerships are Keys to Achieving the Goals

- i) In addition to improving internal coordination, the strategy will seek to leverage resources, and enhance collaboration and leadership in the region.
- ii) Cross-sector and fora needs assessments, as well as public feedback heavily influenced the strategy and will be critical to ensuring that the strategy meets the needs of the region.
- iii) NOAA's partners play a key role in effective regional ocean governance, and we will continue working closely with these groups to advance our common objectives during strategy implementation.

Scope of the Strategy

The ecological, as well as socioeconomic and geopolitical scope of the Caribbean Strategy is based generally on the Caribbean Sea Large Marine Ecosystem (CLME) which includes U.S. and non-U.S. jurisdictions (see Figure).



Implementation of the Goals and Objectives Identified in this Strategy will be Facilitated by Embracing a Number of Principles

- i) Enhance partnerships for effective regional ocean governance,
- ii) Enhance communication and coordination,
- iii) Build capacity,
- iv) Strengthen science, data stewardship, and applications,
- v) Respect diverse cultures and history, and
- vi) Achieve greater continuity.

To the best of its abilities, and subject to government-wide budget constraints, NOAA will seek to implement the initial actions of the Caribbean Strategy, including through coordination with external partners, over the coming years. During this period, the strategy will be reviewed by compiling achievements, analyzing gaps in implementation, and re-evaluating priorities and actions for consistency with the needs of the Caribbean region and broader NOAA strategic priorities, plans, and budgets.

In part, the NOAA Caribbean Strategy is implemented by NOAA's Southeast and Caribbean Regional Collaboration Team (SECART) initiated NOAA in the Caribbean (NOAACarib). NOAA Carib is intended to improve communication and coordination among NOAA and help build and strengthen collaborative partnerships, such as those foreseen in the NOAA Caribbean Strategy. NOAA Carib includes NOAA employees and partners currently active in research, management, training, or other efforts in the Caribbean. While the initial focus is on Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands, NOAA Carib seeks to maintain exchanges with Florida and, as appropriate and practicable, with partners in the Wider Caribbean.

Gulf of Mexico LME