

# NOAA Caribbean Strategy: 2015 Accomplishments Report

## Goal 1: Improved Conservation and Management of Ocean and Coastal Ecosystems and Resources

The **NOAA Caribbean Strategy** is the strategic approach of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) to coordinate and integrate the capabilities of all NOAA staff and line offices to address regional issues and improve the effectiveness of its mission and international cooperation in the Caribbean region.

The Strategy is structured around three primary goals:

- **Goal 1:** Improved conservation and management of ocean and coastal ecosystems
- **Goal 2:** Strengthened understanding of, and adaptation to, a changing climate
- **Goal 3:** Enhanced multi-hazard monitoring, forecasting, and risk management

Within **Goal 1**, six primary objectives guide implementation of NOAA's conservation and management activities:

- **Objective 1:** Enhance and support capacity for ecosystem-based, sustainable management of marine resources to maintain or increase their ecological and economic value.
- **Objective 2:** Reduce the negative impact of human activities on watersheds and coastal waters, and build capacity for improved marine and coastal resource management practices.
- **Objective 3:** Assist the conservation and recovery of species specially protected by laws or international protocols or forums.
- **Objective 4:** Increase the understanding of connectivity to improve management of living marine resources throughout the region.
- **Objective 5:** Increase abilities of Caribbean region nations to maintain the flow of ecosystem goods and services to sustain and improve their economies and well-being.
- **Objective 6:** Develop and enhance partnerships to advance regional governance and the sustainable management of Caribbean marine resources.

### Goal 1: Key 2015 Accomplishments

- Published outcomes from fishery-independent sampling design workshop (**Objective 1**).
- Finalized the Northeast Puerto Rico and Culebra Island benthic mapping (**Objective 1**).
- Created a training and evaluation tool for the commercial fisher licensing program in USVI (**Objective 2**).
- Completed a recovery plan for elkhorn and staghorn corals, and a recovery outline for lobed/mountainous/boulder star corals, pillar coral, and rough cactus coral (**Objective 3**).
- The NE Marine Corridor and Culebra Island were designated a Habitat Focus Area under NOAA's Habitat Blueprint initiative (**Objective 6**).



Green turtle in the Northeast Marine Corridor, Puerto Rico.

### Goal 1: Priority Activities for 2016

- **Objective 1:**
  - Design permit program for Puerto Rico deep-water snapper fishers.
  - Develop place-based fishery management plans for Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands.
- **Objective 2:**
  - Continue efforts with boaters in the NE Marine Corridor to increase knowledge about sustainable resource use and boating activity best practices.
- **Objective 3:**
  - Complete and publish outcomes from bycatch reduction study in the U.S. Virgin Islands.
- **Objective 4:**
  - Carry out larval connectivity study in the NE Marine Corridor to better understand habitat connectivity.
- **Objective 5:**
  - Finalize ecological assessment for the NE Marine Corridor targeting areas identified with high ecological value.
- **Objective 6:**
  - Work with the Caribbean Landscape Conservation Cooperative toward creation of landscape-scale framework for management of offshore cays.

Implementation of the Strategy is supported in part by the **NOAA in the Caribbean Initiative (NOAACarib)**, a forum of NOAA programs and partners committed to strengthening communication and coordination in the region to more effectively deliver NOAA's science and services mission.