

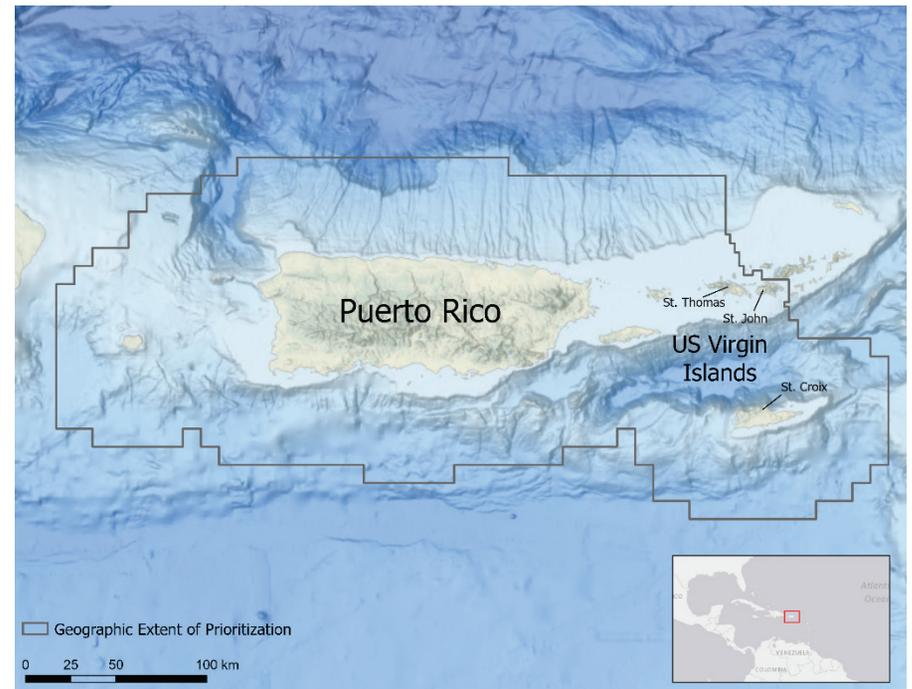
Agency Priorities for Mapping Shallow Coral Reef Ecosystems in Florida, Puerto Rico and USVI

Overview

NOAA's Coral Reef Conservation Program (CRCP) has identified a need for priority locations based on emerging management requirements in shallow coral reef areas along the coasts of the Florida Reef Tract (Martin County to Dry Tortugas), Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands (USVI). The priorities provided by participating agencies will inform research and monitoring activities, address current and future management needs, and maximize opportunities to leverage and complement existing regional efforts. To meet this need, NOAA's National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science (NCCOS) developed a systematic, quantitative approach and online GIS application to gather seafloor mapping priorities from researchers and coral reef managers.

What We Are Doing

Starting in 2021, NCCOS will build a web-based digital inventory of relevant shallow water (up to 40 m) mapping datasets and conduct a data needs assessment for each of the CRCP jurisdictions (Florida, Puerto Rico, U.S. Virgin Islands, the Main Hawaiian Islands, Guam, the Commonwealth of Northern Mariana Islands, and American Samoa). In 2021, this analysis will be focused in shallow coral reef areas along the Florida Reef Tract (Martin County to Dry Tortugas). Early 2022 will include reefs surrounding Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands. In 2021 and 2022, NCCOS will work with local agencies to gather their inputs and priorities. The analysis will be conducted once all inputs are received, and results will be shared with participants. The final results for these three jurisdictions will be released in two final reports for the Atlantic-Caribbean.



Mapping prioritization area for Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands (USVI). This project focuses on mapping needs in shallow coral reefs (0–40 meters depth).



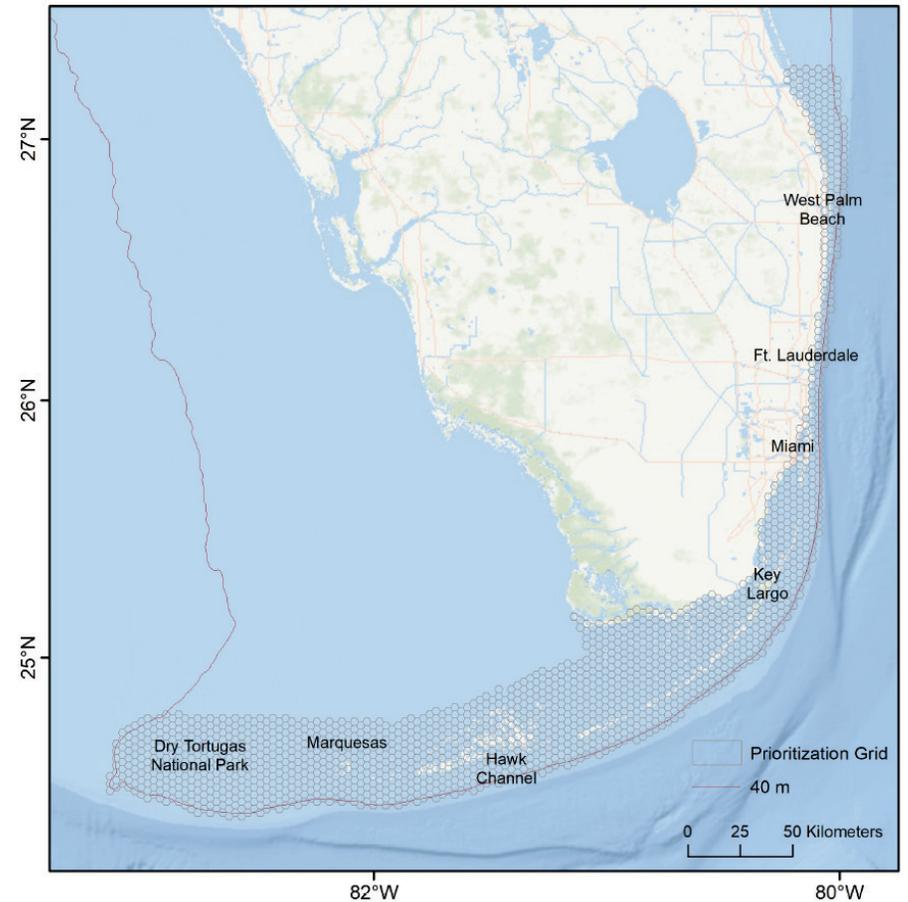
How We Will Do It

To identify priority areas within each jurisdiction, a spatial framework and participatory [online tool](#) will be used to solicit input from select local participants. Using methods similar to prioritization efforts elsewhere in the US (i.e., [West CONUS Coast](#), [US Caribbean](#), [Southeast US](#)), input will be combined to identify areas of high priority for collecting contemporary, high quality benthic mapping data (i.e., acoustic surveys, underwater photos). Ultimately, this will provide CRCP and local agencies with a detailed framework of mapping needs for coral reef management in order to protect, conserve, and restore the nation's coral resources.

Project Results and Links

- [Project Page and Online Hub](#)
- [NCCOS Project Page](#)

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Example of the spatial framework used to identify benthic mapping priorities for the Florida prioritization, stretching from Martin County to the Dry Tortugas.

