



# *NOAA In Your Territory*

# U.S. Virgin Islands

***NOAA*** is an agency that enriches life through science. Our reach goes from the surface of the sun to the depths of the ocean floor as we work to keep citizens informed of the changing environment around them. From daily weather forecasts, severe storm warnings, and climate monitoring to fisheries management, coastal restoration and supporting marine commerce, NOAA's products and services support economic vitality and affect more than one-third of America's gross domestic product. NOAA's dedicated scientists use cutting-edge research and high-tech instrumentation to provide citizens, planners, emergency managers and other decision makers with reliable information they need when they need it. The following is a summary of NOAA facilities, staff, programs, or activities based in, or focused on, your state or territory.

The following is a summary of NOAA facilities, staff, programs, or activities based in, or focused on, your state or territory: Starting with highlights, then [by cities or towns](#), and then [territory-wide programs](#).

## [Highlights of NOAA in U.S. Virgin Islands](#)

[Habitat Conservation Division Field Office](#) St. Croix

[Coastal Zone Management Program](#) St. Croix

### [Charlotte Amalie and Limetree Bay](#)

#### **National Ocean Service (NOS) - [National Water Level Observation Network](#)**

The National Ocean Service (NOS) operates four long-term continuously operating tide stations in the U.S. Virgin Islands, which provide data and information on tidal data and relative mean sea level trends, and are capable of producing real-time data for storm surge warning. These stations are located at Lime Tree Bay, Christiansted, Lameshur Bay, and Charlotte Amalie, VI. Each station is associated with a set of tidal benchmarks installed in the ground that is used to reference the height of the water levels and helps connect the water level to land. Station data feeds into many CO-OPS

products that are used to support safe navigation, mitigate coastal hazards, and protect communities. Such products include:

- Coastal Inundation Dashboard - view water levels in real-time and during storms
- High Tide Flooding Outlooks
- Sea level trends and maps
- Real-time current measurements
- Hydrodynamic models
- Tidal and water level datums

### **St. Croix**

#### **National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) - [Southeast Regional Office](#), [Habitat Conservation Division Field Office](#)**

The Southeast Regional Office has the St. Croix Field Office which is located within the Federal Building on St. Croix. This Office is responsible for implementing NOAA's Coral Reef Conservation Program in the U.S. Virgin Islands. The Office works with the U.S. Virgin Islands government and stakeholders to reduce the impacts of fishing on coral reef habitat. Also, this office conducts mandated essential fish habitat consultations, participates in state and regional habitat planning and restoration efforts, and provides assistance during hazardous material incidents and hurricane events.

#### **National Ocean Service (NOS) – [National Coastal Resilience Fund](#)**

The National Coastal Resilience Fund is a partnership effort between NOAA and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) to restore, increase, and strengthen natural infrastructure to protect coastal communities, while also enhancing habitat for fish and wildlife. In the U.S. Virgin Islands, the NCRF awarded a project in FY20 to restore coral reef habitat across 150 acres of marine protected area in East End Marine Park, St. Croix using a restoration approach that combines the culture and out planting of multiple species of corals produced, and a comprehensive monitoring program to promote effective restoration.

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### **Entire Territory**

#### **National Marine Fisheries Services (NMFS) - [Restoration Center](#)**

The [NOAA Restoration Center](#), within the [Office of Habitat Conservation](#), works with partners across the nation to restore habitat to sustain fisheries, recover protected species, and maintain resilient coastal ecosystems and communities. We have over 30 years conducting habitat restoration through competitive funding opportunities and technical assistance. We also work to reverse habitat damage from disasters like oil spills, ship groundings, and severe storms. See the interactive [Restoration Atlas](#) to find habitat restoration projects near you. Site visits to see habitat projects may be available in your state, please inquire if interested. In USVI, the Restoration Center focuses on restoring habitats, implementing projects that reduce threats to coral habitats including reducing land-based sources of pollution, emergency response to vessel groundings, and placement of navigational aids to reduce the occurrence of future groundings. For example, we are partnering with local, state, and federal agencies to implement sediment and erosion control practices to reduce sediment loadings to coral habitats. By reducing localized threats to coral reef habitats we make the species more resilient to global threats, such as ocean acidification and increased sea surface temperatures. We also partner with local organizations through the operation of five coral nurseries in USVI to actively restore coral habitats and enhance threatened coral populations. Through the [Damage Assessment Remediation and Restoration Program](#), NOAA also collaborates with other agencies, industry, and citizens to protect and restore coastal and marine resources in USVI threatened or injured by vessel groundings.

**National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) - [Southeast Regional Office](#) and [Southeast Fisheries Science Center](#)**

NMFS studies, protects and conserves living marine resources to promote healthy, functioning marine ecosystems, afford economic opportunities and enhance the quality of life for the American public. NMFS' Southeast Regional Office (headquartered in Saint Petersburg, FL) and Southeast Fisheries Science Center (headquartered in Miami, FL) are responsible for living marine resources in federal waters of the Gulf of Mexico, South Atlantic, and U.S. Caribbean. Using the authorities provided by the *Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act*, *Endangered Species Act*, *Marine Mammal Protection Act* and other federal statutes, the Southeast Regional Office and Southeast Fisheries Science Center partner together to assess and predict the status of fish stocks, marine mammal and sea turtle populations, as well as other protected resources, including coral. Additionally, in collaboration, they develop and ensure compliance with fishery regulations, restore and protect habitat, and recover threatened and endangered species in waters off the USVI and throughout the Southeast Region. The Southeast Regional Office is responsible for over 40 percent of all federal fishery management plans nationwide, which cover hundreds of species, ranging from diverse, relatively sedentary and vulnerable coral reef fish, like the popular snappers and groupers, to wide ranging pelagic species, like mackerel and mahi mahi. More than 90 marine mammal stocks and 27 threatened or endangered species, including the North Atlantic right whale and smalltooth sawfish, sixfive sea turtle species, Johnson's seagrass, and seven coral species, also occur in this region. The Office consults on approximately 50 percent of the nation's coastal development permits, provides fish passage and ecological flow recommendations at dozens of barriers, supports large-scale conservation and restoration programs aimed at protecting essential fish habitat and coastal communities from development, subsidence, sea level rise, and storms, and engages partners in regional collaboration. While 99% of the nation's outer continental shelf oil production is in this region, it is also the focus of new wind energy development off the Carolinas and in the Gulf of Mexico. The Southeast Regional Office also fosters sustainable [aquaculture](#) in the region, with two Regional Aquaculture Coordinators that act as a liaison between federal and state agencies to assist in permitting and coordination activities, supporting aquaculture outreach and education, and collaborating with industry, academia and other stakeholders on regional marine aquaculture issues. .

**National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) - The [Southeast Fisheries Science Center](#)** provides the scientific advice and data needed to effectively manage the living marine resources of the Southeast region and Atlantic high seas through the following divisions.

[Fisheries Assessment, Technology, and Engineering Support](#) division provides essential services and development of new innovative technologies to support the center's mission. The branches of Biology and Life History, Advanced Technology, Gear Research, and Gear and Vessel Support branches provide state-of-the-art life history information and innovative solutions to reduce bycatch and optimize the performance of biological and fishery monitoring programs across the science center.

[Fisheries Statistics](#) division provides extensive support to management and science through the collection, management, and dissemination of commercial and recreational fisheries statistics. The branches of Commercial Fisheries Monitoring, Recreational Fisheries Monitoring, Survey Design, Data Management and Dissemination, Catch Validation and Bio-sampling, and Observer Program works extensively with various internal and external partners to collect the fishery dependent information used to support marine resource management in the region.

[Marine Mammals and Sea Turtles](#) division supports and conducts science that leads to improved knowledge and meaningful conservation of marine mammals and turtles and their habitats in a changing environment, helping to achieve NOAA Fisheries' mission of implementing the Marine Mammal Protection Act and Endangered Species Act and making a positive impact on society.

[Population and Ecosystems Monitoring](#) division provides data, analytical products, research, and expertise to support NOAA Fisheries priorities. The branches of Ocean and Coastal Pelagics, Trawl and Plankton, Gulf and Caribbean Reef Fish, Atlantic and Caribbean Reef Fish and Habitat Ecology carry out fishery-independent surveys and applied research focused on fisheries and habitat ecology, and provides support for ecosystem- and climate-related initiatives in the region.

[Sustainable Fisheries](#) division works in partnership with fisheries managers and constituents to provide reliable scientific advice that enhances the stewardship of living marine resources. The branches of Gulf of Mexico Fisheries, Atlantic Fisheries, Highly Migratory Species, Caribbean Fisheries, and Data Analysis and Assessment Support also strive to advance scientific knowledge and promote diverse and sustainable fisheries through innovative research and development activities, and the use of advanced technologies.

[Social Science Research Group](#) conducts research and data collections to assess the social and economic performance of fisheries and regulatory impacts.

**National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) - [National Marine Mammal Stranding Network](#) and [John H. Prescott Marine Mammal Rescue Assistance Grant Program](#)**

The National Marine Mammal Stranding Network and its trained professionals respond to dead or live marine mammals in distress that are stranded, entangled, out of habitat or otherwise in peril. Our long-standing partnership with the Network provides valuable environmental intelligence, helping NOAA establish links among the health of marine mammals, coastal ecosystems, and coastal communities as well as develop effective conservation programs for marine mammal populations in the wild. There is one stranding network member in the territory.

NOAA Fisheries funds eligible members of the Stranding Network through the competitive John H. Prescott Marine Mammal Rescue Assistance Grant Program. In FY20, 43 competitive grants were awarded nationwide for a total of \$3.7 million. No grant applications were received from USVI in FY20.

**National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) - [Office of Law Enforcement](#)**

NOAA's Office of Law Enforcement is the only U.S. conservation enforcement agency that is exclusively dedicated to Federal fisheries and marine resource enforcement. Its mission is to protect global marine resources by enforcing domestic laws, international treaties, and regulations dedicated to protecting wildlife, and their natural habitat. Our special agents and enforcement officers ensure compliance with these laws and take enforcement actions if there are violations. In addition, the Cooperative Enforcement Program gives OLE the ability to leverage its resources with the assistance of 27 coastal states and U.S. territorial marine conservation law enforcement agencies in supporting its Federal enforcement mission. Effective fisheries law enforcement is critical to creating a level playing field for U.S. fishermen and enabling sustainable fisheries to support all the communities throughout the Pacific Islands. The Office of Law Enforcement's Southeast Division is headquartered in St. Petersburg, FL, with a field office in St. Thomas, USVI.

**National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) - [Deep-Sea Coral Research and Technology Program](#) -**

NOAA's Deep Sea Coral Research is administered by NOAA Fisheries' [Office of Habitat Conservation](#). Mandated by the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, it is the nation's only federal research program dedicated to increasing scientific understanding of deep-sea coral ecosystems. Deep-sea corals occur off of every coastal state in the country, and create important habitats for countless species, including many fish species. The Program collaborates closely with partners, including other NOAA offices, to study the distribution, abundance, and diversity of deep sea corals and sponges. This work then informs critical management decisions in the waters of the United States and its territories. These decisions enhance the sustainability of deep-sea fisheries and other ocean uses, while conserving deep-sea coral and sponge habitats.

The Program works with partners to complete multi-year regional fieldwork initiatives, as well as smaller projects around the country, centered on integrating new and existing information on these vulnerable and biologically diverse habitats.

The first research initiative took place from 2009 to 2011 in the U.S. South Atlantic region and provided valuable information to help decision-makers refine protected area boundaries. To date, the Program has completed one or more initiatives in each region of the United States.

**National Ocean Service (NOS) – [Bipartisan Infrastructure Law](#)**

The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law is helping coastal communities build the future they want to see. The legislation provides a historic investment in coastal protection and restoration that will increase community resilience to climate change and extreme weather events, and improve how we manage our ocean resources. Projects funded under this law protect and restore ecologically significant habitats, including conserving lands that play a critical role in helping communities become more resilient to natural hazards. The U.S. Virgin Islands received funding in FY22 to build the territory's capacity to protect its coastal communities and resources.

**National Ocean Service (NOS) - [Regional Geodetic Advisor](#)**

The Regional Geodetic Advisor is a National Ocean Service (NOS) employee that resides in a region and serves as a liaison between the National Geodetic Survey (NGS) and its public, academic and private sector constituents within their assigned region. NGS has a Regional Geodetic Advisor stationed in Raleigh, North Carolina serving the Mid-Atlantic region to include the Virgin Islands. The Geodetic Advisor provides training, guidance and assistance to constituents managing geospatial activities that are tied to the National Spatial Reference System (NSRS), the framework and coordinate system for all positioning activities in the Nation. The Geodetic Advisor serves as a subject matter expert in geodesy and regional geodetic issues, collaborating internally across NOS and NOAA to ensure that all regional geospatial activities are properly referenced to the NSRS.

**National Weather Service (NWS) - [Automated Surface Observing Systems Stations](#)**

The Automated Surface Observing Systems (ASOS) program is a joint effort of the National Weather Service (NWS), the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), and the Department of Defense (DOD). ASOS serves as the Nation's primary surface weather observing network. ASOS is designed to support weather forecast activities and aviation operations and, at the same time, support the needs of the meteorological, hydrological, and climatological research communities. ASOS works non-stop, updating observations every minute, 24 hours a day, every day of the year observing basic weather elements, such as cloud cover, precipitation, wind, sea level pressure, and conditions, such as rain, snow, freezing rain, thunderstorms, and fog. There are two ASOS stations in the territory.

**National Weather Service (NWS) - [Cooperative Observer Program Sites](#)**

The National Weather Service (NWS) Cooperative Observer Program (COOP) is comprised of more than 10,000 volunteers who take observations on farms, in urban and suburban areas, National Parks, seashores, and mountaintops. The data are representative of where people live, work and play. The COOP provides observational meteorological data, usually consisting of daily maximum and minimum temperatures, snowfall, and 24-hour precipitation totals, required to define the climate of the United States and to help measure long-term climate changes, and to provide observational meteorological data in near real-time to support forecast, warning and other public service programs of the NWS. The data are also used by other federal (including the Department of Homeland Security), state and local entities, as well as private companies (such as the energy and insurance industries). In some cases, the data are used to make billions of dollars' worth of decisions. For example, the energy sector uses COOP data to calculate the Heating and Cooling Degree Days which are used to determine individuals' energy bills monthly. There are 12 COOP sites in the territory.

**National Weather Service (NWS) - [NOAA Weather Radio All Hazards Transmitter](#)**

NOAA Weather Radio All Hazards (NWR) is a nationwide network of radio stations broadcasting continuous weather information directly from the nearest National Weather Service (NWS) forecast office. NWR broadcasts official NWS warnings, watches, forecasts and other hazard information 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Working with the Federal

Communication Commission's (FCC) Emergency Alert System, NWR is an "All Hazards" radio network, making it the single source for comprehensive weather and emergency information. In conjunction with federal, state, and local emergency managers and other public officials, NWR also broadcasts warning and post-event information for all types of hazards – including natural (such as earthquakes), environmental (such as oil spills), and public safety. NWR is provided as a public service by the NWS. NWR includes 1,100 transmitters covering all 50 states, adjacent coastal waters, Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and the U.S. Pacific Territories. There is one NWR transmitter in the territory.

**National Weather Service (NWS) - [Caribbean Tsunami Warning Program](#)**

The Caribbean Tsunami Warning Program supports domestic and international tsunami warning services and programs in the Caribbean and adjacent regions. The office focuses on strengthening and sustaining the tsunami observational system as well as the continued enhancement of tsunami outreach, education and readiness, including the implementation of the [TsunamiReady®](#) and international Tsunami Ready Programs.

**NOAA Office of Education — [Environmental Literacy Program](#)**

The Environmental Literacy Program (ELP), administered by NOAA's Office of Education, provides grants and support for formal (K-12) and informal education to advance the agency's mission. In U.S. Virgin Islands, ELP funded a project by the University of the Virgin Islands in Saint Thomas. The project aims to build the environmental literacy of children, youth, and adults so that they can become knowledgeable about ways to increase their community's resilience to extreme weather, climate change, and other environmental hazards, and be involved in achieving that resilience. To achieve this goal, the project integrates relevant state and local resilience plans and collaborates with stakeholders who are actively implementing these plans. The [University of the Virgin Islands project](#) employs NOAA resources and educational methods to promote community-level environmental literacy, enabling participants to better comprehend threats and implement solutions that build resilience to extreme weather, climate change, and other environmental hazards. Environmental literacy includes the knowledge, skills, and confidence to 1) reason about the ways that human and natural systems interact globally and locally; 2) participate in civic processes; and 3) incorporate scientific information, cultural knowledge, and diverse community values when taking action to anticipate, prepare for, respond to, and recover from environmental hazards, including mitigating and adapting to climate change.

**National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) - [Cooperation with States Program](#) and [Species Recovery Grants](#)**

Under the authority of section 6 of the Endangered Species Act, the Cooperation with States Program brings states, NMFS, and other partners together to recover threatened and endangered species. A total of 25 U.S. territories and coastal states, including the U.S. Virgin Islands, currently participate in this program. Competitive grants are awarded to states through the Species Recovery Grants to States Program to support management, monitoring, research and outreach efforts for species that spend all or a portion of their life cycle in state waters. The funded work is designed to prevent extinctions or reverse the decline of species, and restore ecosystems and their related socioeconomic benefits. The Virgin Islands Department of Planning and Natural Resources has received awards through this program to support projects focused on endangered and threatened corals and leatherback sea turtles.

**National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) - [Sea Turtle Salvage and Stranding Network](#)**

The Sea Turtle Stranding and Salvage Network (STSSN) was formally established in 1980 to collect information on and document strandings of marine turtles along the U.S. Gulf of Mexico and Atlantic coasts. The network, which includes federal, state and private partners, encompasses the coastal areas of the eighteen-state region from Maine to Texas, and includes portions of the U.S. Caribbean. Data gathered by the Network helps inform bycatch reduction efforts, monitor factors affecting turtle health, and provide other information needed for sea turtle management and population recovery.

**National Ocean Service (NOS) - [Phytoplankton Monitoring Network](#)**

The Phytoplankton Monitoring Network (PMN) is a nationwide community-based volunteer program of citizen scientists monitoring for the presence of organisms that can lead to Harmful Algal Bloom (HAB) formation. Volunteers serve as data collectors for marine and freshwater blooms at more than 200 coastal and inland sites in the U.S. and Caribbean. Monitoring is conducted year-round and volunteers are trained to measure salinity, air and water temperatures, and how to collect phytoplankton samples using a plankton net. Samples are then analyzed for any HAB organisms via microscopy. Data collected by PMN volunteers enhances the Nation's ability to respond to and manage the growing threat posed by HABs by collecting important data for species composition and distribution in coastal and freshwater environments and creating working relationships between volunteers and professional marine biotoxin researchers. Event monitoring can assist state and federal agencies to issue timely warnings about shellfish consumption and other public health concerns.

**National Ocean Service (NOS) – [National Coastal Zone Management Program](#)**

Through a unique federal-state partnership, NOAA's Office for Coastal Management works with the U.S. Virgin Islands Department of Planning and Natural Resources to implement the National Coastal Zone Management Program in the U.S. Virgin Islands. NOAA provides the state coastal management program with financial and technical assistance to further the goals of the Coastal Zone Management Act and ensure coastal waters and lands are used in a balanced way to support jobs, reduce use conflicts, and sustain natural resources. The liaison between the USVI Coastal Management Program and NOAA is located on St. Croix, USVI.

**National Ocean Service (NOS) – [Digital Coast](#)**

The Digital Coast is a focused information resource developed to meet the unique needs of coastal communities. Developed and maintained by NOAA's Office for Coastal Management, content comes from hundreds of organizations, including federal, state, and local agencies, plus private sector and non-profit contributors. The Digital Coast website provides not only site-specific coastal data, but also related tools, training, and information needed to make these data useful for coastal decision makers. The Digital Coast Act authorizes the Digital Coast as a standing national program and supports NOAA's efforts to increase access to authoritative data, tools, and training that enable coastal communities to plan for long-term resilience, manage water resources, and respond to emergencies.

**National Ocean Service (NOS) - [Coral Reef Conservation Program](#)**

NOAA's Coral Reef Conservation Program brings together multidisciplinary expertise from over 30 NOAA offices and partners to protect, conserve, and restore coral reef resources. The program focuses on three threats to coral reefs - climate change, unsustainable fishing practices, and land-based sources of pollution - as well as coral reef restoration. In response to identified threats and management priorities developed by coral reef managers in U.S. Virgin Islands, the program invests in initiatives to develop and implement watershed management plans that reduce impacts to reef resources, build stewardship capacity for conservation programs, reduce fishing impacts on stocks that affect reef resiliency and health, and promote reef recovery from coral bleaching, ship groundings, coral disease outbreaks and other disturbance events. Examples of projects include: assessing marine protected area boundaries and fish movements in the East End Marine Park, enhancing local impacts of marine science education and outreach programs, supporting coral restoration and disease response, and implementation of watershed projects that reduce sedimentation impacts to coral reefs. NOAA's Coral Management Liaison works in St Croix in close collaboration with the Division of Coastal Zone Management in the Department of Planning and Natural Resources and other local and federal partners responsible for coral reef management.

**National Ocean Service (NOS) – [National Coral Reef Management Fellowship](#)**

The National Coral Reef Management Fellowship Program is a partnership between NOAA's Coral Reef Conservation Program, the U.S. Department of Interior Office of Insular Affairs, Nova Southeastern University's Halmos College of Natural Sciences and Oceanography, and the U.S. Coral Reef All Islands Committee. The program recruits Coral Reef

Management Fellows for the seven U.S. coral reef jurisdictions, including the U.S. Virgin Islands. The Fellow for the U.S. Virgin Islands is working with the Division of Coastal Zone Management in the St. Croix East End Marine Park to coordinate coral disease treatments intended to reduce the impact of Stony Coral Tissue Loss Disease (SCTLD) in the area. They are also working with the Department of Planning and Natural Resources to evaluate the effects of coastal development in the form of watershed interventions on the nearby marine environment, as well as support the preparation and execution of the 2023 US Coral Reef Task Force meeting.

**National Ocean Service (NOS) - [Coastal Management Fellowship](#)**

This program matches postgraduate students with state and territory coastal zone programs to work on two-year projects proposed by the state or territory. The U.S. Virgin Islands Coastal Management Program is hosting a fellow from 2023-2025 who is inventorying newly established park lands managed by the DPNR Division of Territorial Parks and Protected Areas for natural and cultural resources and will share the results with the community.

**National Ocean Service (NOS) - [Navigation Manager](#)**

NOAA's navigation managers work directly with pilots, port authorities, and recreational boating organizations in the U.S. Virgin Islands. They help identify the navigational challenges facing marine transportation in the U.S. Virgin Islands and provide NOAA's resources and services that promote safe and efficient navigation. Navigation managers are on call to provide expertise and NOAA navigation response coordination in case of severe coastal weather events or other marine emergencies. The Office of Coast Survey has a navigation manager in Fernandina Beach, Florida to support mariners and stakeholders in South Florida, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

**National Ocean Service (NOS) - [Navigation Response Team](#)**

The Office of Coast Survey (OCS) maintains the nation's nautical charts and publications for U.S. coasts and the Great Lakes. OCS navigation managers are strategically located in U.S. coastal areas to provide regional support to federal and state agencies in order to assist with navigational challenges. The Office of Coast Survey's Navigation Response Branch (NRB) conducts routine and emergency hydrographic surveys; and working with the regional Navigation Managers, navigation response teams (NRT) work around-the-clock after storms to speed the reopening of ports and waterways. During emergency response, the NRTs provide time-sensitive information to the U.S. Coast Guard or port officials, and transmit data to NOAA cartographers for updating Coast Survey's suite of navigational charts. NRT 2 is assigned to Fernandina Beach, Florida and is able to respond within 24 to 48 hours. Coast Survey also has the ability to use a mobile integrated response kit (MIST) on a vessel of opportunity in the Virgin Islands for response.

**National Ocean Service (NOS) - [OR&R Response and Restoration Coordinators](#)**

NOAA's Office of Response and Restoration (OR&R) is a center of expertise in preparing for, evaluating, and responding to threats to coastal environments, including oil and chemical spills, releases from hazardous waste sites, disasters, and marine debris. To fulfill its mission of protecting and restoring NOAA trust resources, OR&R provides scientific and technical support to prepare for and respond to environmental threats that coastal communities face; determines damage to natural resources from those releases; protects and restores marine and coastal ecosystems; and works with coastal communities to address critical local and regional coastal challenges.

- Eleven regionally based **Scientific Support Coordinators (SSC)** harness the input of a multi-disciplinary team to address issues such as oil slick trajectory forecasting, environmental tradeoffs, best practices, resources at risk, and chemical hazard assessment to reduce risks to coastal habitats and resources. The SSC for the U.S. Virgin Islands is based in Miami, Florida.
- OR&R identifies and quantifies environmental injury caused by releases of oil and hazardous materials. Our network of **Regional Resource Coordinators** work with multidisciplinary scientific, economic, and legal teams with the goal of securing the appropriate amount and type of restoration required to restore injured NOAA trust



resources and compensate the public for their lost use. We collaborate with NMFS Restoration Center and NOAA General Council through the Damage Assessment, Remediation, and Restoration Program (DARRP) to ensure the process is efficient, legally defensible and restoration focused. The RRC serving the Southeast/Gulf of Mexico region is based in St. Petersburg, Florida.

**National Ocean Service (NOS) - OR&R [Caribbean Environmental Response Management Application](#) and [Response Tools for Oil and Chemical Spills](#)**

Assessing important spatial information and designing successful restoration projects rely upon interpreting and mapping geographic information, including the location, duration, and impacts from oil spills, other hazardous materials, or debris released into the environment. Caribbean Environmental Response Management Application (ERMA®) is an online mapping tool that integrates both static and real-time spatial data, such as ship locations, weather, and habitat maps, providing an easy-to-use common operating picture to assist environmental responders and decision makers. Caribbean ERMA has been used to visualize environmental response data during regional response drills, to map small vessel groundings near coral reefs, and to assist in identifying hazardous facilities and natural resources affected by recent hurricanes. In addition to ERMA, the Office of Response and Restoration (OR&R) offers a suite of [tools](#) to support emergency responders dealing with oil and chemical spills. From Environmental Sensitivity Index (ESI) maps and data which provide concise summaries of coastal resources including biological resources and sensitive shorelines to GNOME, a trajectory and fate model that predicts the route and weathering of pollutants spilled on water, and so much more, these tools provide easy-access to critical data that support a wide range of needs for emergency responders, ultimately supporting our coastal communities.

**National Ocean Service (NOS) - [Marine Debris Projects and Partnerships](#) in the U.S. Virgin Islands**

The NOAA Marine Debris Program (MDP) in the Office of Response and Restoration (OR&R) leads national and international efforts to reduce the impacts of marine debris. The program supports marine debris removal, prevention, and research projects in partnership with state and local agencies, tribes, non-governmental organizations, academia, and industry. The MDP Florida and Caribbean Regional Coordinator supports coordination efforts with regional stakeholders, provides support to grant-funded projects, tracks progress of projects, and conducts regional marine debris outreach to local audiences. In the U.S. Virgin Islands, the MDP is partnering with the U.S. Virgin Islands Department of Planning and Natural Resources to remove large debris from Hurricanes Irma and Maria. The MDP is also supporting the Department of Planning and Natural Resources and the University of the Virgin Island in a debris removal project where they will monitor debris accumulation on remote cays and mangroves. The University of the Virgin Islands, with the support of the MDP, led the collaborative effort to develop the U.S. Virgin Islands Marine Debris Action Plan with the input of over 90 individuals from territorial, regional, and federal organizations. The MDP is also working with federal and territory agencies, local governments, and other stakeholders, to implement the U.S. Virgin Islands Marine Debris Emergency Response Guide.

**National Ocean Service (NOS) - [U.S. Integrated Ocean Observing System](#) ([Caribbean Coastal Ocean Observing System](#))**

The U.S. Integrated Ocean Observing System, or IOOS®, is a federally and regionally coordinated observing system with 17 interagency and 11 regional partners. The System addresses regional and national needs for coastal, ocean, and Great Lakes data and information that improves lives and livelihoods.. This includes gathering and disseminating regional observations; data management; modeling and analysis; education and outreach; and research and development. The Caribbean Coastal Ocean Observing System (CARICOOS), the IOOS Regional Association comprising the coastal component of Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands, their respective coastal waters, and Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). CARICOOS provides data and information for decision-making and decision-support data and information to

systematically address regional and national needs, including the safety of coastal communities and marine operations, enhancing the economy, protecting our environment and resources, and supporting coastal resource management.

**National Ocean Service (NOS) - [Students for Zero Waste Week](#)**

Students are inviting their local communities to "Go Green and Think Blue" by joining them in the annual *Students for Zero Waste Week campaign*. During this campaign led by the Office of National Marine Sanctuaries, students focus on reducing land-based waste in order to protect the health of local marine environments. These young leaders are raising awareness of how single-use plastic and other types of litter affect the health of local watersheds, national marine sanctuaries, and the ocean. In addition, some schools are looking at ways to reduce their energy use on campus with hopes of raising awareness of how the burning of fossil fuels also impacts the health of the ocean.

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