



PRESS RELEASE

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\$278K USEPA grant to assist UOG in vital reef, watershed study

A \$278,785 grant from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency will assist the University of Guam Sea Grant program with identifying specific factors that harm the ecosystems within the island's reefs and watersheds.

Illegal fishing activities and poor water quality due to watershed pollution are contributors to the declining health of Guam's coral reefs, but it is difficult to measure the impact of such stressors due to the inconsistency of species found in a particular habitat.

From Oct. 1, 2019, through Sept. 30, 2021, the UOG Sea Grant and UOG Marine Laboratory will be working with the Guam Environmental Protection Agency and the Guam Department of Agriculture's Division of Aquatic and Wildlife Resources to conduct a study identifying and quantifying the marine species in streams and reef flat sites.

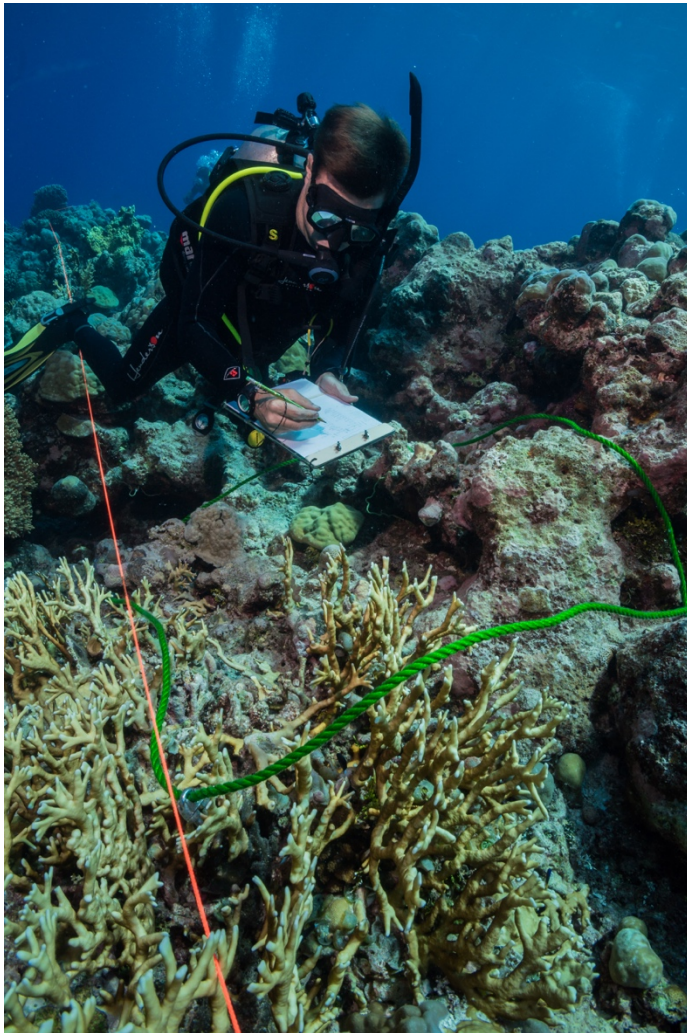
The study will make it possible to develop a standardized model by which to evaluate the condition of reefs and watersheds, assess the issues, and guide natural resource management.

"The information gathered will give some insight on the structure of habitats in our reefs and watersheds and will show how water quality and fisheries exploitation contribute to unhealthy biological assemblages," said Fran Castro, program leader of UOG Sea Grant. "The project is in line with UOG Sea Grant's focus areas of healthy ecosystems and environmental literacy and workforce development, in that we will have a better

understanding of the environmental issues on Guam and can then communicate this message to the community.”

The funding is part of U.S. EPA’s Wetland Program Development Grants. The agency supports state, tribal, and local governments in carrying out projects that shed light on the effects of water pollution and how it can be reduced, eliminated, or prevented.

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Caption:

Dr. Peter Houk, associate professor at the University of Guam Marine Laboratory, conducts a coral survey to evaluate reef resilience. Assessing coral reef health will be one of the projects funded by a \$278,785 grant from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency recently acquired by the UOG Sea Grant program.

Photo courtesy of Simon Lorenz