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**PRESS RELEASE**

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**Guam Year of the Reef 2018 launches with proclamation signing on February 2<sup>nd</sup> and R.E.E.F. Celebration on February 10<sup>th</sup>**

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Guam's coral reefs are a precious resource – they create vital habitat for fishes and other marine species, support social and cultural activities, provide the backbone for Guam's tourism industry, and protect our coastlines from storms and erosion. Despite their value, they are greatly threatened by both local stressors – such as pollution, overfishing, and recreational misuse – and the impacts of global climate change and ocean acidification. This year, we recognize Guam Year of the Reef 2018 in honor of our valuable coral reef ecosystems and in answer to the global call to action to better protect and manage coral reefs.

The International Coral Reef Initiative has declared 2018 as the third International Year of the Reef. Local natural resource managers, scientists, and community leaders are working together to recognize this designation on Guam. Throughout 2018, Guam will host a series of public events and opportunities for everyone to get involved in coral reef conservation and management and improve the condition of our local reefs. More information and a calendar of events is available here: <http://guamcoralreefs.com>. Updates will also be posted on the Guam Year of the Reef Facebook page (@GuamYearoftheReef2018) and Twitter account (@GuamYOR2018).

Guam Year of the Reef 2018 will launch Friday, February 2, 2018, with a proclamation signing by Lieutenant Governor Ray Tenorio at 10:30am in the large conference room at the Ricardo J. Bordallo Governor's Complex, Adelup. This event is free and open to the public. No registration is required.

The following week, the Guam Community Coral Reef Monitoring Program (GCCRMP) invites the public to attend their second Reef Exploration, Experiences, and Fun (R.E.E.F.) Celebration on Saturday, February 10, 2018, from 1:00-3:30pm at the Hall of Governors next to the Latte of Freedom, Adelup. Many island residents already demonstrate their role as caretakers of Guam's natural resources by participating in beach clean-ups, using reusable shopping bags, and reconnecting cultural preservation with environmental conservation. Over 1,200 community members have shown their dedication to our island's reefs by completing GCCRMP training and monitoring the health of Guam's coral reefs during their free time. This event celebrates the strides we have made as a community to protect our marine environment.

GCCRMP coordinators will share results of community-collected data and provide updates on the health of reef flat areas, including Piti and Merizo. The event will also feature GCCRMP's Adopt-a-Reef groups and their environmental stewardship efforts, as well as showcasing coral reef management and conservation efforts by several agencies and organizations.

The R.E.E.F. Celebration event is free and open to the public. No registration is required and seats are available on a first come, first served basis. This event is supported by the Bureau of Statistics and Plans and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

By recognizing Guam Year of the Reef 2018, we are acknowledging the importance of our coral reefs and committing to their protection for current and future generations. Show your support for Guam's reefs by attending these events and upcoming activities.

For more information about Guam Year of the Reef 2018 or the proclamation signing, contact Whitney Hoot, Bureau of Statistics and Plans, at 472-4201 or [whitney.hoot@bsp.guam.gov](mailto:whitney.hoot@bsp.guam.gov). For more information about the R.E.E.F. Celebration, contact Marybelle Quinata, NOAA Fisheries, at 646-1905 or [marybelle.quinata@noaa.gov](mailto:marybelle.quinata@noaa.gov).