

# BIOGEOGRAPHY BRANCH

CENTER FOR COASTAL MONITORING & ASSESSMENT  
NATIONAL CENTERS FOR COASTAL OCEAN SCIENCE



## Sea Floor Characterization of the U.S. Caribbean 2011 Field Season Day 12: April 8, 2011

### A Seminar at Sea

Today is the final day the NOAA Ship *Nancy Foster* will be in port in St. Thomas. But before we said goodbye to Charlotte Amalie, we were joined by some very special guests for our final outreach event. U.S. Virgin Islands senators Craig Barshinger, Terrence Nelson and Patrick Simeon Sprauve, along with several representatives from other local senate offices and Delegate Donna Christensen boarded the ship to learn about the National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science and the Coral Reef Conservation Program's work throughout the territory.

The morning began with a little rain, gray clouds and rough seas, but as the *Nancy Foster* left the Crown Bay Marina the sun came out and the seas calmed, creating the perfect conditions for a NOAA seminar out at sea. Lead scientist Tim Battista first met the group in the mess where he explained a little about the mission, its history and how the resulting data are used by managers in the U.S. Virgin Islands. Next, the guests made their way to the dry lab where Bryan Costa, Laura Kracker and Chris Taylor explained the tools and technologies they use to create detailed sea floor maps and determine certain characteristics about fish populations.

### Ship Tour and More!

No explanation of sea floor mapping tools would be complete without a trip to the bridge of the NOAA Ship *Nancy Foster*, which acts as command central for all mission operations. NOAA Corps Lieutenant Abigail Higgins joined the group on the bridge and gave an informal tour, explaining what they were seeing on many of the monitors as Commanding Officer Stephen Meador was steering the ship to the next stop: the site of yet another uncharted shipwreck discovered during week one of the mission.

As the ship began maneuvers to position itself just over the shipwreck, the guests made their way to the back deck to watch a deployment of the ROV.



Guests, including local senators and political representatives, mingle just before boarding the *Nancy Foster* for a special seminar at sea.



Senator Sprauve (gray shirt) and Senator Barshinger (white shirt) watch as scientists explain their research.



Tim addresses the group in the dry lab (left); everyone huddles around some nautical charts on the bridge (center); and the group peeks into the hull on the back deck (right).

Following the ROV launch we all made our way back to the wet lab to explore the wreckage for the first time. Everyone crowded closely around the monitors as the ROV approached the site and the first images came into view. The scientists and guests were equally excited as we uncovered a little part of the U.S. Caribbean's maritime history.



A photo of the shipwreck.

During the final few hours of the seminar Paige Rothenberger from the VI Division of Coastal Zone Management and the Caribbean Fisheries Management Council's Graciela Garcia-Molnier talked about how the mapping data and other NCCOS/CRCP products are used by managers throughout the territory.

### **A Surprise Ending**

Just before the seminar came to an end, we were thrilled to see that U.S. Virgin Islands Delegate Congress Donna M. Christensen was able to join us just before catching a flight back to Washington D.C. The Delegate warmly greeted the science party and chatted with NOAA leaders, as well as the guests. Her arrival was a very exciting ending the afternoon!



Tim Battista chats with Delegate Christensen and Senator Sprauve.



The event wouldn't have been complete without a group photo in front of the NOAA Ship *Nancy Foster*.

A special thanks to all those who attended today's event! They are: Delegate Donna M. Christensen, Senator Patrick Simeon Sprauve, Senator Craig Barshinger, Senator Terrence Nelson, Aja Baretto, Kirk Thomas, Pamela Kindell, Robert Boschulte, Graciela Garcia-Moliner, Paige Rothenberger, Marlon Hibbert, Steve Thur, Mark Monaco, Simon Pittman and Chris Jeffrey.

And thanks to the crew of the NOAA Ship Nancy Foster for co-hosting the event.