

Pacific Invasives Learning Network



Empowering invasive species management across the Pacific



Geographic scope

Micronesia, Polynesia and Melanesia

Threat

invasive plants and animals can disrupt natural cycles, crowd out native species, create trade barriers, upset livelihoods and cause billions of dollars in damage

Strategy

The Pacific Invasives Learning Network is a capacity building network of multi-agency teams in the Pacific to address the threats posed by invasive species

Location

PILN is hosted by SPREP, Samoa.

PILN Mission:

To empower effective invasive species management through a participant-driven network that meets priority needs, rapidly shares skills and resources, provides links to technical expertise, increases information exchange, and accelerates on-the-ground action.

Invasive species are one of the greatest threats to biodiversity in island ecosystems. When a species is accidentally or intentionally introduced into a new landscape or seascape, the consequences can be devastating, posing a large threat to food security, international trade, public health, tourism, and other economic activities. Invasive plants and animals can spread unchecked, disrupting natural cycles, and costing billions.

Invasives are a priority for Pacific Island nations because islands are highly vulnerable to invasions that can result in catastrophic loss of biodiversity and other impacts. However, the relatively small size and isolation of most islands offer important opportunities for preventing new invasions and eradicating existing pest species.

In some parts of the Pacific, experienced conservation professionals have developed model programs to prevent, eradicate, or control certain high-priority invaders, such as rodents, feral animals, and invasive weeds. However, according to the Global Inva-

sive Species Programme, "In most Pacific Island countries, there is a profound lack of awareness about the issue and an almost complete absence of capacity to deal with invasive species."

Conservation practitioners in the Pacific represent a host of different agencies and countries, and most are geographically and professionally isolated. As a result, few Pacific conservationists currently have the information, expertise, and support they need to manage invasive species effectively.

Peer learning networks are a proven strategy for improving conservation skills and building cooperation between trained professionals. By bringing peers together with conservation experts, learning networks foster new ideas and practical, site-specific solutions.

Multi-disciplinary project teams can work together on strategies with critical input from other teams and experts, resulting in a common vision and a plan for effective conservation action.



Invasive vines smother trees and are a big problem in many islands. Photo: Jill Key

PILN Partners and collaborators

PILN is a partnership between:

- The Nature Conservancy
- Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme
- Pacific Invasives Initiative
- IUCN Invasive Species Specialist Group
- National Park of American Samoa
- Conservation International
- Palau Office of Environmental Response and Coordination
- University of the South Pacific
- USDA Forest Service
- Secretariat of the Pacific Community
- BirdLife International Pacific Division



The introduced Brown Tree Snake has devastated the native animals on Guam. Photo: Dan Vice.

"If we don't find a way to control invasive species, if the public is not educated and if governments don't take action, all of our countries will be overrun "

**Hon. Elias Camsek Chin,
Vice President, Palau**



Rats affect both people and wildlife. Photo: Jill Key

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The PILN pilot programme focused on the design and establishment of the network, as well as identifying priority needs and using a variety of tools/methods to respond.

Since the network launch in May 2006 the network has gained great traction and teams are actively advancing their priority projects.

PILN functions mainly by generating awareness of and interest in successful invasive species activities being carried out, providing the mechanism for other teams to do the same, and then actively encouraging and supporting them to do so.

Examples of PILN achievements during the pilot programme:

- Participant and partner information sharing meetings, Palau May 2006 and French Polynesia, September 2007.
- Strategic action planning workshops in Pohnpei State, Palau, Kiribati, Kosrae State, Marshall Islands, and French Polynesia.
- Marine invasive species workshop, Samoa March 2007.
- Social marketing workshop, French Polynesia September 2007
- A number of exchanges to share skills in weed management, and rodent management.

Founding teams come from all over the Pacific region, with representatives from all three sub-regions, Melanesia, Micronesia, Polynesia.

They include members with a long-term commitment to conservation, strong cultural understanding, and the potential to act as innovators to increase invasive species management and prevention in their nations.

Participating teams determine the specific invasive species issues that they will address using the network. PILN's activities and agenda are determined by the individual and shared needs of the participants.

The network was launched with six initial founding teams and has subsequently expanded to embrace a total of fourteen: American Samoa, Kosrae, Pohnpei and Yap states of the Federated States of Micronesia, French Polynesia, Fiji, Guam, Hawaii, Kiribati, the Marshall Islands, New Caledonia, Niue, Palau, and Samoa.

This expansion has been at the specific request of the new countries wanting to join.

After only one year into the pilot programme PILN was proving an effective means of building capacity and assisting invasive species workers to turn their words into action.

Over the next three years, PILN is well-positioned to continue to help strengthen the young multi-sector PILN teams and extend the network's activities to include the remaining countries, states and territories in the region.

Activities will focus on local, national and international collaboration to implement the new Pacific Regional Invasive Species Strategy and the relevant portions of the updated Pacific Action Strategy for Nature Conservation.

During PILN's 3-year expansion and consolidation programme, from June 2008 to June 2011, assistance to PILN teams will be based on capacity building priorities and work plans agreed by network participants.

In addition, the PILN network will seek to actively recruit the remaining Pacific island countries / states / territories into the network, especially from Melanesia which was under-represented during the pilot.

During this phase, a long-term funding strategy for the network will be developed to ensure continued cost-effective capacity building for invasive species teams across the Pacific island region.

PILN will also seek opportunities to link Pacific teams with other regional and global networks and to share lessons learned.

PILN Goals

- PILN team members strengthen essential technical, organizational, collaborative and policy skills to advance invasive species management in the Pacific Islands.
- PILN teams demonstrate on-the-ground action against invasive species and rapidly share their experiences, skills and resources.
- PILN team members work cooperatively on high priority local and national invasive species issues.

- PILN teams collaborate in addressing at least one critical regional invasive issue or opportunity.
- PILN team members and partner organisations work together to design and implement a well-coordinated, cost-effective, and active network or alternative mechanism to provide ongoing, effective support and services to invasive species teams throughout the Pacific islands.