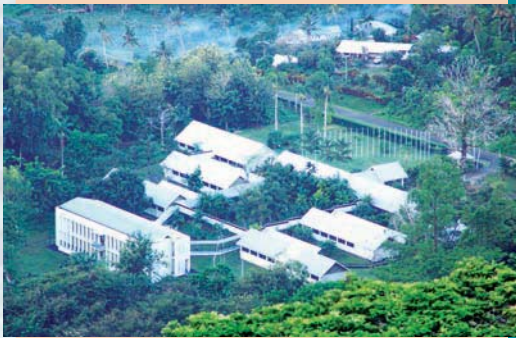




The Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme is based in Apia, Samoa, where its offices and Technical Education Centre are situated at the foot of Mt Vaea. Its Director, Asterio Takesy, and the Deputy-Director, Vitolio Lui, lead a corporate division and two main programmes: *Island Ecosystems* and *Pacific Futures*.



SPREP complex in Apia, Samoa.

SPREP employs more than 70 professional and support staff drawn from its member countries.

The 21 Pacific Island member countries are: American Samoa, the Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, French Polynesia, Guam, Kiribati, Republic of the Marshall Islands, Nauru, New Caledonia, Niue, Northern Mariana's, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tokelau, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu, Wallis and Fatuna.

As well there are four "metropolitan" members with interests in the region: Australia, France, New Zealand and the United States. Representatives meet every year in September to monitor progress and set priorities.

SPREP is the proud sponsor of the 2006-2007 Environmental Media Awards, in association with the Pacific Islands News Agency (PINA).

Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP)

P.O. Box 240, Apia, Samoa.
T +685 21929 F +685 20231
sprep@sprep.org
www.sprep.org

PILN READIES ITSELF TO BATTLE THE PACIFIC INVADERS

Whether it be the Brown Tree Snake crippling Guam's power grid, the Myna bird destroying native bird habitat, or the Merremia vine choking the living daylight out of some Pacific native plants and trees, invasive species are wreaking havoc on our animal and plant life as never before. But they in turn now have a new enemy: the Pacific Islands Invasives Learning Network (PILN).

Invasives are introduced species that are living where they don't belong. They spread unchecked, disrupt natural cycles, and have in all likelihood cost the region hundreds of millions of dollars.

Some were introduced to combat other problem pests. Originally from India, myna birds arrived to remove ticks from cattle. They are now a noisy, aggressive nuisance to other birds and people alike.

In the 1940's the brown tree snake found its way into Guam by mistake. 80 million snakes later they are the cause of frequent power outages and account for about US\$5m dollars of damage per year to the island's electricity supplier. Having your computer suddenly go dead or sit in the dark due to a power outage is a minor inconvenience, when compared to the impact invasives are having on agriculture, public health, tourism, and other economic activities.

Pacific islands' native birds, plants and marine species are particularly vulnerable to invasives. That's because these pristine, isolated islands provide ideal conditions for the development of new species. So much so that the region has 24 percent of the world's threatened bird species living on less than half a percent of the earth's entire land mass.

According to the Global Invasive 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. This often means that few Pacific conservationists currently have the information expertise and support they need to manage invasive species much more effectively.

That's why the Nature Conservancy with SPREP and other partners* have launched the Pacific Islands Invasives Learning Network: PILN aims to turn this situation around.

PILN's mission is "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."

The first set of PILN teams comes from Melanesia, Micronesia, Polynesia, and Hawaii. Each team represents a single nation, state, or archipelago. The teams will 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 area.

PILN wants to bring about better ways to tackle the invasive species problem facing the region's eight million inhabitants. So it is teaming up with national island agencies responsible for agriculture, international trade and other economic interests, as well as conservation and natural resource management. SPREP welcomes the Nature Conservancy's support. United, we can tackle these invasives much better.

Contact information Jill Key, PILN-coordinator, SPREP, PO Box 240, Apia, Samoa.
jillk@sprep.org. T:+685 21929 ext 276, F:+ 685 20231, W: www.sprep.org/piln.

*The Conservancy recently joined with SPREP, the Cooperative Island Initiative on Invasive Species, IUCN Invasive Species Specialist Group, National Park of American Samoa, Conservation International, the Palau Office of Environmental Response and Coordination, University of the South Pacific, USDA Forest Service, and the Secretariat of the Pacific Community to establish PILN. PILN is also being supported by the U.S. Department of State.

Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP)

P.O. Box 240, Apia, Samoa. T +685 21929 F +685 20231 E sprep@sprep.org

www.sprep.org.ws