

REEF TALK

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Coral reef champions enter next phase



Message from the Island Ecosystems Programme Manager

Stuart Chape

Talofa lava and welcome to the second issue of *Reef Talk*, the quarterly newsletter of the 2008 Pacific Year of the Reef campaign. The PYOR has already gathered momentum with a number of exciting activities across the region and we report on several in this issue.

Our regional schools competitions closed in March with entries pouring in from Kiribati, New Caledonia, Niue, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, and Wallis and Futuna. Entries were of a very high standard and you can find out who our coral reef champions are in this issue.

Other events included educational seminars in Australia, Fiji, and Hawai'i. The overwhelming success reported on page 2 has organisers in Northern Mariana Islands considering repeating the event. Read about American Samoa's art-themed launch on page 3, and the use of this focus during Environment Week celebrations in Cook Islands and Tuvalu reinforces vital links between our Pacific cultures, livelihoods, and environments.

News on the international campaign is on page 4, updates on other coastal and marine work are also in this issue, and a calendar of events encourages you all to take action to save our reefs. Merci and happy reading!



Students of Aleipata Secondary School in Samoa completed all activities in the "challengecoralreef" Workbook before submitting their successful action plan. They have now progressed to Phase 2. Photo courtesy of Jessica Ackerman.

Eleven coral reef champions from eight Pacific countries and territories were selected to progress to Phase 2 of the regional "challengecoralreef" competition. The competition encourages youth groups to design and implement concrete actions to reduce coral reef degradation.

Youth groups in Phase 2 are from Mauke School in the Cook Islands; Namamanuca Primary School from Fiji; Betio Junior Secondary School in Kiribati; Equipe du Lycee du Grand Noumea and Lycee Agricole de Nouvelle-Caledonie of New Caledonia; Aleipata Secondary School in Samoa; Mbokona Community High School, Mbua Vale Community High School, and St Joseph's Catholic Secondary School in the Solomon Islands; Malapoa College in Vanuatu; and Lycee d'Etat of Wallis and Futuna.

SPREP Director, Asterio Takesy, commended the quality of the almost 30 entries for Phase 1 of the competition that is part of the 2008 Pacific Year of the Reef campaign.

"Youth and children who participated in the 'challengecoralreef' competition are all winners and stand as shining examples of how to make positive differences to our coral reef resources," Takesy said.

Champions received funding from SPREP to implement actions during the second phase which closes in September. Results of the more than 320 entries for the "Legends of the Reef" competition that targeted a younger audience will be announced later.

REEFS PROTECT IT'S TIME TO GIVE BACK





Travel event links climate change to coral reefs

Reina Camacho



CNMI Department of Public Works staff carpooled to work on 11 April as part of the “Right route” effort. Photo courtesy of the CNMI government.

Over 800 residents of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands took small but important steps to reduce their carbon footprint and impact on the environment as Pacific Year of the Reef celebrations in the northern Pacific islands focused on the link between coral reef degradation and the adverse effects of climate change.

The “Right route” event on 11 April saw hundreds of people car pool, cycle, or walk to work, school, and other destinations. More than 50 organisations on three islands supported the event. Rota registered the highest turnout with 324 participants; 246 residents of Saipan participated in the event; and 237 people took the “Right route” on Tinian.

Event organizer, Kathy Yuknavage, hailed the turnout and was encouraged by the level of enthusiastic participation throughout the islands.

“By taking small steps, such as walking or carpooling to school or work on a regular basis, we can help reduce our contribution

to global warming and climate change,” Yuknavage said.

Organisers hope to continue the success of the single-day event. Maria H. Aguon, “Right route” coordinator on Tinian, plans to continue walking or car pooling to work every Friday and encourages others to do the same. Similar sentiments were uttered by Mark James, coordinator for Xerox, who highlighted both monetary savings and time spent with family as tangible benefits of the “Right route” experience.

A carbon footprint is the direct effect of lifestyles on the environment measured in volumes of carbon dioxide emissions. Two of the largest contributors to our personal “footprints” are travel needs and electricity demands.

Reina Camacho is the Public Information Officer at the Division of Environmental Quality with the Government of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands. She can be contacted at reinacamacho@deq.gov.mp.



Art inspires action in American Samoa

Jeremy Goldberg

The stunning diversity of reef life at the United States' smallest and most remote National Marine Sanctuary provided the inspiration for a mural at the American Samoa Executive Office Building at Utulei by world-renowned ocean and wildlife artist Wyland.

The inspirational portrait of marine life was painted at the invitation of American Samoa Governor Togiola Tulafono and unveiled on 12 April. In expressing his gratitude to Wyland for his contribution to American Samoa's Year of the Reef effort, Governor Tulafono stressed the need for cooperation for effective conservation.

"We hope that activities such as this will foster in our children and community a strong sense of appreciation for our environment and a strong commitment to conservation," Governor Tulafono said.

Wyland dived at Fagatele Bay National Marine Sanctuary and Aunu'u for inspiration for the mural, which he painted with the assistance of art students and teachers from local schools and colleges.

Students have also taken the opportunity to work with Wyland on six of their own mural projects as well as participate in a variety of educational activities put on by the Department of

Cultural dancers perform at the Wyland mural dedication ceremony in Utulei, American Samoa. Photo copyright Charles Seitz.



Education, Department of Marine and Wildlife Resources, the American Samoa Coastal Management Program, and the Coral Reef Advisory Group.

Successful joint activities have included a station on fishing and fish identification, discussions about sea turtles, and a coral reef and plankton game that taught children about coral reef protection. These and the mural are part of the Coral Reef Advisory Group's effort to generate urgent action at all levels to develop and implement effective management strategies for conservation and sustainable use of marine ecosystems.

Jeremy Goldberg is the Coordinator of the Coral Reef Advisory Group in American Samoa. Contact him at jgoldberg@doc.asg.as for further information on Year of the Reef activities in American Samoa.



Update from Fiji

The second major clean up of the Suva foreshore in as many months was organised as part of Fiji's Year of the Reef campaign to push the message of connectivity between land and sea ecosystems.

"The main message is the importance of protecting our reefs from mountains to seas," according to Ms Margaret Tabunakawai of the Fiji campaign committee.

Participants at the first beach clean up in Suva in March. Photo courtesy of Nanise Kuridrani.





Pacific activities part of global effort

Francis Staub



Posters developed as part of the IYOR education material and available through <http://www.iyor.org>



Two high-level global events will provide opportunities to showcase the aims of the 2008 International Year of the Reef (IYOR) campaign, and how regional and national activities have responded to local needs.

A high-level afternoon side event titled "Marine Biodiversity and the International Year of the Reef" was held during the 9th meeting of the Conference of Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity on Monday, 26 May in Bonn, Germany. The event was chaired by Christine Dawson of the US Department of State and featured presentations on the global status of coral reef biodiversity; impacts of climate change on reefs; and regional and global campaigns for reef conservation.

Presentations on regional efforts included one on the Coral Triangle Initiative and another on the establishment of an MPA network. A presentation on IYOR 2008 was also made at the Communication, Education, and Public Awareness Fair on Tuesday, 27 May.

A second partnership celebrated World Ocean Day on 8 June with the theme "helping our

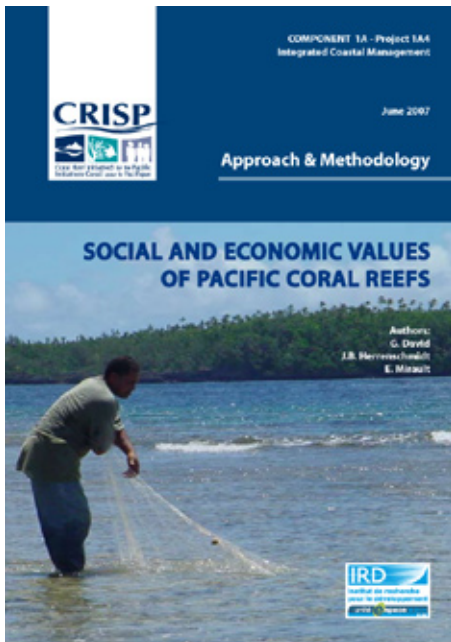
climate, helping our ocean." The partnership helped engage global audiences to make connections between climate change and the health of the world's oceans. A special focus of celebrations was on threatened species and habitats which illustrated possible effects of climate change on local environments. More information is available at www.theoceanproject.org/wod/.

These international partnerships continue the high level attention given to the global IYOR 2008 campaign that began with a launch hosted by the World Bank on 24 January in Washington DC. More than 60 organisations and national focal points have tailored the international campaign to address local needs and issues. In all, over 175 events have been showcased on the IYOR online calendar. A listing of events, contact points, press coverage, and educational material can be accessed at www.iyor.org.

Francis Staub is the IYOR 2008 Coordinator and can be contacted for more information at fstaub@iyor.org.

REEF TALK

Strong reefs Strong islands



Economic valuations are the focus of CRISP in 2008 and the Economic Workshop included discussions on multidisciplinary research approaches to valuing coral reefs, as proposed in this report which is available from www.crisponline.net/ **CRISPProducts**.

A week-long regional workshop on improving marine conservation decisions through the use of economic valuation studies was held in Fiji at the end of May. The Pacific-centred discourse benefited from the experiences of users of these tools in other parts of the world.

The Coral Reef Initiatives for the Pacific (CRISP) Economic Workshop looked at ways to improve the utility of these tools in the Pacific, as increasing attempts are made to put monetary values on services generated by ecosystems for people.

SPREP's Coral Reef Management Officer and member of the workshop steering committee, Caroline Vieux, believes the workshop provided a platform from which SPREP could launch planned studies in the region to advance goals of the 2008 Pacific Year of the Reef campaign.

"The Pacific and SPREP have benefited from this workshop through knowledge sharing, and importantly, through the international network of resource economists that has emerged who are interested in supporting and assisting economic valuations in the Pacific," Vieux said.

Results of economic valuations – usually conducted by valuing past, present, and future changes in quality of services – can demonstrate monetary values of the environment, determine net benefits of interventions, compare costs and benefits of different uses, and identify possible financing sources from environmental goods and services.

Emphasis during the workshop was placed on adapting economic valuations of marine protected areas to Pacific needs that support investment decisions; ways to encourage ownership of studies by policy makers; incorporating financial options for management of marine protected areas; and identifying case studies to demonstrate the utility of these newly adapted tools.

Discussions also included overviews of successful valuations in other parts of the world, follow-up activities, and an inventory of the current Pacific situation including past studies, gaps, and needs. Three sites will be selected as study sites following a call for proposals and economic studies will be conducted with funding from CRISP through the CRISP Coordination Unit and SPREP. Selection will be based on the typology of a particular Pacific marine protected area, requests from stakeholders, data availability, and identified methods.

The workshop also sought to develop a medium-term road map to ensure future steps are taken for the better use of economic valuations of marine protected areas in the Pacific.

The Coral Reef Initiatives for the Pacific (CRISP) programme is an initiative of the French Government that aims to support contributions of different scientific disciplines and crosscutting network activities to coral ecosystems work. CRISP is a major partner in SPREP's 2008 Pacific Year of the Reef campaign. More information on the programme is available at www.crisponline.net or by contacting *Eric Clua* at eric@spc.int.



Kiribati prepares to commit to wetland protection



Another Pacific island country is preparing to join more than 150 other countries worldwide in protecting their wetland areas for the benefit of current and future generations.

Kiribati's plans to become a Contracting Party to the Convention on Wetlands, commonly known as the Ramsar Convention, are progressing smoothly with the sharing of experiences of Pacific countries that are signatories to the Convention and assistance from SPREP.



The benefits of both were evident at the Oceania Preparatory Meeting for the 10th Conference of the Parties to the Ramsar Convention where Kiribati used its observer status to share its experiences and challenges of becoming a Contracting Party, according to SPREP's Associate Ramsar Officer, Vainuupo Jungblut.

"It was a two-way learning experience for them and an opportunity to make contact with current parties in the region, and international and regional partners that could contribute technical assistance for wetlands work in Kiribati," Jungblut said.

SPREP's assistance with wetland conservation in Kiribati is ongoing, with a visit by Jungblut and SPREP's Marine Conservation Analyst, Paul Anderson, scheduled for late June. The two officers will provide hands-on training to the Ministry of the Environment, Lands and Agricultural Development, other relevant Government agencies, and community representatives.

"SPREP will provide training in wetland mapping and boundary delineation of their intended Ramsar site and other notable wetlands as part of a current Ramsar Small Grants Project," Jungblut explained.

The training will also assist Kiribati with preparing a nomination of a Ramsar site, as this is the first requirement for signatories to the Convention. Kiribati hopes to join other Pacific Contracting Parties at the triennial Conference of Parties to the Ramsar Convention, to be held in October in South Korea.

The Ramsar Convention, named for the city in Iran where it was signed in 1971, promotes the conservation and wise use of the world's wetlands.

For more details please contact *SPREP's Associate Ramsar Convention Officer, Vainuupo Jungblut* on **E: vainuupoj@sprep.org T: (685) 21929 F: (685) 29231 W: www.sprep.org**



Regional marine species action plans for next five years developed



A guiding document for regional efforts in marine species conservation for the next five years was launched in March after Pacific-wide reviews and consultations involving countries and territories, intergovernmental organisations, non-governmental organisations, and other organisations throughout the region. The SPREP Governing Council endorsed the document in 2007.

The Pacific Islands Regional Marine Species Programme 2008-2012 contains three detailed Action Plans for cooperative conservation and management of dugongs, marine turtles, and whales and dolphins. The focus on these three target groups of marine animals was at the behest of SPREP member countries and territories to cover priority species that lacked comprehensive plans under other existing regional conservation efforts.

In contrasting the new Action Plans and the previous five-year regional framework, SPREP's Marine Species Officer, Lui Bell, highlighted improvements in refining identified needs and actions.

"The Pacific Islands Regional Marine Species Programme 2008-2012 contains actions that are more specific, clear, and targeted; and improvements were made to accommodate resourcing strategies, reporting mechanisms, and funding in individual Action Plans," Bell said.

All three target groups of marine animals play significant ecological roles in coastal and oceanic ecosystems as well as holding important cultural values. Most are long-lived and have low reproductive rates, making them vulnerable to overharvesting. Most species within these target groups are globally threatened.

Successful implementation of the Action Plans is now the joint responsibility of SPREP, member countries and territories, intergovernmental organisations, non-Government organisations, and the private sector.

"A very important step highlighted in the Action Plans is for SPREP members to incorporate relevant actions that concern them into their national plans such as the National Capacity Self-Assessments and National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plans," Bell stated.

The endorsed action plans will focus the work of Bell and other marine species staff at SPREP for the duration of the Programme, as well as serving as a guide in the development of similar plans for other marine species. In addition to endorsing the Programme, the SPREP Governing Council encouraged the inclusion of sharks in the Programme. SPREP is currently pursuing this issue with the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission, the Secretariat of the Pacific Community, and the Forum Fisheries Agency.

Calendar of Pacific events

Find out more about recent and upcoming campaign events in the Pacific from our website at www.sprep.org/pyor or from www.iyor.com.

**4
Apr**

- Earth Day celebrations
- Launch of Solomon Islands campaign
- "Right route" event in CNMI
- Unveiling of reef life mural in American Samoa
- Launch of Palau Year of the Reef
- ★ **Beginning of Phase 2 for coral reef champions in the 'challengecoralreef' competition (21 April)**
- Release of "Reef in a Box" teaching tool in Guam
- Second beach clean up as part of Fiji campaign

**5
May**

- Focus on recreation activities as part of Guam IYOR08
- Fiji public lecture series begins
- Voting open in Guam PSA contest
- Underwater clean up in Maui, Hawai'i
- Australian Research Council Centre of Excellence for Coral Reef Studies presents online seminar series on the future of the world's coral reefs
- ★ **IYOR side-events at Convention on Biological Diversity meeting in Germany (26-27 May)**
- ★ **CRISP Economic Workshop in Fiji (26-30 May)**

**6
Jun**

- Ocean Awareness Training course begins in Maui, Hawai'i
- World Environment Day and World Ocean Day celebrations
 - String band, drama, and recyclable art competitions in Cook Islands
 - Shore and underwater clean up at Blue Hole, Kosrae, Federated States of Micronesia
 - Song and poster competitions, and drama in Solomon Islands
 - Poster competition in Tuvalu
 - Kawaikui Beach clean up in Hawai'i
- Reef Night at Maui Ocean Center, Hawai'i

**7
Jul**

- Coral parade and carnival in CNMI
- ★ **11th International Coral Reef Symposium**
- Hawai'i Conservation Film Festival
- "Conservation through art" exhibition in Hawai'i
- 10th Festival of Pacific Arts begins in Pago Pago, American Samoa



REEF TALK

The Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP) is an intergovernmental organisation working with Pacific islands countries and territories to strengthen environmental management and promote sustainable development.

ReefTalk is developed by SPREP:

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Become a 2008 PYOR campaign partner

Help us save and protect our Pacific reefs.

- Let us know about your Pacific Year of the Reef activities
- Provide pictures and articles on coral reef science for our website and newsletters
- Share links to educational material for use by all
- Contribute to the Pacific Reef Trust Fund
- Support the development of a behaviour-change workshop kit

Our 2008 PYOR webpage has useful information and resources for coral reef education at www.sprep.org/pyor.