

REEF TALK

ISSUE NO 1

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Message from the SPREP Director

Asterio Takesy

Welcome to the inaugural issue of **Reef Talk**, a quarterly newsletter produced as part of the 2008 Pacific Year of the Reef campaign.

Reefs are a central part of life in the Pacific islands. For centuries, the bounty of the reefs has sustained our livelihoods. People from all walks of life, from all over the world, marvel at their beauty and diversity of life by the millions each year. All people benefit from new medicines derived through application of the genetic makeup of its life forms. Coral reefs are one of the richest ecosystems on the planet, and many of its species can only be found in our part of the world.

Sadly, never before have our reefs been so imperilled. Exacerbated by access to modern technology, unsustainable practices create destruction on a scale previously unknown. Dynamiting, dredging, coral trading - these are just a few ways in which we "bite the hand that feeds us." In some cases we also literally "love our reefs to death" when tourism and other recreational activities are not carefully managed and result in damage to the precious coral and the life it supports.

In addition to the traditional threats we are faced with perhaps the gravest threat to reefs ever: the impacts of accelerated global climate change. While not a new problem, only recently have we understood the nature and extent of the threat posed to reefs. The results are alarming.

Clearly, the time has come for each of us to take active steps to protect our reefs. In this regard, I am pleased that the SPREP Governing Council has designated 2008 as the Pacific Year of the Reef. Through this newsletter, I hope you will learn more about reefs in general, mangroves and marine species, and steps we can all take to ensure their survival into the future.



Region launches 2008 Pacific Year of the Reef campaign

Future objectives of marine and coral reef projects in the Pacific region, as well as lessons learnt in the past, have been translated into the two key messages for the 2008 Pacific Year of the Reef (PYOR) campaign by SPREP and its partners. The two key messages embody the campaign slogan of 'strong reefs, strong islands' and reflect the current and potential pivotal roles of reefs in Pacific island life.

These messages provide the focus of regional campaign activities targeted at policy and decision makers among SPREP Members. Activities of the campaign will build on the solid foundation of awareness raised during the highly successful 1997 Pacific Year of the Coral Reef according to Tamara Logan, SPREP's Education and Social Communications Adviser.

"This year's campaign is more strategic in looking beyond raising awareness to inciting action at national and community levels. The campaign hopes to encourage changes in people's practices by promoting incentives and reducing barriers," Ms Logan explained.

"This year-long campaign is only the beginning. Sustainable use of coral reefs will require long-term commitment by policy makers to protect one of the most unique features of this region," she elaborated.

The regional campaign will be officially launched on 27 February in Port Vila, Vanuatu. The 2008 PYOR campaign is part of the global 2008 International Year of the Reef programme of the International Coral Reef Initiative.



2008 PYOR Key messages

Ms Caroline Vieux, SPREP's Coral Reef Management Officer

"Our first key message of 'provider, protector' sums up the importance of coral reefs to our livelihoods, lifestyles, and cultures; and as a defender of our islands against destructive events such as storm surges."

"The other key message is 'it's time to give back' which encourages action that builds on the high levels of awareness about the status and threats to coral reefs in the Pacific."

REEFS
PROTECT
IT'S TIME TO
GIVE BACK





School competition deadline extended

Enthusiastic response to two regional school competitions launched by SPREP and its partners as part of the 2008 Pacific Year of the Reef (PYOR) campaign has prompted the extension of the deadline for one of the competitions through the end of March. The first phase of the secondary schools competition, 'challengecoralreef,' will now close on Friday, 28 March 2008. Participants in the competition now have more than two months to complete action plans as required in Phase One.

According to SPREP's Coral Reef management Officer, Caroline Vieux, both '**challengecoralreef**' and '**Legends of the Reef**' (a competition for primary school students) were designed to demonstrate the need for urgent, concerted action to effectively protect Pacific reefs.

"Both competitions are designed to encourage people to connect and cooperate with others for reef conservation and protection. Secondary school groups will benefit from partnerships with Government agencies and non-Government organisations in the 'challengecoralreef' competition. Similarly, primary school students will need to talk with community elders in the course of preparing their entries for the 'Legends of the Reef' competition," Ms Vieux explained.

Guidelines and a workbook for both competitions can be obtained from the SPREP website at www.sprep.org/pyor. Digital submission of entries is encouraged and all participants in both competitions will receive participation packs. Competition prizes have been made possible by the CRISP programme, ICRAN, and UNF.

Commencement of competitions coincided with the launch of the 2008 International Year of the Reef campaign in Washington, DC USA on 25 January 2008 by the International Coral Reef Initiative. The launch symposium and meeting were attended by Ms Vieux, who made a presentation on the 2008 Pacific Year of the Reef campaign.

2008 PYOR school competitions



The three-phased '**challengecoralreef**' competition requires groups of secondary school students to develop action plans of activities to protect a reef in their area. School groups submitting the five best action plans will receive funding to implement key components of their plans. The overall champion will be invited to send a representative to present their work at the International Coral Reef Symposium in Florida, USA in July 2008.

'**Legends of the Reefs**' is a primary school competition that aims to capture legends or stories that demonstrate the importance of reefs to Pacific island life. Entrants are required to write about a legend or story concerning a reef in their area and draw a poster depicting the story. Entries for this competition should reach SPREP by 30 March 2008, and will be displayed at all SPREP meetings and events.





Guam Governor proclaims 2008 Year of the Reef

Romina King, *Guam IYOR08 Focal Point*

A proclamation declaring 2008 as Guam's "Year of the Reef" was signed by Governor Felix P. Camacho on 1 February. The signing marked the official launch of Guam's International Year of the Reef campaign, developed by the Guam Coastal Management Program in conjunction with the Pacific Islands Regional Office of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

Ms Evangeline Lujan, Administrator of the Guam Coastal Management Program and Guam's point of contact for the U.S. Coral Reef Task Force, welcomed the support for protecting Guam's natural resources.

"It is admirable that our current administration recognises the value of Guam's reefs and is supportive of our efforts. Coral reef ecosystems are extremely important for our culture, economy, and environment, and must be protected for current and future generations," Ms Lujan said.

Two of the planned programs are 'Guardians of the Reef' and user-generated public service announcements (PSAs). 'Guardians of the Reef' will be led by junior and senior high school students from two environmental clubs. These students will explain the importance of Guam's reefs in a creative, fun, and interactive presentation to inspire younger generations to become 'Guardians of the Reef'.

"Third graders look up to their older peers and we're hoping messages about coral reef protection will be absorbed differently coming from the 'cool,' older kids as opposed to adults," Ms Lujan explained.

She acknowledged the support of local and federal partner agencies for these and other activities that will promote active community stewardship of this precious resource throughout 2008.

Romina King is a Natural Resource Management Specialist for the Guam Coastal Management Program. She can be contacted on **671.475.9666** or via email at **rominaking@gmail.com** for more information, or visit **http://www.guamiyor08.com**.

Guardians of the Reef and PSAs

Guardians of the Reef is an innovative environmental education program specifically developed for third-graders focusing on the following questions:

- What are coral reefs?
- Why are coral reefs important to Guam?
- What threatens coral reefs?
- What we can do to protect coral reefs?

Residents of Guam will be invited to create original 20 second PSAs that will be uploaded to the YouTube Internet video-hosting site. The general public will vote for their favourite PSAs, with winners to be aired during 2008.

Proclamation and fair kick off Hawai'i campaign

Catherine Toth, *Outreach Manager,
The Nature Conservancy, Hawai'i*



One of the booths at the Hawai'i launch of the International Year of the Reef campaign. The launch was attended by more than 200 people. Photo courtesy of Catherine Toth.

More than 200 people turned out at the State Capitol for the signing of a proclamation by Hawai'i Governor Linda Lingle declaring 2008 as the International Year of the Reef in Hawai'i. Keith Rollman also signed a proclamation to launch a national campaign on behalf of Honolulu Mayor, Mufi Hannemann, on 25 January 2008.

The highlight of the day was a speech by famed navigator Nainoa Thompson, who urged the standing room-only crowd at the Capitol to take action to preserve what remains of this important natural resource.

Those present were able to visit more than 30 educational booths around the Capitol. Booths provided information on the various threats to the health of coral reefs, including alien invasive species, destructive fishing methods, and land-based pollution. One booth served deep-fried ta'ape (blue-striped snapper) to demonstrate the preparation of this plentiful introduced fish. Another served a gorilla ogo salad which made use of an invasive seaweed that has proliferated on Hawai'i's reefs and smothered native limu.

The event kicked-off a year-long campaign in the islands that makes Hawai'i part of a global campaign aimed at raising awareness about the state of the world's reefs and their ecosystems.

Enquiries can be directed to **cloth@tnc.org**.



CRISP programme updates

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 improve knowledge of the biodiversity, status, functioning, management, and protection of coral ecosystems. CRISP also supports wide dissemination of this information in Pacific islands and is a major partner in SPREP's 2008 Pacific Year of the Reef campaign. Here are updates of a selection of existing CRISP projects implemented by SPREP and other agencies.

SEM-Pasifika Guidelines

New guidelines for socio-economic monitoring will be released in March after extensive regional consultations, circulations of drafts, and a trial in Papua New Guinea. The content and format of these SEM-Pasifika Guidelines were drafted at a multi-stakeholder workshop in Fiji in May 2007, followed by a launch at the 8th Conference on Nature Conservation in the Pacific, and a trial during a train-the-trainer workshop in Papua New Guinea. The 18 participants at this workshop, including eight from local communities, tested the draft guidelines in three local villages.

The new guidelines, being developed by Community Conservation Network of Hawaii, will complement manuals already in wide use in the Pacific and serve as the Pacific version of socio-economic monitoring guidelines of the Global Coral Reef Monitoring Network and the NOAA Coral Reef Conservation Program.



Trainees testing the draft SEM-Pasifika Guidelines in one of the villages on Sariba Island, PNG during the Training of Trainers workshop in October 2007. Photo courtesy of Mike Guilbeaux.

ReefBase Pacific

by Pip Cohen, ReefBase Pacific Project Coordinator

The Pacific is the first regional focus of ReefBase, the world's leading information system on coral reefs. The ReefBase Pacific project is coordinated by the WorldFish Center and is jointly funded by the Agence Francaise de Developpement and the United Nations Fund. The project has recently generated a database DVD containing extensive information relating to reef fisheries and coral reef research, management, monitoring, conservation, and education in the Pacific region. Project activities during 2008 will increase the volume and range of information available on subsequent DVDs and web-based databases.

The focus of the project is to improve accessibility and availability of information on critical components of the dynamic relationship between people and reefs in the categories of people and livelihoods; natural systems; institutions and governance; and external threats and opportunities. The tools produced by this project are designed to provide support to those reef resource management initiatives that consider implications for fisheries, livelihoods, and biodiversity.



Contact Pip Cohen for distribution details of the ReefBase Pacific DVD version 1.0.

You can contact Pip on p.cohen@cgiar.org.

Ridge to Reef

CRISP, through SPREP, will support the establishment of a multi-stakeholder decision-making committee of the Efate Land Management Area in Vanuatu. The project will focus on supporting the committee in its infancy by providing financial and human resources.

Reef Economic Valuations

Kiribati has expressed interest in providing a site for a reef economic valuation study to support decision making for altering appropriate legislation. Studies are useful investments that could also be used for advocacy, decision-making, and as the basis for policy options. SPREP is seeking expressions of interest from other groups that would like their sites assessed. A summary of a previous valuation provides a glimpse at the information derived:

Total Economic Valuation of Navakavu LMMA

The aims of the study were to estimate both the total economic value (TEV) of coastal ecosystems within the Navakavu Locally Managed Marine Area (LMMA) in Fiji and the economic value of the LMMA management intervention, which began in January 2002.

The economic value of key goods and services provided by marine ecosystems within the Navakavu LMMA were identified as: fisheries, coastal protection, waste assimilation, research and education benefits and bequest values. Results showed that the TEV of coastal ecosystems within the protected area ranges from US\$1,764,221 – \$1,786,885 per year, and the present value of coastal ecosystems over a 20-year period is between US\$16,740,231 and \$16,955,843) using a 10% discount rate. Fisheries associated with these coastal ecosystems makes up about 45% of this value. The next most important service provided is coastal protection, which accounts for 33% of the TEV.

Analysis of changes in finfish catches suggested that there was an average increase of 3% between mid-2002 and late-2006. The establishment of the LMMA was suggested as the cause of the increase. The value of these changes to the local community was approximated at US\$36,628. It is expected that the economic benefit to local villages from the LMMA will continue to increase with finfish and invertebrate catches for several years.

The complete report by Tanya O'Garra can be accessed from www.crisponline.net. Groups interested in being part of the project should contact Caroline Vieux at SPREP via email at carolinev@sprep.org.

Free CRISP resources



**Funafuti Atoll
Coral Reef
Restoration
Project, Republic
of Tuvalu
Baseline Report**

Funafuti Atoll was the second location chosen for a low-tech coral reef restoration method being researched by Foundation for the Peoples of the South Pacific International as a viable management tool for local communities. The baseline report covers the establishment and initial monitoring phases which occurred between late 2006 and early 2007. The former activity involved donor site selection and coral transplanting while the latter one focussed on assessments of coral and fish at recipient sites and impacts of extraction on donor sites a month after transplanting occurred.



**Young Coral
Reef Fish of
Wallis and the
Central Pacific:
An identification
guide**

An identification guide to young coral reef fish of Wallis and the Central Pacific by Matthieu Juncker was published in English and French with the help of CRISP. The guide was based on research conducted for the Wallis Environment Service in 2005 on the specific diversity of reef fish larvae colonising the Wallis lagoon. The guide is targeted at researchers, decision makers, and the general public.

These and other reports of CRISP projects are available in English and French from www.crisponline.net.



The Ramsar Convention

What does it do?

It promotes the conservation and wise use of wetlands around the world and works to ensure the goods and services provided by wetlands are maintained for the future.

What is a wetland?

Wetlands are areas where water is the primary factor controlling the environment and the associated plant and animal life. The Ramsar definition of wetlands is very broad and ranges from lakes and rivers to mangroves and coral reefs.

The Ramsar Convention and SPREP

SPREP's Associate Ramsar Officer, Vainuupo Jungblut, helps the Pacific island countries that are Ramsar signatories to meet their obligations under the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands. SPREP also provides assistance to interested non-party Pacific Island countries to join the convention.

The Ramsar Convention in the Pacific

Five Pacific island countries are currently Ramsar signatories: Fiji, Marshall Islands, Palau, Papua New Guinea and Samoa. Kiribati and Nauru are currently in the process of becoming signatories, with a goal of joining by October 2008.

SPREP's Associate Ramsar Officer is Vainuupo Jungblut E: vainuupoj@sprep.org

World Wetlands Day (WWD)

The second of February every year is "World Wetlands Day" to celebrate the date of the signing of the Ramsar Convention and to remind the world of the importance of our wetlands. "Healthy Wetlands, Healthy People," was the theme for this year's event. Here's a glimpse at some of the activities.



Palau

Ms Tarita Holm (National Ramsar focal point)
*Forest Management Coordinator, Office of the Minister
Ministry of Resources & Development*

"We had short PowerPoint presentation on what WWD and wetlands are at Melekeok Elementary School. Then we visited the Ramsar Site at Lake Ngardok Nature Reserve where Jesse Cezanski-Moir from the Belau National Museum gave a talk on the importance of insects."



Marshall Islands

Mr John Bungitak (National Ramsar focal point)
General Manager Environment Protection Authority

In Majuro:

"Over 120 people attended a public meeting at Ajeltake Community, about establishing a community coastal conservation area. The Conservation Officer, David Tibon, made a presentation to the meeting on the expected benefits, roles and responsibilities of the stakeholders, and the role of the Environmental Protection Agency. The community youth sang songs."

On Jaluit Atoll:

"Student's and teachers of the Jaluit High Health and Environment Club visited two elementary schools to give presentations. The main issues discussed were mangroves and coral reefs. There was also an Education Field Trip and a guided tour through the Jaluit Mangrove Forest with Maity Bungitak, our Monitoring Officer. The science teachers gave lectures on World Wetlands Day. These teachers asked all students to submit drawings or written essays on two themes - 'healthy wetlands, healthy people,' and 'the important uses of wetlands.' The best three will receive awards."



Time for Turtles

Monitoring turtles in the Pacific

In October, November and December 2007, training workshops in monitoring turtle nesting, including field activities, were conducted in Kiribati, Tuvalu and Tonga. SPREP's Marine Species Officer Lui Bell worked with different agencies, departments, organisations and community representatives to help them establish turtle monitoring programmes.

SPREP's Marine Species officer is Lui Bell E: luiB@sprep.org



Kiribati 28 Sept – 8 Oct



- A one-day turtle nesting monitoring training for the core group (Environment and Conservation Division of the Ministry of Environment, Lands and Agricultural Development; Fisheries Department; and an Environment Youth Club) on turtle monitoring surveys.
- Establishing a Turtle Monitoring programme in Nooto and Marenamuka Villages in North Tarawa, including tagging and taking measurements of a nester
- Training for the village turtle nesting monitors.
- A two-week training attachment in Australia for one Officer on Kiritimati Island to support the development of a turtle programme.



Tuvalu 30 Oct – 7 Nov



- A one-day turtle nesting monitoring training for the core group (Fisheries Department; Tuvalu Fishermen Association; NAFICOT; Traditional Turtle Hunter; Tuvalu National Council of Women; Department of Environment; Funafuti Town Council (Kapule); and the Tuvalu Association of NGOs)
- Practical exercise on measuring, tagging and tissue-sampling with two live turtles that were caught then released into the wild.
- Daytime visits and night turtle surveys on islets within the Funafuti Conservation Area.
- Turtle landing survey in the Funafuti area.



Tonga 26 Nov – 7 Dec



- Two workshops for the core turtle monitoring group (Department of Environment, Department of Fisheries). The first workshop was held before the survey activities and the second workshop was on practical exercises that covered the measuring, tagging and tissue-sampling of turtles. The second workshop included a representative from the 'Oua community.
- Turtle nesting monitoring activities conducted on Fonua'ika, Nukulei, Luanamo, and Lekaleka in Central Ha'apai. The four main activities were: daytime turtle nest and track surveys; night-time nesting turtle survey; turtle landings for consumption/sales; flipper tagging and tissue sampling.

Turtles and climate change

One of the biggest challenges facing the turtles and their nesting activities are the effects of climate change. Coastal erosion on turtle nesting areas is becoming a huge problem. Erosion makes it difficult for turtles to come up and nest due to steep beaches. In some cases, the area suitable for nesting has simply eroded away. Turtles will normally try to find suitable land to nest nearby, however if it that proves difficult, they will instead lay their eggs in the ocean - these will never hatch.

Calendar of Pacific events



REEF TALK

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

1
Jan

- Launch of the International Year of the Reef, Washington DC
- 'Legends of the Reef' and 'challengecoralreef' guidelines and workbook available for regional schools competitions
- Launch of 2008 Pacific Year of the Reef webpage
- Hawai'i Year of the Reef campaign begins

2
Feb

- IYOR08 kicks off in Guam
- Marine Preserve Focus of Guam IYOR08 campaign and Kites Festival in Asan, Guam
- ★ **Regional launch of the 2008 Pacific Year of the Reef campaign, Vanuatu on 27 February**

3
Mar

- National campaign launches in Pacific islands
- Land-based sources of pollution focus of Guam campaign and Chamorro Month festivities in Guam
- Coral reef ecology and survey methods training by Reef Check Hawai'i
- ★ **Closure of Phase 1 of 'challengecoralreef' (28 March) and regional primary schools competition (30 March)**

4
Apr

- Regional and national events continue
- Watersheds focus of Guam campaign
- Earth Day celebrations in Guam and Hawai'i
- Solutions to Coastal Disasters Conference in Hawai'i
- Announcement of winner of regional primary schools competition

5
May

- Focus on recreation activities in Guam IYOR08 with surfing, paddling, and swimming competitions
- International Day for Biological Diversity
- ★ **Closure of Phase 2 of regional secondary schools competition (30 May)**

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.

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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
- Co-fund 'challengecoralreef' and 'Legends of the Reef' competitions
- Let artists know about SPREP's programmes during the Pacific Arts Festival
- Support the development of a behaviour-change workshop kit

Campaign resources

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

