



A flying success: The Kakerori Recovery Programme

by Anna Tiraa, Takitumu Conservation Area Support Officer

Established in early 1996, the Takitumu Conservation Area (TCA) is the home of many unique plants and animals. However, few need more care than the critically endangered Kakerori, or Rarotonga Flycatcher.

The 155-hectare Takitumu Conservation Area (TCA) is located on the south-east side of inland Rarotonga, Cook Islands. It is owned by three major landowning groups, and contains the core breeding grounds of the Kakerori (*Pomarea dimidiata*). In fact, the conservation area was primarily established to protect this unique bird.

The main dangers to the Kakerori are introduced predators, particularly the ship rat (*Rattus rattus*) which preys on the nestlings. In 1987 a recovery programme to help save the Kakerori commenced. This programme involves a number of activities designed to help the Kakerori breed successfully.

In 1989 there were 29 birds left. At the last annual census in 1996, their population stood at 134.

The breeding season lasts from mid-October to early January. Before it starts, an annual census of the Kakerori is undertaken. This involves counting the adult birds, which can be recognised by the combination of

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An islander's perspective

by Anna Tiraa

"All my days I have been bounded and hunted. It would be a comfort to know that there is a refuge somewhere for one like me."

In 1989, I started work for the Cook Islands Conservation Service (CICS), now called the Cook Islands Environment Service. A management plan for the Kakerori had been drafted, and one of the activities was a rat eradication programme. Studies showed that the introduced ship rat was interfering with the Kakerori's breeding.

Ed Saul, who had taken leave from his job in Aotearoa, started work on the Kakerori Recovery Programme (KRP) as a volunteer. It was the start of a close working relationship and I soon came to respect Ed's dedication and commitment to saving this unique little bird. With the help of staff of the CICS, that year we laid poison in Totokoitu valley and the ridge surrounding this valley. My initial impression was that it was refreshing to get out of the office and close to nature.

The rat eradication programme (part of the KRP) is labour intensive and monotonous work. Tramping up and down Totokiotu valley was tough going, but that was nothing compared to the successive years. In 1990, Ed was back on

the island and the poison lines were extended. I was now getting more exercise than the previous year. We were going into the hills more frequently—almost on a daily basis.

Due to a lack of workers, it was common to separate in order to cover more poison stations. Thus, there were many times when we worked on our own. Yet cultural and spiritual beliefs meant that local staff did not want to work on their own in the hills. It was getting harder to get our people to undertake this type of work.



There was an incident in 1991 I will never forget. One day, while up in the hills, a new CICS staff member (who was from one of the outer islands) asked if I smelt an unpleasant and unusual odour. I could not smell anything unusual or unfamiliar. He was very concerned about this. Not long after this episode his wife passed away and, later, I found out that he had related the smell to her death.

Strangely enough I never felt uncomfortable when I worked in the hills on my

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News from the SPBCP-funded Conservation Areas

Ngaremeduu, Palau

The Ngaremeduu Project Preparation Document (PPD) has in the last few weeks finally received formal approval from the Governor, Speaker, and Council of Chiefs of all three states covered by the proposed Conservation Area. This is a magnificent achievement, and the end of a long process of consultation. Congratulations to all involved!

Pohnpei, FSM

The PRA/community planning process has now been completed for two of the six municipalities, Kitt and Nett. Each of these communities has now produced a Community Action Plan, committing itself to undertake certain actions. These include setting aside certain areas of forest for conservation and various types of sustainable use.

Community Conservation Officers have been trained in the use of Global Positioning System (GPS) equipment and the preparation of maps, while the marking of conservation forest boundaries has commenced in the Woahun Koahpin, Soamwoai and Senpehn areas. A new state law on community-based resource management has been drafted to replace the earlier Watershed Forest Management Law. Hopefully this new law will recognise the forest conservation areas defined by local communities.

A plan is also being developed to support the establishment of a sustainable lowland sakau industry, as an alternative to the environmentally destructive upland sakau industry.

Other plans for the near future include a two-day strategic planning retreat for the Conservation Area Coordinating Committee (CACC), the development of a design for a



Photo by Michael McGrath (SPBCP)

Trainer Grant Trewenack and participants at the Regional Ecotourism Planning and Management workshop in Kosrae.

Pohnpei Community Conservation Trust Fund to support CA management following the cessation of SPBCP funding and an exchange visit to Kosrae to assist them with the development of a watershed forest protection project along the same lines as that which has been implemented in Pohnpei.

Two major training events are programmed for the balance of the year. In July, specialists in biodiversity and socio-economic monitoring will make the first of two visits to Pohnpei. During their stay, they will develop a model for community-based monitoring that is relevant to Pohnpei and train government staff and community representatives in monitoring skills. Later in the year, more than 25 Community Conservation Officers will receive comprehensive training in conservation theory and reserve design, conflict resolution, monitoring and enforcement and grantsmanship/fundraising.

Utwa-Walung Marine Park, FSM

With the financial assistance from the US Land Grant, this project has provided training in traditional methods of canoe construction. Successful participants from this

course will be eligible to join an additional tour guide training course. After completing this, they will then be able to guide tourists along the eight kilometre mangrove channel between Utwa and Walung villages.

Funding has been secured from the FSM and Kosrae State Governments to cover the cost of designing and constructing a visitor centre in the mangrove forests outside Utwa village. A design has already been selected and construction is expected to start in the near future.

Comprehensive aerial photography of Kosrae was completed in February this year. Comparison of this data with the 1975 survey will allow accurate estimates of the rate of forest loss over the past two decades. The US Forest Service will also be assisting the project to establish permanent monitoring plots in the mangrove forests, so that environmental impacts can be swiftly detected and corrective action taken.

One of the key decisions that will affect the future of the Marine Park involves the question of whether the

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From the Programme Manager's Desk



Greetings to all the CASOs, CACCs and other friends of CASOLink! It's been more than six months since the last issue of our newsletter. This is not very good. However, work pressure on our staff at headquarters in the last few months has been heavier than usual and this has contributed largely to the delay in producing this issue. We'll try to do better next time!

On a more positive note, the past few months have been busy and a productive period for the SPBCP and some of the conservation area projects under the Programme. There has been a lot of development both at the SPBCP and CAP level during this period—too many to mention in this issue of the newsletter—and I want to thank those of you who contributed articles and news to this issue. Keep up the good work.

Some of you would have already met Sam Sesega who joined the Programme in February 1997 as our Programme Officer (Resource Management). With Sam on board, we now have a full team of staff at SPBCP. This has improved our capacity to respond to your requests for assistance in the past few months.

A number of projects are now moving from project design and planning to implementation. I am particularly pleased to see increasing emphasis on sustainable income/benefit-generating activities. Ecotourism appears to be the flavour for many CAs while others are looking closely at other options. Resource surveys and data collection are also being carried out in many projects. These will certainly increase our knowledge of the resources of our CAs and would help you manage these resources sus-

tainably. I wish you success in these endeavours.

Most, if not all of you would be aware of the looming end of the SPBCP's five years life span in 1998. This is less than 18 months away. However, this is not the time to panic and rush into doing things without proper planning and adequate consultation with your communities. I am optimistic that UNDP and the GEF would grant us an extension of the Programme with existing funds as long as we continue to show progress. A review of progress with your projects may be needed in order to support our proposal for extension. I will keep you informed of developments in this regard.

We have not added to the number of CAs since the end of 1995. However, I have now received new concept proposals for the Rock Islands in Palau and Jaluit Atoll in the Marshall Islands. These will be considered together with the PPD for Cook Islet in Kiribati at the upcoming meeting of the Technical and Management Advisory Group (TMAG) in August. If all three proposals are approved, this would bring to 17 the number of CAs supported by the Programme.

We have just successfully conducted an Ecotourism workshop in Kosrae, FSM, in July for six CAPs under the SPBCP. We were fortunate to have participants from other projects funded by NZODA in the Solomon Islands to share their own experience with us during the workshop. This type of interchange was found very useful and should be further encouraged in future. The report of the workshop will be produced and distributed to all of you when it's published. We are also looking into

developing guidelines for the development of ecotourism activities within your CAs to assist you with this task. We should have this well in hand towards the end of the year.

There are a number of key developments in the next six months you should be aware of.

Firstly, the TMAG will be meeting for the fifth time in Apia from 25 to 27 August 1997. This meeting will be making some very important recommendations for the future of the Programme. Amongst the issues to be discussed are: the potential for extension of the SPBCP beyond 1998; the lessons learned from the Programme; indicators for measuring success of the SPBCP; and consideration of the three CA concept proposals from Palau, Marshall Islands and Kiribati.

The second important event planned for the second half of the year is the Sixth South Pacific Conference on Nature Conservation and Protected Areas to be held in Pohnpei from 29 September to 3 October 1997. There has been a great deal of interest in this conference with registered participants now totalling 125. I believe many of you have registered and I look forward to meeting you in Pohnpei. You will be pleased to know that there will be plenty of time at the conference for discussing community-based conservation areas and marine protected areas. Your contribution to these discussions will

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Vatthe Conservation Area Project—The first three years

by Russell Nari, Project Coordinator

In this article, Russell Nari discusses some of the issues which the Vatthe Conservation Area Project has had to confront—such as land disputes, lack of community commitment, intra-village conflicts and differing perceptions about problems—and the strategies that have been developed to address them.



From left to right: Russell Nari, Iosefatu Reti and Charles Vatu at the Vatthe Conservation Area

The Vatthe Conservation Area is located at the southern end of Big Bay, on the island of Santo in Vanuatu. It is a 2,276 hectare area of lowland alluvial rainforest owned by the villages of Sara and Matantas and managed by the Vanuatu Environment Unit. The Vatthe Conservation Area Project (CAP) was initiated in 1994. Since then, it has undergone three distinct phases of the planning process:

- **Phase I:** The 1994 work plans and budgets were prepared by the Environment Unit after giving consideration to community inputs from the various workshops as well as a quality of life assessment conducted in 1993 as part of the biodiversity survey. Most of the activities were based on assumptions, with very little discussion with the community. The prime focus of the Environment Unit (EU) at this time was to access funds by

meeting the donor's requirements and deadlines. It was seen by the project management that full community involvement would have been premature, as many of issues were yet to be resolved.

- **Phase II:** In 1995, there was more community participation in preparing the project work plan and budget, but mainly at the approval stages. Most of the activities were based on progress from the previous work programmes, which did not always address the real issues as perceived by the community.
- **Phase III:** In 1996, the community assumed control over work plans, activities and budget. This is seen by the project management as a major achievement. The appointment of two Conservation Support Officers and the greater commitment shown by individuals are seen as indicators of a potentially sustainable project.

These gradual changes have occurred due to the project management's desire to give the community as much control and involvement as possible to enhance their commitment and interest in the project as well as to help them take responsibility for the project

In addition, community development needs were identified through a PRA-style "Community Needs Assessment" in early 1994. The community identified water supply, education, community health, sanitation and communication as priority needs. Unfortunately these activities are outside the programme and donor guidelines. The project has endeavoured to link the communities with other government and non-government agencies that can assist in addressing these needs.

First decisions

In September 1994, the Environment Unit presented a short-list of candidates for the position of Conservation Area Support Officer (locally known as the Project Manager) to the two communities of Sara and Matantas. The communities were asked to select a project manager who they could trust and cooperate with. More recently, two Conservation Support Officers, one from each village, were appointed by the Community Management Committee (CMC) to work closely with the project manager on a part-time basis.

Involving the communities in hiring project staff helped demonstrate that they had real decision-making

responsibilities. Their selection of a worker who they felt that they could trust and cooperate with also had advantages for project implementation. The newly appointed CSOs provided the transition between an external project manager and total community control when external funding is withdrawn. It has also strengthened the community involvement in direct management activities.

Some of the key social issues that emerged as the Environment Unit and the two communities began to implement the project are summarised in Table 1.

Lack of commitment

Initially the community had very little understanding of the project. At this stage the existing internal conflicts and divisions would have

delayed and possibly prevented progress if community participation had been implemented and awareness raising had taken place. The workplans and budgets were based on the Environment Unit's interpretation of community views with little community involvement. As a consequence, the community had a very poor understanding of the project concept and goals and therefore made no commitment to the project. Due to this lack of commitment most planned activities were not implemented.

Once funding was secured, more time was devoted to raising community awareness and provided opportunities for participation. In the third year (1996), workplans and budgets are largely prepared by the community. While it is too early to make definitive judgements, the process seems to have

stimulated greater commitment towards project activities.

Land disputes

A long-term land dispute between the two participating communities created near conflict situations, prevented cooperation and was the major obstacle to the project. To address the need for cooperation, a consultant conducted a sociological survey to address: ethnographic background; villagers' views on the idea of a CAP; social impacts; and potential problems and management issues. The study recommended no cooperation between the two villages. It was stated explicitly that if the project required villagers to cooperate they would oppose the project.

In response, the Environment Unit negotiated separately with the landowning families of both villages. However following a court ruling on the land dispute in 1994, and the realisation by landowners in both villages that the project could not proceed until the dispute was resolved, both parties began healing the rifts and explored ways of working together, jointly managing the area and sharing the benefits. The decision was cemented by a traditional peace ceremony in April 1995. These initiatives were taken by the two communities without direct involvement of the project organisers.

Intra-village conflict

One village had its own internal divisions. One group consisted of the early settlers, families from further west along the coast. The other is an immigrant population who, on the invitation of the chief landowners, came from inland to settle on the coast. The village split was manifested in a number of ways:

- *Residential separation.* The original settlers live close to the shore, while the mountain people live at the back of the village;

Table 1: Social Issues affecting the Conservation Project

SOCIAL PROBLEM	CONSEQUENCES	SOLUTIONS IMPLEMENTED/PROPOSED
Ineffective community leadership	Lack of respect Lack of organisation Lack of communal sense Lack of cooperation Lack of trust Land, religion, political, and other forms of conflicts within and outside the communities	Conduct leadership training for men and women in the community. Organise tours by the heads of the different groupings within the communities to other project sites to gain experience and encourage discussion. For example, the landowners' trip to Fiji in early 1995 renewed commitment to the project and the willingness to cooperate, as evidenced by the resolution of a decade-long dispute.
Low level of education	Lack of understanding of the project concept Lack of vision Fear of change Jealousy (resentment to project) Lack of women's participation	Practical experience of similar project activities elsewhere has proven effective. Frequent training workshops or short courses for men and women of the villages. Note that consistency is crucial for representation in various areas of the project; women and men's business training, nut training, Community Management Workshop, work experience at small resorts etc.
Lack of motivation	Lack of participation and commitment to the project	Payment in kind for services to the project. This increases the level of commitment and the sense that the project appreciates the communities' contributions. Organise trips and training activities, and respond to perceived community needs as incentives to the community.

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TOOLS for NATURE CONSERVATION

The Sixth South Pacific Conference on Nature Conservation and Protected Areas will be centred on the theme of “TOOLS—for supporting nature conservation and protected area initiatives in the Pacific Islands region”.

This conference continues a series, begun in 1975, that forms the premier international and regional event for reviewing progress and setting future agendas for biodiversity conservation and sustainable use in the Pacific islands region.



In honour of the 1997 Pacific Year of the Coral Reef, a one-day special focus on Marine Protected Areas is being developed as part of the Protected Areas Tool. This is also the first time the Conference has been held in Micronesia. It provides a special opportunity to celebrate and focus on conservation initiatives in the Federated States of Micronesia, Guam, Kiribati, Nauru, Northern Mariana

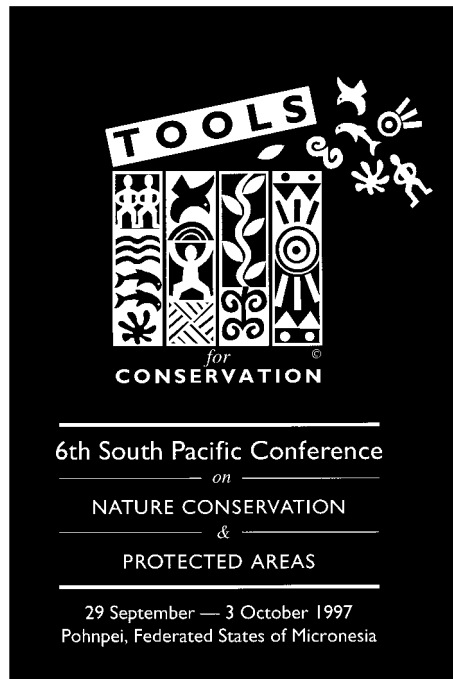


conservation initiatives. Lessons learnt from work carried out in SPBCP Conservation Areas will be particularly important in both the protected areas and enterprise development working groups. Conference delegates will have the opportunity of visiting the SPBCP supported Pohnpei Watershed Management Project as a pre-conference field trip.

The “TOOLS” theme was deliberately chosen in order to draw out lessons learnt of what has worked and what has not amongst the various initiatives aimed at the conservation and sustainable use of the region’s biodiversity. Four key nature conservation TOOLS will be focused on during the Sixth Conference, with the overall objective of producing a “toolbox” of practical, solution-oriented guidelines for use.

The TOOLS focused on in the Sixth Conference will be:

- Protected Areas—marine protected areas and community-based conservation areas;
- Enterprise Development and Conservation Incentives;
- Environmental Trust Funds; and
- World Heritage Convention.



Islands, Republic of the Marshall Islands and Palau.

The Sixth Conference will build on the previous conferences through revision of the Action Strategy for Nature Conservation and Protected Areas and by keeping faith with the strong emphasis on community involvement and partnerships in



The Conference is a key opportunity to find out about work carried out in the region and to join together on common agendas for further work.

For more information about the Conference, please contact:

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around-the-island road is to be extended and, if so, along which route. The project will be reviewing the situation to determine if additional information, covering the full range of social, economic and environmental considerations, would be useful in supporting the decision-making process.

Jaluit Atoll, Marshall Islands

The Marshall Islands Environment Protection Authority has identified Jaluit Atoll as a potential site for a conservation area. SPBCP staff have been invited to visit the Marshall Islands for consultations with EPA personnel and examination of the feasibility of the proposal.

Kiritimati Atoll, Kiribati

The first draft of a PPD for a proposed new conservation area on Kiritimati Atoll in the Line Islands, in the easternmost extremity of Kiribati, is now under review by SPBCP and Kiribati Government agencies. Further consultation is expected before the document is finalised.

Funafuti Marine Conservation Area, Tuvalu

The draft marine parks legislation, prepared with the assistance of UNEP, has now been tabled in the Tuvalu Parliament. The CASO is in the process of developing an environmental education plan for the area, with the assistance of SPREP's Environmental Education, Information and Capacity-building Division staff.

The Canada Fund has agreed to fund the purchase of a boat, engine and safety equipment to be used with the project. Dive training for the CASO and staff of associated agencies has recently been carried out by a Samoa-based consultant (actually the former Director of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries for Tokelau); to be followed by training in marine survey techniques. SPBCP is seeking to identify a volunteer marine biologist willing to work with the project.

Other activities currently underway include the completion of boundary marking for the area, a poster competition and clean-up campaigns. In the near future, the project will undertake marine and biodiversity surveys.

Arnarvon Islands Marine Conservation Area (AMCA), Solomon Islands

The two Biodiversity Conservation Network (BCN) funded fisheries centres at Posarae and Waghena villages are now in full operation. They are shipping an average of 20 eskies/coolers of fish a week to the Honiara fish markets.

Two 10-day refresher training courses for AMCA conservation officers were conducted in February this year. The courses covered the full range of skills which are needed by Conservation Officers, from basic marine biology and conservation management to safety at sea, radio operation and seamanship.

An important development at AMCA is the decision that Conservation Officers, in addition to their conservation management duties during their 10-day stint at the Arnarvon Islands, should also take on the role of community educators during their off-duty time in their own village. Conservation Officers will soon receive training in the development of community awareness materials to assist them in this task.

Other activities planned for the coming months include plant identification training for Conservation Officers and a study tour to Ha'apai Conservation Area in Tonga, tentatively scheduled for October.

Komarindi Catchment Conservation Area, Solomon Islands

CASO, Nathaniel da Wheya, has been actively involved in preparations for the First National Ecotourism Conference, which was held in Honiara in late May. This event brought together

government and NGO staff working in the fields of community conservation and small-scale tourism with village-level tourist entrepreneurs and specialists in tourism research and marketing. Koroyanitu CASO Semi Lotawa also attended.

The project plans to undertake a comprehensive ecotourism feasibility study in the near future. This will be followed by a pilot tour to Komarindi (with real tourists and local guides), guide training as well as training in the development of promotional and information materials.

Vatthe Conservation Area, Vanuatu

Over recent months the Vatthe project have been fully occupied with the development of ecotourism activities. Two major ecotourism planning studies, one covering community management structures, and one covering marketing and promotion aspects, are due for completion this month.

Several community planning workshops have been carried out, where one person completed a Vanuatu Chamber of Commerce/Vanuatu Island Bungalows Association course in tourism management. A follow-up tour guide training course is planned for late June. Construction of six tourist bungalows, complementing the existing project house/temporary lodge, commenced on 20 May 1997. The ecotourism venture has been extensively promoted to wholesalers in Europe, New Caledonia, New Zealand and within Vanuatu.

The Environment Unit is now investigating how to give legal force to the MOU between Matantas and Sara villages which forms the basis for the Conservation Area. Negotiations are underway for the establishment of a rural training centre at Matantas village. In the meantime, a trainer from a nearby village has been organised to conduct a one-week training course for

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village women in screen printing and weaving.

The Farm Support Association, which has been conducting agroforestry trials in Matantas village, is to expand the trials to other crops and to Sara and the peripheral villages. Two Peace Corps volunteers will spend a year in Sara village, commencing in December this year. They will focus on providing training in the skills needed for community development.

Koroyanitu National Heritage Park, Fiji

Project Manager, Seva Tabua, and CASO, Semi Lotawa, have been carrying out intensive field work over the past six months, encouraging the five villages which make up the Koroyanitu project to come to a common understanding regarding the way forward. This work culminated recently in a week-long workshop which established the Koroyanitu National Heritage Park Trust as the body that will have legal responsibility for the protection and management of the Koroyanitu area. This body performs the same role as the CACC in many other SPBCP-supported projects. The same meeting agreed on a structure for the Trust, the division of responsibilities of the various parties involved and draft by-laws to govern the Trust's operation.

A feature of the Koroyanitu project has been its ability to attract support from a wide range of sources. One of the most long-standing supporters, NZODA, has recently confirmed that it wishes to have a continuing involvement with the development of ecotourism in the Koroyanitu area. The first priority for NZODA cooperation will be to improve the standard of vehicle access to the village as the focus of the second stage of ecotourism development, Navilawa. The project will then proceed to develop basic tourist facilities, first at Navilawa and later at Nalotawa.

However, support has come from other, less conventional sources. The most

recent has been the International League for the Protection of Horses (ILPH), which is assisting with the establishment of small-scale saddlery enterprises. Outward Bound provide groups of volunteers to work on specific projects, as do other organisations. For example, a group of Australian nurses is due to arrive mid-year to observe community health issues in the Koroyanitu villages. The Agricultural Extension Service is assisting farmers with vanilla cultivation, whilst the co-operative service department provides auditing services for the village ecotourism co-operatives. One lesson of Koroyanitu's experience is perhaps that lateral thinking can result in assistance from sources that one might not expect.

Ha'apai Conservation Area, Tonga

The first issue of the project newsletter, a most attractive publication, has been circulated throughout Ha'apai. In addition, the first information brochure (on beach combing and marine conservation) has been fully prepared for publication. Translation of the SPBCP-funded Ha'apai video script into Tongan is underway, and it is hoped that a Tongan-language version will be available for circulation in the project area before the end of the year.

Fencing of the only remaining specimen of an endangered mangrove, *Bruguiera gymnorrhiza*, has led to successful regeneration in the fenced-off area. In cooperation with the Forestry Department, cultural and medicinal tree seedlings are being distributed from the Department's Foa nursery for interested villages on 'Uiha and Ha'ano Islands. Village nurseries will soon be established on Lofanga and 'Uiha islands, so that local communities can raise and directly plant out the species that are seen as being a high priority at the community level.

The youth groups have carried out a major clean-up of the Pangai beach front, and educational and awareness activities are now being planned and



implemented in association with women's, church and youth groups. Wall murals with a conservation theme are to be painted at schools in Lofanga and 'Uiha islands.

Much of the project's time has been occupied with preparations for a major botanical and ecological survey of Tofua and Kao islands, to be carried out in July. These two high volcanic islands, one unpopulated and the other with only a few resident families, lie 70 kilometres west of the main Ha'apai group. Virtually all of the remaining natural forest in Ha'apai is found here. They are very difficult to access and the survey, the first thorough study of the flora, is taking on the character of an expedition.

A two-day community tourism awareness workshop has been conducted, laying the groundwork for more intensive ecotourism planning later this year. We are also examining options for funding a consultancy on handicraft development and marketing, ideally in association with the biennial Royal Agricultural Show in Ha'apai in August.

Huvalu Forest Conservation Area, Niue

Three major activities have recently been undertaken by the Huvalu Forest project. These were a six-week management skills training course for



CA staff, organised with the assistance of the United Nations volunteer, Mohammed Bereteh, and a range of Niue Government agencies; a survey of Uga (coconut crab) populations; and a study tour for six landowners and CA staff to Koroyanitu and Ha'apai Conservation Areas.

Two tourist sites in the CA have been upgraded and directional and information signs erected. Plans have been developed for the construction of an information centre/office building in one of the CA villages.

A workshop on income-generating activities and a comprehensive survey of the flora of Huvalu Forest are both planned for the next few months.

Uafato Conservation Area, Samoa

The Uafato village water reticulation system was formally opened by UNDP (Apia) Resident Representative, Tony Patten, on 22 March. This is an important improvement in the infrastructure of this remote village.

Hawaii-based botanist, Dr Arthur Whistler, has largely completed a survey of the flora and will return in September to investigate the environmental impact of the planned expansion of the Afulilo hydroelectric power project adjacent to the Conservation Area. The first phase, a study of the volume of Ifilele (*Intsia*

bijuga) timber in the Conservation Area has been completed; the second phase is expected to be finished by the end of July. Ifilele is a valuable timber which is used for wooden handicrafts, and the timber volume survey is a critical step in the development of a plan for sustainable utilisation of the resource.

Consideration is being given to the extension of Uafato Conservation Area to include the adjacent marine area, and to the possibility that the financial support might be available from the forthcoming IUCN/GBRMPA/World Bank marine protected area project.

Sa'anapu/Sataoa Conservation Area, Samoa

World Biodiversity Day was used as an opportunity to promote the Conservation Area. An "open day" was organised, with handicraft displays, dancing and village feasts. Many visitors came from Apia, an hour's drive away on the other side of Upolu Island. A video currently in the production stage will highlight the achievements of the Conservation Area.

Chinese cabbage is being grown in a common agricultural plot, with the funds being added to a community account to meet expenses associated with the establishment of the ecotourism project.

The project has recently completed an additional fale at Sa'anapu village, and constructed a stone wharf at Sa'anapu as a departure point for canoe tours. Directional and trail signs have been installed and tour guide training for Sa'anapu has been completed.

In the coming months, six canoes will be purchased for the Conservation Area's ecotourism operation. An additional fale and stone wharf will be built at Sataoa, and guide training will be carried out in that village. At Sa'anapu, toilets and showers will be built and the walking trail will be completed. A handicraft development and marketing workshop, focusing on

woven products, will be organised for the women of Sa'anapu and Sataoa.

The project is also reviewing, in association with the Fisheries Department of Samoa, the possibility of establishing a crab farming operation. A marine biologist with experience in crab ecology and population surveys has been contracted to conduct a survey of mangrove crab populations at Sa'anapu/Sataoa in late July. Once the survey has been completed, the same consultant will work with the local community to develop a community-based crab monitoring programme, and will train selected community representatives in the implementation of the programme.

Takitumu Conservation Area, Cook Islands

The rat eradication, vegetation survey and Kakerori (Rarotongan Flycatcher) monitoring programmes continued. In the latter programme, 26 fledgelings were found in the 1996/97 season. A gate was installed on the access track into the valley that will hopefully limit the dumping of unwanted cats.

Track construction and maintenance was carried out, and plans for the overnight shelter were finalised. The site for the shelter was cleared and the septic tank installed. The CASO and one CACC member attended a USP short course in Business, Finance, Investment and Management. Two people were trained in tour guiding skills.

A Takitumu Conservation Area newsletter was produced, along with newspaper articles in Maori and English. The staff also assisted a television crew in making a programme about the Conservation Area.

The project's new volunteer, Rebecca Blackburn, commenced work in July. Over the next few months, the project plans to finish constructing the overnight shelter, and produce a fact sheet, booklet and video on the Conservation Area.

SPBCP Conservation Areas

Approved Projects as at June 1997

CONSERVATION AREA	COUNTRY	AREA	LEAD AGENCY
Takitumu	Cook Islands	155 ha	Ministry of Works, Environment and Physical Planning
Uafato	Samoa	1,400 ha (terrestrial area only)	O Le Siosiomaga (a Samoan NGO)
Ngaremeduu	Palau	At least 859 ha	Division of Conservation and Entomology, Bureau of Natural Resources and Development
Funafuti	Tuvalu	4,000 ha	Funafuti Town Council
Arnarvon Islands	Solomon Islands	8,270 ha (including 3,100 ha core conservation area)	Environment and Conservation Division, Ministry of Forests, Environment and Conservation
Ha'apai	Tonga	10,000 sq km	Land and Environmental Planning Unit, Ministry of Lands, Survey and Natural Resources
Utwā-Walung	FSM	Utwā-Walung Channel extends for more than 8.1 km	Division of Tourism, Department of Commerce and Industry
Komarindi	Solomon Islands	19,300 ha	Environment and Conservation Division, Ministry of Forests, Environment and Conservation
Vatthe	Vanuatu	2,276 ha	Environment Unit, Ministry of Health
Koroyanitu	Fiji	2,984 ha (core); potentially may be extended to cover 19,000 ha	Land Use Planning Section, Native Lands Trust Board
Sa'anapu/Sataoa	Samoa	75 ha (core); may be extended to cover 12,000 ha	Division of Environment and Conservation, Department of Lands Surveys and Environment
Pohnpei	FSM	10,600 ha	Department of Resource Management and Development
Huvalu Forest	Niue	5,400 ha	Environment Unit, Community Affairs Department
North Tarawa	Kiribati	2,150 ha (terrestrial area) plus 3,500 ha (marine area)	Environment Unit, Ministry of Social Development and Environment

From salmon to coral reefs

by Michael Hortle, AVA/UNV volunteer, Ha'apai Conservation Area Project

How does a Tasmanian salmon farm operations manager and former marine biologist end up on the Tongan island group of Ha'apai working on a conservation project? It's a long way from the cool waters of Tasmania to the wonderful coral reefs surrounding the islands of Ha'apai but, for my family and I, it's the chance of a lifetime.

My wife, our two small boys (aged 7 and 4) and I all enjoy travelling and experiencing new cultures. We decided a couple of years ago that the chance to experience something other than a western culture and lifestyle would be of benefit to all, particularly the boys' education. We both felt we had skills that would be of use somewhere in the world (Helen is an accountant/teacher), so we applied to the Overseas Service Bureau in Australia. We were accepted as Australian Volunteers Abroad in late 1995, having indicated we would like to work somewhere in the south-west Pacific. The friendly people, wonderful climate, and the safe and easy lifestyle for children all sounded very appealing.

I originally expected a placement involving aquaculture, having spent many years firstly in applied aquaculture research and then in commercial aquaculture. However, we were delighted when offered this position on the Ha'apai Conservation Area Project. One of my areas of interest is coastal management and environmental issues associated with this crucial land/sea interface. There is much conflict in Australia regarding appropriate management of the coastal zone and allocation of resources to many competing interests.

Having now read much of the background material for the Ha'apai project and other environmental issues in Tonga and Pacific nations in general, I can see that community education/awareness/training will probably form most of my work,

with a particular emphasis on schools. Sione Faka'osi has already done an excellent job in establishing the project and it seems well accepted and supported in the community. It is still early days, but we have already discussed ideas for brochures on marine ecotourism and conservation principles, marine pollution, care of the coastal zone and fisheries protection, including a simple interpretation on the Tongan Fisheries Act.

I would like to apply my aquaculture skills in some way, but intensive aquaculture is probably not relevant in this context. Extensive aquaculture (reef reseeded and harvesting projects such as those involving trochus transplants and giant clam circles) are already underway, but their status is uncertain.

We have now been in Tonga for a month, and our first impressions are many and varied. The friendliness and sharing nature of the people is wonderful and has made our introduction to Tonga very easy. The lifestyle is much more relaxed and peaceful than we are used to in Australia. Regarding the project, I have several observations:

- there are lots of reports by experts, not always leading to productive outputs;
- there are lots of potential "nice to do" projects, but I have to keep asking myself if they are really relevant;
- the conflict, balancing traditional sustainable use against the need for quick cash income seems to be a

major issue in gaining acceptance of the basic principles underlying the project; and

- rubbish disposal/pollution is an issue that just won't go away.

I am now looking forward to immersing myself in more than the project. The chance to dive in warm, clear water on these wonderful reefs is a dream come true. No more 8-millimetre wetsuits (and 13 kilograms of lead), limited visibility and snow melt waters to dive in! Not all diving in Tasmania is in such conditions—in fact there are some spectacular dive sites—but the water temperature rarely exceeds 17°C.

For those CASOs seeking volunteers to support them on other projects, the following advice may be useful:

- provide as much background material as possible;
- if possible, send the prospective volunteer as much reading material as you can;
- don't be afraid to ask them to bring resources with them that will help with the project—most will be more than happy to do background research prior to leaving their country of origin.

For further information, contact:

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Ministry of Lands, Surveys and
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Pangai, Ha'apai
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Dugong Conservation in Palau

by Noe Yalap, Program Officer Palau Conservation Society

Palau is the only nation in Micronesia that supports a population of dugong, known locally as the mesekiu. However, recent surveys show the population has been declining.

As legend has it, this gentle sea mammal is the descendant of a young girl who was transformed into a dugong. Even today, there are stories of the tears that the dugong shed as they are brought to shore to be cut up for feasting. Many people claim that the tail of the dugong looks like two human feet joined together, having five bones in each side of the tail that resemble the skeletal structure of toes.

Although the *mesekiu* has long held a place in Palauan history, in recent years the dugong population has been declining, with aerial surveys in 1991 sighting only 26 *mesekiu* and estimating the population to be between 50 and 200 individuals. Female dugongs, called cows, begin reproducing only after they reach 10 years of age, and bear calves thereafter every five years or so. As their reproduction rate is so slow, a depleted dugong population can take a very long time to recover.

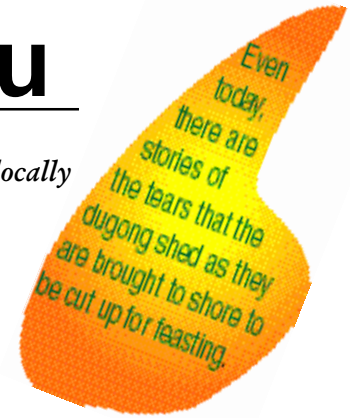
The single most important cause of this decline is the people who hunt them. While there is a law prohibiting the harvest of dugong, a few hunters are still actively taking the animals. Some speculate that the hunters enjoy the chase and the kill, but there is also a market in Palau for the meat and jewellery made from dugong bones. Penalties for breach of the dugong conservation laws are also quite low; the current penalty of USD50 for poaching can be paid for from the sale of a single dugong with profit left over. More importantly, nobody has ever been convicted for violating the dugong poaching law. Environmental experts are concerned that the

dugongs face extinction if nothing is done to stem their decline.

In December 1996, a number of local and international groups, individuals and government agencies, spearheaded by the Palau Conservation Society, formed a committee to oversee the implementation of a year-long campaign against the depletion of the dugong. The committee consists of representatives from Palau Community College, Sea Grant, Environmental Quality Protection Board, Ministry of Education, Peace Corps, The Nature Conservancy and Crime Stoppers. The programme was made possible by funds provided by the South Pacific Regional Environment Programme, The Nature Conservancy, Palau Community College and the British Embassy to Micronesia in Suva, Fiji.

A nationwide survey of present knowledge of dugongs by local residents is being conducted to gauge Palauans' perceptions, attitudes and observations of dugong and their uses. Another part of the campaign is to identify research needs and formulate long term management strategies for dugongs. In addition, the present law protecting dugongs will be reviewed and changes recommended in order to close loopholes and make it stronger.

Outreach is on-going in all of Palau's sixteen states to raise awareness within schools and communities about the dugong and the threats to its continued survival in Palau's waters. The hope is that once individuals understand and sympathise with the dugong, the demand for *mesekiu* will diminish.



Spreading the word

Palau Conservation Society (PCS) has been the catalyst in the production and implementation of a number of tasks to raise awareness about the dugong. These include:

- 3000 copies of a colourful underwater poster of a dugong with a calf have been produced and widely distributed;
- Puppet shows featuring the dugong as the main character have been presented in three schools;
- Two songs about dugongs have been composed. One is a dugong rap song and the other is an ode to the dugong written by local musicians. Local radio stations have also agreed to play these songs in an effort to spread the word;
- A newspaper cartoon showing a cow and a calf being threatened by a fisherman on a raft with a harpoon in his hand aimed at the mother. The mother and baby were crying as they saw their impending separation;
- A popular radio talk-show featured a live interview with PCS executive director, Noah Idechong, talking on the subject of dugong; and
- A dugong mascot designed and produced by a local seamstress has gained popularity in schools and in public events. This mascot has appeared in the Youth Day Parade and as a natural and cultural heritage mascot during this year's International Museum Day. Palau Community College has the dugong as its college mascot. Recently, the college formed a student environmental club called "Menage El Mesekiu" (Magnificent Dugong).

continued from page 1

A flying success: The Kakerori Recovery Programme

colour bands (placed on their legs) and the territory they occupy. The fledglings from the previous breeding season are caught with a mist nest and colour banded, and these are also included in the count.

Kakerori generally build their nests in trees over valley streams, and pairs defend their territories aggressively while breeding. Their nests are made with moss (*Aerobryopsis longissima*) commonly found in the area. To prevent rats from reaching the nest, the trunks of nesting trees and adjacent trees whose branches touch those of the nest-tree are banded with aluminium. In addition, poisoned rat baits are laid in the area both before and during the breeding season.

Soon after the Kakerori breeding season finishes, the search for fledglings commences. This is normally carried out until early March.

In 1989 there were 29 birds left. At the last annual census in 1996, their population stood at 134, giving hope for the Kakerori's future. The next census is due to start in August.

Financial support from the SPBCP has enabled the continuation of the Kakerori Recovery Programme, which has moved out of the government sphere and is now managed by the landowners through the Takitumu Conservation Area.

Acknowledgements

So many individuals and groups have contributed to the Kakerori Recovery Programme over the years. However, I would especially like to thank Eddie Saul, Hugh Robertson, the staff of Tu'anga Taporoporo (Environment Service), Pacific Islands Development Conservation Trust Fund and SPREP. *Meitaki maata e kia manuia.*

continued from page 1: An islander's perspective

own. My belief is that because I have links to the land (my father being a landowner in the area), my tupuna (ancestors) made sure that no harm came to me.

Ed continued to extend the poison lines in 1991. There were over 500 bait stations that we had to check. As the Kakerori are restricted to the wettest side of Rarotonga, there were times when it would rain over our area only. One day I looked down from the ridge to the coastal area where it was dry and wondered, "what is all this work for?"

My belief is that because I have links to the land (my father being a landowner in the area), my tupuna (ancestors) made sure that no harm came to me.

One good thing came out of it though—I lost about three kilos. I was even starting to laugh at Ed's dry jokes when we would meet halfway through our poison rounds.

The population of the Kakerori rose from 29 in 1989 to 48 in 1991. I could see results from our hard work. I was feeling proud that I was involved in a programme where good results were starting to show.

In 1992, I was awarded a scholarship to further my education overseas for 3 years. From 1992 to 1994 I was not involved with the KRP. Although monotonous, the rat eradication programme is probably the most vital activity to the success of the Kakerori Recovery Programme. I am proud to be associated with a programme that has helped in raising the numbers of a special and unique bird.

The establishment of the Takitumu Conservation Area presents a new and exciting challenge and one which I am sure the landowners will rise to.

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From the Manager's desk ...

be invaluable as your experience and knowledge in managing CAs under the SPBCP could guide a decision by the conference to adopt this approach as an effective "tool" for conserving biodiversity in our region. I will also try to find an opportunity outside the meeting to discuss with you any areas of common concern to your projects.

Finally, I am planning to hold the Multipartite Review of the Programme sometime in November this year. This is a critical meeting for the Programme and your projects as the meeting will be required to decide on a recommendation for the extension of the Programme beyond 1998. It is unlikely that all of you will be there, so make sure you know who

will represent your country at this meeting and brief him or her on what progress you have made in your project and how a decision to terminate the Programme might affect your projects. I will of course let you know of the dates and venue for the Multipartite meeting once these are confirmed.

I hope to be able to report back to you through the next issue of CASOLink at the end of October. So until then, I wish you great success in the implementation of your project activities in the next three months.

Joe Reti
Programme Manager, SPBCP

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Vatthe Conservation Area Project

- *Terms of mutual reference.* The two groups have distinct names which they call each other to reinforce their different origins;
- *Religious affiliation.* Most of the original settlers are Seventh Day Adventists (SDA) and attend daily prayer meetings in the village church. The mountain people, along with the chief, are converts to the Bahai faith, but continue many customary practices;
- *Different views on traditional lifestyle.* Many traditional foods and behaviours are forbidden by the SDA church, whose teachings conflict with the customs and beliefs of non-Christian people from the inland mountains. Conversely the mountain people see themselves as maintaining traditional ways, while they believe the Christians have abandoned traditions in favour of a European lifestyle.
- *Recourse to healers.* When ill, the original settlers receive custom treatment from the oldest man in their part of the village. The mountain people receive custom treatment from the chief.

Different perceptions about problems

The initial biodiversity survey raised concerns about the expansion of gardens into the bush. Alley cropping was identified as a potential solution by project management, and promotion of this alternative gardening method was approved by

the community. However, land in the area is plentiful and the soil rich. Few community members perceived the shifting cultivation and the loss of forest as a problem and they were, initially, non-committal to the activity. In fact many villages wish to expand gardens and plantations as a means to increase cash income. Furthermore, there is a resistance to change due to uncertainty as to whether or not the newly introduced practices will sustain the community needs.

Nevertheless, funds were secured and two trial plots established. By mid-1996, six families were trialling the alley cropping gardening techniques.

Some answers . . . and more questions

Although traditional practices and customs do exist which protect important areas, the development of conservation areas is a new concept in the Pacific. The project has emphasised that successful establishment of conservation areas will not occur overnight. It took this project two years to engender community commitment. Much effort has been put into identifying landowners and resource users, and the project has evolved a slow but steady process of education and consensus building.

The real test of the success of the CAP is the willingness of the principal resource users to participate in its development activities. Current indications are promising. Perhaps the

most significant contributing factor to the long term success of this project is that the landowners and resource users have become involved in the development of management rules and in the on-going management of the conservation area.

This project has several features common to a lot of similar projects in the Pacific. For example:

- it proceeded at a time when there was limited interest and awareness among the principal stakeholders;
- project managers and the community had different perceptions of what constituted problems;
- problems perceived as priorities by the community were outside the donor's criteria; and
- the project's success was dependant on changes in behaviour and attitudes.

The project has sought to address these issues during implementation through an emphasis on awareness raising, a commitment to transferring decision-making responsibility to the community, an awareness of underlying social problems, attempts to link community with other agencies who can help meet their more immediate needs, and a realistic acceptance that the project targets had to be modified to reflect community capabilities and interests. At the same time, some observers have been critical that the project is expensive for the demonstrated results.

Planners will often be faced with similar dilemmas and be forced to make similar difficult decisions. To what degree should a project be externally driven? What is the desirability of early intervention or, perhaps more pragmatically, intervention when funding is available versus waiting on community perceptions to change? Is a project that, due to funding criteria or other issues, can only meet some of a community's perceived goals, better than no project at all?

Involving the communities in the hiring of project staff helped demonstrate that they had real decision-making responsibility.

The real test of the success of the CAP is the willingness of the principal resource users to participate in its development activities. Current indications are promising.

SPREP supports first national ecotourism conference in Solomon Islands

The First National Ecotourism Conference in Solomon Islands received full support from SPREP's Director, Tamari'i Tutangata. Despite being unable to attend, the Director's faxed statement of support was read out in the opening ceremony of the conference.

In his statement, Mr Tutangata noted the central role which ecotourism plays in SPREP's Action Plan for Nature Conservation—as an alternative use of biodiversity and a means of reconciling the often conflicting objectives of conservation and development. He also noted with pleasure that the growth in ecotourism in the region indicates a growing appreciation of biodiversity and other environmental values as a potential source of income and employment for many in rural communities. He reminded the meeting that this potential can be fully realised as a result of dedication, commitment and cooperation amongst operators, resource owning communities, industry and governments.

The Director registered SPREP's support for the objectives of the Conference, noting that it is, " ... a healthy sign of the continuing strengthening of the ecotourism industry in Solomon Islands". He also offered support for the idea of an ecotourism association, stating that a united and cohesive association will enable ecotourism operators to more effectively communicate their requirements and needs to national policy makers, planners and partners in development. A strong ecotourism association can provide the ideal vehicle for promoting ecotourism as a viable and sustainable alternative to other forms of resource use.

We welcome three new Conservation Area Support Officers (CASOs) to the programme as well as one Officer to SPBCP.

Ngaremeduu Conservation Area, Palau

Alma-Ridep-Morris is the new CASO for Ngaremeduu Conservation Area. Alma works with the Division of Conservation and Entomology (DCE) under the Bureau of Natural Resources and Development, in the Ministry of Resources and Development. As well as a Biological Science degree emphasising Biology/Marine Biology, Zoology and Entomology, Alma holds an Arts degree which stresses Linguistics and Sociology. Both were acquired at the Australian National University, Canberra, Australia. She also completed a cross-institutional course in Spanish with the University of Canberra.

Huvalu Forest Conservation Area, Niue

The former CASO for Huvalu Forest Conservation Area, **Billy Talagi**, was elected to Parliament earlier this year. He has been replaced by **Logopati Seumanu**.

Koroyanitu National Heritage Park, Fiji

Semi Lotawa was appointed as the first CASO for Koroyanitu in December last year. A professional forester, Semi came to the Conservation Area project from Fiji Pine. He has close family connections to two of the five

villages in the project area, and is accepted as a "local" throughout the project. Semi has been spending a great deal of time in the field during the first half of 1997, getting to know the environment and the situation of the people.

SPBCP arrival

In early February 1997, Sam Sesega joined SPBCP to replace Roger Cornforth. Sam comes to SPBCP from the South Pacific Commission where he coordinated Phase I of the UNDP-funded Pacific Sustainable Development Networking Programme (PSDN). Before that, Sam was the Principal Environment Officer in Samoa for three years from 1992 to 1994 and, before that, a project manager for an ADB-funded forestry development project in Samoa. Sam has a background in forestry and resource management.

New CASOs and SPBCP arrivals

STOP PRESS

TMAG 1997

Members of the Technical and Management Advisory Group (TMAG) for the South Pacific Biodiversity Conservation Programme (SPBCP) will meet in Apia from 25 to 27 August, 1997. This will be the Fifth meeting of this Group which is primarily responsible for guiding the implementation of the SPBCP.

The key issues to be discussed during this meeting are:

- Review progress over the past 12 months;
- Consider three new Conservation Area proposals for SPBCP support;
- Prospects for continuing the SPBCP after 1998;
- Lessons learned from the Programme over the past four years; and
- Consideration of the work programme and budget for 1997/1998.

The SPBCP aims to assist local communities, governments and non-governmental organisations identify, establish and manage Conservation Areas. The main characteristics of Conservation Areas include: community ownership and management; benefits to the local communities; and sustainability over the long term.

TMAG brings together a wide range of expertise and experience in terrestrial and marine biodiversity, socio-economic, and project management.

The experts involved include:

Dr Arthur Dahl (Deputy Director Earthwatch, UNEP, also first Coordinator of SPREP 1974 to 1982);

Ms Fanaura Kingstone (Cook Islands), Socio-economics;

Mr Peter Hunnam (WWF), Terrestrial biodiversity expert;

Mr Trevor Ward (CSIRO, Australia) Marine biodiversity expert;

Ms Annette Lees of New Zealand;

Mr Sailimalo Pati Liu (Representing Pacific island countries);

Mr Cliff Brock (AusAID);

Mr Anthony Patten (UNDP); and

Mr Tamari'i Tutangata (SPREP)

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