

environment

January-March 2001
NEWSLETTER

CONTENTS

Kosrae Goes Solar	1
Turtle Tag Training	2
PNG PEIN workshop	4
Whale Watching	5
Update: EE & T Construction Begins	6
JICA Vice-president visits SPREP	7
Indonesian Coral Reef Specialists Visit	7
Marine Ecotourism Goes to Yap	8
Regular Feature From the Director's Desk	3

KOSRAE GOES SOLAR

Solar energy for one of the Conservation Areas under SPREP's South Pacific Biodiversity Conservation Programme (SPBCP) came on line recently.

By OLIVIER WORTEL

IT WAS A COMBINED EFFORT. THE Visitor's Center of the Utwa-Walung Conservation Area dedicated 18 solar panels, and 32 maintenance free batteries. However, much of the credit goes to Madison Nena, whose hard work, vision, and diligence has brought a conservation-mindedness and environmental awareness to the communities of Kosrae. Last year Madison was awarded the Seacology Foundation's prestigious *Indigenous Conservation of the Year Award*. The award recognises his efforts in forming the Utwa-

Walung Conservation Area, a section of rare and brilliant mangrove forests, swamps, and channels on the southern part of the island.

"We could have had the Kosrae Utility Authority (KUA) put in power lines, but we would have had to cut down some big trees," he said. "Instead I pursued the idea of solar energy and we were fortunate to get the funding from Seacology...their assistance is appreciated.

"SPBCP have helped us from the start and deserve recognition, and now other organizations, like the Packard Foundation have become interested in what we are doing here. It is really a win-win situation."

The festive opening took place under a bright, cloudless sky, greeting the multitude of people gathered there with perfect weather.

continued on page 7



... much of the credit goes to Madison Nena, whose hard work, vision, and diligence has brought a conservation-mindedness and environmental awareness to the communities of Kosrae.



photos by DRC

Turtle Tag Training

SPREP's Marine Species Officer, Job Opu, attended the Turtle Monitor-2000 activity review workshop in North Efate, Vanuatu. He presented a topic on biology, conservation and proper tagging methods for leatherback turtles.

DURING THIS VISIT TURTLE MONITORS were also informed that despite a significant number of turtles being tagged, further sightings were very low. Therefore, as a way of encouraging reports, sightings and recapturing (live) tagged turtles, SPREP will be giving away turtle T-shirts.

He believes that efforts at sighting and reporting tagged turtles need to be stepped up. The Vanuatu Fisheries laws on turtle protection does not protect turtles and needs to be reviewed, while the turtle monitor programme should ideally be extended to outer islands with tags and applicators provided by SPREP. [SPREP has since agreed to part fund the Vanuatu 2001 Turtle Programme.]

Field training on Leatherback turtle tagging and monitoring in Kamiali Wildlife Management Area, PNG has been completed. The training was targeted at local field assistants and covered basic leatherback turtle biology, proper methods of applying titanium tags to the turtles' flippers, and turtle

data recording that met SPREP's turtle database requirements.

Village Development Trust, a local NGO providing advice to the Wildlife Management Area, has requested SPREP's assistance in formulating a Leatherback Turtle Conservation Strategy for the Wildlife Management Area and adjacent beaches that are not protected but have leatherback turtles nests. A meeting is scheduled for April, 2001, in Canberra, Australia between Wetlands International-Oceania, SPREP and PNG to formulate the strategy.

Out of a total of 12 turtles sighted on the beach, seven female turtles were tagged during a three-night beach patrol which also doubled as a field demonstration in line with the training workshop. Leatherback turtles can only be tagged (without them putting up a fight) at a certain point in time when they are covering up their eggs. Only female turtles come up the beach to nest. The actual tagging programme started in 1999. It's hoped that with



Job Opu instructing one of the turtle monitors on the correct technique for tagging a leatherback turtle.

SPREP support, the programme will continue for several more years to gather as much information as possible. This would provide more accurate estimates of turtle breeding populations, conservation, management and migration routes.

During the last tagging exercise in 1999, a large number of the titanium tags did not clamp well; in some cases damaging the fleshy flippers of the leatherbacks causing heavy bleeding. Opu says he will look into this more closely and advise on a safer, more appropriate type of tag to use on the turtles. Fortunately, other marine turtles have no problems with the titanium tags as their flippers are made of harder substances.

Training was targeted at local field



Field training and turtle monitoring workshop in Vanuatu.

assistants and covered basic leatherback turtle biology, proper methods of applying titanium tags to the turtles flippers, and turtle data recording that met SPREP turtle database requirements.



Mr Tutangata, Director of SPREP

Snapshots of the Sea in Your Home

IT NEVER CEASES TO AMAZE ME HOW THE coastal and marine environment of the Pacific Ocean continue to provide opportunities and revenue for its people.

From the most sought after fish on restaurant dinner tables to harnessing of mineral resources, and as a tourist destination, the commercial potential from the world's largest waterway remains enormous.

One of the more recent players in the water-driven niche markets is to do with marine ornamentals. Although the term suggests black pearls or exquisite pieces of jewelry carved from mother of pearl and whalebone, marine ornamentals are actually to do with what goes in your fish tank.

Fish, corals, other invertebrates, "live rock" and "live sand" (meaning coated with living organic material), are all marine ornamentals sought after for home use and large public aquariums.

For those of us whose only previous experience with anything remotely aquarium-like was the sea of green sludge constituting the primary school gold fish bowl, big changes have occurred during the interim. The beauty of the technology available today, is that it now allows hobbyists to bring their own customised snapshots of the sea into their homes.

The new technological edge emerges from a better understanding of reef ecology, and ways to control conditions in the aquariums, giving owners more options and enjoyment.

Having what is generally considered to be the best supply of quality coral reefs in the world also means more economic opportunities for the region. And while this spells good news for Pacific islanders, the proper groundwork needs to be in place so that those involved can extract the benefits fairly and sustainably without damag-

ing coral reef ecosystems. Today, an alarming 41 per cent of coral reefs in the Pacific are already considered at risk, from a range of human-induced and natural impacts, including over-exploitation, coastal development, pollution and climate change.

In parts of south-east Asia this has been taken a step further, with many of the communities involved in the trade using destructive collecting prac-



photo by Jim Maragos

tices to capture marine ornamentals. Fish that are stunned and caught using chemicals such as sodium cyanide often die before they reach the retailer or soon after they are sold. This practice has resulted in long-term damage to coral reefs and has inadvertently killed other marine life.

Still, the marine ornamentals industry in the Pacific does provide opportunities in a region of frequently limited opportunities, and has the potential to support community-based enterprises in a proactive way.

In one of our workshops in Fiji, funded by the US Government, delegates from eight countries examined what needed to be done to make the aquarium industry environmentally sound and how this could be accomplished.

Following overviews of best management practices, coral reef conditions and individual country presentations; the participants had provided a clear take home message which we at the Secretariat support. They said, "it is important for government and indus-

try to work together to manage the trade through regulation, enforcement of policies, and the adoption of best practice by industry."

However, these mechanisms are unlikely to be totally effective unless reasonable enforcement to ensure compliance takes place. You do need that oversight to keep people honest and to ensure that acceptable standards are being adhered to otherwise...

One group attempting to assist the industry is the Marine Aquarium Council (MAC), an international non-profit organisation. The people at MAC have been working with industry, hobbyists, and governments to develop a set of standards for the marine ornamentals trade. Their plan is to develop a certification and labeling system that allows, for example, an organism to be traced from the time it leaves the reef to when it arrives at the retailer. In the Pacific region, MAC is working in collaboration with our colleagues at the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, in Suva, Fiji.

The United States dominates the ornamental market making up to 60 percent of the demand. Closer to home, and with an annual turnover of US\$9m dollars, stakeholders in Fiji's marine ornamentals trade have already given their support to certification, which will hopefully act as a spur for other island nations to get behind the initiative.

The future for this industry in the region is one in which high quality aquarium products are collected from reefs sustainably, and providing regular income to local communities. In the long-term Pacific islanders could enhance their international reputation by providing sustainable reef products to the world. A goal well worth pursuing for hobbyists and communities alike.

PNG PEIN Workshop

Media and communications professionals from Papua New Guinea were brought together by SPREP and UNESCO in Port Moresby, for a national environment workshop to bolster their skills on covering environment issues.



Plenary session in PNG's national workshop

Photo by Chris Peteru, SPREP.

USING WASTE AS THE THEME, THE 27 participants in the Pacific Environmental Information Network (PEIN) workshop came from government, non governmental organisations and media groups.

Run by SPREP in partnership with UNESCO, including extra assistance from the European Union's Waste Awareness and Education Project, they spent a week at the Granville Motel going through practical exercises, to turn out environmental stories with balance, appeal and impact.

Modules on radio, print and video production were run. A highlight was the use of all Pacific island trainers for the first time since the project began in 1999. The trainers Joe Kanekane, print (Papua New Guinea), Johnson Honimae, radio (Solomon Islands), and Rico Tupai, television/video (Samoa), were a credit to their professions and SPREP's capacity building objective.

Papua New Guinea's environment officials say they are keen for SPREP to run similar types of workshops in



Photo by Chris Peteru, SPREP.

the future. UNESCO's Communications Adviser, Ms Tarja Virtanen has indicated that two more media workshops will take place.

The PNG workshop concludes the first series of this UNESCO/SPREP initiative. One of the major achievement of the series was an all Pacific team of trainers at the PNG workshop. Started in Samoa with four NZ trainers, the PNG workshop has realised the vision of Pacific trainers taking over the role usually occupied by overseas experts.

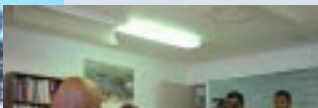
Other workshops in the series were held in the Cook Islands, Fiji, Marshall Islands, Samoa and Tonga.

IMAGES FROM PEIN WORKSHOPS IN MARSHALL ISLANDS AND SAMOA



MARSHALL ISLANDS

MARSHALL ISLANDS



SAMOA



SAMOA

WHALE WATCHING

For the past five years, SPREP, Whales Alive (an International Whale Conservation NGO) and the South Pacific Humpback Whale Research Project have been working together to support the sustainable development of Whale Watching in Tonga and the region.

WORK CARRIED OUT HAS INCLUDED training of whale watch operators and guides, guidelines for whale watching vessels, operation, policy and technical advice on whale watching issues, plus research, education, awareness raising and media coverage. In August 1996, Tonga developed and agreed on a "Whale Watch Vision 2000". The vision contains priorities for whale watching development in Tonga. The SPREP/Whales Alive partnership has used this vision as a guide for all subsequent work.

SPREP's Regional Marine Mammal Conservation Programme and Whales Alive ran a review exercise in September 2000. The exercise revisited the Tonga Whale Watch Vision 2000 implementation between the

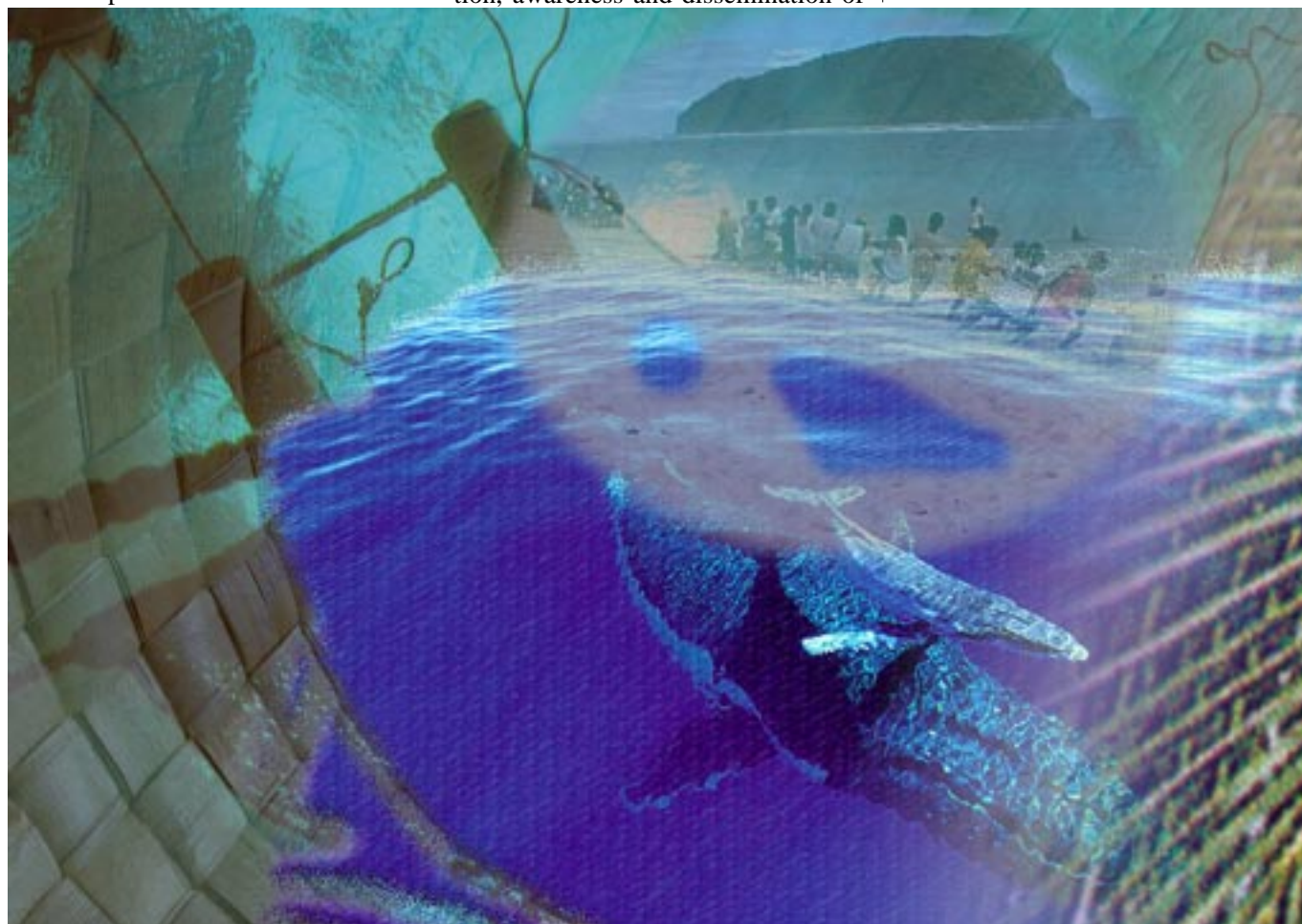
Government and private sector. The exercise held on Tonga's Vava'u island, included participants from Government departments (Fisheries, Environment and the Visitors Bureau), and from the tour boat owners and operators. From the review, "Awareness on Whale Conservation" and "training of operators and tour guides" components of Vision 2000 to date have been successful. Towards the end of the review, there was strong support by the participants for the setting up of a Whale Watch Association. The Association would have a say in the control and regulation of licence granted to operators, to develop and promote whale watching as a national industry, advocate conservation and protection of whales through supporting of education, awareness and dissemination of

information, and provide linkages to other similar industry. This will allow closer working relationships regionally and internationally in the promotion of whale research, and most importantly, to be the link between the industry, NGOs and relevant government bodies.

The Whale Watch Vision 2000 review recommended that:

- 1) a National Meeting be convened in 2001 to establish a Whale Watch Association that will draft a Constitution and Charter, elect office Bearers and identify activities and funding sources;
- 2) Ministry of Fisheries, Tonga Visitors Bureau, and Ministry of Lands, Survey and Natural Resources to promote the Whale Watch Association concept.

As a follow-up of the review exercise, a meeting on the "Establishment of the Tonga Whale Watch Association" is scheduled for September 2001.



Composite by Fatu Tanuifati, SPREP

Composite portraying the integral part played by whales in the Pacific islands region and the tug of war currently staged in the international arena regarding the conservation and protection of this mammal.



Photos by Chris Peteru, SPREP.

ET&E Construction begins

At SPREP's new premises at Vailima, construction has started on a new US\$3.2m dollar Environmental Training and Education (ET&E) complex.

CONSTRUCTION ON THE THREE HECTARE site is at the foundation stage with heavy machinery leveling the site for the initial ground work and underpinning the foundations. The main contractor, Fujita Corporation sent their first team over soon after the contract was signed in February. The contractors aim to have the building completed by March 2002.

The ET&E Centre complex comes fully loaded with the latest multi media technology donated by the Government of Japanese who generously agreed to fund the entire project with grant aid made through its bilateral aid programme with the Government of Samoa.

Inside the two storey building, a video editing suite and radio recording studio will give the current information and publications section effective access to production in almost all media. Japan has also agreed to provide technical expertise.

SPREP's Director, Mr Tamari'i Tutangata, says the move to the information fast lane is timely, and signals a positive step forward.

"At the moment all our training and education activities are undertaken in hotels and other facilities available in Samoa and in other member coun-

tries. We believe the Centre will allow us to become an even sharper, more focused organisation in getting information and environmental training out to as many Pacific Islanders as possible," he said.

With international interest in Pacific environmental issues, such as climate change, biosafety and hazardous and solid wastes (including their disposal), the timing for completion of the centre (March 2002) could not have been better.

Facilities for Environmental Training and Education will also be provided giving SPREP a fully resourced facility that can cater to a broad range of community, youth, government and non governmental environment workers and media representatives.

Samoa's Environment Minister, Hon. Tagaloa Tuala Tagaloa, who gave the key address at the groundbreaking ceremony, was enthusiastic about the new development.

"This is a noteworthy gesture by the Government of Japan which has given SPREP more opportunities to fulfil the dream of environmental sustainability. Environmental issues in the Pacific have expanded. SPREP has grown, its activities have diversified and its workload has increased.



Clockwise from top left: Hon. Tagaloa, the site of the new complex, Tsutomu Moriya and Tamari'i Tutangata complete the formal part of the ceremony—let the work begin.

"Training and educating people of the Pacific islands region to enable them to manage and handle their own environmental issues is one of SPREP's most important agendas", he said.

Construction is being handled by the Japanese Fujita Corporation.

JICA Vice-President Visits SPREP

The funding for SPREP's Education and Training Centre has come through the generosity of the Japanese Government as part of a grant aid plan with the Samoan Government.

THE START OF CONSTRUCTION ON THE facility coincided with a visit from Japan by Mr Kenjiro Izumi, the Vice President of the Japanese International Cooperation Agency (JICA). He met with SPREP's Director, Tamari'i Tutangata, and management.



Mr Izumi also met with Mr Shiro Amano, a JICA volunteer who is working for SPREP in the area of Landfill Management. Shiro's project focuses on four areas: systematic development of good management practice, demonstration of waste minimisation, incremental improvement of landfills, and holding regional workshops.

Shiro notes that problems associated with waste treatment and disposal are worldwide but in the case of the Pacific, they are more serious because

Mr Kenjiro Izumi meeting with SPREP's management team at the SPREP Centre complex.



Mr Kenjiro Izumi and JICA's Resident Representative for Samoa, Mr Tsutomu Moriya.

of the limited land resources. He feels that, "If we can solve problems here, the solutions can apply anywhere in the world". He says that one of the ways to create awareness and solve the problem is to tell tourists and visitors "... we don't have enough space for your rubbish. Please bear this in mind as you enjoy our precious island."

Indonesian Coral Reef Specialists Visit

The way coral reefs are being looked after in the Pacific brought a group of Indonesian specialists from COREMAP to SPREP for a courtesy call.

IN WELCOMING THE VISITORS, OFFICER IN CHARGE, MS NEVA WENDT SAID SPREP WAS keen to share ideas with the Coral Reef Rehabilitation and Management Programme (COREMAP) in the interests of a sustainable environment for all.

Several SPREP programme officers presented brief overviews on marine and terrestrial biodiversity in the region and programmes to address international waters issues. Long term lessons learned will be applied to the more than 75,000 square kilometres of coral coastline across the five provinces COREMAP covers.

COREMAP Director, Dr Nonji Angurerah, says the group had been keen to visit Samoa because of the shared traditions between people of the Biak district of the West Papua Province and Polynesians.

"We hope that the Polynesian system could be adapted to our local traditions to help protect what we have."

He noted that both cultures respected the role of chiefs as moderators and leaders in all village activities. The group of sixteen had spent a week in Samoa. The group also spent time in Tonga.



A Samoan Chief from the village of Lalomanu, in Upolu. A moderator and leader in all village activities.

continued from page 1

American Peace Corps and Japan International Cooperation Volunteers mingled with locals and sampled the ample local foods on hand. Tourists browsed or bought local handicrafts: sun hats made from pandanus leaves, scale canoes carved from breadfruit wood, and various fish carvings made from the red mangrove tree.

The Utwa Youth Choir, dressed in crimson and white floral patterns, sang their beautiful harmonies, their voices amplified by the solar panels behind them.

Reverend Natchuo Andrew gave a small blessing to the solar energy system and a brief opening prayer. The Utwa mayor Truman Wakuk, said the solar panels created "an island of modern technology." Governor Rensley

Sigrah thanked the Kosrae Utility Authority and the US army corps engineers for volunteering their skills to install the system.

Indeed the new energy system is good for the people of Kosrae, the Pacific region, and the environment. There is a beacon shining in the sunlight in this small corner of the world, and it signals that the future can be a better place.

MARINE ECOTOURISM GOES TO YAP

Across the Pacific islands region, up to 80 per cent of the resources are still communally owned. Ecotourism has been identified as one of the ways Pacific communities can employ to provide for their economic needs without destroying or depleting their natural resources.

THE COMMUNAL APPROACH PROMOTED by SPREP is to build partnerships with villagers and their leaders, and making them aware of the rationale behind marine ecotourism concepts, activities and benefits to the communities.

Wetlands Management Officer, Ms Lucille Apis-Overhoff was in Yap coordinating a Marine Ecotourism Workshop for local communities. This is the third workshop of a series that covers the three sub-regions of Polynesia, Melanesia and Micronesia made possible with funding assistance from AusAID and NZODA.

“The practical work and exercises covered in the workshop attempts to show the benefits of marine ecotourism to the communities. However, the decision to participate is left completely to the community or village.”

With the community’s support, initial assessments on what eco-type facilities are available such as mangroves, forests and fauna and how the community wants the resources used is discussed. Other factors also involved include the type of interaction they want with visitors, the costs and logistics.

The workshops and material are geared to be as interactive as possible. For example modules on how to turn out simple assessment surveys are backed up with practical field exercises using local sites such as beaches or lagoons.

“In the workshop, communities are given the tools where with our help, they learn how to use and apply them. In this way, the workshop is custom-

ised to the communities’ needs or wants and is specific to the character and special features of their natural environment. This way of working will, hopefully, give the communities breathing space to take in new activities and ideas without creating wholesale disruption to their daily lives which could lead to resentment towards the workshop and activities.

Ecotourism is therefore an excellent alternative. It provides communities with other options and choices: can replace destructive practices such as dynamite fishing, sand-mining using mangrove areas as landfill; provides income to offset western consumer pressures and demands; and by conserving environmental treasures, it will allay fears that cultural values and traditions are being eroded and lost.

The division of income from ecotourism activities is the sole responsibility of the village community infrastructure. As in the past, the traditional way of handling these issues promoted greater harmony within the communities.

Using web sites to promote eco-products through local tourist operators is an ideal strategy

for communities to advertise the products they have available. It also overcomes shortage of marketing or economic skills that are beyond the scope of many small island communities.

“It may seem insignificant, but when one considers a country like Palau or the Federated States of Micronesia, each country is made up of many small communities. One community will teach another community, and in a short while, the whole island will be like a marine ecotour.”

“Little by little that’s the way to go.”



Photo by Lucille Overhoff, SPREP

For each participating country, an Action Plan is formulated taking into account results of assessment surveys, overall potential and support mechanisms. The onus is on the community to implement the Plan themselves and encourages the passing of their acquired skills to their neighbours as a form of capacity building or even to having equal shares in a joint enterprise.

“One of the reasons for so much environmental destruction we now see is because communities need money. They have to feed their children, provide for their education and health services and so forth.

“Little by little that’s the way to go”
