



## SECRETARIAT OF THE PACIFIC REGIONAL ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME

*Twenty-Second SPREP Meeting*

Apia, Samoa

13 – 15 September 2011

**Information Paper 4:****Regional Wetlands Action Plan for the Pacific Islands, 2011-2013****Purpose**

1. To provide for the information of the Meeting, the review of the Regional Wetlands Action Plan for the Pacific Islands (1999) and for the Meeting to take note of the new Regional Wetlands Action Plan for the Pacific Islands 2011-2013.

**Background**

2. Wetlands in the Pacific Island region harbour many rare species and endemics, serve as a buffer to storms and sea-level rise on the coastlines, and are a key resource for local communities.

3. The region's wetlands are classified into seven systems: coral reefs, seagrass beds, riverine, lacustrine, freshwater swamp forests and marshes.

4. These wetland ecosystems hold great traditional significance both as a source of food and income for communities and for maintaining cultural practices. In addition, they provide for PICTs tremendous economic and conservation benefits through fisheries production, water table maintenance, water storage, flood control, shoreline stabilisation, water purification and recreational opportunities.

5. Some of the threats to wetland ecosystems in the region include the effects of climate change, introduced freshwater species, invasive species, urban growth/expansion, downstream effects of mining, agricultural activities and uncontrolled land clearance, pollution and unsustainable coastal developments.

6. The Regional Wetlands Action Plan was endorsed by SPREP member countries and territories in 1999. The action plan was a response to the call for greater effort and commitment to the conservation and sustainable use of wetlands in countries of the Pacific. The action plan provided an overview of existing programmes for the conservation of wetlands in the Pacific region as well as a rationale and framework for action to increase and improve the wetlands conservation situation in the region.

**1. Regional Workshop to Review Implementation of the 1999 Regional Wetlands Action Plan for the Pacific Islands. 2-6 August 2010.**

7. The workshop was held at the headquarters of the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) in Noumea from the 2-6 August 2010. It was hosted by the Government of New Caledonia and was co-organized by SPREP and the Ramsar Convention Secretariat.

8. The following 13 Pacific islands participated in the workshop - Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Nauru, New Caledonia, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Vanuatu, Wallis and Futuna). The participants comprised 5 representatives from the Pacific Island Ramsar Contracting Parties and 8 representatives from other Pacific Island Countries and Territories (PICTs), representatives from the southern province of New Caledonia, NGOs and regional partners.

9. The main purpose of the workshop was to review implementation of and update the 1999 'Regional Wetlands Action Plan for the Pacific Islands' (RWAP). In total, there were over 30 participants at the workshop. Regional partners represented at the workshop included WWF, Conservation International, IUCN-ORO, USP and Wetlands International Oceania.

10. The workshop was made possible through the generous financial support of the Governments of France, Australia, United States and Norway.

**2. New Regional Wetlands Action Plan**

11. The main output of workshop mentioned above is the new Regional Wetlands Action Plan for Pacific Islands covering the period 2011-2013. This new action plan outlines activities, responsibilities and targets, to further the wise use and conservation of wetlands in our region.

12. The development and finalisation process of the new action plan was driven by PICTs with the assistance of SPREP and regional partners

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16 July 2011