

## FROM THE 9TH PACIFIC ISLANDS CONFERENCE ON NATURE CONSERVATION AND PROTECTED AREAS

The 9th Pacific Islands Conference on Nature Conservation and Protected Areas is hosted by the Government of Fiji in partnership with the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme, the Pacific Island Roundtable for Nature Conservation and IUCN Oceania.

This media coverage is a partnership supported by the Pacific Media Assistance Scheme (PACMAS), SPREP, University of the South Pacific (USP), Fiji National University (FNU) and the Pacific Island News Association (PINA).

# Revamped strategy a useful tool for conservation groups



Tierra Mar consulting director Mr. Peter Thomas.

By STEVE POGONOWSKI

Local community organisations should use the refined [Action Strategy for Nature Conservation and Protected Areas in the Pacific Islands Region 2014-2020](#) to frame their conservation programs and aspirations, the review's architect said.

Pacific Island country and territory representatives, non-government organisations and other attendees at the 9th Pacific Islands Conference on Nature Conservation and Protected Areas have given input into the review in line with



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common themes from this week's sessions.

Members of the consultation meetings had suggested the strategy be renamed as the Regional Framework for Nature Conservation in the Pacific Islands Region.

Tierra Mar consulting director Mr. Peter Thomas, who is leading a review of the strategy, said strategy objectives have been updated to reflect conference topics such as traditional knowledge and biodiversity awareness.

The new proposed framework has six objectives and nine principles to guide nature conservation work across the Pacific region.

Mr. Thomas said community conservation groups on the ground in the Pacific should see the strategy as a guiding document.

"At that level, they would use

the strategy to try to ensure that any partnership they went into took into account the values they hold strongly. In the hands of a local organisation, it's a very powerful tool," Mr. Thomas said.

"What they may well need is someone to interpret it for them, to show them the important principles that apply to their project or programme."

Mr. Thomas said the feedback sessions during the conference and in previous meetings across the Pacific countries and territories had been invaluable.

Some of the messages the review committee heard throughout the week included: the protection of cultural heritage and traditional knowledge, broadening of conservation paradigm to include faith-based groups and the private sector, and the need to ensure conservation programmes contribute to improving food security and help alleviate poverty.

"The new 9th principle has been added to call on national and international partners to promote resilience and sustainability of biocultural resources," Mr. Thomas said.

Review committee members will also ensure the strategy is in line with the Convention on Biological Diversity Aichi Targets and would eventually marry with the five year review of the 2010-2015 Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme Action Plan.

# Whales, dolphins focus of MoU

By **SHAHANI MALA**  
*journalism student at FNU*

An agreement has been forged to strengthen collaboration on the conservation of whales and dolphins in the Pacific region.

The MoU was signed in Suva on Thursday between the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP) and Whale and Dolphin Conservation.

"This agreement will strengthen our joint work on whale and dolphin conservation," said Mr. Sheppard.

"This MoU formalises the ongoing cooperation and collaborative efforts we have undertaken to protect Whales and Dolphins, of which research plays a large role."

Pacific Islands Programme Leader, Dr.



**Mr. David Sheppard, the Director-General of SPREP and Dr. Cara Miller of Whale and Dolphin Conservation after the signing of the MoU.**

Cara Miller said: "We have excellent links to the universities so I am really hopeful that strong student participation can be part of the way going forward developing further developing projects we've already begun and have been working on."

The MoU lists key activities for collaboration which include promoting research and development of environmental modeling approaches to cetacean habitat protection and promoting the development and implementation of effective national cetacean management plans in the Pacific Island Countries and Territories.

The MoU was signed during the 9th Pacific Islands Conference on Nature Conservation and Protected Areas in Suva, Fiji.

## Fiji to host follow up on high level outcome of Nature Conservation Conference

By **ERONI TUINACEVA**  
*Journalism student at FNU*

6 December 2013, Suva, Fiji

Fiji will host a follow-up meeting on the Pacific Islands Conference on Nature Conservation and Protected Areas Action Strategy Framework in 2014. This announcement was made today by Mr Aiyaz Sayed-Khaiyum, Attorney-General and Minister for Local Government, Urban Development, Housing and Environment of the Government of Fiji.

"It gives me great pleasure to announce that Fiji has offered to host a more focused high level meeting consisting of representatives from government, business, and civil society by no later than April next year to follow-up on these key action points that have been produced by this Conference," Mr. Sayed-Khaiyum stated.

Mr. Sayed-Khaiyum further emphasised Fiji's commitment to the conservation of natural resources that Pacific is blessed with, reiterating that Fiji is serious about its new role as Chair.



**Mr. Kosi Latu, SPREP, Mr. Josefa Serulagilagi Permanent Secretary of Environment, Ms. Eleni Tokaduadua Department of Conservation, Mr. David Sheppard, SPREP.**

"As the recently appointed chair of this Conference, Fiji will ensure that the emphasis is placed firmly on action. We're not interested in simply making grand pronouncements that are not achievable or are never implemented," Mr. Sayed-Khaiyum said.

Mr. Sayed-Khaiyum further elaborated on the importance of engaging all stakeholders as the new Action Plan Strategy Framework is implemented over the next five years.

"We want all stakeholders to have a seat at the table, including NGOs, the corporate sector, development partners, international organisations and individual communities from throughout the Pacific."

The 9th Pacific Islands Conference on Nature Conservation and Protected Areas, hosted in Suva Fiji ended today.

*Eroni Tuinaceva is a member of the Media Team providing coverage of the 9th Pacific Islands Conference on Nature Conservation and Protected Areas from 2 to 6 December in Suva, Fiji.*



## SPREP and TNC sign partnership agreement

The 9th Pacific Islands Conference on Nature Conservation and Protected Areas was the perfect backdrop for a signing of a partnership between the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP) and The Nature Conservancy.

Having worked together for over a decade on joint nature conservation efforts in the Pacific region, the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding formalises the partnership in the ongoing nature conservation work in the region.

"We are happy to sign this agreement, it recognises our converging objectives but also the great work done by TNC on the conservation initiatives in the region," said Mr. David Sheppard, the Director-General of SPREP.

"We see this MoU as a basis for moving forward in a focused way on key issues to strengthen our conservation efforts."

These sentiments were echoed by Mr. Bill Raynor, the Director of the Indo-Pacific Division at The Nature Conservancy.

"This is a great event for us, we have been working with SPREP since TNC first came into the Pacific over a decade ago, it's



**Mr. David Sheppard, the Director-General of SPREP and Mr. Bill Raynor, the Director of the Indo-Pacific Division at The Nature Conservancy with their staff at the signing.**

always been a great relationship.

"While we don't do a lot of work in the South Pacific, working more in Micronesia and the Solomon Islands we are interested in sharing a lessons we have learnt, resources we have, expertise we have

gained in over 60 years of Conservation work to the larger Pacific. This is a great opportunity for us."

The MoU was signed during the 9th Pacific Islands Conference on Nature Conservation and Protected Areas in Suva.

## First 'net zero' building in the Pacific



**Ms. Christianera Tuitele of the American Samoa Environmental Protection Agency**

**By WATI TALEBULA**  
*Journalism student at FNU*

A new building for the American Samoa - Environmental Protection Agency (AS-EPA) that was damaged by the earthquake and tsunami in 2009 would be the first in the Pacific to receive an international eco-rating.

The new building will be energy efficient and built on the same footprint as the old building.

The agency hopes to have the building certified Leed Platinum Green, which would be the first in the Pacific.

Ms. Christianera Tuitele, water programme manager at AS-EPA said: "The goal is to be net zero so that the whole year we don't have to pay any money to our power authority as everything comes naturally like all the solar energy," she said.

Like all other projects the American

Samoans faced challenges but were able to overcome them.

"Administration challenges are getting multiple funding sources, the federal process, local process and most importantly the weather and if there is no boat for five weeks then we have to wait for five weeks to get our materials from Australian and New Zealand and most importantly we didn't have the local knowledge to build the green building as this was the first time in American Samoa."

From March this year they have been "net zero" so far and hope to sustain this throughout the rest of the year.

*Wati Talebula is a member of the Media Team providing coverage of the 9th Pacific Islands Conference on Nature Conservation and Protected Areas from 2 to 6 December in Suva, Fiji. This is a partnership between the Fiji National University (FNU), University of the South Pacific (USP), SPREP and Pacific Islands News Association (PINA) whereby a team of 10 journalism students are mentored by senior reporters as they cover the conference. This activity is funded by the Pacific Assistance Media Scheme (PACMAS).*

# Creativity drives youth group

By **MARYANN LOCKINGTON**  
Journalism student at USP

A new youth group in Lautoka, Fiji's second city is making waves, trying to build a platform for youth in the Western Division of Viti Levu.

The Creative Environment Advocacy Social Empowerment for Youths (Creative EASEY) is an initiative that was formed in December 2012 by Mr. Jone Nawaikula for young advocates on their respective issues.

Creative EASEY representative 17-year-old Pravneil Chand animatedly advocated for youth involvement at the Pacific Youth Environment Network (PYEN).

He said that Creative EASEY was a much needed achievement for the youths in the western division.

"It was important to have a link with the Ministry of Youth and National Youth Council because there wasn't much being done in the West," he said.

Mr. Chand joined Creative EASEY in September this year and is currently the youngest member of the youth group.

"I was approached by Creative EASEY after school about a gardening workshop

in September," he said. "As soon as I joined, I found out that this was my passion."

Mr. Chand said that Creative EASEY was involved in advocating for women's issues, children's rights and awareness on abuse.

"These are all very important issues but we need more environmental awareness and that's why I'm here," he said.

Mr. Chand hopes to take back what he learnt at the PYEN workshop to share with his youth group in Lautoka.

"I'd like to go back and run a workshop with other youth on nature conservation," he said.

Mr. Chand added that he would also like to work on waste management projects and advocacy.

"We don't separate our rubbish into plastics, paper and so on which I think is something we should push for," he said.

He said he was enthusiastic about future projects with Creative EASEY.

"We're hoping to visit the Yasawa Islands and take with us some supplies for them with help from US funding," he said.

He hoped that Creative EASEY could branch out to other nearby towns and partner with PYEN to assist in projects.



**Pravneil Chand**

## Communicating climate change challenge for Tuvalu

By **JOSEPHINE NAVULA**  
journalism student at FNU

Communicating climate change and its associated issues to Tuvalu's people is challenging because of the difficulty in translating scientific terms in the native language.

This was shared by Tuvalu's Biodiversity officer Ms. Tilia Tima (*pictured*) at the 9th Pacific Islands Conference on Nature Conservation and Protected Areas in Suva, Fiji.

"It's hard to translate words to the people back at home because we don't have a specific term for it," she said.

"The other thing that we are facing difficulty in are forms of communications, since our only form of communication is radio, and since we have eight islands far apart from each other, it's really hard when some of the people don't have access to radio."

Trying to generate interest among the locals so that they



attend the various awareness programmes was another problem, said Tuvalu's Ministry of Natural Resources Research Officer Mr. Semese Alefaio.

He said although many workshops were held to raise awareness on environment issues, many did not attend.

"Most of the people don't attend the awareness programmes because of isolation."

He said the need to increase women's involvement was also pertinent.

*Josephine Navula is a member of the Media Team providing coverage of the 9th Pacific Islands Conference on Nature Conservation and Protected Areas from 2 to 6 December in Suva, Fiji. This is a partnership between the Fiji National University (FNU), University of the South Pacific (USP), SPREP and Pacific Islands News Association (PINA) whereby a team of 10 journalism students are mentored by senior reporters as they cover the conference. This activity is funded by the Pacific Assistance Media Scheme (PACMAS).*





# Community cooperation helps increase tree kangaroo numbers

By STEVE POGONOWSKI

Collaboration between a North American zoo and Papua New Guinea villages, a developing highlands coffee market and community education efforts have combined to conserve an endangered tree kangaroo.

Matschie's tree kangaroo, found on the Huon Peninsula in Papua New Guinea's Morobe Province, is on the International Union for the Conservation of Nature's Red List.

Various species of tree kangaroos have traditionally been hunted by villagers in the province for food and clothing but population growth and land clearing have threatened macropod numbers.

Team members from the Tree Kangaroo Conservation Program gave an overview of their project yesterday at the 9th Pacific Islands Conference on Nature Conservation and Protected Areas.

The programme has been coordinated by Lisa Dabek and her team from the Woodland Park Zoo in Seattle, Washington, USA.

Ms Dabek said zoos around the world held small numbers of tree kangaroos and there was developing interest in connecting zoos with field conservation efforts.

As threatened Matschie's tree kangaroo populations are located in the Yopno-Urawa-Som (YUS) river area, the conservation program has focused on increasing tree kangaroo numbers in this almost inaccessible region. The YUS Conservation Area was declared in 2009 and there is a 78,000 hectare area under protection.

"The tree kangaroo is a culturally important animal ... and there is a common interest in maintaining the current populations," Ms Dabek said.

As the region is subject to customary land tenure, engaging landowners in conservation efforts is vital to restoring tree kangaroo numbers. The program has not only worked on tree kangaroo conservation but also - with donor support - funded education scholarships, bought 12 VHF radios for villages spread throughout the province and built a bridge

over the Urawa River.

Ben Sipa, who runs the program's Sustainable Livelihoods and Community Development department, said local coffee growers had also received an income boost with their product now being exported to Seattle-based roasting company Caffé Vita.

Up to 12 tonnes of the product, marketed as Conservation Coffee, is being flown to the US each year but a scarcity of roads in Morobe Province has made it difficult to increase exports.

"They produce up to 28 tonnes of coffee a year but transport is a problem," Mr Sipa said.

"Alternative projects like growing coffee and cocoa not only complement but add value to the conservation initiatives."

Limited research has been completed on tree kangaroo numbers but Ms Dabek said anecdotal reports from local people have shown an increase in animals on traditional hunting grounds and also a welcome rise in cassowary populations.

# Participation ‘key to birdlife protection’

By JUSTINE MANNAN

Journalism student at FNU

Local participation is the focus of BirdLife International's work in the Pacific Islands.

BirdLife International is one of the world's largest nature conservation partnerships, teaming up with over 100 countries to protect birds around the world.

In the Pacific, they have the Local Empowerment Programme, working closely with local people and organisations, as the loss of biodiversity does not only affect the environment but also people's livelihoods will be diminished such as food, clean water and recreational areas.

Ms. Morena Rigamoto, Program Manager for BirdLife International, highlighted how important it is to work with the local people in Pacific island countries and get them involved



**BirdLife International staff at their display booth at the 9th Pacific Islands Conference on Nature Conservation and Protected Areas.**

in protecting their environmental surroundings in areas where birds are

endangered.

“Basically the Local Empowerment Programme looks at engaging with people at sites that are critical for birds and biodiversity and also working with local organisations, empowering local groups, learning from local groups and local people and how they depend on nature and their natural resources and working out ways whereby a meaningful partnership could be established for the benefit of the people and also the benefit of nature conservation and biodiversity,” Ms. Rigamoto said.

The Local Empowerment Programme is currently set up in the Cook Islands, French Polynesia, New Caledonia, Palau, New Zealand and Fiji.

The BirdLife International secretariat works with governments and NGOs in these Pacific Island countries.

## Sourcing funding for biodiversity work

By JUSTINE MANNAN

Journalism student at FNU

A lack of funding for biodiversity work in the Pacific is a major hurdle for countries trying to safeguard their environment but a five-year-old initiative is helping address this gap.

A funding partnership called LifeWeb Initiative was launched in 2008 at the 9th Conference of the Parties of the Convention on Biological Diversity.

LifeWeb Initiative works to facilitate financing to conserve biodiversity, secure livelihoods, and address climate change.

Mr. Charles Besançon, the LifeWeb Initiative Coordinator, made a case for how to secure funding for natural solutions to biodiversity challenges during a

presentation at this week's 9th Pacific Islands Conference on Nature Conservation and Protected Areas.

He added: “The donors want to ensure these projects are really important to government and must be submitted by governments, however the reality is many projects are written by NGOs, budgets are constructed by NGO partners and the implementers of the projects are also NGOs. Governments must take ownership of the process, it must endorse and they must actually submit the projects.”

Some larger projects which require more than one donor are put on roundtables where LifeWeb organises events and funds for participants.

“The potential recipient talks about what their needs are and donors present what their interests are in funding and

developing partnerships right there on the spot,” Mr. Besançon added.

“Donors want to know that the projects that you are proposing are not just a stand-alone, that they are actually important to a country, they are a priority and there are many ways to demonstrate that they are a priority. It can appear in your national biodiversity strategy and action plan (NBSAPs), and in your research plan, national adaptation plan - these are the things the donors will be interested to know,” Mr. Besançon said.

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## Samoa's successes in climate resilience

By **PRIYA CHAND**  
*journalism student of USP*

Samoa has many success stories in terms of building climate resilience, says Tusani Joe Reti, a founding member of the Roundtable on Nature Conservation in the Pacific.

Speaking at the 9th Pacific Islands Conference on Nature Conservation and Protected Areas, Tusani Joe said despite the focus of the 1985 conference on constraints, there were some success stories that could be learnt from.

"Organisations like SPREP, IUCN, Conservation International and TNC, to name a few, have all been very successful in their efforts to engage different sectors in the conservation movement," he said.

"There have been special training and awareness programmes conducted for the media people, the youth groups, the parliamentarians, the private sector and, of course, various agencies of governments."

Tusani Joe said regional campaigns effectively supported by national efforts had also been launched for the conservation of specific species and ecosystems over the years.

"For example, we had the Year of the



**Tusani Joe Reti**

Sea Turtle in 2006, the adoption of the Island Biodiversity Programme of Action during COP 8 and we had specific activities for the conservation of dugongs, whales and dolphins," he said.

"And, many Pacific Island countries have adopted the Convention on Migratory Species, the Pacific Invasive Learning Network (or PILN) and more recently the Ramsar Convention."

Tusani Joe also noted the commitment of several northern states through the Micronesian Challenge which aimed to

protect 30 per cent of their near-shore and 20 per cent of their terrestrial resources by 2020.

He said efforts in recent decades have been well documented and acknowledged, and that they had put the Pacific region on par with other regions of the world that had far greater capacity and resources to achieve their conservation goals.

"But we must not stop here," he cautioned.

"There is still a long way to go yet to ensure the achievements of today are not threatened by the challenges of tomorrow.

"The successes of today should provide us the impetus and courage to continue to move forward and these are lessons we need to take forward, not stored away to be unheard of again as we confront new challenges," he said.

*Priya Chand is a member of the Media Team providing coverage of the 9th Pacific Islands Conference on Nature Conservation and Protected Areas from 2 to 6 December in Suva, Fiji. This is a partnership between the Fiji National University (FNU), University of the South Pacific (USP), SPREP and Pacific Islands News Association (PINA) whereby a team of 10 journalism students are mentored by senior reporters as they cover the conference. This activity is funded by the Pacific Assistance Media Scheme (PACMAS).*

# Community support helps protect areas of high biodiversity

By STEVE POGNOWSKI

Protection of key biodiversity areas in Kiribati, Fiji and the Solomon Islands was linked to successful community engagement and marine planning at the 9th Pacific Islands Conference on Nature Conservation and Protected Areas.

Attendees at the Marine Spatial Planning parallel session held during the week, heard examples of protected area projects and the challenges faced in persuading governments and small villages on the long-term value of linked marine and land planning.

Mr. Willie Atu from The Nature Conservancy explained the use of the Ridges to Reef Approach in the Solomon Islands to meet the goals of the Coral Triangle Initiative.

Ridges to Reef aims to link terrestrial, freshwater and marine conservation planning to ensure a strategic approach, as demonstrated by successful projects in Choiseul and Isabel provinces in the Solomon Islands.

"We involved the community by giving them maps to show threats (to their livelihoods) and opportunities and their local knowledge of the province," Mr. Atu said.

"These provinces contain potential mining areas and their map of threats matched up with the (land-based) mining leases."

Kiribati has been seen as a test case where successful marine spatial planning is of vital importance, as the islands contain a land area of 810.8 square kilometres and an exclusive economic zone of 3.5 million square kilometres.

Nenenteiti Teariki-Ruatu from the Kiribati Government's Environment and Conservation Division said identifying and protecting key biodiversity areas across the 33 atolls of the Gilbert, Line and Phoenix groups required strong community involvement.

"We learnt from some projects that there was limited community involvement, engagement and participation. Protecting key areas is a priority in the outer islands where livelihoods and income are from the land and sea," she said.

"Eight key biodiversity areas are currently protected ... and North Tarawa has a proposed RAMSAR site that should offer further protection."

Wildlife Conservation Society Fiji program director Stacy Jupiter said speaking to community leaders in each province would be crucial to the success of the Kubulau District Marine Protected Areas Network in Fiji.

She said the lack of national legislation supporting marine protected areas in Fiji meant that involving the community and listening to their concerns on overfishing, poaching and coastal management was necessary to ensure local people would work to conserve local ecosystems.

