

The Inside Story on Saving the Last Great Places in the

# pacific island countries



Images from Micronesia Photos © Jez Ohare

At the end of October I was privileged to be part of a wonderful team of dedicated conservationists who helped make history here in the Pacific by showcasing the Micronesia Challenge and the related commitments of Fiji and Kiribati to the protection of their marine resources in the region. The Global Island Partnership, a group which represents a broad range of international conservation organisations active in the region, together with senior government staff from Palau and Fiji, staged an influential high level event which attracted the leaders of all but four of the Forum Governments and representatives of the region's most influential public funding donors and donor countries. Subsequently, with strong support from the Micronesian countries, the Forum endorsed the conservation of natural resources as a priority activity in the Pacific Plan and perhaps more importantly, urged donor organisations and countries to sustainably fund these activities. To my knowledge this is the first time that the political leadership of the Pacific has embraced conservation and its sustainable funding, and heralds in a new era of political commitment to our work. That it was achieved through such a co-operative effort is especially rewarding.

This issue of the newsletter also highlights many other significant achievements by our Pacific Team. Particularly exciting is the remarkable effort by the Kimbe Bay multi-disciplinary team which completed the design of the Kimbe Bay Marine Protected Area network which is one of the first in the world to incorporate the principles of resilience and human resource use factors. Congratulations to the team for this groundbreaking achievement and for showing the tropical marine conservation community the way forward in this crucial area of network design.

**Peter Thomas**  
 Director, Pacific Island Countries Program

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## Conservation leaders strengthen ties between Micronesia and Caribbean Challenges

by Susi Menazza Olmsted

Inspired by the launch of the Micronesia Challenge at the Coral Reef Task Force Meeting in Palau last November, the country of Grenada announced its commitment to protect 25% of its marine and terrestrial resources by 2020. The announcement was made during the High Level Event hosted by Palauan President Tommy Remengesau at COP8 in March in Curitiba, Brazil, thus officially launching the Caribbean Challenge.



Dr. Thomas with some MIC members in Saipan. From left to right: Albon Ishdoa (Marshall Islands Conservation Society), Ricky Carl (Pohnpei Marine Conservation Unit), Dr. Spencer Thomas, Patterson Shed (Conservation Society of Pohnpei) and Madison Nena (Kosrae Conservation and Safety Organisation) ©The Nature Conservancy

Since then, the Conservancy has worked to create a bridge between conservation leaders from Micronesia and the Caribbean involved in the two Challenges. In June, Willy Kostka, Executive Director of the Micronesia Conservation Trust, was invited to participate in the Caribbean Workshop on Protected Area Design and Management in Miami. Willy was the keynote speaker at the opening gala dinner, attended by approximately 100 participants, and shared the experiences and lessons learned of the emerging Micronesia Challenge. His talk “inspired government and civil society conservation leaders throughout the Caribbean,” says the Conservancy’s Senior Protected Area Specialist, Jason Spensley.

Building on the success of that exchange, the Micronesia Program invited Dr. Spencer Thomas to the eighth retreat of the Micronesians in Island Conservation (MIC) Network in Saipan, CNMI on August 20-24. Dr. Thomas is the Economic Policy Advisor to the Ministry of Finance of Grenada, the Caribbean

focal point for the Convention on Biological Diversity, and a champion of the Caribbean Challenge. During his keynote speech at the retreat’s opening dinner, Dr. Thomas focused on the worldwide implications of the Micronesia Challenge and the importance of cooperation between Small Islands Developing States.

“The Micronesia Challenge is an inspiration for every island nation and group of islands throughout the world. In fact, it is an example for every country in the world... While we are cognisant of the inadequate levels of domestic resources, particularly finance and technical know-how, we must seek to unleash our creative energies and collective strengths through partnerships, cooperation and collaboration... among island systems and nations and across geographic boundaries... Today, the bonds of friendship between our regions have been further strengthened.”

After Saipan, Dr. Thomas proceeded to Palau, where he met the president and discussed the opportunity of further exchanges between the Micronesia and Caribbean Challenges.

## Conservancy convenes Micronesia Challenge planning retreat for key support partners

by Bill Raynor

The Micronesia Challenge provides a once-in-a-generation opportunity to significantly “ramp up” biodiversity conservation efforts in Micronesia. The implementation of the Challenge will demand a higher level of support from the various regional, international and U.S. federal agencies and organisations than has been provided to date. In light of this, the Conservancy convened a meeting of some of the key implementation support partners in Guam from August 15-18.

Eighteen representatives from six agencies and organisations, including Conservation International, Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Program, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the RARE Centre for Tropical Conservation, the Micronesia Conservation Trust and the Conservancy, participated in a three-day strategic planning workshop. Dr. Lucille Apis-Overhoff, the Conservancy’s Partnership Specialist, facilitated the event. The group identified the overall goal for the Micronesia Challenge Support Team as providing strategic assistance for the implementation of the Challenge by the five entities of Micronesia: the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, Guam, the Republic of Palau, the Republic of the Marshall Islands and the Federated States of Micronesia. The partners committed to working collaboratively on six thematic areas – funding, coordination, communication, sustained political support, technical support and building local partner capacity - in support of the five Micronesian entities’ Challenge implementation activities.

## Conservancy staff facilitate strategic planning in the Marshall Islands

by Bill Raynor

On May 15-17, Bill Raynor, Micronesia Program Director, and visiting Coda Fellow Alex Mas from California facilitated a strategic planning workshop for the Coastal Management Advisory Council (CMAC\*) in Majuro, Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI). CMAC is an integrated team of government and non-government organisations with a wide variety of institutional mandates – all with a common interest in the mutually compatible goal of sustainable development and conservation of the coastal and marine resources throughout the RMI. CMAC was officially recognised in 2005 by the Board of the Marshall Islands Marine Resources Authority as an Advisory and Coordination council, and members decided to develop a management and strategic plan for developing and conserving their nation's coastal resources. The plan's overall goal is to utilise an ecosystem approach to coastal resource management for the RMI and facilitate collaborative work in three major thematic areas:

- Community Based Coastal and Fisheries Management
- Preserving Our Natural and Traditional Heritage
- Securing Sustainable Finance

During the three day retreat, the Conservancy staff also assisted CMAC to establish a team charter to document their common understanding of performance agreements and expected end results.

*\*CMAC currently consists of the following organisations: Marshall Islands Marine Resources Authority (MIMRA), RMI Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), College of the Marshall Islands (CMI), Marshall Islands Visitors Authority (MIVA), Office of Environmental Planning and Policy Coordination (OEPPC), Marshall Islands Conservation Society (MICS), and Natural Resources Assessment Surveys (NRAS).*

## The Conservancy's Micronesia Program and Hawaii Program partner to conduct a series of Pacific Marine Efrogmson Workshops

by Trina Leberer

From February to July, four Pacific teams participated in a series of three workshops to develop conservation action plans (CAPs) for marine sites in their islands with support from the U.S. Department of Interior – Office of Insular Affairs and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. The teams participating in the workshops worked at the following sites: Utwe-Walung Marine Park, Kosrae, FSM led by Kosrae Conservation and Safety Organisation; Northern Reefs, Palau led by Palau Conservation Society; Maunalua Bay, Oahu, led by Malama Maunalua; and Palmyra Atoll led by the Conservancy.

The Conservancy has designed a process for sharing CAP through a highly effective series of workshops, called the Efrogmson Fellowship. In these workshops, four to six field-based teams come together to comprehensively analyse biological, social, economic and other factors at their conservation sites, and then develop and assess strategic conservation actions to preserve or improve biodiversity, abate critical threats and build local capacity for conservation.

The effort was co-sponsored by Bill Raynor (TNC, Micronesia) and Karen Poiani, (TNC, Hawaii). Audrey Newman (TNC) and Karen Poiani served as facilitators, while Trina Leberer (TNC, Micronesia) and Gerry Davis (NOAA Fisheries) provided technical assistance and served as coaches for the Kosrae and Palau teams, respectively. The Resource Team also included Theresa Menard (TNC, Hawaii) and Bill Millhouser (NOAA Coastal Programs). Richard Hamilton (TNC, Melanesia) and Peter Ramohia (TNC, Solomon Islands) participated in the first workshop to learn more about CAP in preparation for the first Melanesia Efrogmson series planned for 2007.

Upon completion of the third workshop, each team had identified one to two critical threats, along with some key action steps to begin to address these threats. In addition to identifying clear threats and the initial steps with which to tackle them, the teams benefited greatly from working through the CAP process in an Efrogmson context, drawing on the experiences and advice of their peers.



Participants in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Pacific Marine Efrogmson workshop in Palau.  
©Trina Leberer

# federated states of micronesia

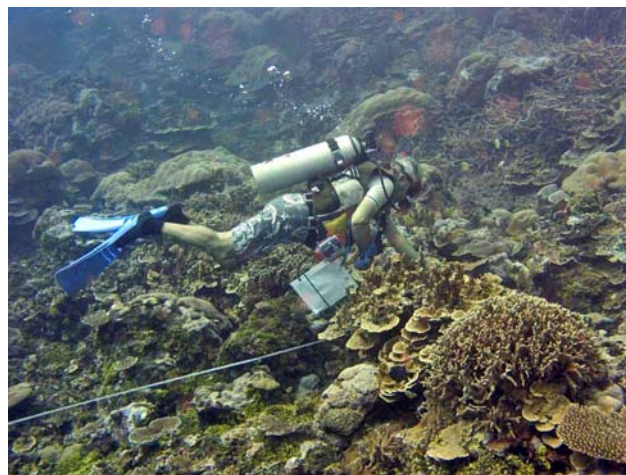
## Kosrae Rapid Ecological Assessment

by Trina Leberer

The state of Kosrae in the Federated States of Micronesia is comprised of a single high volcanic island. The island has a roughly triangular shape totalling about 112 km<sup>2</sup>, with the population of nearly 7,700 living in the four municipalities of Lelu, Malem, Tafunsak and Utwa, primarily along the coast.

From July 27– August 4, the Conservancy’s Micronesia Program assisted local partners in Kosrae to conduct a rapid ecological assessment (REA), with support from the U.S. Department of Interior – Office of Insular Affairs and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. The objectives of the REA included assessing marine biodiversity and the status of marine resources in coral reef habitats; using survey results to identify additional areas of biodiversity significance for protection; providing advice on developing a resilient network of MPAs to protect marine biodiversity; and identifying, in a preliminary sense, the stresses and the threats that currently, or may in the future, adversely affect Kosrae’s marine resources.

Dr. Jim Maragos (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service), Dr. Terry Donaldson (University of Guam Marine Laboratory), Eugene Joseph (Conservation Society of Pohnpei) and Trina Leberer (TNC) worked with a local team including Andy George and Marston Luckymis (Kosrae Conservation and Safety Organisation) and Tony Abraham, Steve Palik, and Osamu Nedlic (Kosrae Marine Resources / Division of Surveillance). The team compiled



Dr. Jim Maragos conducts a coral survey in Kosrae  
© Katrina Adams, Kosrae Village Ecologe

species lists and conducted quantitative surveys for both coral and reef fishes and categorised principal habitat types based on different associations of species. The current status of the coral reef communities, and any recent impacts and future threats to these areas, were also identified.

The preliminary results were presented to local leaders and community members in Kosrae following the survey. According to Dr. Maragos, “Kosrae has the highest coverage of live coral of any populated island or atoll that I have visited.” However, Dr. Donaldson and the fish team found very few large fish. The final report will be used to assist Kosraeans in identifying appropriate sites for possible inclusion in a network of marine protected areas.

# palau

## Protected Areas Network Planning in Palau

by Sean Austin

In May, the Conservancy and the Palau International Coral Reef Centre sponsored a series of two workshops in Palau that brought together nearly 50 participants from relevant government institutions, NGOs, community representatives and individuals to review and assess the latest biodiversity and socio-economic information available for the country. The long-term aim of these workshops was to ensure that decisions related to evaluating and prioritising marine and terrestrial biodiversity are based on the most up-to-date and accurate information available. This in turn allows decision-makers at the national and state levels to meet the dual objectives of the Palau Protected Areas Network (PAN): protecting the country’s biodiversity and assisting with local management of natural resources.



© The Nature Conservancy

During these workshops, participants reviewed and updated the latest maps and data layers and modelled various protected area designs for Palau’s PAN. These scenarios are enabling decision-makers to determine how to most effectively protect and manage Palau’s natural resources. A summary presentation was given to the Congress’s House of Delegates highlighting the collaborative approach of the PAN and the technical input that the Conservancy’s Ecoregional Assessment is providing to planning for biodiversity conservation in the Asia-Pacific region.

## kimbe bay

### Marine Protected Area Network Design Completed

by Paul Lokani and Alison Green

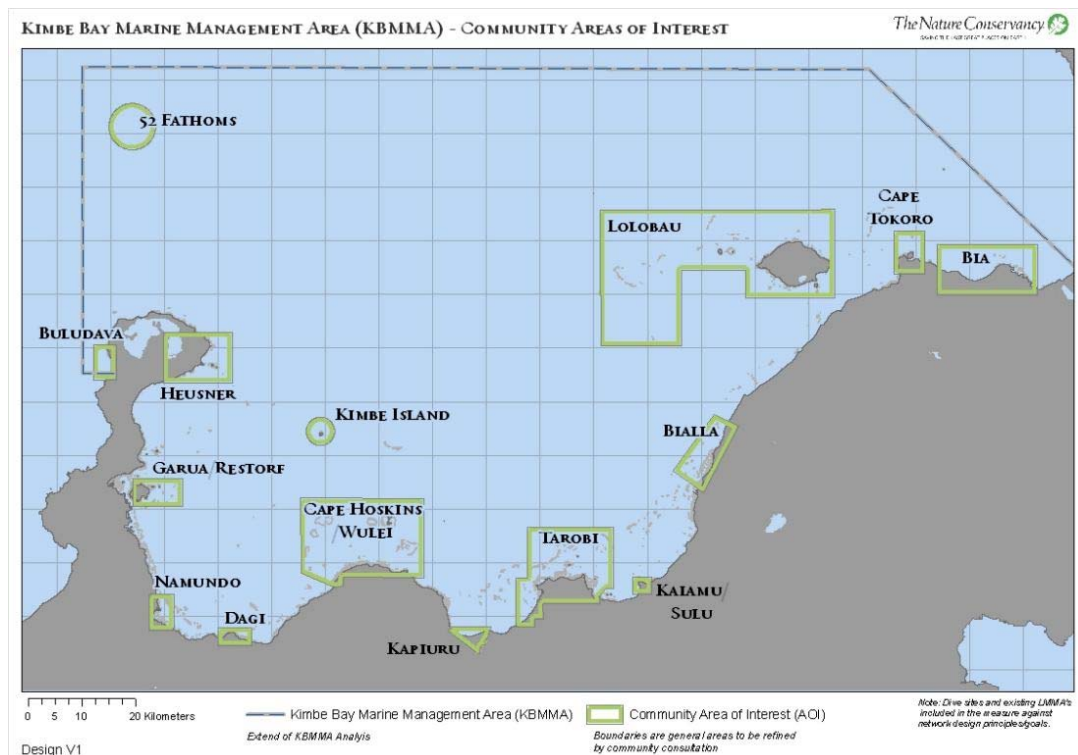
The Nature Conservancy recently completed the design for a resilient network of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) for Kimbe Bay. This network design, which takes into account both biodiversity and human needs, is one of the first on the planet to also address the threats of climate change.

The Conservancy spent the last two years working with experts and partners collecting information and designing a network which incorporated the principles of resilience, including representation and replication, patterns of

connectivity and identification of areas more likely to survive climate change. By taking these principles into account, the network will ensure that corals can survive the effects of rising sea temperatures and other threats such as overfishing and pollution. The MPA network design team also included human factors in the equation, conducting socioeconomic studies to address communities' marine resource needs. The final design has 15 areas of interest spread across the whole Kimbe Bay Marine Management Area.

First iteration of the MPA network for Kimbe Bay, Papua New Guinea, showing Areas of Interest where the Conservancy will work with local communities to effectively manage their marine resources and protect biodiversity.

Map courtesy of Stuart Sheppard



### Local Level, Provincial and National Government Endorse Kimbe Bay MPA Network Design

by Christine Muge

Following the completion of the MPA design process, Kimbe Bay staff members conducted two meetings to begin the process of seeking endorsement of the network design by national, provincial and Local Level Government (LLG) stakeholders. The first, a one-day provincial and LLG stakeholder meeting, was held on August 10 in Kimbe Bay. The second meeting, which included national government members, was held in Port Moresby on September 12. The primary objectives of these meetings were to share the network design, discuss elements of the implementation plan and seek endorsement and support for the process.

The response from both meetings was extremely positive. We now have support for the MPA network at all levels of government. The Conservancy has already worked with the LLG to draft and implement legislation for communities to legally enforce the protection of their marine areas. The next steps include working with provincial and national level governments to reinforce LLG legislation, which will further strengthen the legal framework needed to support the network.

# adelberts

## Additional Conservation Agreements Signed in the Adelberts Mountain Range

by Francis Hurahura

On June 16, eight clans from four different communities in the Adelberts Mountain Range, Papua New Guinea, signed conservation agreements with the Almami Local Level Government, setting aside 3,000 hectares of forest for conservation. The participating clans came from the communities of Gurube, Itatavat, Avipa and Dumudum.

With the June signings, 10 communities have established conservation agreements in the Adelberts, accounting for a total of 5,398 hectares of forest conserved.

By signing conservation area agreements, communities make a commitment to implement land use and management plans, which are designed to ensure the long-term sustainability of their cherished resources. The Conservancy will play a supportive role for these communities by providing technical assistance and monitoring expertise to ensure that the management plans are working, and will assist with any modifications as needed.

## The Fourth Strengthening Partnership Workshop

by Francis Hurahura

From July 12-14, the Conservancy and Village Development Fund, with financial support from the Eco-Forestry Program, held the fourth Strengthening Partnership workshop in Madang. This workshop, which involved 50 participants from both government and NGO sectors, enabled participants to share information and experiences as well as providing a forum to build relationships with others engaged in community-based approaches to conservation, eco-forestry, sustainable forest management and rural development projects. What has resulted from these workshops is a greater



Clan leader of Kimanghugu of Dumudum village, Thomas Mabakol signing the Conservation Area Agreement  
© The Nature Conservancy

understanding of the community based work that is taking place in Papua New Guinea and the role that strong partnerships can play in achieving a myriad of goals. With the fourth workshop now complete, participants and newcomers are already looking forward to the next workshop, which will take place in the next several months.

## Conservation Advisory Committee

by Francis Hurahura

The Conservation Advisory Committee (CAC), which is comprised of representatives from the District Administration, Almami LLG, local landowners, community groups and the Conservancy, went on a four day educational tour to Lae, Morobe Province, to visit projects sites for the Village Development Trust, Rainforest Habitat and Forest Research Institute. The field trip was an opportunity for CAC members to observe and to learn from experiences of other community-based projects in the region and to take these lessons home for application in their communities, projects and LLGs.

# manus and kavieng

## Northern Bismarck Sea Rapid Ecological Assessment: Phase One

by Alison Green and Richard Hamilton

In August, an international team of scientists began a survey of marine life in Papua New Guinea's northern Bismarck Sea. Coordinated by the Conservancy's Tapas Potuku and Manuai Matawai, the aim of the survey was to assess the biodiversity, status and health of coral reef resources in the Tigak Islands in New Ireland Province, and around Manus Island in Manus Province.

The first phase of the survey included a survey of coral reef health and biodiversity, and has been completed. Coral



Emre Turak conducting coral survey in Manus  
© Louise Goggin

experts Dr Charlie Veron and Mr Emre Turak recorded 407 coral species from reefs in the Tigak Islands and 401 coral species from the reefs around Manus Island. An additional number of corals were not identified and could prove to be new to science. Combined with the 390 species already recorded from Kimbe Bay, New Britain, this brings the total number of coral species for the Bismarck Sea to 478.

These results confirm that the area is one of high biodiversity and belongs in the Coral Triangle- the area of highest marine biodiversity on the planet.

Phase Two of the survey is now underway. Dr Gerald Allen, a world expert on coral reef fishes, is currently conducting a more detailed assessment of coral reef fish biodiversity, while an assessment of the coral reef resources (fishes and commercially important invertebrates) is also underway. Stay tuned for more results in the next issue of the Pacific Island Countries Newsletter.

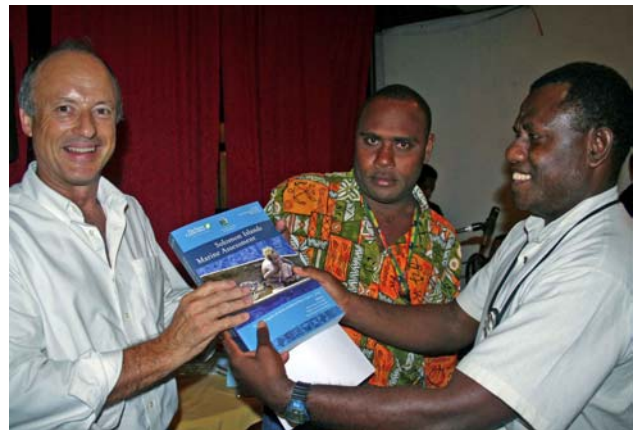
## solomon islands

### Solomon Islands Marine Assessment Report Launch

by William Atu

On September 6, the Solomon Islands Marine Assessment Report was publicly launched in Honiara, Solomon Islands. The report contains the eight technical chapters and the conservation and management recommendations which resulted from the 2004 marine assessment of the Solomon Islands.

A variety of guests attended the launch ceremony, including members of provincial and national level governments, tribal leaders, community elders and guests from the private sector, diplomatic missions, multilateral donors and other conservation organisations.



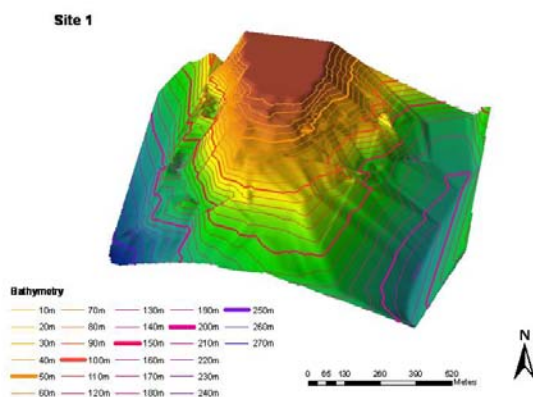
William Atu presents report to European Union Charge'd Affairs Mr Henry Pranker & Martin Jasper, Department of Fisheries.  
© Solomon Star

The guest of honour for the occasion was Hon. Dudley Tausinga, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Environment & Conservation. In his address, Hon Tausinga called for a closer collaboration among government, non-government organisations and other stakeholders to participate in the management of the country's natural resources. He also stressed that the country should use the information from this report as an important planning tool to help conserve and manage the country's vulnerable marine biodiversity.

Visit <http://conserveonline.org/workspaces/pacific.island.countries.publications/SIMAReport> to download the report in its entirety.

### Bathymetric, Terrestrial and Spawning Aggregation Site Mapping in the Solomon Islands

by Richard Hamilton



Fish spawning aggregation site that was mapped and later set aside as an MPA in Munda  
© Jean-Louis Ecochard

In July, Jean-Louis Ecochard, the Conservancy's Chief Information Officer, and several of the Conservancy's Melanesia staff spent two weeks in the Solomon Islands. The trip began in Munda and Gizo (Western Province) where participants mapped a number of fish spawning aggregation sites. While in Munda the group, hosted by the Dunde community, attended a celebration for the closure of a large spawning aggregation site. The Conservancy and partners have been monitoring this site over the last two years.

The group then went to the Arnavon Islands where they produced a bathymetric map of the area as well as a map of its terrestrial habitats. In addition to the mapping, Jean-Louis provided training for the Melanesia staff in bathymetric mapping methodologies.

# General News

## Peter Thomas Celebrates 15 Years with The Nature Conservancy

On October 27, staff in the Indo Pacific Resource Centre in Brisbane, Australia came together to celebrate Peter Thomas' 15-year anniversary with the Conservancy. We surprised Pete with a large poster filled with funny pictures from his time at the Conservancy, an office filled with balloons and a brand new desk which we wrapped in foil and cling wrap (an Australian/New Zealand tradition).



Robyn Curham and Peter Thomas  
©The Nature Conservancy

All of the celebrations were in honour of a great man who has given such a huge part of himself to those of us in the Pacific Island Countries programs and to the Conservancy at large. We are very lucky to have such a compassionate and dedicated person on our team. Congratulations Pete and here's to many more!

## Pacific Island Countries Publications on ConserveOnline

The Pacific Island Countries Program now has a dedicated workspace on [conserveonline.org](http://conserveonline.org) where we are in the process of posting a number of our key publications. Once the structure for the site is finalised, we hope to identify key users in our Micronesia and Melanesia programs who can keep the site updated with important documents from the various projects. At this stage the workspace is in its infancy, but eventually we hope that this site will prove to be a very useful tool for sharing the great work that we do with both internal Conservancy audiences and with our partners. To visit this site, please go to <http://conserveonline.org/workspaces/pacific.island.countries.publications>

### Recent Pacific Island Countries Program Publications

- Colin, P.L. 2006. Study of reef fish spawning aggregations and connectivity on the Palauan reef tract: Final Report and Addendum. Report prepared for the Pacific Island Countries Coastal Marine Program, The Nature Conservancy. TNC Pacific Island Countries Report No. 2/06
- Green, A., P. Lokani, W. Atu, P. Ramohia, P. Thomas and J. Alman (eds.) 2006. Solomon Islands Marine Assessment: Technical report of survey conducted May 13 to June 17, 2004. TNC Pacific Island Countries Report No. 1/06.
- Hamilton, R.J., P. Mous and A. Smith. 2005. Advanced Workshop on Monitoring Reef Fish Spawning Aggregations Report, Pere, Manus Province, Papua New Guinea, 2-11 June 2005. Report prepared for the Pacific Island Countries Coastal Marine Program, The Nature Conservancy. TNC Pacific Island Countries Report No. 6/05
- Hamilton, R.J. and W. Kama. 2004. Spawning Aggregations of Coral Reef Fish in Roviana Lagoon, Western Province, Solomon Islands: Local Knowledge Field Survey Report. Report prepared for the Pacific Island Countries Coastal Marine Program, The Nature Conservancy. TNC Pacific Island Countries Report No. 5/04
- Hamilton, R.J., P. Lahui, J. Warku, J. Aitsi, A. Sapul and S. Seeto. 2005. Local Knowledge of Reef Fish Spawning Aggregations in Kimbe Bay, West New Britain Province, Papua New Guinea. Report prepared for the Pacific Island Countries Coastal Marine Program, The Nature Conservancy. TNC Pacific Island Countries Report No. 2/05
- Hamilton, R.J., M. Matawai and T. Potuku. 2004. Spawning Aggregations of Coral Reef Fish in New Ireland and Manus Provinces, Papua New Guinea: Local Knowledge Field Survey Report. Report prepared for the Pacific Island Countries Coastal Marine Program, The Nature Conservancy. TNC Pacific Island Countries Report No. 4/04
- Rhodes, K.L. 2003. Kavieng Spawning Aggregation Monitoring Training Workshop Report, Kavieng, New Ireland, Papua New Guinea, 22-30 April 2003. Report prepared for the Pacific Island Countries Coastal Marine Program, The Nature Conservancy. TNC Pacific Island Countries Report No. 3/03
- Rhodes, K.L. 2003. Palau Spawning Aggregation Monitoring Training Workshop Report, Koror, Republic of Palau, 18-30 June 2003. Report prepared for the Pacific Island Countries Coastal Marine Program, The Nature Conservancy. TNC Pacific Island Countries Report No. 4/03
- Rhodes, K.L. 2004. FSM Spawning Aggregation Monitoring Training Workshop Report, Black Coral Island, Pohnpei, Federated States of Micronesia, 31 January – 6 February, 2004. Report prepared for the Pacific Island Countries Coastal Marine Program, The Nature Conservancy. TNC Pacific Island Countries Report No. 1/04
- Rhodes, K.L. 2004. Solomon Islands Spawning Aggregation Monitoring Training Workshop Report, Gizo, Western Province, Solomon Islands, 13-21 March 2004. Report prepared for the Pacific Island Countries Coastal Marine Program, The Nature Conservancy. TNC Pacific Island Countries Report No. 2/04
- Rhodes, K.L. and K. Warren-Rhodes. 2005. Management Options for Fish Spawning Aggregations of Tropical Reef Fishes: A Perspective. Report prepared for the Pacific Island Countries Coastal Marine Program, The Nature Conservancy. TNC Pacific Island Countries Report No. 7/05

All of the reports listed above will soon be available on the Pacific Island Countries Publication website  
<http://conserveonline.org/workspaces/pacific.island.countries.publications>

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