

Key Messages:

- Successful 'ridge-to-reef' management depends on broad stakeholder input
- Inland and coastal communities need to manage their actions and resources together
- 'Ridge-to-reef' management protects habitat for all stages of life
- The success of protected areas for conservation and livelihoods relies on combining bottom-up community engagement with top-down planning
- Public health and livelihoods depend on environmental health
- Healthy ecosystems are the best defense against climate change impacts to livelihoods

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Wailevu EBM plan launched in March

On March 22, a formal ceremony was held in Wailevu village outside the home of Tui Wailevu, Ratu Kinijoji Rarokoqica Maivalili (high chief of Wailevu District), to launch the Wailevu District Ecosystem-Based Management Plan.



Above: Participants at the Wailevu EBM plan launch. Photo © Ged Acton

Assorted chiefs, representatives of government, NGOs and community members participated in the launch where the Tui Wailevu spoke of his support for the management plan and the need to safeguard precious local resources. "This is a historic occasion for the people of Wailevu" he stated, "I thank the Provincial Office, the Wildlife Conservation Society and other partners for their support as we take steps to manage our resources for future generations."

The management plan, developed by communities over the past two years, includes management rules for a network of 67 km² of marine, freshwater and terrestrial protected areas, and additional regulations to protect local resources within the district and its customary fishing grounds (*i qoliqoli*).

Government partners and community representatives looked on as high chiefs signed the document and it was blessed in a ceremony on the beach.

Dr. Stacy Jupiter, Director of the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) Fiji Country Program, remarked "this reflects a community-driven approach that is informed by extensive scientific assessments alongside local ecological knowledge. I congratulate the people of Wailevu on the management plan, which provides a focus for them to work together to maintain healthy ecosystems that benefit all communities."

Wailevu is the largest district in Fiji, with 27 villages and over 6,000 people. Considerable coordination and collective effort is required for effective management across its large terrestrial and marine areas. Two resource management committees have been established (for Wailevu West and Wailevu East) to deliver the plan and report progress to traditional leaders through the Bose Vanua (council of chiefs).

The management plan also includes communities in the Upper Nasekawa River basin area of neighbouring Koroalau district, providing a rare example of cross-district collaboration in a formalized management plan. This recognizes the ecological and hydrological connectivity between ecosystems and demonstrates a commitment to cooperation across boundaries as part of an ecosystem-based management approach.

The Roko Tui Cakaudrove, Bulutani Mataitawakilai also offered his support and the Cakaudrove Provincial Council Office congratulated the people of Wailevu for recognizing the importance of working together to protect their resources for future generations. "Working with the Cakaudrove Yaubula Management Support Team, the Provincial Office will continue to support the Vanua Wailevu and encourages other districts in the province to adopt their approach. We thank the Tui Wailevu and his Masi ni Vanua (tribal chiefs) for adopting and supporting sustainable natural resources management".

All partners are now committed to supporting implementation and monitoring the management plan through an adaptive co-management approach.



Left: The local community looks on as Dr. Stacy Jupiter and the Tui Wailevu exchange handshakes marking their commitment to the management plan. Stacy also congratulated the communities for taking this step into resource management. Photo © Ged Acton

Student research awarded at international conference



Above: Mr. Wendt presenting at the SCCS in Brisbane. Photo © Hans Wendt

Mr. Hans Wendt is a young Fijian professional currently studying for a Masters degree whilst working for the Institute of Applied Sciences (IAS) at the University of the South Pacific (USP).

Hans received a special award at the Student Conference on Conservation Science (SCCS) in Brisbane in January, where his talk on 'Applying spatial planning tools to strengthen the design on Marine Protected Areas in Kadavu, Fiji' was judged 3rd best out of 36 international postgraduate presentations.

"I really enjoyed and appreciated this opportunity," said Hans. "It

was a great chance to meet other conservation scientists and learn about their work across south-east Asia, Australasia and the Pacific. There was a lot that we can learn from and apply in Fiji. I would like to thank my colleagues and supervisors at IAS and all the partners who are involved in marine conservation work in Fiji."

Professor Bill Aalbersberg, the Director of IAS, endorsed Hans' recognition, "The award reflects the quality of scientific research and the calibre of graduate researchers at USP," he stated. "We all offer our congratulations and continued support for Hans in this important work, which contributes to the ongoing efforts of partners in the Fiji Locally Managed Marine Area Network".



Supported by the Thomas Foundation, the Australian Research Council and the University of Queensland, the conference was attended by 125 postgraduate students from around the world as part of a programme that aims to strengthen the careers of young conservation scientists. Participants also took in field trips to Lamington National Park and Lone Pine Koala Sanctuary.

Engaging clans in forest and river conservation

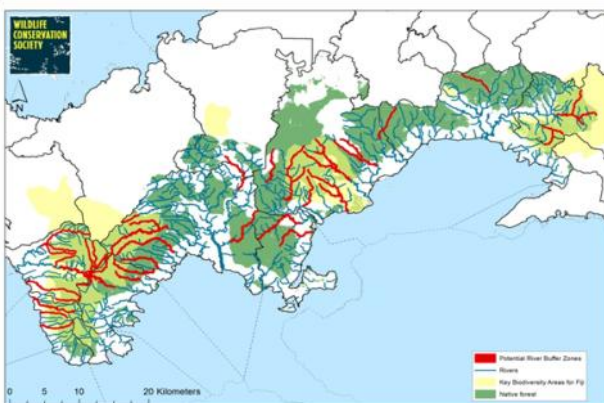
WCS Fiji and partners have been engaging with land owning clans (*mataqali*) to protect forest and rivers in the Mt. Navotuvotu – Mt. Kasi forest corridor, a largely undeveloped area of Vanua Levu that includes several Key Biodiversity Areas for Fiji. The area provides critical ecosystem services to communities who are heavily dependent on natural resources for their health, livelihoods and resilience to climate change impacts. These forests and freshwater habitats are under imminent threat from logging, mining and invasive species and there is a high risk that endangered plant species will be lost without management. Sedimentation from forest clearing also threatens endemic and vulnerable freshwater fish species locally.

Accompanied by the iTaukei Lands and Fisheries Commission and Department of Forestry, WCS Staff worked with clans to explore the threats to their forest and river habitats, including logging con-

cessions, roads, mining sites and hanging culverts which prevent upstream migration of some fish species. Maps of primary forest coverage and the biodiversity of waterways and riparian buffer zones were also considered by clans as they discussed which areas would be best to protect for conservation.



Left: Members of the mataqali Navakalama in Natua Village, Wailevu West, Cakaudrove during the first consultation. Photo © Akanisi Caginitoba



Above: Map showing forest cover (green) Key Biodiversity Areas (yellow) and waterways with high-biodiversity within the study area.

Several clans have now identified areas to be preserved as Community Forest Parks and River Buffer Zones. Although the community-based management does not afford legal protection, it represents an important step to safeguarding ecosystem services, such as clean water and flood protection. These will also be integrated within networks of other locally managed protected areas at district-level, guarding against damage to downstream coastal and marine ecosystems as part of an ecosystem-based management approach.

'Strengthening Conservation and Management across the Mt. Kasi-Mt. Navotuvotu Forest Corridor' is supported by the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund.

FLMMA Annual Lesson Sharing workshop and AGM

The Fiji Locally Managed Marine Area (FLMMA) network Annual General Meeting (AGM) 2012 was held in Navakaka village in Cakaudrove in December. FLMMA is a network of communities, government and NGOs involved in marine conservation. Its partners come together in order to learn and act collectively and improve the success of their efforts.

Mr. Timoci Namotu, Manager of Provincial Services of the iTaukei Affairs Board, opened the lessons sharing workshop by outlining its objectives to:

- Capture lessons learned and best practice;
- Review FLMMA governance and management; and
- Discuss the role/status of Yaubula Management Support Teams (YMSTs) in expanding and maintaining the network.



Above: Participant at the 2 day meeting in Navakaka village. Photo © FLMMA Secretariat

Information and best practice sharing covered, the management of Tabu Areas and No Take Zones; reef enrichment and herbivorous fish; land-based activities; and alternative means of sustainable income generation.

Exploring the negative impacts of land-based activities on marine ecosystems, participants shared experiences of good practice including: reforestation of native trees; substituting chemical weed-killers with collective weeding efforts (*solesolevaki*); and strengthening village by-laws in relation to unnecessary burning.



Above: Participants during 2012 FLMMA AGM. Photo © FLMMA Secretariat

Although these initiatives have restored and maintained healthy freshwater and marine ecosystems, subsequent discussion identified a gap between awareness of these causal chains and the emergence of practical measures to address them—highlighting the need for collaborative planning between communities across wider areas as part of a 'Ridge to Reef' approach.

There was great interest in the growing network of YMSTs, operating at provincial level in Kadavu, Bua, Macuata and Cakaudrove and at island level on Koro, Gau, Ovalau-Moturiki and Vanua Balavu.

The AGM covered FLMMA governance and management issues, before endorsing the annual report and plans for a FLMMA coordinator position, confirming the FLMMA trustees and electing new divisional representatives for 2013.

Participants also suggested a 'FLMMA National Day for Prayer 2013' to acknowledge the support of God augmenting their passion, perseverance and dedication for sustainable resource management.

The AGM was co-funded by the ADB-GEF Coral Triangle Initiative program and the Packard Foundation grant through the Locally Managed Marine Area (LMMA) network. For more information, contact FLMMA Secretariat on (+679) 3361122.

Turtle nest records show big increase



Above: Beautiful beaches in Katawaqa Island. Photo © WWF South Pacific

Katawaqa, an uninhabited island in Nadogo District in the province of Macuata, has been protected as a turtle nesting site since 2011. Recent nesting surveys by WWF's Dau ni Vonu (DnV) network show turtle nest numbers have increased ten-fold on Katawaqa over the last decade, with twenty turtle nests recorded where only two were sited ten years ago.

Local people have been trained as turtle monitors and members of WWF's DnV network. Mr. Emosi Time is one of the local Turtle Monitors and has conducted awareness campaigns involving village meetings, church and community functions as well as informal *talanoa* sessions. He has noticed big changes in local attitudes to eating turtle meat and eggs. "Now turtle harvesting and consumption is only done for important traditional functions," he stated "and people understand the value of our turtles."

The vigilance of people from neighbouring Kavewa Island is seen as a key factor. As well as monitoring access to Katawaqa, they have been proactively supporting the turtle population by planting coconut and casuarina trees that improve vegetation, help protect turtle nests, and prevent erosion of their coastal habitats.

The DnV Network currently includes 30 men and women who are actively supporting implementation of Fiji's Sea Turtle Recovery Plan.



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Climate change adaptation workshop

Conservation International (CI) hosted a national 'Training of Trainers' workshop on climate change adaptation in Rakiraki in February. Over 30 participants from Government ministries, non-government organisations, Provincial Council Offices and communities were involved in piloting CI's recently developed training course and manual on climate change adaptation. The training materials had been developed by a wide range of CI offices and partners, providing insight, knowledge and experience from across 12 different countries. The workshop sought to test their effectiveness as awareness and capacity building tools for communities in Fiji.

A range of participative activities were used to explore the impacts of changing ecosystems on the resilience and vulnerability of island communities. Visual learning, role plays (including negotiation of international conventions), acting and guessing games contributed to a fun learning experience. Participants went on to explore threats to local ecosystems, means of communicating these threats



Above: Participants play a game demonstrating how ecosystems mitigate the impacts of climate change. Photo © Conservation International

to communities and the practical steps they can take in response.



Above: A group presentation demonstrating how to plan for adaptation and take action using visual aids. Photo © Conservation International

The event included visits to project sites in Rakiraki and Nadroga, as well as presentations from the Global Environment Facility's Small Grants Programme, Fiji Meteorological Center, National Climate Change Unit and the Pacific Centre for Environment and Sustainable Development at USP.

Participants provided insight from a range of perspectives, incorporating their extensive experience of community engagement in Fiji.

Based on the feedback, training products will now be amended by CI before their application to help communities adapt and retain resilience to local climate change impacts.

Reef resilience surveys in Western Bua

Alongside local ecological knowledge, robust data are key to enabling effective ecosystem-based management. In late 2012, WCS undertook marine surveys in the customary fishing grounds (*i qoliqoli*) of the districts of Bua, Dama, Lekutu, Navakasiga and Vuya off the western coast of Bua Province.



Above: WCS survey team holding an important discussion before the dive. Photo © Stacy Jupiter

The sustainability of fisheries is a major issue for coastal communities, who are heavily reliant on marine resources for income as well as sustenance. Data are currently being analysed so they can be used in the coming months to inform district man-

agement planning, enabling consideration of which reefs are most resilient and productive, and therefore where communities might best locate any marine protected areas (MPAs).

The survey team was initially based in Navuneivu village in Bua District, before moving on to Yadua Island, Yaqaga Island and eventually Nabouwalu Village. The great hospitality received was a big help as the team battled to overcome wet and windy conditions that preceded the arrival of tropical cyclone Evan.

Since the surveys, WCS has conducted a spatial prioritization exercise using the decision-support tool Marxan to design recommendations for placement of marine protected area (MPA) networks in Bua that would represent habitats, include critical sites for reef resilience, and spread risk.

The surveys replicated methods previously applied in the districts of Kubulau, Wainunu, Nadi and Solevu, generating data that now provide an overview of the health of coral reefs and fisheries across the province. This will also help stakeholders as they work towards developing an integrated coastal management plan for the province of Bua in 2014.