



COMPONENT 1

PALAU MISSION PRELIMINARY REPORT

COMPONENT 1 MPAs and WATERSHEDS

1 November 2006 – 30 September 2007

SCOPING OF CRISP SUPPORT TO PALAU AND THE MICRONESIA CHALLENGE



Scoping of CRISP Support to Palau and the Micronesia Challenge

Preliminary Report

Purpose

This preliminary report summarizes the results of a mission undertaken by François Martel, CI Executive Director for the Pacific Islands to Palau to participate in the Micronesia Challenge Strategic Planning Workshop held in Palau from 4 to 7 December 2006 and follow up work with Palauan stakeholders to target well the proposed support from the CRISP. The purpose of this project is to investigate and outline for AFD's consideration support from the CRISP to Palau for improving coral reef conservation and management as part of CRISP Component 1 MPAs and Watersheds

Background

AFD and CI are working together as part of the Coral Reef Initiative in the Pacific (CRISP). Importantly CI is coordinating the CRISP Component 1 focusing on MPAs and Watersheds.

CI is also a founding partner, together with The Nature Conservancy (TNC) in the Micronesia Challenge. The Micronesia Challenge (MC) is a commitment by the Governments of Palau, Federated States of Micronesia, Republic of the Marshall Islands, Guam and the Northern Mariana Islands to conserve 30% of coastal marine and 20% of forest areas by the year 2020.

At the present time Micronesian countries are not active in the CRISP and recently the Government of Palau has expressed strong interest in engagement with CRISP and its partners. The only exception to this is Kiribati where CRISP Component 1 Output 2 supports MPAs led by FSPI and Output 3 MPA capacity building efforts will link CI's effort in the CRISP with CI's program to support the Phoenix Islands Protected Area.

MC governments, partners and supporting agencies met in Koror, Palau from December 4-7 2006 to develop and agree a concrete programme of work for the MC to meet its goals. With CI Pacific Islands a key NGO in both the CRISP and the MC, AFD and CI recognized that this meeting was a useful opportunity to scope initial support from CRISP to Palau and to investigate potential linkages and synergies between CRISP and the Micronesia Challenge as it pertains to common goals of marine protected area and improved watershed management development in the region.

1. Summary update of coral reef conservation initiatives, including MPAs, in Palau in relation to a potential CRISP engagement.

There are 28 conservation areas of various types in Palau (ranging from traditional closures or "buls" to state and national conservation areas protected by legislation) most of these have been protected primarily for resource management purposes. For

2. Outline of potential project(s) in Palau for initial CRISP support in 2006/7 through the existing AFD and CI CRISP Component 1 MPAs and Watersheds

During the mission to Palau as part of the Strategic Planning Workshop for the Micronesia Challenge, several meetings were held with PAN, TNC, PCS, the Government of Palau officials and the PICRC, to ascertain potential projects in Palau for CRISP initial support.

Four interesting initiatives were identified for potential CRISP support:

- 1) Sustainable financing and conservation of Helens Reef marine protected area (Tobi State), in partnership with the people of Tobi, Conservation International, the Helens Reef Steering Committee, the Packard Foundation and the Community Conservation Network (CNN, based in Hawaii).
- 2) Marine Rapid Assessment of the remote corals of Palau, the Helens Reef (southern) and the Valasco Reef (northern), in partnership with the Tobi people, TNC, CI and the PICRC.
- 3) Support to PICRC marine research initiatives for the Palau Protected Area network, in partnership with PCS and PICRC.
- 4) Developing a Blueprint for the Palau Protected Areas Network: State priority setting exercises in partnership with the PAN, TNC, PALARIS and the PCS.

Only one of the above, no.4, had been clearly defined and in a situation to be initiated and completed during the period of the CRISP. This project is a key activity of the Palau workplan defined during the workshop for addressing their commitment to the Micronesia Challenge. This project would contribute significantly to increase knowledge and State buy-in for priority areas for marine and coastal conservation, assess the marine biodiversity gaps and provide a long-term framework for the implementation of a network of marine protected areas in the context of the Micronesia Challenge.

The aim of this proposal is to identify areas of high marine and terrestrial biodiversity within each of the sixteen states of Palau that represents the full array of ecological communities, plants and animals, that when conserved and managed will effectively protect the nation's natural heritage for this and future generations.

General description of the project

In November 2003 a landmark piece of legislation, the Protected Areas Network Act was passed by the Olbiil Era Kelulau (Palau National Congress) and signed into law by President Tommy E. Remengesau, Jr. The Act provides a framework for Palau's national and state governments to collaborate to establish a nationwide network of terrestrial and marine protected areas that will protect areas of biodiversity significance, important habitats, and other valuable resources that are essential to the future social, cultural, economic, and environmental stability and health of Palau.

In May 2006, The Nature Conservancy and local partners (including Palau Conservation Society, Ministry of Resources and Development, Palau International Coral Reef Center, Coral Reef Research Foundation, Bureau of Agriculture, Bureau of Marine Resources, PALARIS, the States) came together in a one week workshop to synthesize current knowledge to contribute towards the planning and implementation of a nationwide network of marine and terrestrial protected areas in

Palau. During the workshop, participants developed a range of options for areas that could be included in the Protected Areas Network to meet biodiversity conservation goals. These options can then be used in the processes of community consultation and discussion at the State level to help progress the development of the Protected Areas Network Act over the next few years. At the end of the workshop, representatives from the 16 States of Palau requested that a simplified priority setting exercise be conducted for each of the states for local planning purposes.

This provides an opportunity for the national and state governments to work together to build on the existing suite of protected areas to develop a protected areas network that meets the dual objectives of protecting the country's terrestrial and marine biodiversity, in concert with managing the natural resources. This ecoregional assessment report provide a starting point for discussion at national and state/community level of how additional protected areas might be selected and managed to meet these dual objectives and will feed into the proposed state priority setting exercise.

The proposed state priority setting exercises include the following components:

- Training of local staff in facilitating the process (PCS and PALARIS)
- Conducting 16 state priority setting meetings, including collecting additional/new data, analysis of the data and drafting reports.

The total budget of the exercise is: \$ 41,200 USD of which TNC contributes \$ 12,000 USD. The contribution from CRISP will be 19.000 Euro.

An example of scenario developed for the eco-regional assessment report at the national level is provided in Attachment 1. The project proposes to complete these scenario for each of the 16 States through GIS analysis and stakeholder consultations. The project thus incorporates the Republic of Palau in Output 1 Marine Conservation Planning activity coordinated by CI for the Component 1 of CRISP.

CI recommends also to consider separate funding for the other three projects from CRISP in a future phase.

Further discussions were held between the CI Pacific Islands Program and TNC on the project proposed and CI also received confirmation from the Government of Palau's PAN Director that the Blueprint process with State stakeholders was a priority and part of the Micronesia Challenge workplan for Palau. The grant agreement was negotiated over the period May to September 2007 and signed in October 2007. A copy of the grant agreement between CI and TNC is attached in Attachment 2. It is noted that this grant term is fully within the time frame of CRISP implementation, however, an extension to the CI AFD CRISP Palau Grant from 30 September 2007 until 30 June 2008 to fully cover the period of the work in Palau is now required.

3. Briefing on the Micronesia Challenge and potential synergies and opportunities with CRISP for engagement from CRISP in its envisioned second phase.

At the Eighth Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) held in March 2006 in Curitiba, Brazil, the leaders of the five political entities of Micronesia (Republic of Palau, Federated States of Micronesia, Republic of the Marshall Islands, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, and Guam) put forth to the world the **Micronesia Challenge**.

The Challenge states that the Chief Executives of Micronesia, in order to:

- *Sustain our unique island biodiversity;*
- *Ensure a healthy future for our island people;*
- *Protect our unique island cultures;*
- *Guard the foundations of our future development, our pristine island environments;*
- *Sustain the livelihoods of our island communities; and*
- *Contribute to global and national targets set out in the Millennium Development Goals, the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation for the World Summit on Sustainable Development, the Mauritius Strategy for Small Island Developing States, the U.S. Coral Reef Task Force National Plan of Action and the relevant Programmes of Work of the Convention on Biological Diversity agree to undertake an expanded commitment to preserve our marine and terrestrial environments through:*

“effectively conserving at least 30% of the near-shore marine and 20% of the forest resources across Micronesia by 2020.”

In order to begin implementation of the Micronesia Challenge, leaders, resource managers, community representatives, and technical experts from around the region participated in a 3.5 day Action Planning Meeting in Palau from December 4-7, 2006. Prior to the meeting in Palau, each jurisdiction held pre-meetings to prepare for the regional meeting, at which they will identify their current status of near-shore marine and terrestrial conservation efforts, appropriate local conservation targets for meeting the goals and intent of the Micronesia Challenge, and suggested benchmarks for measuring success to propose to the broader group. The objectives of the Palau meeting include:

- Designating a regional coordinating body/mechanism;
- Establishing sustainable financing mechanisms;
- Designating a regional fundraising mechanism;
- Developing a plan with Pacific Island programs and facilities to optimize regional coordination and financing;
- Developing a clear understanding of the terms of the Micronesia Challenge, i.e. amount of resources or areas to be protected, the meaning of “effective conservation”, forest vs. terrestrial resources, etc.;
- Establishing key targets and milestones that will be used to measure progress region-wide;
- Sharing experience, tools and techniques and identifying additional skills and knowledge that will be required for successful implementation;
- Reviewing existing mechanisms for establishing, expanding, and formalizing local partnerships;
- Developing a plan for expanding communication and interaction with local communities and traditional leadership;

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 US Federal agencies and organizations than has been provided to date.

In light of this, eighteen representatives from **key implementation support partners**, including Conservation International (CI), Micronesia Conservation Trust (MCT), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Rare (former RARE Center for Tropical Conservation), the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP), and The Nature Conservancy (TNC)¹ participated in a meeting in Guam from August 15-18, 2006, to:

- Provide an overview and the latest update on the Micronesia Challenge
- Learn about each others' agencies, programs, and plans for supporting the Challenge
- Assess our joint team strengths and weaknesses as we prepare to support the region in implementing the Challenge
- Identify key issues and support needs of Micronesian governments and non-government partners
- Create a joint strategic action plan to support the Challenge

This regional support team received guidance from the five Micronesia Challenge jurisdictions at the December Planning Meeting on how best to support their implementation efforts. In the meantime, the team has drafted **seven concept papers** for discussion during the jurisdictions' meetings about the Micronesia Challenge:

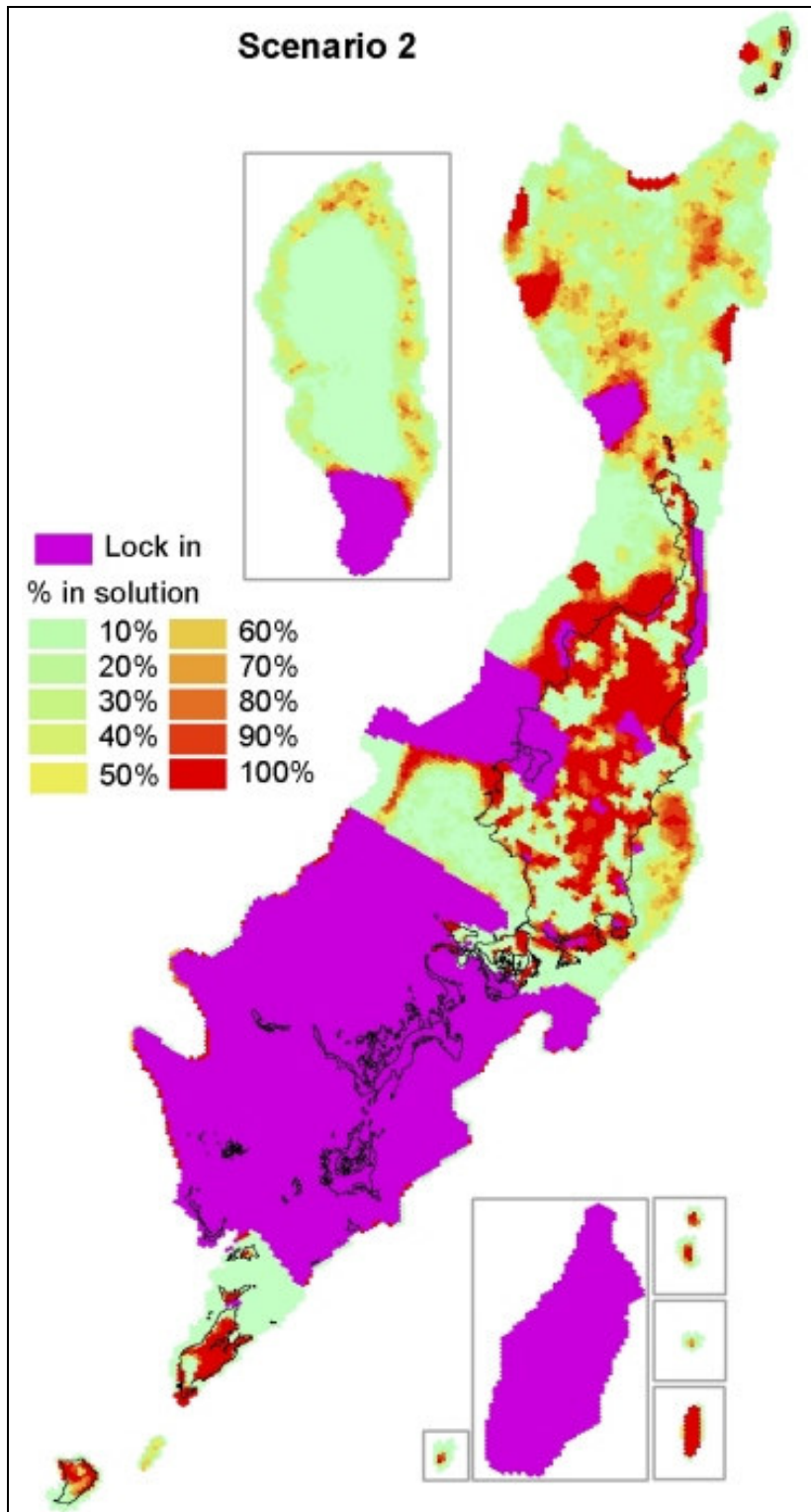
1. Concept Paper on Meaning and Definitions of "Effective Conservation"
2. Concept Paper on Meaning and Definitions of "30% Near-shore Marine"
3. Concept Paper on Meaning and Definitions of "20% Forest"
4. Concept Paper on Benchmarks and Measures
5. Concept Paper on Developing a Regional Coordinating Mechanism
6. Concept Paper on the Rationale for a Single Conservation Endowment to Support the Micronesia Challenge
7. Concept Paper on Public Awareness and Communications for the Micronesia Challenge

The Strategic Planning Workshop was hosted by the Government of Palau. The concept papers were then discussed in Working Groups.

¹ The Department of Interior, Office of Insular Affairs is also a member of the team but a representative was unable to attend the Guam meeting.

Example of Scenario (2): Existing Protected Areas

This scenario “locks in” all existing protected areas and then allows MARXAN to search for *additional areas* to fully meet conservation goals.



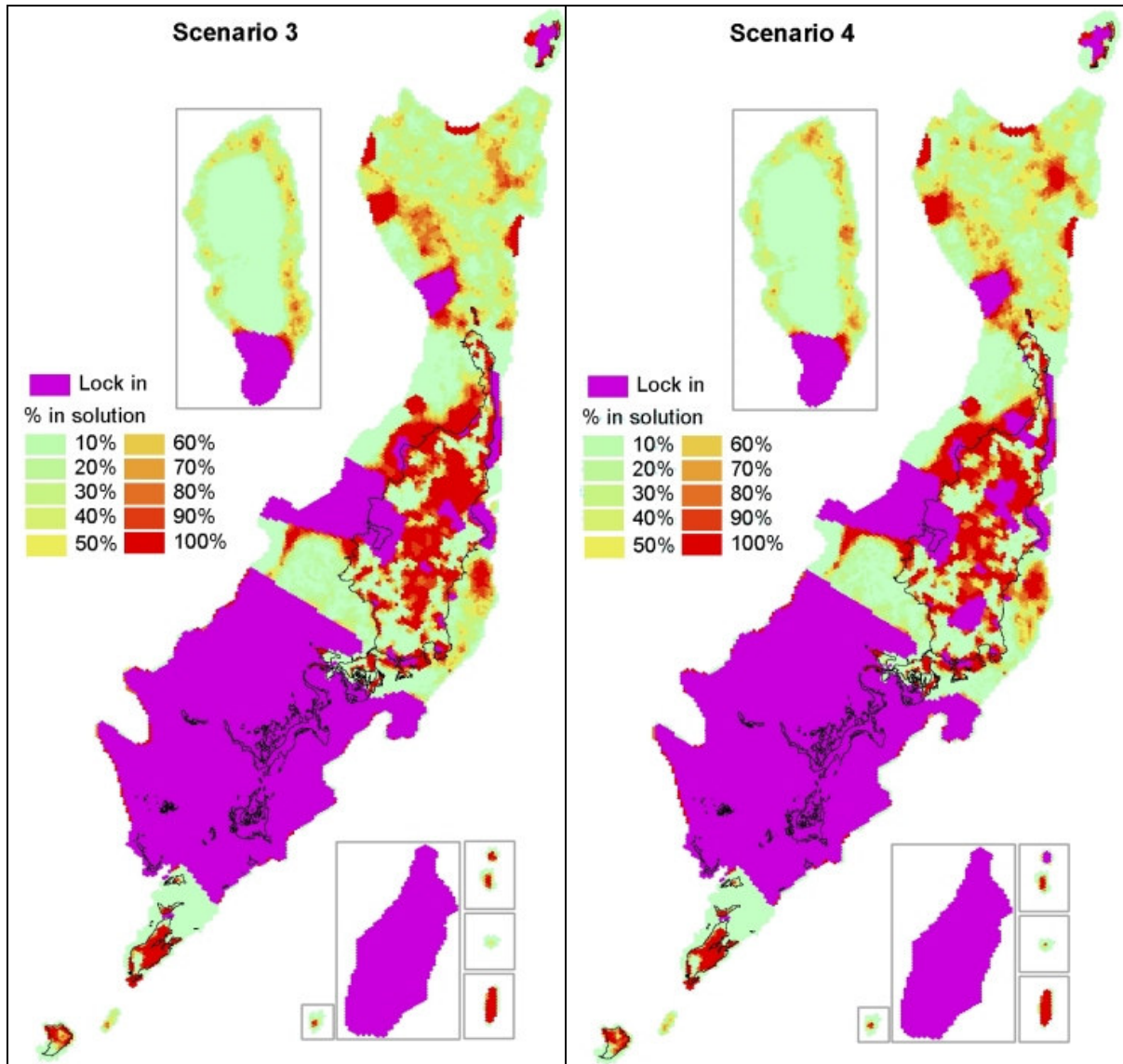
If all existing protected areas are included in the PAN, this scenario shows one example of additional areas that might also be protected or managed to conserve Palau’s biodiversity. As for Scenario 1, all conservation goals were fully met in this scenario.

Slight differences in the new areas selected compared with Scenario 1 reflect the fact that many of the conservation goals are fully or partly met within existing protected areas.

(Courtesy of TNC-Palau)

Examples of Scenario 3 and 4: Existing Protected Areas, Traditional areas, Dive areas and Proposed Protected Areas.

These two scenarios are quite similar. Scenario 3 “locks in” all existing protected areas and also traditional areas and dive sites and then allows MARXAN to search for *additional areas* to fully meet conservation goals. Scenario 4 is the same except that it also locks in proposed protected areas. (Courtesy of TNC-Palau)



These two scenarios both meet all conservation goals and produce very similar maps. The maps are also quite similar to the results of scenario 2, as the additional areas locked-in for these two scenarios are not large.