

# REGIONAL TURTLE TRAINING CONSERVATION WORKSHOP REPORT

29<sup>th</sup> Nov – 1<sup>st</sup> Dec, 2006

Venue: Senate Conference Room - USP



*All SPREP member countries representatives to the training workshop*

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## **1. ABSTRACT**

The three days Marine Turtle Conservation Workshop in the region reflected an achievement as a successful outcome from the objective of the Turtle Conservation Project in Tuvalu, Fiji and Vanuatu implemented and coordinated by the Institute of Marine Resources (IMR) under the University of the South Pacific (USP). Fellow representatives are from various non government organisation, local community, tourist industry, government officials, SPREP staffs and regional representatives including Samoa, Tuvalu, Tonga, and the Solomon Islands. Altogether, 31 participants attended the workshop. Presentations were conclusively conducted by Dr. Ian Bell (Marine Biologist) assisted by Dr. Ken MacKay (IMR), Aisake Batibasaga (Dept. Fisheries), Alan Resture (IMR) and Lui Bell (SPREP). Participants were basically trained on appropriate scientific research methods on Turtle Conservation, these includes, identifying turtle species, identifying turtle tracks, identifying turtle nesting and feeding grounds, turtle tagging and collating and recording datas. The formulation of the network between representatives would allow information dissemination, increasing in capacity building and education and awareness on turtle conservation at national and regional level. However, SPREP installed the Turtle Research and Monitoring Database System to centralise and secure collated datas and reports on Turtle Research in the region. Conclusively, increasing in efforts, cooperation, networking, management and support on conserving marine turtles will contribute to the rehabilitation and restoring the lost population of the endangered sea turtles in the Pacific.

## **2. BACKGROUND**

The first Pacific Year of the Sea Turtle was celebrated a decade ago, in 1995. The year 1995 was a constructive year, resulting in the formulation and enhancement of the Marine Turtle local networking group consisting of various stakeholders, Government Ministries, non government organizations and other individual representatives. The major initiative of that activity was the formulation of the Fiji National Turtle Conservation Strategic plan that addresses conservation and management issues in Fiji. However, there has been little implementation of the strategy.

This year (2006) was nominated as the Year of the Sea turtle in the region, as coordinated by the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP). Thus is celebrated nationally through non government organizations, government departments and ministries and support groups, in Fiji this has resulted in a revisiting of the Fiji National Turtle Conservation Strategic plan with the hope of developing a more active plan. An outgrowth of that has been the emergence of the Marine Turtle Conservation Project at USP with the first activity being a training workshop.

### 3. INTRODUCTION

The Marine Turtle Training Conservation Workshop was held at the University of the South Pacific – Fiji from November 29 – December 1, 2006 organized by the Institute of Marine Resources, University of the South Pacific. The workshop marked the initiation of the project *Marine Turtle Conservation in Fiji, Vanuatu and Tuvalu* funded by the Australian Government's Regional Natural Heritage Program (RNHP). Unfortunately there was a press embargo on the announcement of the funding so the workshop could not be advertised as funded by the Australian Government. The official announcement of the grant through a media release by the Minister for the Environment and Heritage, Honorable Senator Ian Campbell was made on 30<sup>th</sup> November 2006 part way through the workshop, however, at that time the Fiji press was preoccupied with political events.

Additional financial and in kind support came from the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environmental Programme (SPREP) who funded two SPREP staff and regional participants from Samoa (3), Solomon Islands (1), Tonga (2) and Tuvalu (1). In kind support came from the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS), Fisheries Research Department and World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF).

The workshop was convened to unveil and identify outputs that are outlined under the Marine Turtle Conservation Project. The Marine Turtle Conservation Project is coordinated and executed by the Institute of Marine Resources (USP) working in partnership with the Fisheries Research Department, WWF and Laje Rotuma Initiative, Tuvalu Association of Non-Governmental Organizations (TANGO), and Wan Smol Bag in Vanuatu with Tetepare Descendants Association.

The theme of the workshop was to strengthen collaboration and cooperation in research, conservation and management of sea turtles in the South Pacific region, targeting Vanuatu, Tuvalu and Fiji Islands. Whereas the main objectives were to:

- ❖ Train researchers, stakeholders, non government organizations (NGOs), tourism industries on proper marine turtle research and conservation techniques
- ❖ Discuss and adopt the formulation of a networking system between trained researchers, stakeholders, n.g.os, tourism industries on the collation of datas
- ❖ Discuss and outline the component of Turtle Research and Monitoring Database System (TREDS)
- ❖ Discuss the management and conservation issues and threats on marine turtles in the region

Significant inputs were received from SPREP who funded the participation of two participants from Tonga, one from Samoa, Solomon Islands and Tuvalu including the two SPREP staff members

#### **4. PARTICIPANTS & FACILITATORS**

Present at the workshop were participants from 5 Pacific Island Countries including, Samoa (1), Tonga (2), Tuvalu (2), Solomon Islands (1) and Fiji (24). In addition one USP student was from Vanuatu. . The Fiji participants represented non-government organizations, WWF (3), WCS (2), MES (3), Frontier (1), Tagi – I – Tuba Initiative (1), PCDF (1), Laje Rotuma (3), Fiji Fisheries officials (4), tourism industry (4), local communities (1) and other stakeholders, A list of participants and facilitators and their contacts is given in Appendix I.

The main facilitator was Ian Bell. Turtle Biologist, Queensland Parks and Wildlife Services, Townsville, Queensland. Because of the Fiji Political crisis and an Australian travel warning he agreed to come on his own time. His participation was key to the workshop. He was assisted by Aisake Batibasaga, Principal Fisheries Officer – Research, Fiji Department of Fisheries, SPREP staff from Samoa, Lui Bell, Marine Species Officer and Anne Patricia Trevor, TREDIS Database officer, and IMR staff Kenneth MacKay, Director and Alan Resture research fellow. Dr George Balazs, Marine Turtle Research Program, NOAA, National Marine Fisheries Service, Honolulu, Hawaii USA was also to have assisted but was prevented because of the Fiji Political situation.

#### **5.0 WORKSHOP AGENDA**

The three days workshop was scheduled from 8.30 am for registration on Day 1 and continues throughout the workshop days till 5pm. The detailed Schedule is given in Appendix II

The program was modified frequently. This was partly due to the main facilitator arriving only as the first day of the workshop and the ongoing political crisis, which resulted in the closing down of USP at 12pm on the last day of the workshop and the cancelling of formal closing and media event. Despite the political uncertainties the interest and cooperation of the participants and facilitators was very high including full presence on the last day of the workshop that corresponded with the coup deadline.

Presentations were conducted through power point presentations, practicum trainings and discussions.

#### **6.0 METHODS AND RESULTS OF THE WORKSHOP**

Preparation towards the workshop entailed briefing and discussions within the IMR Staff (emails, faxing, and phone calls) and meetings between the Turtle Conservation Local Group members. Present were IMR, WWF, Fisheries Research Department and WCS with the inclusion of SPREP on the 28<sup>th</sup> November 2006 at 3pm.

Extensive recommendations from the meeting were integrated into the workshop schedule. In the meeting members were disembarked with allocated tasks and were expected with greater inputs and supports towards the workshop.

The workshop begins with challenging briefings by each participant on their general experiences and work on Turtle Conservation.

To promote the long term survival of the sea turtle population, presentations conducted were basically on turtle biological life, traditional theories and proper research methods and conservation techniques and data collation through a networking system between NGOs, institutions, stakeholders, tourism industries and the involved government departments. The networking system has resulted in the Turtle Resource Monitoring Database (TREDS) that has been installed by SPREP at the Fisheries Research Department. TREDS will allow researchers, to centralize collected data for further justification and analyzation.

At the end of the second day workshop, participants were grouped out into four discussion panels. The panels identified various threats that are significant in the Pacific region.

Moreover the third day was based on training that practically focused on identifying the different turtle species, nesting beach surveys, turtle tagging, hatchling and eggs handling, measuring turtle and data entry.

There were two sub adults turtles brought in from Makogai Island were named, Qase and Frank. These turtles were tagged and released at the lower campus – USP at 12.30pm. The tag numbers were recorded and entered in the TREDS system.

Consequently, the University was closed on Friday at 12 pm due to the political crisis. This major event impacted the schedule including the cancellation of the launching of the project event, proposed media release and a formal reception.

The workshop was concluded with a minor reception held at the Directors residence. The reception includes activities such as general questionnaires on turtles and discussions upon the success rate of the workshop.

## 7.0 LISTS OF HANDOUTS

The following items were distributed to participants:

- ❖ Turtle Identification Cards
- ❖ Fiji Marine Turtle Fact Sheet
- ❖ Turtle Watching (Good Environmental Practices)
- ❖ Drafted Turtles in Melanesia and Threats
- ❖ Turtle Conservation Posters
- ❖ VANUATAI - DVD

## 8.0 THREATS IDENTIFIED AT THE WORKSHOP

### *Humans*

- Development (Coastal development)
- Fishing nets
- By catch – e.g. Tuna Industry
- Dynamites
- Boat propellers
- Head start
- Hand feeding
- Traditional harvest
- Commercial harvest
- Alteration of habitats
- Poaching – in MPAs
- Lack of awareness & Information dissemination
- Subsistence harvest (opportunistic)
- Erosion of cultural values
- Tourist pressure
- Land reclamation (removal of sea grass beds)

### *Marine Pollution*

- Plastic bags
- Oil spill
- Ghost nets

### *Natural Causes*

- Natural predation (sharks, seabirds, dogs, pigs)
- Disease

## **9.0 EVALUATION**

Due to the political crisis, many events in the programs were not been able to be implemented. The effect of time constraints resulted in the postponed distribution of the evaluation form. Thus informal interview and discussions was carried out with participants during the minor reception at the end of the workshop which mostly contributed in evaluating the workshop.

Consequently, evaluation forms were distributed in a week after the workshop via emails. Only 10% of the attendance responded back to the evaluation form.

### **9.1 Positive**

- Very informative and educational
- A good opportunity to have open forum with the experts in this field
- An excellent introduction to nesting beach surveys
- Participants were able to learn from other country members

### **9.2 Recommendations**

- A greater focuses and extra effort is needed in the preparation towards the workshop
- Needed more time to cover some of the practical sessions
- Participants were eager to practically carry out surveys and research on field
- Needed more resource people

## **10.0 CONCLUSIONS**

In conclusion, the workshop successfully achieved its objectives in training participants from various involved stakeholders, non government organizations, inline government sections and tourist industries on proper research methods and techniques that will promote turtle conservation in the pacific region.

Twenty participants were expected to attend the workshop. However, the extensive need and interest on the work to be carried out on Turtle Conservation in the region have been reflected in the interest in the workshop resulting in twenty eight registered participants attending the three days workshops despite the apparent political crisis in the country.

The expect results was that 15 people would increased their knowledge and competency in marine turtle conservation research techniques. This was more than accomplished. Thirty people increased their knowledge and competency. Over half of them have applied that knowledge to turtle monitoring and conservation within two month of taking the training, while others are well placed in their organisations to follow up on turtle conservation issues. Dramatically, we would like to share our greatest sympathy in the passing away of one of our participants, Mr. Manoa Tuinausori Raicebe, early this year.

The TREDIS database was installed at the Research Fisheries Department, which draws a collective centralized networking system between trained participants. This database



system will enable researchers and trainees to collect and input data for secured purposes and extensively to document the datas with the support of SPREP, IMR, Fisheries Research Department and WWF.

Moreover, the Turtle Conservation Network in the region involving Tuvalu, Fiji and Vanuatu are appreciating any further support and is looking forward for more funds to continue support the good battle on Conserving Marine Turtles in the Pacific region.

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# 11.0 Appendices

## 11.1 Appendix i



# The University of the South Pacific

## Institute of Marine Resources

Serving the Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Nauru, Niue, Solomon Islands, Tokelau, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu, Samoa

**Our Ref:**

Private Mail Bag, Suva, Fiji  
Telephone: (679) 323 2929  
Fax: (679) 323 1531  
Email: [laveti\\_m@usp.ac.fj](mailto:laveti_m@usp.ac.fj)

**Turtle Conservation Training Workshop**  
**Date: 29<sup>th</sup> Nov -1<sup>st</sup> Dec**

### Registration Form

<b>First Name:</b> _____
<b>Surname:</b> _____
<b>Postal Address:</b> _____
<b>Name of organization:</b> _____
<b>Residential Address:</b> _____ _____
<b>Please indicate the days you will attend by ticking the following boxes</b> Day 1: <input type="checkbox"/> Day 2: <input type="checkbox"/> Day 3: <input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Telephone No:</b> _____ <b>Work number:</b> _____
<b>Fax No:</b> _____
<b>Email address:</b> _____
<b>*A limited number of travel grants for those outside Suva are available</b>
<b>*Detailed Programme will be sent to those who register.</b>
<b>Workshop will resume on November 29 at the Senate Lecture Theatre, Upper Campus, USP.</b> <b>For further enquiries contact Merewalesi Laveti on Ph: 323 2929, email: <a href="mailto:laveti_m@usp.ac.fj">laveti_m@usp.ac.fj</a> or contact Seruwaia Olive, Clerk Assistant, Ph: 323 3995 or email <a href="mailto:olive_s@usp.ac.fj">olive_s@usp.ac.fj</a>.</b>

## 11.2 APPENDIX II

### SCHEDULE

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**Opening – Mr. Saimoni Tuilaulala, Director of Fiji’s Ministry of Fisheries and Forests**

**Day 1 – 29 November**

Morning: Introduction, participant introduction, turtle videos

Lunch at USP

Afternoon: Turtle Biology, traditional knowledge, threats to turtles, and examples of conserving turtles

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**Day 2—30 November**

Morning: Turtle Identification, Nesting Beach Surveys, Foraging Ground Surveys, Stranding and Rehabilitation

Lunch at USP

Afternoon: Turtle migration, turtle tagging, collecting information, data sheets and database.  
Turtle video

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**Day 3—1 December**

Morning: Practicum – turtle identification, measuring turtles, tagging, sexing, etc.

Afternoon: Planning turtle surveys

15:30 Official closing and media event releasing the tagged turtles (*cancelled due to political events*)  
Followed by closing reception

**11.3 Appendix iii**  
Workshop Evaluation Form

1. How do you rate the topics covered in the workshop?  
a. Unsatisfactory      b. Satisfactory      c. Good      d. Excellent

2. Which topic(s) were you most interested in and why?

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3. Which topic(s) would you have liked to know more about and why?

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4. Was the three days sufficient to get an overview of Turtle Conservation Workshop in Fiji and abroad?

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5. What other topics do you think should be covered in this workshop?

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6. What did you think of the field visit to Kiuva? (option)

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7. FOR FURTHER COMMENTS ON THE WORKSHOP, PLEASE STATE

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## 11.4 APPENDIX III

### BUDGET/ Allowance/cost for Participants

Number	Name	Representative	Present/Absent			Total Cost incurred
			DAY 1	DAY 2	DAY 3	
1	Kenneth MacKay	IMR				nil
2	Alan Resture	IMR				nil
3	Merewalesi Laveti	IMR				nil
4	Neema Nand	Fisheries Department				Nil
5	Aisake Batibasaga	Fisheries Department				Nil
6		Fisheries Department				Nil
7		Fisheries Department				Nil
8	Etika Rupeni	WCS				Nil
9	Sirilo Daunioqio	Kubulau/Namena Community				Per diem/Travel /Accommodation
10	Alex Patrick	WCS				nil
11	Penina Solomona	WWF				nil
12	Akisi Bolabola	WWF				nil
13	Ana Tuwai	WWF				nil
14	Freddy Qauqau	MES				Travel/per diem/ accommodation (4 nites)
15	Fesi Isimeli	MES				Travel/per diem/ accommodation (4 nites)
16	Fulori Nainoca	PCDF				nil
17	Taniela Kama	Kadavu Community				Travel/per diem
18		Ra Community				Travel/per diem
19	Manasa Sovaki	Ministry of Environment				nil
20	Kate Moss	Peace Corp				Travel/per diem/accommodation
21	Sarah Hart	Frontier - Gau				Travel/per diem/accomodation
22	Lui Bell	SPREP				nil
23	George Balaz	SPREP				nil
24	Anne Trevor	SPREP				nil
25	Tevita Ahoafi	Tonga				nil
26	Malakai Finau	Tonga				nil
27	Maeli Asotasi	Samoa				nil
28	Tia Masolo	Solomon Island				nil
29	Tataua Moeava	Tuvalu				nil
30	Semese Alefaio	Tuvalu (usp)				Travel/per diem/accomodation
31	Chinnamma Reddy	Resort Supporters				nil
32	Helen Sykes	Resort Supporters				nil
33	Ian Bell	Australia				nil
34	Daniel Godoy	New Zealand				
35	Emma Roberts	Tagi I Tuba Initiative	14			nil

**11.5 Appendix IV – Photos (All photos by Merewalesi Laveti, IMR)**



**pic 1: Qase the turtle has been tagged**



**Pic 2: Fesi Isimeli measuring the carapace length of the turtle**



**Pic 3: Turtle have been released by WWF Rep at USP**



**Pic 4; Mr. Batibasaga – Fisheries Research Department (right) tagging turtle**



**Pic 6: Practical exercise on Turtle identification**



## APPENDIX 11.6 – PARTICIPANTS CONTACT ADDRESSES

	<i>First Name/s</i>	<i>Surname</i>	<i>Organisation</i>	<i>Postal Address</i>	<i>Telephone #</i>	<i>Fax #</i>	<i>Email</i>
1	Sakiusa	Yavala	Namarai	Namarai, Nakorotubu, Ra PO Nanukuloa			
2	Tuinausori	Raicebe	Dept Fisheries Makogai Station	Verata Wailevu, Tailevu PO Box 1239, Nausori	336-1122 (w) 359-2340 (h)	336-1184	
3	Sanivalati	Navuku	WWF SPPO	4 Maafu Street Private Mail Bag, Suva	331-5533 (w) 330-3912 (h)	331-5410	<a href="mailto:snavuku@wwfpacific.org">snavuku@wwfpacific.org</a>
4	Emma Adi Kosoluva	Roberts	Tag-i-Tuba Initiative Lagi Villaage: Dogotuki, Macuata	PO Box 402 Labasa	997-3492 (m)		<a href="mailto:tagituba_initiative@yahoo.com">tagituba_initiative@yahoo.com</a>
5	Tarisi	Shaw	Fisheries Research Dept	Nukuwatu PO Box 3165, Lami	336-1122 (w) 336-2480 (h)	336-1184	<a href="mailto:ttoroca@fisheries.gov.fj">ttoroca@fisheries.gov.fj</a>
6	Etika	Rupeni	Wildlife Conservation Society	11 Maafu Street, Suva	331-5174		<a href="mailto:erupeni@wcs.org">erupeni@wcs.org</a>
7	Fulori	Nainoca	Partners in Community Development Fiji	Qrts 27, Extension St PO Box 14447, 8 Denison Rd Suva	330-0392 993-0782 (m)	330-4315	<a href="mailto:fnainoca@pcdf.org.fj">fnainoca@pcdf.org.fj</a>
8	Tataua	Alefaio	Fisheries Dept	Funafuti, Tuvalu	20341 / 20343		<a href="mailto:kapuati@yahoo.com">kapuati@yahoo.com</a>
9	Malakai	Finau	Dept of Environment	Tonga	(676) 25-050	(676) 25-051	<a href="mailto:morofizz@yahoo.com">morofizz@yahoo.com</a>
10	Tevita Mafi	'Ahoafi	Fisheries Dept	Fisheries Pangai Ha'apai Islands, Tonga	60399, 21399	60476	<a href="mailto:mofishhp@kalianet.to">mofishhp@kalianet.to</a>
11	Tia	Masolo	Dept of Forests, Environmnt & Conservation	PO Box G24, Honiara Solomon Islands			<a href="mailto:t_masolo@yahoo.com.au">t_masolo@yahoo.com.au</a>
12	Lui	Bell	SPREP	PO Box 240 Apia, Samoa	(685) 28350 (h) (685) 66281 (w)	(685) 20231	<a href="mailto:luib@sprep.org">luib@sprep.org</a>
13	Semisi	Tataua					
14	Chinnamma	Reddy	Resort Support	6 Qeyleya Rd, Lami	336-3625 (w) 930-1630 (m)		<a href="mailto:trffy_chandra@yahoo.com">trffy_chandra@yahoo.com</a> <a href="mailto:resortsupport@connect.com.fj">resortsupport@connect.com.fj</a>
15	Sarbh	Hart	Frontier - Fiji	Qarani Post Office	938-2403 (m)		<a href="mailto:sarabhart_1@hotmail.com">sarabhart_1@hotmail.com</a>



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