

SPREP-ToK

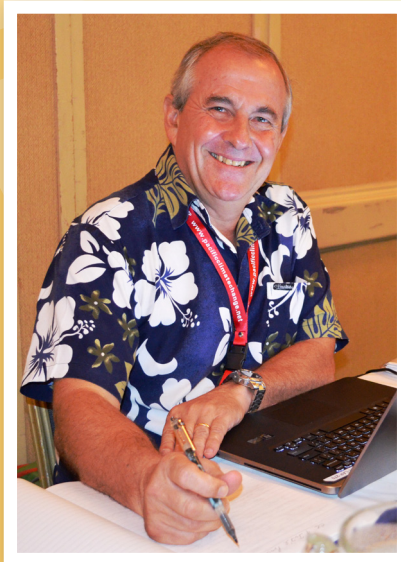
A monthly e-bulletin from the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme



SPREP

Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme

ISSUE 17 – AUGUST 2015



Kashelelie and Kia Orana!

This month we are proud to announce the release of our SPREP Annual Report for 2014, now available in [English](#) and [French](#). The report documents the many projects and activities through which SPREP has worked with our partners to support the Pacific island countries and territories to address their environmental and development challenges in 2014.

I am pleased to note that since 2010 our direct financial support to Pacific island members has increased from around USD 2.5 million to over USD 8 million in 2014 which is over and above the significant technical and capacity building support provided to our members.

Hard copies of our Annual Report will be made available at our SPREP Meeting in September this year.

It has been a busy month, not only for us at SPREP but also for our Members. In this regard we would like to congratulate the Cook Islands who celebrated their 50th Independence Anniversary this month. It was an honour for me to be part of the celebrations on Rarotonga and we look forward to working with the Cook Islands in the years to come.

As I said, it has been a busy month for our members as well and as you'll see in this SPREP ToK we had a wide range of activities happening in our Pacific islands to help protect our environment and we thank you all for your hospitality and your partnership as we undertake this mammoth task together.

Before I end I would like to pay respect to the late Bill Raynor who recently passed away, a conservationist who worked tirelessly to protect our environment across Micronesia and the Pacific islands. He was a close friend to many in the Pacific islands and will be remembered and missed by many of us who work in the biodiversity field. May he Rest in Peace.

Fa'afetai tele,

David Sheppard

Director General, SPREP



The late Bill Raynor with David Sheppard and friends during the 9th Pacific Islands Conference on Nature Conservation and Protected Areas, 2013.

LATEST NEWS



TUVALU JOINS THE BATTLE AGAINST INVASIVE SPECIES

The nine islands of Tuvalu have joined forces with the rest of the Pacific islands to fight invasive species to protect their environment, communities and economic aspirations. A three day workshop facilitated by SPREP led to the formation of the Tuvalu Invasive Species Committee which will be coordinated by the Environment Department. During the workshop participants learnt the water carried by a ship to help keep it stable during a voyage, also known as ballast water, can have thousands of living organisms swimming in it. When ships become close to their destination some of the water is discharged to allow the ship to take on cargo. It becomes a problem if this discharged water contains living organisms which then survive and spread. [Read more ...](#)



MARSHALL ISLANDS AND SPREP WORK TOGETHER TO DEVELOP CRUCIAL NATIONAL ENVIRONMENT DOCUMENTS

The Republic of the Marshall Islands are working with SPREP to develop their State of the Environment Report. Periodic SOE Reports serve as a “health check-up” for the environment and environmental services upon which the people of the Marshall Islands depend. The results from these reports feed directly into strategic environmental planning, which seeks to protect the healthy parts of RMI’s environmental systems and improve other parts that are in decline. Over two and a half days, all stakeholders worked together to continue the drafting process of the RMI State of Environment Report and started the process to develop a National Action Strategy for strengthening environmental management and planning. [Read more ...](#)



MAKING WASTE USEFUL IN NIUE

A new initiative was launched in Niue to promote effective waste management and composting. Through the innovative new demonstration project, it is hoped that communities in Niue will take up composting as an alternative to the common practice of burning green waste. The initiative is supported through a partnership between the Pacific POPs Release Reduction project, managed by SPREP, and Pacific Organic and Ethical Trade Community (POETCom), which is housed at the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC). The demonstration project, which will run over a period of three years, will engage families in the six villages of Alofi, Vaeia, Tamakautoga, Avatele, Hakupu and Liku located on the southern, more densely populated, side of Niue. [Read more ...](#)



DRY CONDITIONS AHEAD FOR SEVERAL PACIFIC ISLANDS

Reduced rainfall, possibly leading to drought, is forecast for several Pacific Islands. It is likely that there will be below normal rainfall for a number of countries, which could lead to drought conditions. These countries are Vanuatu, Fiji, New Caledonia, Niue, Tonga and Papua New Guinea. These countries are urged to take all necessary measures to mitigate the potential impacts of drought and El Niño. Impacts in each sector (water resources, agriculture, health, tourism, forestry, marine ecosystems) will vary in severity and are dependent on a number of factors. [Read more ...](#)



SPREP YOUTH AMBASSADOR MS. BRIANNA FRUEAN, COMMEMORATES INTERNATIONAL YOUTH DAY

“It is now time to prove that we are worthy caretakers of this beautiful planet and I think our youth have the force to lead this change. We as youth may not hold all the power or money in the world but we have something more valuable in my opinion and that is Passion. Youth all around the world have started environmental groups, led grassroots initiatives, set up petitions, established solar panels to provide power, invented energy sufficient home appliances and they have also painted towns with awareness posters.” [Read more ...](#)



NEW PACWASTE REPORTS DETAIL THE EXTENT OF ASBESTOS RISK ACROSS THE PACIFIC REGION

Recently released reports from the PacWaste Regional Asbestos Baseline Survey identify the locations, and relative risk, of asbestos materials across 25 different islands in 13 Pacific island countries. Historically, asbestos has been widely reported across the Pacific islands regions but until now, the available information has been either largely anecdotal or too small in scope to withstand scrutiny. The new survey details just how widespread, and serious, the issue is. PacWaste (Pacific Hazardous Waste) is a €7.85 million, four year project supported by the European Union and implemented SPREP to improve regional hazardous waste management across the Pacific. Asbestos is one of four focus areas of PacWaste - the others include E-waste, healthcare waste and atoll solid waste management. [Read more ...](#)



VOICES OF THE ATHLETES PROGRAM EMPOWERS YOUNG PEOPLE TO PROTECT OUR ENVIRONMENT

Empowering, engaging and encouraging youth to be leaders in their community advocating for the environment is at the core of support from the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP) to the Voices of the Athletes (VOA) Champions Program. It aims to empower youth to be leaders in the four key areas of - a Doping Free Culture; Healthy Lifestyle; HIV and AIDS Education and Prevention; and the Environment with the key messages being – Play True; Play Safe; Go Green; and Stay Healthy. Funded by the Oceania National Olympic Committees (ONOC), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and Oceania Regional Anti-Doping Organisation (ORADO), the Voices of the Athletes Program was launched at the South Pacific Games in Samoa in 2007.

[Read more ...](#)



TONGA BROADCASTING COMMISSION NOW HAS A CLIMATE AND DISASTER RESILIENCE PLAN

As part of the National Broadcasters Climate and Disaster Resilience Plan project, the Tonga Broadcast Commission (TBC) was able to complete their Climate and Disaster Resilience plan in August. The National Broadcasters Climate and Disaster Resilience Plan project is supported by the [Pacific Media Assistance Scheme \(PACMAS\)](#) which is funded by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade of the Government of Australia. Senior staff from TBC gathered together with SPREP to hear presentations from the National Emergency Management Office and the Tongan Meteorological Service which helped them better understand the terminology used in warnings and bulletins. The sessions also confirmed the role that TBC plays at times of disasters. As the government broadcaster TBC is the only radio station that reaches all islands of Tonga through their Radio Tonga 1 AM channel.

[Read more ...](#)





MANTA RAYS, GIANTS OF THE OCEAN

Did you know that Manta Rays must keep moving in order to keep water flowing over their gills, which means they can never stop to sleep or rest on the seabed?

Magnificent creatures, Manta Rays are found all over the world, with the largest species of the two, the oceanic manta ray (*Manta birostris*) reaching wing spans of up to seven metres! A large oceanic manta can weigh in at up to 2 tonnes!

The second species is the reef manta ray (*Manta alfredi*) which grows to an average wing span of 3–3.5 metres and a possible maximum of 4.5 metres. They can weigh up to 1.4 tonnes.

Manta Rays are a close relative of all sharks and rays. They are cartilaginous elasmobranch fishes and while they are found all over the world in warmer waters, including in the Pacific islands, there are differences in range and habitat between the oceanic and reef manta rays.

Although both species can be found in the open ocean, oceanic mantas have the wider range of the two, occurring in tropical, sub-tropical and temperate waters. This species is more migratory in its nature, commonly sighted along productive coastlines with regular upwellings, oceanic island groups and offshore pinnacles and seamounts. The resident reef mantas are more commonly sighted inshore around coral reefs, tropical island groups, atolls and bays, as well as along productive coastlines. As the name suggests, this

species is more resident to tropical waters with smaller home ranges.

Research indicates that mantas probably live up to at least 50 and possibly up to 100 years.

Although they are such large creatures, manta rays feed on some of the smallest organisms in the sea. They are planktivores, feeding especially on zooplankton; tiny animals such as copepods, shrimps and arrow worms. Mantas are known to make seasonal migrations in order to take advantage of particularly abundant concentrations of food.

Predators of mantas include certain species of sharks, as well as Orcas and false killer whales. Mantas also face significant threats from humans and our activities - entanglement in fishing lines results in deep, and often life threatening lacerations. Gill nets and other fishing nets also cause entangle mantas, usually resulting in death. Mantas which become entangled in nets die quickly because they are unable to actively pump oxygen rich water over their gills in order to respire.

Mantas are the targets of directed fisheries in many parts of the world, in part because of the value of their gill plates in Chinese medicine, but they are protected throughout the Pacific Islands region. Last November, Fiji successfully proposed the listing of mantas on Appendix I of the Convention on Migratory Species, and is now considering proposing a similar listing on CITES.



Images courtesy of Thomas Vignaud

In the last ten years scientists have made a good start at uncovering the secret lives of mantas rays, however so far we have just uncovered the tip of the iceberg in terms of really understanding these animals. Much still remains to be found out about even the basics of their biology, and with the largest brain of all the world's fishes, there is much still to understand about their intelligence, curiosity and social interactions. Learning more about these species is vital to being able to provide them with effective protection; ensuring their persistence in years to come.

Manta ray tourism is a growing and valuable industry in the SPREP region, generating millions of dollars in revenue for Fiji, French Polynesia and the Federated States of Micronesia. SPREP is working with governments and scientists to develop best practice guidelines. Here's hoping you get to see a manta ray in real life – such beautiful creatures in our sea and ocean!

(Developed with text kindly provided from [The Manta Trust](#)).

PACIFIC ISLANDS SHARK AND RAY POLICY BRIEF

Maintenance of a productive oceanic ecosystem and conservation of threatened and migratory species has led to the development of a Pacific island policy brief on the reservation of shark and ray populations.

The Brief helps to summarise the status and trends of shark and ray species in the Pacific islands region, and to provide advice on their conservation to governments of the Pacific islands countries and territories. You can download a copy in both **English** and **French** from the SPREP website.



SPREP-TOK ISSN: 2311-861X

The Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP)
 (685) 21929 | PO Box 240 | Apia, Samoa | sprep@sprep.org | www.sprep.org

Our vision: *The Pacific Environment, sustaining our livelihoods and natural heritage in harmony with our cultures.*

[Click to follow us on Facebook and Twitter.](#)