Turtle Conservation and Eco-tourism
development in Fiji, Solomons, Kiribati

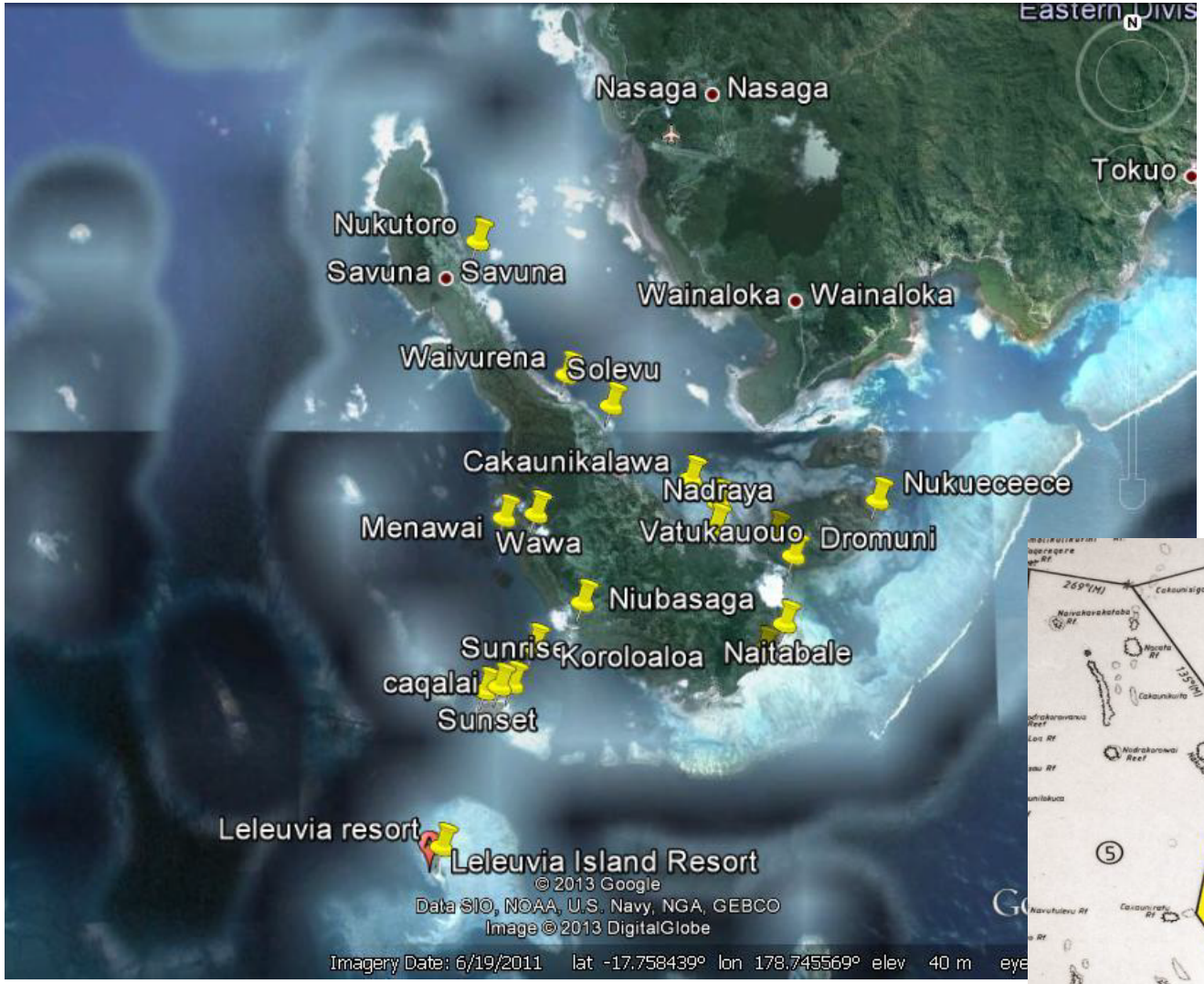
Multiple outcomes – turtle conservation and sustainable livelihoods

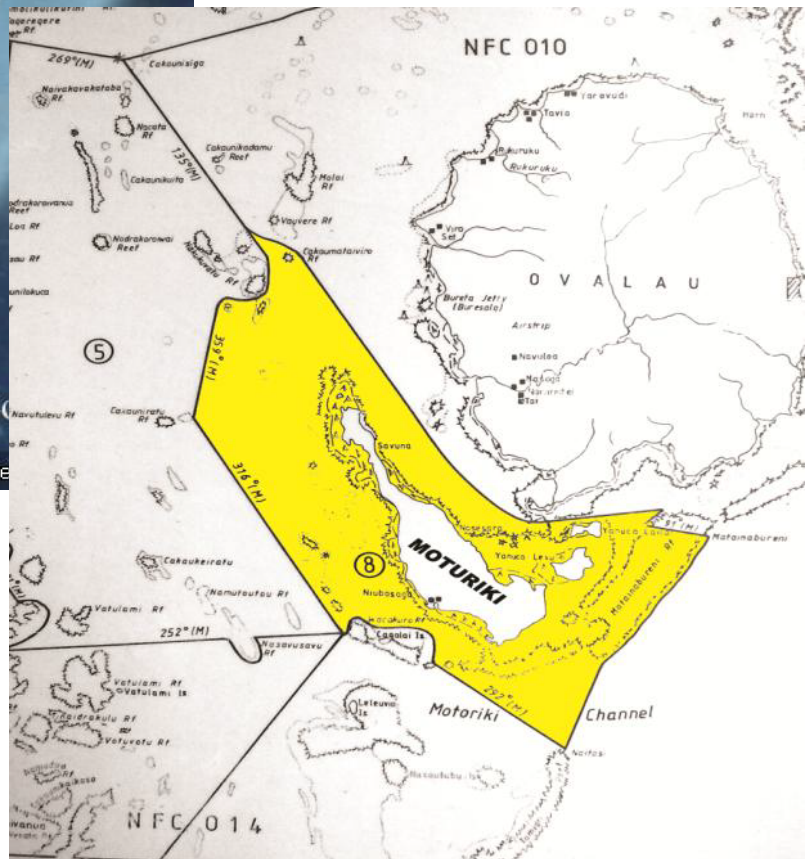
- Funded by NZ Aid Programme
- Partners – NZ DOC, SPREP, Govt agencies, NGOs, local communities

Selecting sites and talking with community leaders

- Local Project team
- Site selection based on
  - Nesting turtles
  - Accessible
  - Communities want to be involved
- Community meetings
- Annual activity plans

Moturiki, Fiji





Government partner: Fisheries

Turtle monitoring workshop objectives

1. Raise awareness with Moturiki communities on sea turtle conservation;
2. Introduce the 'Turtle Monitors' concept;
3. Invite nominations from the communities for their turtle monitors;
4. Train nominated monitors on basic research skills including flipper tagging, nesting beach survey techniques, and data recording;
5. Identify monitoring sites and develop a monitoring schedule.

Fiji Training: March 2013, Moturiki,

10 villages, 63 participants including Provincial Council,
17 Turtle Monitors appointed

Marau and Haevo – Solomon Islands

Government partner: Environment Ministry (MECDM)

Haevo Khulano
Leatherback
Conservation Area
Haevo
Legend
Managed Area
Villages
Rivers
Coastline
Haevo Khulano Leatherback
Conservation Area, Isabel Province
Isabel Province
Area
enlarged
Buala
Solomon Islands
Isabel Province
Honiara
Tavarao
Paipai
Ta'aru
Kosa
Rauhi
Data SIO, NOAA, U.S. Navy, NGA, GEBCO
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Ecotourism training - Solomons

2 day workshop by Ministry of Culture and Tourism; 16 participants

- Introduction to tourism industry and eco-tourism
- examples of eco accommodations in the Solomon Islands
- hospitality and hygiene
- pricing and packaging ecotourism products

Turtle monitors meeting

Key objectives

- Compile and update turtle monitoring results, issues and lessons learnt ;
- Compile Turtle data and report on the project sites
- Introduce monitoring and recording of turtle consumption and sales including monitoring of any turtle sales in local markets
- Determine needs of Turtle Monitors for the upcoming turtle monitoring and education and awareness activities.
- Draw up a plan of activities for next stage of the project

Haevo beach nesting report,
17 turtle Monitors, 11 communities

- Turtle species nesting in 2013 Oct -2015 April: Green turtle (1), Hawksbill (2) and Leatherback (20),
- Laid a total of 7,222 eggs laid (leatherbacks (85 clutches), Hawksbills (8 clutches) and green turtle (3 clutches)

Kiribati – North Tarawa

Government partner: MELAD

Kiribati – North Tarawa

November 2014 Training, Abaokoro Village, 17 Turtle Monitors, 8 turtles were tagged and released

Training field work - Kiribati

Vanuatu Study Tour

- Learning from Tasiriki Turtle Project
- 7 participants from Solomons, Fiji, Kiribati, SPREP

- Beach patrols
- Marking nesting sites

Identifying tracks and nests, relocating nests

Discussion on Ecotourism with Community/Wan Smolbag

An Eco-volunteer Project at Tasiriki started in 2006 as a partnership between the Tasiriki Community, Wan Smolbag, and Global Vision International

Benefits – Tasiriki experience

- Increased marine habitat protection, and poaching of turtle eggs from the Tasiriki community has ceased.
- Increased knowledge of turtles and protective measures in the Tasiriki and neighbouring communities
- Eco-volunteers helped community monitoring with the turtle work as well as other community tasks such as painting buildings, and beach cleanups
- Ecovolunteers project brought Income to the village - community monitors were paid

- Multiple side benefits for villages – eg improved waste management, increased cooking and nutrition skills, improved medical services, water tank donations, renovations and resources for the primary school, and new buildings - to accommodate the ecovolunteers.

Challenges – Tasiriki experience

- Budgeting for meals was difficult and sometimes resulted in financial loss for the village, especially when visitors requested special diets
- Payments were not always made to monitors as promised
- Visitor issues eg relationship conflicts, unacceptable behaviours such as drug-taking
- Some visitors left early because of weather conditions
- Suspected financial mismanagement

How to make turtle ecotourism a success?

Success for turtle conservation

- How can we ensure community monitors continue to have the commitment, knowledge, skills and resources they need?
- How can we develop, promote and share best practice in turtle conservation and ecotourism and monitor and minimise negative impacts
- How can local conservation knowledge and skills be passed on to others

Success for community-led ecotourism

- How can we support villagers to be skilled ecotourism guides and storytellers – about turtles, conservation and cultural traditions?
- How can initiatives ensure that business and financial aspects are well covered, and in a way that is founded on cultural values?
- What other natural and cultural attractions can be added to the turtle experience to create a year-round business that justifies investment in infrastructure ?
- How can villages attract and meet the needs of overnight and longer stay tourists? How can villages generate income from day visitors?
- Health and safety awareness and skills, and access to first aid equipment and medical services, are important. How to minimize risks in this area?
- What can be marketed about the marine turtle ecotourism experience in Pacific countries that is unique? What regional marketing opportunities are there?

We hope that the learning from our project, as it continues to be implemented, will make a significant contribution to the success of turtle conservation and sustainable livelihoods for village communities in the region.

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