

Environment Planning Tool For Sustainable Tourism in the Pacific

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Pacific coastal areas have been targeted for tourism development due to their sandy beaches, favourable climates, distinctive cultural settings and attractive snorkelling, diving, surfing, boating, wildlife watching and fishing opportunities.

While tourism has brought economic benefits to Pacific islands it has also resulted in negative impacts, including: **impacts on threatened species**, through poorly-managed wildlife viewing operations; **degradation of coastal waters and lands**; **increased pressure on local energy and water supplies**; **increased or new forms of plastic wastes**; **economic and/or physical displacement of communities**, who lose access to coastal areas and natural resources that support their lifestyles, livelihoods and cultural practices; **competition with other land-uses**, like agriculture, village settlements, owing to the lack of land-use planning; **greenhouse gas emissions**, from the operation of energy-intensive tourism infrastructure and transport services.

Tourists are often looking for cultural and environmentally friendly options for their holidays. Appropriate use of low impact attractions can be a drawcard. The EIA process can help to identify environmentally sustainable options for development.

Aims of the Guidelines

- Increase awareness and understanding of the EIA process in the Pacific region's tourism sector;
- Promote best practice EIA for coastal tourism development
- Encourage government agencies and tourism developers to comply with national EIA regulatory frameworks;
- Support sustainable and resilient development that protects the environmental, social and cultural assets of coastal environments, which provide a foundation for tourism.

Recommendations for Effective EIA

- Promote adequate and meaningful stakeholder engagement and public consultation. Good public consultation is crucial for a successful EIA, it is not something that can happen overnight, it needs concerted, ongoing effort.
- It needs to engage stakeholders in a meaningful manner that empowers them.
- Engagement with the local community, land/resource owners and other stakeholders is mandated in several Pacific Island states.

Environmental Impact Assessment Guidelines for Coastal Tourism Development in Pacific Island Countries and Territories



Pacific island communities are vulnerable to climate change and natural disasters. The EIA process should give consideration to climate change and disaster risk management, to promote resilient development. Photo: Funafuti, Tuvalu. Credit: Melanie Bradley



Live sharks and rays have been shown to worth over \$1 million dollars each to tourism; Shark and Ray Sanctuary Zones in Pacific Islands contribute directly to countries GDP. Photo: Guy Stevens

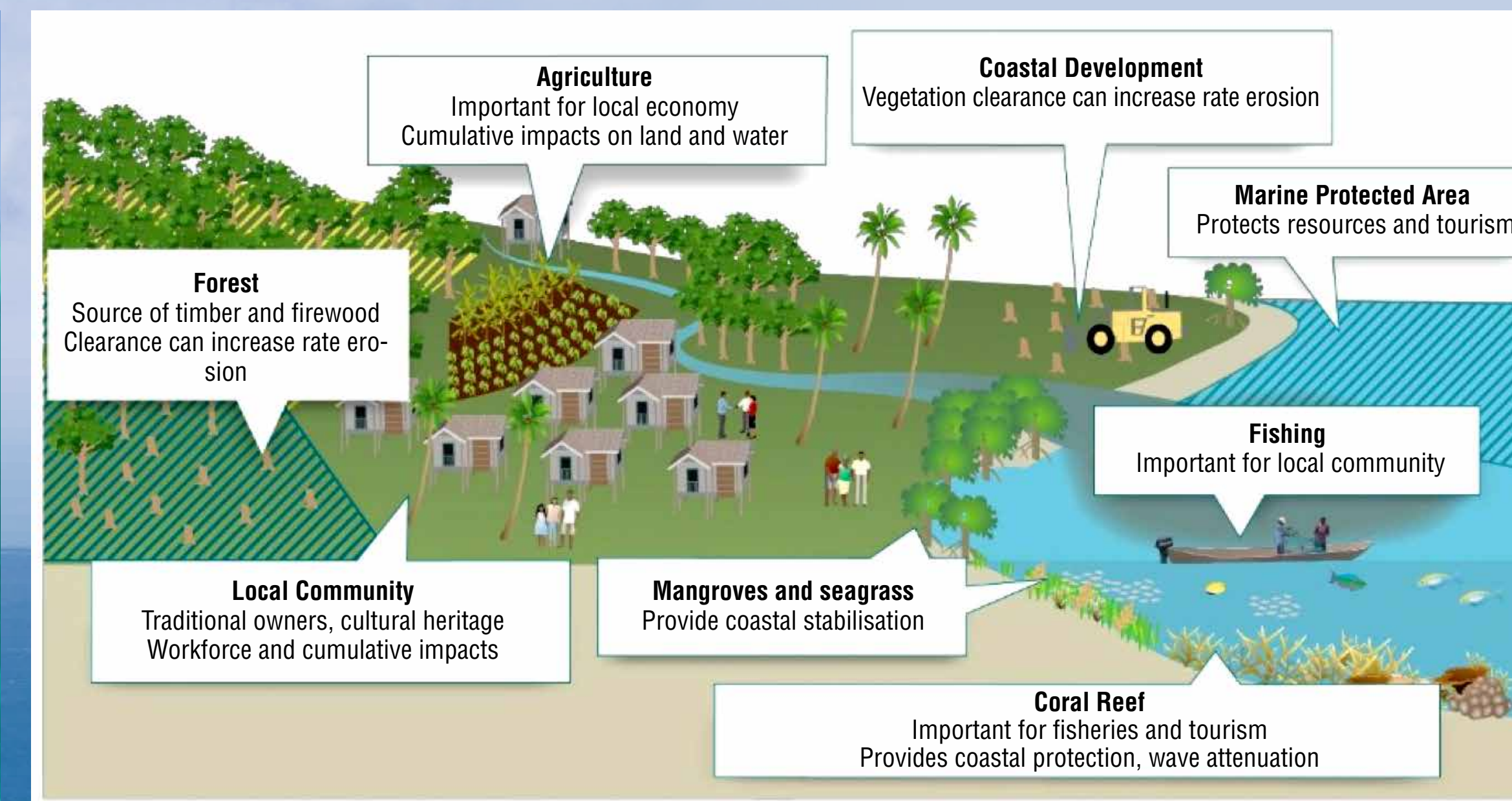


Photo: SPTO



Culture and the environment are interwoven and visitors are seeking these authentic experiences, tourism can have a positive impact on preserving culturing knowledge and skills. Photo: SPTO

Well planned developments can lead to improved environmental outcomes such as improved water quality and coastal stability, through better waste management and erosion control. Photo: Tonga Domestic Ferry Terminal. Credit: Greg Barbara



Conclusion

Effective EIAs benefit coastal tourism developments by embedding design elements to address local community, customary and private resource owners' concerns, and help to ensure that a project is better suited to its local environmental and social context.

This can contribute to smoother project, by aligning with local values and needs, promote greater social acceptance of tourism development, and ultimately reduce stressors on important coastal ecosystems.

EIA encourages: efficient use of energy and water; helps to pinpoint opportunities for minimising and controlling waste outputs; and can identify options for sourcing local, environmentally-friendly materials and services that contribute to tourism development; lower operating expenses and avoidance of environmental remediation or clean-up costs for tourism developers.

Overall, EIA can help to ensure that tourism developments contribute to protecting environmental assets that support local livelihoods and give positive visitor experiences.

Creation of the Guidelines

Across the Pacific, the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP) has been promoting the use of Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) and delivering EIA capacity-building for more than twenty five years. In 2016 SPREP produced the regional EIA guidelines titled, *Strengthening environmental impact assessment: Guidelines for Pacific island countries and territories*.

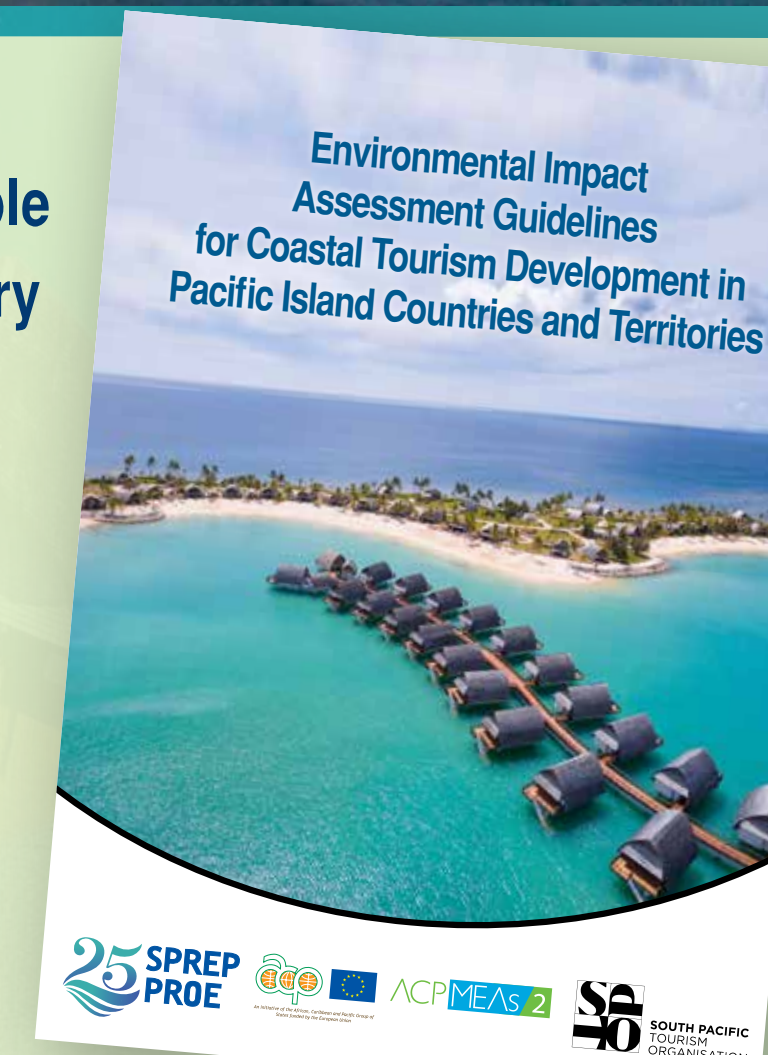
SPREP has now partnered with the South Pacific Tourism Organisation (SPTO) to produce the *Environment Impact Assessment Guidelines for Coastal Tourism Development in the Pacific island countries and territories*.



The guidelines remind developers to consider waste streams and how to deal with them sustainably in order to preserve the environment that attracts tourists to the area. Waste management and pollution control remains one of the most pressing environmental issues in Pacific Islands. Photo: Paul Anderson

These Guidelines are available from the SPREP online library in English and French: <https://library.sprep.org/Pein/home/home.aspx>

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