

Key EBM Messages:

Preservation of functional integrity of Fiji's eco-scapes through multiple stakeholder management.

- Successful EBM relies on cross sectoral planning and management
- Inland and lowland communities need to manage resources together
- EBM protects habitat for all stages of life
- Improving land and fishing practices helps protect natural resources
- Public health and livelihoods depend on environmental health

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FIJI EBM PARTNERSHIP NEWSLETTER

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Kubulau district Marine Protected Areas get blessed

On June 12th the *Bose Vanua* (Hierarchy council of chiefs), Kubulau Resource Management Committee (KRMC), Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) Director, Dr. Stacy Jupiter, and other partners met in Kiobo village to participate in a unique ceremony which brought together the modern resource conservation principles and traditional governance.

This ceremony was conducted to traditionally bless the 3 district Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) as a no-take zone for the next 5 years. These 3 MPAs are Namena, Namuri, and Nasue. In addition to these, there are existing 17 traditional tabu areas, one island reserve, and one proposed forest reserve.

This decision was reached after seeing the benefits of the on-going Ecosystem Based Management (EBM) work being done in the district since 2005. This work is being done by WCS, the lead Organization, together with Wetlands-Oceania and WWF.

The no-take status means that it is illegal to fish or collect invertebrates from these areas. However, it is safe to dive using the CORAL developed diving guidelines. These guidelines include best practices such as: no anchoring in the zones; no diving with hand gloves; no touching of corals; no fish feeding, etc.

According to the recommendations made from on-going scientific work it is suggested that long-term no-take areas, such as Namena which has been a no-take zone since 1990, has higher abundance and diversity of important food fishes. The principle behind setting up MPAs are that in time these areas will act as pools for sustaining marine fisheries stocks,

One of the major challenges faced by the EBM partnership and the communities of Kubulau has been the enforcement and monitoring of these areas for poaching. Due to the vast area and limited resources, the Kubulau qoliqoli is often not being



Participants of the Kubulau district MPAs blessing ceremony.

fully monitored for poachers. The committee has secured a monitoring boat from Partners in Community Development (PCDF) to help enforce and monitor poaching. Several community members have also been trained by Fiji Islands Marine Safety Authority (FIMSA) as certified boat captains.

The EBM partnership is anticipating that communities will soon be equipped with the necessary safety and evidence gathering materials to help identify and prosecute offenders.



The participants on a boat during the blessing of the district MPAs.

Integrated approach towards coastal zone management

On May 14th the National environmental Council (NEC) met in Suva to discuss the formation of the proposed Integrated Coastal Zone Management Committee (ICZMC).

During the presentation, Professor Bill Aalbersberg, Director Institute of Applied Science at University of the South Pacific, mentioned the need for integrated cross-sectoral approach to natural resource use.

He also stated the importance for addressing inland unsus-

tainable practices and it's effect on coastal zones. Therefore, an amendment to the 30 meter mark from high water mark (HWM) was suggested to be increased to accommodate "ridge to reef" concept. Currently, the Environmental Management Act (EMA) only considers 30m from HWM as the upper limit of 'coastal' area.

It was also highlighted that mangroves, which are an important coastal and estuarine resource, grows beyond the 30 meter mark and ICZM needs to be inclusive of this.

It was suggested that in the following meetings, these issues should be fine-tuned for a more effective implementation of the committee. The secretariat of this proposed committee is expected to be with one of Fiji's government agencies, supported by various NGOs and other institutions.

The next NEC meeting is scheduled to be held in September 2009.



Mangroves have been identified as an important coastal and estuarine resource.

Habitat degradation threatens cetaceans

On March 11th, 2003, the Fiji government declared Fiji's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) as a whale sanctuary. Since then, several other conventions such as South Pacific Whale Research Consortium and South Pacific Whale Watching Plan have been adopted by Fiji to help protect these mega-wonders of the sea.

On 2nd April a cross-sectoral whale sanctuary management plan development workshop was conducted in Suva as a follow up of existing cetacean work being done in Fiji.

Cetacean conservation work carried out by Ministry of Fisheries, WWF, Greenpeace in association with various dive operators have revealed that 17 species of dolphins and whales are known from Fijian

waters. Maximum weekly sightings during peak months (July-September) for humpback whales can be as high as 238 individuals.

Kubulau, Bua province, was identified as one of the important sites for cetacean research and conservation. In addition, Lomaiviti and waters off the coast of Northern Viti Levu also exhibit frequent cetacean sightings.

"It is important to identify the areas where cetaceans usually occur in Fiji, as these sites have high value for cetaceans research and conservation but also for tourism" commented Penina Solomona from WWF. Dive operators frequent waters where cetaceans are found, such as Namena Marine Protected Area (MPA) in Kubulau.

Cetacean sightings list developed by Dr. Cara Miller have been distributed to help communities and environmental organisation in Fiji to effectively report Cetaceans sightings.

Poaching has been identified as a major global threat for cetaceans. Habitat degradation including: coastal development; sedimentation of coastal waters; aquaculture; increased nutrients; and other habitat impacts is also considered to adversely affect cetaceans.

Of these, point-source activities leading to habitat degradation has been identified as most significant type of habitat degradation affecting the cetaceans.



Cetaceans, whales (above, © WWF Canon) and dolphins (below, © WWF Canon/Cat Holloway), make Kubulau a popular choice for tourist.

Inaugural Fiji Islands Conservation Science Forum

The EBM partnership (Wetlands International-Oceania (WI-O, Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS), World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF)) together with other partners (Fiji Locally Managed Marine Areas (FLMMA) and University of the South Pacific), hosted Fiji's inaugural Conservation Science Forum from 5th – 7th of August, 2009.

This event which was held at Studio 6 apartments at 1-3 Walu street, Suva. This event was organized with an aim to provide a platform for conservationist working in Fiji to present their findings, highlight challenges, lessons learnt, and future priorities.

Over 60 abstracts were received and accepted for presentation. Based on the abstracts received, there was eight presentation themes: Ecosystem Based Management and conservation planning; Habitat mapping; Species conservation; Community based adaptive management and socioeconomics; Marine protected areas; Marine ecology; Terrestrial ecology; and Taxonomy.

A range of local, regional and international conservationists, who have worked in Fiji and are engaged in working in the above mentioned themes, were selected to help facilitate this forum.

The Forum's proceedings will be publicly available soon. The proceedings will

include the annotated abstracts from the three days of presentations, summary of each thematic presentation with challenges and identified future priorities.

This event has proudly organized by the Ecosystem Based Management project which is primarily funded by the David and Lucile Packard Foundation and the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation.

Please keep checking <http://oceania.wetlands.org/NEWS/tabid/469/articleType/ArticleView/articleId/1821/Default.aspx> for the release date of the proceedings.

Government takes multi-sectoral approach for NBSAP

On April 8th the department of Environment organized a half day stakeholder forum for the Fiji National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP). The event was attended by: government departments; statutory bodies; non-governmental organizations; and others.

The major goal of this meeting was to develop an effective framework to implement Fiji's NBSAP and its suggested outcomes. Eleni Tokadua, senior environment officer with the department of environment, presented and mentioned that "EBM is an important stakeholder for NBSAP awareness and implementation".

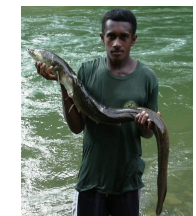
Fiji NBSAP aims to advocate conservation of biodiversity

and sustainable use of Fiji's terrestrial, freshwater, and marine natural resources and to maintain the ecological processes and systems which are the foundation of national and local development.

With such broad aims, the Fiji NBSAP can not be administered by a single department or organization, therefore, a multi-sectoral approach needs to be adopted.

"Biodiversity does not belong to one only, it requires an inter-sectoral approach for its protection" commented Eleni.

**Successful EBM
relies on cross-sectoral
planning and
management**



NBSAP advocates conservation of biodiversity and sustainable use of Fiji's natural resources

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FIJI EBM PROJECT OVERVIEW

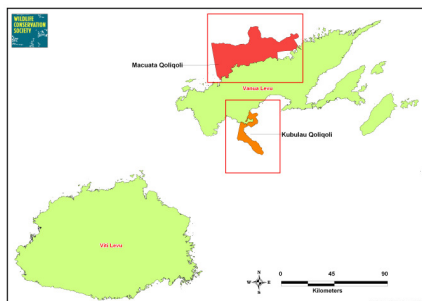
The Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS), in partnership with WWF and Wetlands International-Oceania (WI-O), are working directly with communities and government towards the vision of protecting the Vatu-i-Ra and Cakau Levu Reefs Seascape using Ecosystem-Based Management (EBM) principles and approaches.

Science-based marine protected areas (MPAs) have been demonstrated to protect exploited marine resources, may increase coral reef ecosystem resilience, and are considered an essential tool for the long-term management and conservation of high priority seascapes around the world. Recognizing the connectivity between terrestrial and marine systems has led to

a more holistic approach that also includes terrestrial processes and their potential impact on marine habitats. For example, sedimentation and nutrient enrichment have been found to be key threats to the health of nearshore marine ecosystems and therefore understanding the potential impacts of runoff from watersheds on the adjacent marine areas is vital.

Our research and advocacy as part of this EBM project is building an applied understanding of how terrestrial and marine systems are connected in terms of fauna and habitat quality, and what the implications are for conservation management in a tropical high island setting. The areas we are investigating include the aquatic fauna that

utilize "wet" ecosystem types during different life stages (living connections between the land and the sea), spatial patterns of perceptions of ecosystem change, community resource use, potential influence of terrestrial nutrients and run off on near shore environments, the effects of intensive harvesting of a traditional MPA on reef fish communities, fish community responses to management in Fiji, a low cost resource mapping approach for Pacific Islands, the connectivity of marine habitats, including understanding the movement ranges of adult reef fishes from MPAs, and priority conservation regions (Ecoscapes) for Fiji Islands to preserve ecosystem connectivity.



The Fiji Ecosystem Based Management (EBM) project has two focal sites, Macuata and Kubulau, on the island of Vanua Levu. This is the second largest island in Fiji (5,538 km²). Macuata is made up of four districts, including 37 villages with a population of approximately 10,000, while Kubulau is made up of one district, encompassing 10 villages and 1 settlement with a population of approximately 1,000. Macuata has a total *qoliqoli* (traditional fisheries management region) area of 1,349 km² out of which 112 km² is currently protected through a network of 9 marine protected areas (MPAs). Kubulau, with a total *qoliqoli* size of 260 km² has a network incorporating 16 MPAs (89 km²) and 1 proposed forest reserve (0.8 km²).



The Fiji Ecosystem-Based Management project is primarily funded by the David and Lucile Packard Foundation and the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation, which started in 2004. It is led by WCS, with the partners WWF and WI-O.