

**Community-based Marine Managed Area Meetings and Site Visits in Yap, FSM
May 4-10, 2006**

Summary

BACKGROUND:

Beginning on April 30, the Pacific Islands Marine Protected Area Community (PIMPAC) held a meeting in Yap to plan its first training event. A full report of the meeting is available from Meghan Gombos: Meghan.Gombos@noaa.gov.

The YAP PIMPAC meeting was designed so that some of participants could stay longer and join in site visits with the local communities of Kadaay on the main island of Yap and Ngulu Atoll to the southwest of Yap. The site visits included staff of Yap Community Action Program (YapCAP), Charles Chieng and Vanessa Fread, and staff of the Community Conservation Network (CCN), Wayne Andrew, Mike Guilbeaux, and Scott Atkinson.

This document is a brief summary and highlights of the community site visits and planning meetings. Detailed minutes of the community meetings and reports of the site visits have been prepared and can be requested from Vanessa Fread of YapCAP at freadv_yapcap@mail.fm.

NGULU ATOLL SITE VISIT AND COMMUNITY MEETING:

The Ngulu visit took place on May 5 and 6, 2006 and was planned in partnership with the Yap Fisheries and Maritime Institute (FMI). The atoll is located approximately 60 miles southwest of Yap. The group was accompanied from Yap by the Chief of Ngulu and several community members. The site visit was brief, approximately 10 hours, and consisted of discussions with the Chief and community members about the condition and issues related to marine resource management at the atoll. Visitors were able to do three dives near the island of Ngulu at the south end of the Atoll.

During the discussions, the Chief shared information on the main fishing grounds of the atoll and discussed how fishing has changed over time. The Chief indicated where important species are fished, including jacks, snapper, and others. Among community members, there was a general impression that the fisheries of the area have declined over the years. In addition, the Chief explained the agreement that the community previously had with the Yap Fisheries Agency, with which the Agency was allowed to fish the Northern half of the atoll for bottom fish and pelagics. During this time, Yap Fisheries visited the atoll approximately once per week and provided transport for community members. Over the last few years, this agreement expired and the renewal has not been formally discussed. In addition, the atoll is so large that it is not possible for the community to observe the northern part of the reef, so it is unknown to what degree foreign fishing vessels may visit the atoll to poach marine resources.

During the dives near Ngulu Islands, YapCAP and CCN staff noted that the corals and fish populations of the reef are in very good condition. While no systematic data was collected, the divers observed healthy coral and fish populations including an abundance of fish from all feeding guilds- herbivores, coralivores, and predatory fish. In some shallow areas, the group noted some signs of what could have been bleaching from previous years, including dead coral with newly generating coral colonies. Eagle rays, hump head wrasse, small sharks, an abundance of grouper, and other fish were also observed.

Overall, the portion of the reef observed appeared to be in very good condition. Due to its features and because Ngulu Atoll may be an important source for propogules for Palau's coral reefs, the site is already considered a local and regional priority for management and conservation activities,.

On May 8, 2006 the Ngulu Community held a meeting in cooperation with YapCAP to discuss:

- I. The community's Goals/Vision for their atoll
- II. Problems and Challenges that are preventing the community from achieving their vision
- III. Possible Solutions and Activities to overcome these problems and challenges, and ways to help the community achieve their vision.

Ngulu Vision Statement: Synthesized from the various goals offered by community members, the Vision of the Ngulu people is:

For the Ngulu people to achieve good economic opportunities and consistent social services, and for the atoll to maintain healthy populations of marine species, so that Ngulu people can return to the atoll and have a good quality of life for generations to come. Under this vision, Ngulu residents will actively control the management and work with key partners on issues that affect the atoll. Maintaining and utilizing the natural resources of the island is the key to achieving this vision.

Problems/Challenges:

- Lack of control over atoll area: foreign poachers, people from Yap poaching (fish decreasing, clams decreasing, turtles increasing)
- Lack of reliable and affordable transportation to the island and between the atoll islands;
- No steady income or Jobs;
- Lack of economic opportunities on Ngulu
- Lack of basic needs (School is presently shut down lack of hospitals, etc.)
- Lack of food security / supply (especially during disasters); Possible food shortage – need to plant food
- Difficult communications: Lack of reliable communication systems among/between atoll and Yap
- Lack of information (i.e.. study, assessment) on best income generating opportunities (technical information and knowledge)
- Communications problems between community and agencies/organizations
- Lack of community involvement in decision making
- Invasive and Problematic Species (i.e. rats)

Actions/Solutions:

- Create economic opportunities on Ngulu
- Natural resource conservation managed by the Ngulu people to ensure abundance and availability of fish for the Ngulu people or for the Yap fisheries to make profit
- If people move back to Ngulu, the school will reopen and create jobs for teachers on the island
- If people move back, it is important to consider turtle management. Currently the turtles may be increasing because there are fewer people living on the island and therefore less disturbance
- Increase surveillance (radar, boats). Train Community members in surveillance and enforcement;
- Develop an enforcement program.
- Set up solar electricity (Fuel prices are rising, such as gas and kerosene)
- Possible mariculture (need good studies to be sure it will work)
- Look into fishing and other ventures as a possible transportation solution (should include emergency response).
- Ask partners (like YapCAP) to assist in raising money for assessments on natural resource and economic development, and for technical assistance

- Seek assistance and raise funds for surveillance equipment (radar, solar panels, boat)
- Conduct rat eradication
- Develop a plan to promote suitable agriculture on island
- Establish atoll “core group” or “steering committee”

KADAAAY SITE VISIT AND COMMUNITY MEETING:

During the Kadaay site visit, staff of YapCAP and CCN had a chance to dive and snorkel with community members. The group noted that the visibility inside the inner reef is limited as a result of sediment and particulate matter, possibly as a result of the channel dredging that had occurred in previous years. On the outer reef, visibility was excellent. On inner reef flat areas there was healthy coral and a moderate biomass of fish with herbivores, coralivores, and predatory fish observed. We noted some signs of current bleaching in acropora coral species.

On the outer reef, a school of approximately 29 bumphead parrotfish was observed. Two turtles and a reasonably abundant number of fish (with herbivores, coralivores, and predatory fish) were observed as well. There were some signs of bleaching in acropora coral species.

On the edge of a “blue hole” in the interior of the reserve, within 15 minutes three swimmers noted: large amounts of stag horn coral, several large porites coral heads, no evidence of current bleaching, large numbers of black damselfish, five or six juvenile humphead wrasse, one lobster, and large numbers of the yellow parrotfish.

After diving and snorkeling, the team and community members discussed the reasoning for the current location of the reserve. The team suggested options for the design of the reserve that might increase its effectiveness, such as including the South side of the channel mouth and portions the outer reef slope. Community members explained that they share traditional rights to the edge of the channel with another community, so the matter would have to be negotiated with the adjacent community. They may pursue this negotiation in the future. Community members also said they have not included the reef slope because they do not have a boat to enforce any rules they would make for that area.

On May 7, 2006 the Kadaay Community held a meeting in cooperation with YapCAP to discuss:

- I. The communities Goals/Vision for their atoll
- II. Problems and Challenges that are preventing the community from achieving their vision
- III. Possible Solutions and Activities to overcome these problems and challenges and to help the community achieve their vision.

I. Vision for the Kadaay Community Traditional Fishing Ground

In the years to come, the Kadaay Community wants its traditional fishing ground restored to have the numerous fish species and abundance that it once had. This will include species that are especially important for traditional fishing and customary obligations, such as bumphead parrotfish.

II. Problems and Challenges

- There is currently a lack of awareness that the community has established a sanctuary area.
- It is difficult for people to enforce the sanctuary because they do not have a boat.
- Currently the boundary is difficult to see at night so fisherman can easily cross the boundary by mistake. More signage is needed to decrease the amount of accidental entries.

- The area is small so fishing and other activities that take place outside the area may still impact it. For example, bumphead parrotfish are over fished around the entire island and they migrate. As a result, protecting them here may not bring back the population as they are fished elsewhere
- An underlying problem is that people are currently fishing for their family and to sell
- People are not fishing in the traditional manner
- The community has stopped managing the habitat
- There are new fishing techniques and methods (better technology), and now the area is fished year-round
- There is more fishing done at night compared to the past.
- There is not a balance between use for food versus long-term conservation and good management
- The community has noted a major increase in stag horn coral, which has increased as a result of changing fishing practices. The community believes this habitat change has led to decreases in key fish such as bumphead parrot fish. The community does not fully understand the impacts of this change nor the possible impacts of reducing the amount of coral.
- The community does not fully understand which area will be most suitable for a biological reserve site.
- Erosion/runoff: The near shore area has become more shallow as a result of runoff
- Pollution problems from nearby villages and others in the community
- There is the potential for a fuel spill. The village should make arrangements to protect the area in case of a spill.
- Laundromat spill could be a problem
- Trash from the park may be a problem. Any land-based activity can possibly cause a problem in the water area. Limited awareness on land-based impacts could be a problem
- Impacts to water quality due to dredging

III. Activities and Solutions

- Traditional and modern systems of consultation (brochures, meetings, schools, campaign)
- Youth group activities (as an awareness program)
- Village meetings on why, how, and outcomes of management, monitoring etc.
- Public Education
- Inform community members and neighboring communities, and they will inform their fishermen
- Create a no-fishing area. This will help this problem immediately. In the future, the community can decide how to regulate the area.
- Boundary demarcation. There are many options so research is needed.
- Bumphead Parrotfish needs to be a species management issue for this state. There is not enough bumphead parrotfish to go around this whole island. The population of this species has decreased to the lowest level ever. One Palauan man nearly wiped out the entire population of parrotfish. There is no protection for the aggregation sites on this island. This community could help to spearhead discussions on this species restriction.
- Try to encourage other communities so they may pursue similar marine managed areas
- Develop a compliance and enforcement program
- Regulate the fishing that goes on in the other area. Could possibly limit what kind of fish or what method of fishing. For example, if you use net you can't sell. Should we allow gill net or ban gill net? Explore ways of regulating fishing in the outside area
- One solution to selling could be if you are going to sell fish you must grow it.
- Limit the size of nets such as larger mesh size
- Create a closed protected area
- Conduct research on bumphead parrotfish- need to know more about the life cycle of the fish. Can summarize the research on the bumphead parrotfish to help create State regulations.

- Need some research on the effect of breaking the coral. May want to do a controlled experiment
- Ask for technical assistance to help understand ecological impacts
- Training community members in monitoring techniques
- Control erosion by making revetment systems along the streams to clean water
- Management of the watershed. This was traditional has been neglected by modern society. Work with community to spread awareness on watershed management and sewage disposal
- Maintenance of public infrastructure, such as the road. The government needs to take more action on this, there is little that the community can do.
- Possible spill from storage tanks etc. Put village meeting with the tank operators on ways to respond.
- Village meeting to help address/control pollution - possibly signage
- Fix seawalls and waterways to minimize earth moving which is related to the land-based threat

NEXT STEPS:

YapCAP will continue to work with both communities. Next steps include:

1. Identify and develop a Core Group of community members from each area that will work within the community and with YapCAP to pursue activities as identified and/or practical for each area. This step was initiated by each community in the planning meetings.
2. Hold regular planning meetings with the Core Group from each community to help plan and pursue next steps
3. Create a brief Community Action Plan with each community to help guide the next steps
4. Pursue project activities that will provide some simple and early successes. These will be identified by community members and YapCAP in subsequent meetings
5. Pursue fundraising for activities as needed