



Marine Protected Area (MPA) Training in Fiji A rich sharing experience

The International Ocean Institute's *OceanLearn* Programme cooperates with NOAA's Marine Sanctuary Programme on a 6-day MPA training course; Fiji

Some 45 MPA Practitioners and other professionals attended a 6-day MPA training course hosted by the University of the South Pacific (USP) in Suva, Fiji from September 8-13. The course was the first cooperation between NOAA's Marine Sanctuary Program and IOI-OceanLearn. The curriculum was developed by Anne Walton, NOAA, with input of regional case studies provided by USP's Institute of Applied Sciences (IAS) and from the participants themselves. Funding was provided by the Coral Reef Initiative in the South Pacific Programme (CRISP), the US State Department, the Secretariat for the Pacific Community (SPREP), the Nature Conservancy, Conservation International, and NOAA, with in-kind support provided by OceanLearn and IAS. Instructors were Anne Walton (NOAA), Malia Chow (NOAA), Rikki Grober Dunsmore (IAS/USP), Vina Ram-Bidesi (OceanLearn & USP), Joeli Veitayaki (IOI-Pacific Islands & USP) and G. Robin South (OceanLearn). Much of the local logistical support was provided by Rikki Dunsmore and the staff of IAS.

The participants came from 12 Pacific Island Countries (American Samoa, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, French Polynesia, Kiribati, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu). The course was organised in six modules: Introduction, Management, Zoning, Sustainable Fisheries, Enforcement, and Sustainable Tourism; a field trip to a nearby MPA was led by the Fiji participants. The mode of instruction emphasised a strongly interactive approach, with formal presentations interspersed by many group exercises which allowed for a great deal of experience-sharing among the participants. Participants also contributed excellent case studies, which were made available to the whole group on CD at the end of the course. The participants worked as teams throughout the week, and team leaders met at the end of each day with all instructors, to provide feed-back, and to comment on how the course was going.

The development of follow-up as an integral part of the course was an important element. All participants developed a "contract" in which, for each module, they identified follow-up actions to take home with them and put into practice. The contracts were reviewed by the instructional team at the end of the week, and will be part of further follow- during the coming year. A communications network was also established at the end of the course, and participants are now regularly communicating through an eMail list. The sharing of case-studies was a highlight of the course. Included among them were:

- Overview of the Phoenix Islands Protected Area (PIPA)
- Benefits of the Rau'i in the Cook Islands
- Marine Area Management Plan – West Tairapu, Tahiti
- Review of Marine Conservation in Palau, 1981-2005
- The Kabualau Experience, Fiji
- Samoa's MPA Project
- Co-management of marine resources in American Samoa
- Northern Reefs Initiative, Palau
- Science in Action – Conservation International Initiatives
- Fiji's Locally Managed Marine Area Network (FLMMA)
- Fisheries & Marine Protected Areas in Tuvalu
- Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument, Hawaii

The course concluded with a party hosted by the US Embassy in Suva, and the presentation of certificates to the participants. All agreed that the course had been a great success, and the instructors parted with a commitment for more training collaboration in the future. For more information contact: Prof G. Robin South, Coordinator, IOI-OceanLearn - robin.south@orda.com.au; Anne Walton - anne.walton@noaa.gov

The image above right shows artwork on MPA topics created during the course by the participants themselves

