

“Sustainable Management at Helen Reef, Palau”

Final Narrative Report

to

The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation

Award # 2006-0090-021

Reporting Period:

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Prepared and Submitted by:

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¹ There was a significant delay in reporting on the activities and outcomes of this project due to: 1) difficulties in receiving timely and adequate financial information from the site implementing program, the Helen Reef Resource Management Program (HRRMP), and 2) in January 2009 the dissolution of the Community Conservation Network. Since these events, project principals Wayne Andrew, former HRRMP Program Manager and current chairman of the HRRMP Management Board, and Michael Guilbeaux, former CCN International Program Director, have worked together to prepare the following report based on available information.

INTRODUCTION

Helen Reef is a large coral reef atoll located in the remote Southwest Islands of Palau, close to the north coast of West Papua, Indonesia. The people and State of Hatohobei, the owners of Helen Reef, have made attempts for several decades to protect and manage the atoll's coral reef's marine resources. However, they have faced significant challenges in finding workable solutions to threats to the atoll's resources and biodiversity, such as foreign poaching and unsustainable harvesting practices at the site. New management strategies were initiated at Helen Reef in 2002 with the enactment of State legislation declaring a Marine Conservation Area at the site. A surveillance and enforcement program has been implemented since 2003 to address foreign poaching. In September 2005, a management planning process was begun to articulate management objectives and rules and to identify day-to-day responsibilities and staff activities and workplans. The intention of this NFWF award was to build on previous actions to strengthen the State Government's and local community's ability to sustainably manage the atoll's resources and protect it against key threats now and into the future.

BACKGROUND

As a division of the Hatohobei State Government, the Helen Reef Resource Management Program (HRRMP) was established in the 2002 and is overseen by a board of representatives of the Hatohobei Island community. The overarching goal of the HRRMP is to conserve the outstanding biodiversity and natural resources of Helen Reef and Hatohobei Island for the people of Hatohobei and the greater public. The Program strives to achieve this goal by working with relevant stakeholders, including the local community, local government, national government agencies, and NGOs, to develop mechanisms and capacity to effectively protect, manage, and sustainably utilize Helen Reef's resources. In the past, the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation and other government agencies and private donors have supported the HRRMP to initiate a program to deter illegal fishing at Helen Reef and related activities.

NARRATIVE REPORT

With the current support from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, the Helen Reef Resource Management Program has been able to complete components of an overall Management Plan for the atoll and strengthen elements of its surveillance and enforcement program. The project has also installed demarcation and mooring buoys at the site, undertaken resource monitoring training, and conducted awareness building activities. The details of these and other accomplishments and outcomes are described below:

PHASE 1 COMPONENTS:

COMPONENT 1.1: "Design and Implement Conservation Area Regulations and Demarcation of Zones at Helen Reef"

A Management Plan has been developed for the Helen Reef Conservation Area that is the result of general input and suggestions generated from numerous community and board meetings held over the project period. The Management Plan identifies key goals and objectives of management activities for the site. The Plan also describes specific activities and recommendations for resource monitoring, enforcement, and other management activities, as well as background on sustainable financing issues and options related to the site that may eventually be considered by the program.

A management planning team attempted to best address local priorities for specific social, biological, and economical goals and tried to ensure that selected objectives and activities were realistic and practical as possible. Collectively, the elements of plan took longer than expected to draft because of the general complexity of managing such a remote site, while members of the community were consulted extensively for each key component. The current zoning plan protects approximately 75% of the entire reef as a “no take” area, while allowing for the remaining 25% to be managed as a regulated community subsistence harvest zone (Figure 1).

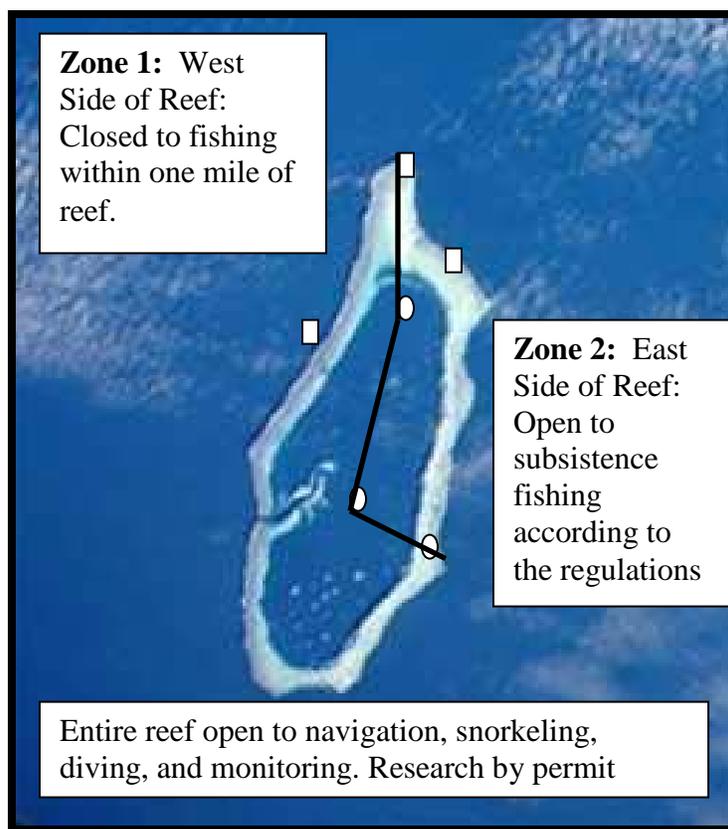


Figure 1. Indicative Map with Landmarks and Management Zones of Helen Reef

During the planning processes, the Management Board also consulted with the community on small-scale commercial harvest issues. It was decided by the planning team that more detailed fisheries information is desired before specific decisions on this topic could be made. The Management Board and community has not yet allowed commercial harvest, but has agreed to entertain the question of limited commercial harvesting activity in the future once enough data on the status of resources have been gathered. This action is in line with the plan’s biological goal to restore, maintain, and understand the biological resources of Helen Reef (including an understanding of ecosystem health, key species, habitats, and biodiversity), yet provide for some sustainable economic benefits to the resource owning community.

Major components of the management plan are now complete (save the detailed fisheries information mentioned above) and the plan going through a review and approval process at the state level. While awaiting the final approval of the Management Plan by the State Legislature, a trial period for the zoning and regulations has been endorsed and implemented to so that

outreach, awareness and enforcement activities could be initiated. During this period, detailed fisheries and other advice is being sought from resource managers and scientists, and once this information is obtained, new zoning design and regulations will be reviewed by the Hatohobei State Legislature for adoption. Additionally, once formally adopted the management plan will allow the Helen Reef site to become eligible for general management support from Palau's national Protected Area Network, which was established as a mechanism to provide technical and financial support to state government in managing their protected areas.

COMPONENT 1.2: “Deploy Buoys to Demarcation of Open and Closed Fishing Zones”

As part of the NFWF award, the Helen Reef Resource Management Program and Hatohobei State Government planned for the installation of mooring and other demarcation buoys at the site. The Helen Reef Management Board identified the most durable and cost-effective materials, as well as the preferred sites for the buoy locations. Originally, it was planned that a contractor would be hired to install the mooring and demarcation buoys. However, difficulties in logistics and contracting lead to the Helen Reef Management Program staff taking on the bulk of the tasks involved in installing the buoys². Technical assistance was provided by those with experience in buoy installation and drilling equipment was loaned from local agencies. In August 2007, program staff deployed five demarcation buoys at the site completing the demarcation of the community subsistence and the “no-take” zones of the Helen Reef Conservation Area. The buoys were placed between visible landmarks, such as ship wrecks, that also serve as permanent boundaries markers of the open and closed zones. Surplus demarcation materials, such as lines and floats, remained after the planned installations, so an additional three buoys were deployed to serve as navigation markers and also as moorings for boat to tie on to instead of dropping anchor (Figure 2).



Figure 2. Image showing orange demarcation buoys (right) with Helen Island in the background.

Additional, two heavy-duty buoys with specially designed concrete anchors were planned not only as demarcation buoys but also as mooring buoys for larger boats (including the state supply vessel, The Atoll Way, and National Patrol Boat). Ultimately, only one of the mooring

² Because a contractor could not be arranged to install the mooring buoys as originally planned, program field staff undertook the lead in implementing this activity; thus, ship fuel for transportation of materials and a portion of staff salaries during the period of installation were charged to the NFWF award.

buoys was installed because of difficulties in locating the second of the concrete anchors deployed earlier. During the following trips to Helen Reef in October 2007, program staff attempted but were unable to locate the second concrete anchor and thus delayed the deployment of the final mooring and demarcation buoy. Remaining mooring buoy equipment and materials remain in storage and site managers and field staff will continue to search for the location of this second mooring buoy anchorage during subsequent visits to the atoll so that the final buoy can be installed.

COMPONENT 1.3: “Initiate Monitoring Training Activities to Promote Community involvement in Resource Monitoring”

For this component of the project, the HRRMP was expected to provide training to between 10 and 15 field staff and Hatohobei community members to improve skills in basic resource monitoring. As a result, it is hoped that field staff and interested community members will be more confident and skilled to participate in resource monitoring activities that help support management decisions.

In October 2006, the HRRMP conducted its annual community-based resource monitoring that included initial training for the new monitoring team members, plus a refresher course for the returning team members (Figure 3). Fifteen Community members and other partner site members participated in the training and the community-led resource surveys. This included: Selino Maxin and Primo Eperiam from Pohnpei; Audrey Rafael from Angaur, Palau; Wayne Andrew, Paul Homar, Peter Lorenzo, Robinson Richard, William Andrew, Sharon Patris, Jamos Andrew, Erwin Moses, Inoki Lorenzo, Castro Stanley, and Angus Wong of the Helen Reef Resource Management Program; and Asap Bukurou of the Palau Conservation Society (Figure 4). The data is currently being analyzed to be used for management effectiveness monitoring and site-level decision making.



Figure 3. Wayne Andrew and Asap Bukurou leading a session in resource monitoring training on Helen Island, October 2006



Figure 4. Members of the Helen Reef Resource Monitoring Team at Helen Reef, November 2006

To continue to build the capacity of the HRRMP staff and Hatohobei community members in resource monitoring, the HRRMP also organized its monitoring team to assist with and attend monitoring refresher training with a partner community of Ngardmau State, in the Main Palau Islands. The training was conducted with a total of seven members of the Helen Reef Team and five member of the Ngardmau State Conservation Program (Figure 5). The team members were also trained in data analysis skills as part of training support in monitoring Locally Managed Marine Areas (LMMAs) among local community teams.



Figure 5. Nardmau Monitoring Training Participants August 2007.

During the next site monitoring trip in October 2007, senior researchers from the Palau International Coral Reef Center (PICRC) joined HRRMP staff and community members to participate in additional training and monitoring activities at Helen Reef (Figures 6 and 7). During these activities, the HRRMP Field Staff and twenty (20) community members from various regions of Palau were provided additional training in coral reef monitoring methods.

Information resulting from these monitoring surveys will be used, along with other information, to assess the outcomes of program activities and interventions, as well as contribute to the overall adaptive management of the Helen Reef Conservation Area.



Figure 6. Coral Monitoring at Helen Reef, Oct 2007



Figure 7. Coral Reef Monitoring Team, Helen Island, Oct 2007

COMPONENT 1.4: “Team Leadership Training”

Activities to help build leadership skills of field staff and the management team were previously identified as critical for the continued development of management, staff performance and

retention, and overall site governance. Targeted skills included those of general leadership, as well as staff supervision and planning. Potential trainers and training sessions were identified and planned to be held at Helen Reef in the second quarter of 2007; however, due to mechanical problems with the Hatohobei State Vessel and weather conditions during the first half of 2007, these activities were postponed and not completed.

COMPONENT 1.5: “Provide Partial Support to Field Station for MPA Monitoring and Analysis Supplies”

A portion of this award partially supported operations of the Field Station located on Helen Island, as staff there would play an important role in the organizing, coordination, and execution of many of the project’s activities. These activities primarily included installation of the demarcation buoys and supporting resource monitoring and training events. The NFWF award also covered the costs of 1) basic field supplies and equipment and 2) of monitoring training materials and supplies during training events at Helen Reef and the Ngarmau State community in the main islands of Palau. During monitoring training events, new and familiar monitoring approaches were demonstrated and practiced, and data collected during monitoring activities were analyzed in subsequent training sessions. Both series of training events benefited Helen Reef Field staff and Hatohobei community members by reviewing and learning new monitoring methods and by providing an opportunity for Helen Reef staff to serve as trainers in teaching relatively simple monitoring methods to other interested community members.

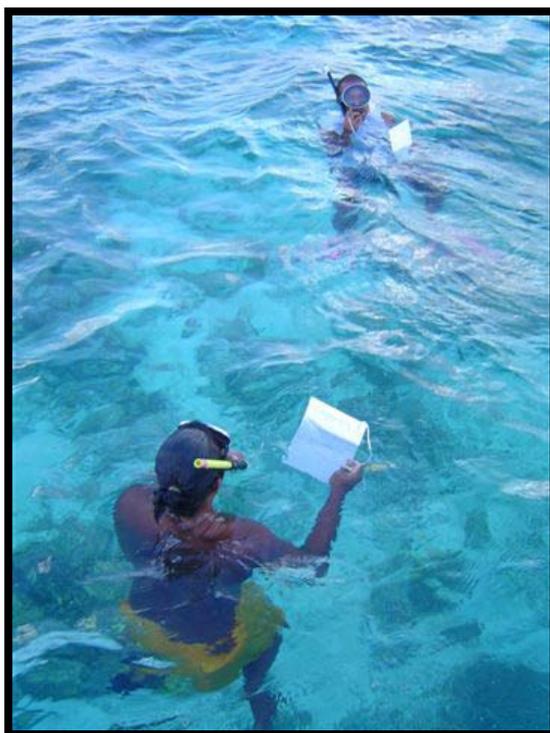


Figure 8. Helen Reef Field Staff Collecting Invertebrate Monitoring Data at Helen Reef



Figure 9. Asap Bukourou Reviewing Monitoring Data with Helen Reef Field Staff

COMPONENT 1.6: “Undertake an Educational Summer Camp on Hatohobei and Helen Islands”

Due to complications in the operation of the Hatohobei State supply vessel, the planned Summer Educational Camp on Hatohobei and Helen Island had to be postponed. During the summer of 2007 when the camp was planned, the state vessel was prioritized and on a stand-by for land monumentation on Hatohobei Island and was unavailable for the summer camp program. Shortly thereafter, the vessel underwent dry-docking repair and subsequently experienced a long-delay waiting for necessary parts. Therefore, the summer camp component was not executed.

PHASE 2 COMPONENTS: (implemented to the degree possible, despite not requesting the second tranche of NFWF financial award)

COMPONENT 2.1: “Develop and Disseminate education material targeting illegal foreign fishermen”. To implement a strategy to decrease the number of illegal poachers visiting Helen Reef from foreign countries, this component focused on disseminating educational and awareness materials to specific target groups through regional partners and organizations.

With the assistance of communication specialists and others, program staff have developed basic communication materials to be further refined and disseminated to fishing communities in neighboring Indonesia and the Philippines. These materials, to be published in Indonesian and Filipino languages, describe the purpose of the Helen Reef Management Area and current site-management activities (Figure 10). The expected outcome of the dissemination of these communication materials are to deter the target groups from potential violations by indicating the purpose of the conservation area and presence of law enforcement staff at the site.

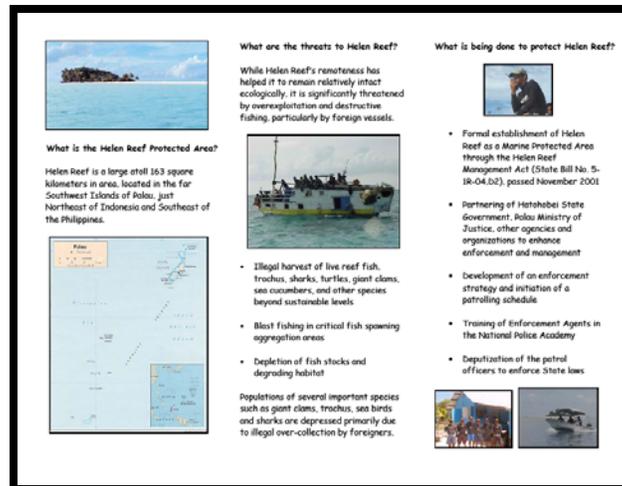


Figure 10. Inside Fold of a Helen Reef Conservation Area Brochure to be Translated in Indonesian and Filipino languages.

COMPONENT 2.2: Foster partnerships and sharing with stakeholders for support and awareness of MPA regulations.

The HRRMP staff held more than six meetings on the MPA regulations among the community and other stakeholder groups. The highly attended meetings included the women's group, the youth group, the State Legislature, the Hatothobei State leadership (including traditional leaders), and the Hatothobei community in general. Information regarding the program's ongoing activities and monitoring results was presented. Those who attended these meetings had the opportunity to learn more about the overall program, the management plan and its new regulations, as well as provide their feedback to the Program's staff. Feedback indicated that support for the new MPA regulations is still strong among community members.

In September 2007, the HRRMP staff also had the opportunity to meet with several high-ranking political leaders from the Palau National Congress (OEK) to discuss aspects of the Program's strategy and success. Program Manager Wayne Andrew was invited to give a presentation on the Program's approach to addressing foreign poaching, managing local use of resources, and engaging the community in the Program's design and activities. After this presentation, Mr. Andrew was invited to give additional presentations to other members of the Palauan Political Leadership, including to the President of Palau. These high level presentations and discussions are envisioned to lead to greater understanding and support of the Hatothobei State Government's and community's effort to protect their resources at Helen Reef.

COMPONENT 2.3: Produce a Video "Visitor Guide" for community users and tour operators that visit the protected area.

The Helen Reef Management Program had arranged with a local communications company, TakeOne Productions, to create a video visitation guide for visitors to Helen Reef. The planned video guide, once complete, will be available in Palauan, English and Japanese. A preliminary script and video footage for the visitor guide project was drafted and assembled, but due to administrative difficulties funds were not available to edit or complete this planned activity. In the

Financial Summary Report:

(see additional attached spreadsheet for transaction details)

Financial Report Summary

Project: "Sustainable Management at Helen Reef, Palau"

NFWF Award # 2006-0090-021

	Original Project Budget	Reported Expenses of the Received \$18,000 (April - Oct 2007)	Variance
Salaries			
	\$ -	\$ 3,245.66	3,245.66
Equipment			
	\$ -	\$ -	0.00
Other			
Buoy Anchorage and Installation	\$ 10,000.00	\$ 7,024.75	(2,975.25)
Monitoring Training	\$ 4,000.00	\$ 1,974.29	(2,025.71)
Leadership Training	\$ 1,000.00	\$ -	(1,000.00)
Field Station Supplies	\$ 2,000.00	\$ 4,840.68	2,840.68
Outreach Materials	\$ 500.00	\$ -	(500.00)
Student Program	\$ 1,000.00	\$ -	(1,000.00)
Ed/Outreach/Awareness - stipend	\$ 1,000.00	\$ 800.00	(200.00)
Video Production	\$ 3,000.00	\$ -	(3,000.00)
Misc.	\$ -	\$ 86.50	86.50
total	\$ 22,500.00	\$ 17,971.88	

Original Project Budget \$ 22,500.00

Received* \$ 18,000.00

Expended \$ 17,971.88

Balance \$ 28.12

*Second Payment of \$4500.00 not requested by recipient.