

Coral Reef Alliance (CORAL)
Final Report

**CORAL REEF CONSERVATION GRANT:
DIRECT SUPPORT TO CORAL PARK PRACTITIONERS IN THE PACIFIC**

Report to the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)

**NOAA Award No. NA03NMF4630307
10/1/2003 – 3/31/2005**

Project Title: Direct Support to Coral Park Practitioners in the Pacific

Applicant Organization: Coral Reef Alliance (CORAL)

Principal Investigator: Sherry Flumerfelt, Program Manager

Contact Info: 417 Montgomery St., Suite 205, San Francisco, CA 94104; (415) 834-0900 x306; Fax (415) 834-0999; sflumerfelt@coral.org

Program Category: General Coral Reef Conservation in the Freely Associated States in the Pacific

Project Location: Pohnpei, Federated States of Micronesia; Rock Islands, Palau

Amount Requested: \$45,000

Amount of Matching Funds: \$96,750

Table of Contents

Executive Summary	3
1) Accomplishments.....	3
2) Project Outline	6
3) Pohnpei Results.....	8
4) Palau Results.....	11
5) Lessons Learned.....	14

The following appendices are attached to CORAL's October 2004 Performance Report:

Appendix I: Threats and Solutions: Results from Group Exercises

Appendix II: List of Participants

Appendix III: Press Coverage

Appendix IV: Support Materials

Acronyms

Belau Tourism Association	BTA
Conservation Society of Pohnpei	CSP
Coral Reef Alliance	CORAL
Freely Associated States	FAS
Federated States of Micronesia	FSM
Marine Recreation Provider	MRP
Memorandum of Understanding	MOU
Non-governmental organization	NGO
The Nature Conservancy	TNC
Palau Conservation Society	PCS

Executive Summary

In 2004, the Coral Reef Alliance facilitated a three-module workshop series entitled “Coral Reefs and Sustainable Marine Recreation” in Pohnpei and Palau. The goals of this project were to increase the capacity of participating park managers to engage community support for reef protection, increase the number of marine recreation providers (MRPs) (dive/snorkel/kayak/surf businesses, etc.) that actively collaborate with park managers on reef conservation, and increase the number of MRPs that provide customers with conservation education. This report outlines our successful completion of these goals.

In **Pohnpei**, CORAL partnered with the Conservation Society of Pohnpei (CSP).

Forty-nine participants from all dive businesses and one surf business attended four workshops and one community stakeholder meeting with the following results:

- 71% pledged to deliver routine environmental briefs to clients.
- 88% expressed motivation to participate in coral reef conservation.
- Participants developed plans for marine conservation projects and successfully carried out two of the three projects.
- MRPs helped design a plan for a new user fee¹ system to be managed by a multi-stakeholder Advisory Board. This is currently on-hold with plans to reintroduce following the 2006 elections.

In **Palau**, CORAL partnered with the Koror State government, Palau Conservation Society (PCS), and Belau Tourism Association (BTA). The partnership attracted 191 participants from 33 marine recreation businesses to attend six workshops with the following results:

- 94% pledged to deliver routine environmental briefs to clients.
- 90% expressed motivation to participate in coral reef conservation.
- Tour guides and community members planned to organize seven marine conservation projects, and successfully carried out four of the seven projects.
- Tour Operators developed zoning recommendations for the Rock Islands Southern Lagoon Area, which were accepted by Koror State and integrated into the proposed management plan. Recommendations are now waiting for legislative approval.
- Thirty-two Taiwanese MRPs, representing all Taiwanese tour businesses in Palau, made personal commitments to reduce impacts to coral reefs and deliver environmental briefs to clients.

¹ A tourism user fee is a charge imposed on tourism-based activities designed to generate revenues to support conservation. Pohnpei’s user fee system will support the island’s network of Marine Protected Areas.

1) Accomplishments

This project intended to improve the environmental practices of MRPs and their clients in Pohnpei and Palau, while building conservation alliances between MRPs, park managers, rangers, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and other community stakeholders. CORAL has achieved all of our anticipated outcomes, as indicated below:

Measurable Outcomes in Proposal	Status – June, 2005
<p>1) Two FAS Pacific park managers will have posted, and be routinely distributing CORAL’s diver and snorkeler “Best Environmental Practice” guidelines and other conservation materials designed to minimize tourism impacts on reefs.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CORAL distributed more than 12,000 sustainable tourism guidelines to park managers and MRPs at both sites, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 6200 English guidelines ○ 4000 Japanese guidelines ○ 2000 Mandarin guidelines The guidelines are now being displayed and distributed to customers at MRP shops and on boats, and will reach an estimated 19,000 tourists.² • Through the “Park Buddy Program,”³ CORAL raised \$3,200 in 2004 to pay for multiple-language interpretive signs for key tourist activity areas in the Rock Islands, Palau.
<p>2) Two FAS Pacific sites will have completed a threat reduction assessment to help prioritize and strategize local conservation efforts.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Threat reduction assessments were completed at both sites during the first module of the workshop series. Participants identified threats and developed solutions to minimize those threats (see Appendix I October 2004 Performance Report).

² We distributed 12,000 paper guidelines with an estimated readership rate of 1:1.5. We also distributed 200 laminated guidelines to remain on boats, with an estimated readership rate of 1:5. According to these estimates, total readership = 19,000.

³ The “Park Buddy Program” is part of CORAL’s international Dive In To Earth Day event, which takes place every April during the week of Earth Day. Through the Park Buddy program, CORAL members and volunteers organize fundraising events to support projects in coral reef protected areas.

<p>3) 60 % of participating tour/dive operators will have initiated active support of their local parks, either through donations of equipment, facilities, or staff, or through the collection of user fees, assistance in law enforcement activities, local underwater cleanups, maintenance and installation of mooring buoys, or similar activities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 94 “Take Action” workshop participants at both sites developed action plans for marine conservation projects, such as mooring buoys, cleanups, and dive site management plans. • In Palau, 60% of the conservation projects planned during the Take Action workshop were completed within six months, including recommendations for the new Rock Island’s dive site management plan, and a reef monitoring training (See <u>June 2005 Update</u> section page 13 and14). • In Pohnpei, 100% MRP operations participated in workshops to design a new user fee system to finance Pohnpei’s marine protected areas. MRPs agreed to actively support park management by sitting on the Advisory Board, collecting user fees, and reporting violations. In addition, 30% of Pohnpei’s MRPs donated staff time and equipment to help CSP with two mooring installations.
<p>4) 60 % of participating tour/dive operators will routinely provide customers with low-impact diving/snorkeling orientations, briefings and other educational activities that have been shown to reduce diver/snorkel impacts on coral reefs.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participants were trained in environmental briefings, either in English, Japanese, or Mandarin. 71 % of Pohnpei’s “Sustainable Tourism” participants plan to give routine environmental briefings to clients, as do 94% of Palau’s participants. 100% of Palau’s Taiwanese workshop participants made personal commitments to reducing impacts to coral reefs and giving environmental briefs to clients. • CORAL worked with Koror State and PCS to design a Tour Guide certification program and Video Training Program to educate all tour guides on the local marine environment, culture, and safety issues. The program will be launched in July 2005.

2) Project Outline

CORAL delivered the following three-module workshop series in Pohnpei and Palau between May and December 2004:

a) **Module one: Coral Reef Ecology, Threats & Solutions**

This one-day workshop introduced participants to coral reef ecology, international and local threats to coral reefs, and practical solutions to help minimize those threats. Facilitators used Power Point presentations, brainstorming, and group exercises, incorporating techniques such as Threat Reduction Assessments and Threat Ranking⁴, Participatory Problem Analysis,⁵ and Problem Trees.⁶

b) **Module two: Sustainable Marine Recreation**

This one-day workshop focused on the impacts of marine recreation and environmentally sustainable business practices. Facilitators used Power Point slide shows, brainstorming, and group exercises to discuss impacts from marine tourism and develop local solutions. Participants were trained in environmental briefings, and were asked to commit to a conservation project of their choice.

c) **Module three: Collaborative Solutions**

This two-day, highly interactive workshop guided MRPs and other community members through a series of steps to help them select a coral reef conservation project, set realistic project goals, identify partners, funding needs, and organize a timeline. Participants were asked to commit to “action steps” after the workshop.

In addition to the “Take Action” workshop, the third module also incorporated a fourth workshop, aimed at developing collaborative solutions that respond to each site’s specific needs, be they fundraising, moorings, user fees, low-impact tourism, or other issues as defined by our partners. The topics of these workshops were selected according to the needs of each site.

User Fee Workshop, Pohnpei

During the first two workshops, participants expressed frustration with current user fee legislation, which was recently implemented without their input. However, they were supportive of user fees in general, as long as the user fee system was fair and transparent. This influenced CORAL and CSP’s decision to host a User Fee workshop in September, to address these concerns, and attempt to develop a new system using stakeholder feedback.

The two-day workshop presented an overview of MPA user fees, with examples

⁴ Margoluis, R. and N. Salafsky. 2001. Is our project succeeding? A Guide to Threat Reduction Assessment for Conservation. Washington, D.C.: Biodiversity Support Program.

⁵ IIRR. 1998. Participatory methods in community-based coastal resource management. Vol 2. International Institute of Rural Reconstruction, Silang, Cavite, Philippines.

⁶ Mahanty, Sango and Natasha Stacey. 2004. Collaborating for Sustainability: A Resource Kit for Facilitators of Participatory Natural Resource Management in the Pacific. South Pacific Regional Environment Programme.

of success stories and lessons learned around the world. The group discussed the strengths and weaknesses of Pohnpei's existing legislation, and the necessary details for a new and revised system that would be acceptable to all stakeholders. Details included: funding needs, details of sale and collection of revenue, control and use of revenues, patrol/fine system, socialization plans, timeline for implementation, and transparency and reporting. CORAL returned in December 2004 to facilitate a follow-up stakeholder meeting to reach consensus on the proposed changes.

Taiwanese Sustainable Tourism Workshop, Palau

At least 60% of Palau's visitors are from Taiwan, and this number is expected to increase significantly. During the first two workshops, participants addressed a growing concern with the rise in package tours from Taiwan, and the resulting increase in site congestion and reef damage. Although Taiwanese MRPs are an important key stakeholder group, their representation at the first two workshops was low, due to language barriers. CORAL and Koror State decided to host a special, translated, Taiwanese Coral Reefs and Sustainable Tourism workshop.

This one-day workshop gave participants a general overview of the importance of coral reef value and threats. Participants brainstormed to identify reef threats caused by marine tourism, and they identified ways that they can help minimize those threats. Each participant practiced giving environmental briefs, and made a personal commitment to help reduce threats to Palau's coral reefs. Koror State government also took this opportunity to present the new 2004-2006 Rock Islands Management Plan, and obtain feedback from MRPs.

d) Additional Support

In addition to the workshop series, CORAL has maintained regular contact with our partners on the ground, providing ongoing technical and financial assistance to ensure project goals are met. We have offered continued support to both sites through CORAL's Dive In To Earth Day and Park Buddy programs. CORAL has provided ongoing assistance to Koror State and PCS with the development of a Tour Guide Certification and Video Training Program—tentatively slated to launch in July 2005. We have also promoted all participating partners and businesses on the CORAL website (www.coral.org) and to our members as incentive to participate in the program.

e) Support Materials

CORAL provided participants with the following CORAL materials (see Appendix IV of October 2004 Performance Report):

- *Introductory Handbook to Coral Reef Ecosystems, Threats, and Solutions*, 2003.
- *Sustainable Tourism Handbook for Marine Recreation Providers*, 2004.
- *A Practical Guide to Good Practice: Managing Environmental Impacts in the Marine Recreation Sector*, 2004.
- *Mooring Buoy Installation and Maintenance Handbook*, 2004
- *User Fees in Coral Reef Protected Areas*, 2004
- *Laminated Environmental Dive Brief* (English, Mandarin & Japanese)

- CORAL's *Good Environmental Practice* guidelines for tourists:
 - *Diving* (English, Mandarin, Japanese)
 - *Snorkeling* (English, Mandarin, Japanese)
 - *Turtle Watching* (English, Japanese)
 - *Whale Watching* (English, Japanese)
 - *Underwater Cleanups* (English, Japanese)
- Take Action Support Materials, including: Ten Steps to Project Planning, Fundraising Guide, and Sample Project Budget
- Certificates of Appreciation

f) Partnerships

CORAL relied on the assistance of several project partners to deliver our workshops. CORAL facilitated the first workshop series in collaboration with Project A.W.A.R.E. Foundation. In Pohnpei, CSP was our central partner, organizing on-the-ground logistics and coordination, and inviting participants. For Pohnpei's User Fee Workshop, CORAL also partnered with Dr. Mark Erdmann, who was instrumental in setting up Bunaken's world-renowned user fee system in Sulawesi, Indonesia. In Palau, CORAL partnered with the Koror State Department of Conservation and Law Enforcement, PCS, and BTA. The Koror State Department was particularly involved with setting up the logistics for the training, donating a facility for the workshop, promoting the workshop in the local press, and recruiting participants.

3) Pohnpei Results

a) Background

Pohnpei, part of the Federated States of Micronesia, is a diverse and unique island, home to over 400 species of hard and soft corals and 900 species of fish. Tourists have recently discovered Pohnpei's reefs, with an estimated 9,000 visitors in 2003. With only five MRPs currently in business, marine tourism does not yet pose a significant threat to Pohnpei's reefs. However, the potential for tourism growth and its associated impacts are high, and of concern to local park practitioners. CSP has identified MRPs, specifically dive operators, as a target stakeholder group in need of education to reduce tourism threats to coral reefs, and increase community support for marine protected areas. Consequently, CSP invited CORAL to Pohnpei to lead our three-module workshop series to address these concerns, and help increase the support and capacity of this key stakeholder group.

b) Project Timeline

CORAL facilitated the first two modules of the workshop series, *Coral Reef Ecology, Threats and Solutions*, and *Sustainable Tourism* in May 2004. The third module on *Collaborative Solutions*, including the *Take Action* and *User Fee* workshops, was held in September and October 2004. CORAL returned to Pohnpei in December 2004 to facilitate a follow-up User Fee Stakeholder Meeting.

c) Results

The Pohnpei workshops increased the ability of park managers to engage community support for reef protection, increased the number of MRPs that actively collaborate in reef conservation, and increased the number of MRPs that provide customers with conservation education.

Table 1: Pohnpei Workshops

	Participants	Results from Group Exercises
Coral Reef Ecology, Threats & Solutions <i>May 24, 2004</i>	19 participants: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 63% MRPs (5 dive shops) • 16% NGO (CSP) • 21% Tourism Bureau, and other community members 	During Threat Reduction assessments, participants identified the following top 5 threats to Pohnpei's reefs: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Dredging 2. Sewage/Pig family farms 3. Trash 4. Anchors 5. Reckless diving
Sustainable Tourism <i>May 25, 2004</i>	17 participants: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 65% MRPs (5 dive shops) • 12% NGO (CSP) • 24% Tourism Bureau, press, and community members 	Participants looked at various solutions, and committed to the following: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Youth education 2. Mooring buoy installation 3. Reef Check monitoring
Take Action (Sept. 30 & October 4, 2004)	12 participants: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 60% MRPs (4 dive & 1 surf shop) • 40% NGO (CSP) • 8% government 	Workshop participants developed action plans for the following reef conservation projects: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Educational brochures & posters for tourists. 2. Dive In To Earth Day event 3. Mooring buoy installation
User Fees (September 28 & 29, 2004)	20 participants: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 39% government (8 government offices) • 30% MRPs (5 dive shops) • 30% NGO (CSP, TNC) 	Participants developed plans for a new user fee system with the following details: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Managed by a 13-member multi-stakeholder advisory board • Plastic dive tags modeled after the Bunaken, Bonaire, and Namena tags • MRPs will assist by sitting on the Advisory Board, collecting user fees, and reporting violations
User Fees Stakeholder Meeting (December 14, 2004)	14 participants: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 43% MRPs (4 dive shops, 1 surf business) • 43% government (4 agencies) • 7% Visitor's Bureau • 7% NGO 	Consensus was reached on the revised amendments incorporating the following changes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advisory Board was restructured to have more non-governmental representation. • Board authority was restricted to user-fees. • Board has the authority to place a moratorium on the user-fee system until a Willingness to Pay survey is complete.

Results from Sustainable Marine Recreation Workshop Evaluation Forms:

- 60% perceived increase in participants' knowledge of coral reef ecology, threats & conservation.
- 71% plan to give routine environmental briefs (40% increase from pre-surveys).
- 88% are motivated to participate in coral reef conservation.

Selected quotes:

- "I think off island trainings and bringing people with experiences outside of Pohnpei translates well to work that can be done at home. Especially when that outside work has been successful. [The facilitator's] experiences are invaluable. It's great to see different groups come together for this common purpose."
- "I will give briefings on the environment and on coral before going diving and snorkeling with guests."
- "Better cooperation with dive shops and government will really make a difference."

Additional Outcomes

This was the first opportunity that Pohnpei's MRPs met to discuss local issues. Many participants met for the first time, to discuss shared issues of concern. The workshops set the tone for future cooperation between MRPs.

The workshops were also a good opportunity for MRPs to learn about CSP's work. It became evident that CSP was perceived as an official authority rather than a non-profit organization. CSP was able to discuss their work, and invite participants to volunteer.

In addition to marine tourism, the workshops successfully addressed other threats to coral reefs. Many of the local participants engage in subsistence fishing, pig farming, sakau⁷ farming, and contribute to the trash problem. Participants recognized this, and discussed ways of changing their behavior locally first.

Update June 2005

In January 2005, Pohnpei Surf Club assisted CSP with a mooring buoy installation. Dive Pohnpei and CSP held a second mooring installation in April 2005 as part of CORAL's Dive In To Earth Day celebrations.

CORAL successfully raised \$4,000 through our Park Buddy Program to help fund a research vessel needed to conduct a Rapid Ecological Assessment (REA) of Pohnpei's coral reef ecosystems. The REA is scheduled to take place in the summer, 2005.

CORAL has followed up with the tour guides who were interested in creating educational brochures and posters, and they still expressed an interest in moving forward with these projects. In the meantime, CORAL distributed our own educational materials to these dive shops, and we will continue to keep in touch and assist in any way that we can.

⁷ Sakau is the Pohnpeian kava, which is an alcoholic drink made from the kava/sakau root. Sakau farms are often planted in the highlands, leading to erosion and runoff.

User Fee Workshop and Stakeholder Meeting

The User-Fee workshops successfully gathered stakeholder input and engaged the support of the dive community to assist with future funding for marine protected areas. Over the course of the two-day workshop in September, participants were able to discuss their concerns with the current user fee system, address the need for use fees, and express their preferences for a revised system. Together, the community developed a proposal for a new system. CORAL returned in December 2004 to facilitate a follow-up stakeholder meeting to address concerns raised by some of the dive operators, and to ensure that stakeholder input was incorporated in the proposed changes.

The September workshop was significant in addressing community concerns and developing plans for a new user fee system. However, CORAL's return in December was critical in sustaining the momentum gained during the first workshop, and ensuring that the community continued with their plans. CORAL also drafted a Willingness To Pay survey for CSP to distribute to tourists.

June 2005 Update

The stakeholder recommendations are still pending action with the Attorney General's Office. There are concerns that with current government budget shortfalls, the money could be spent inappropriately. CSP has decided to hold on pushing forward with the user fee system until a new government is elected in 2006. CORAL will continue to offer our assistance through technical advice, distribution and analysis of a Willingness To Pay survey, and development of a dive tag system. CORAL is also in communication with the Attorney General's office and we plan to send a letter of support for the revised User Fee system in July 2005.

4) Palau Results

a) Background

Tourism has become Palau's economic mainstay with more than 60,000 tourists per year. Almost all tourists visit the Rock Islands, a protected area comprised of limestone islands, marine lakes, and extensive coral reefs. Unfortunately, the growing arrival of tourists is negatively impacting coral reefs and fragile marine ecosystems. The Koror State Department of Conservation and Law Enforcement has identified dive tourism as the sixth largest threat out of fifteen threats facing the reefs of the Rock Islands, but believes it can easily be remedied. State resource managers have stressed the need to educate marine recreation providers in low-impact coral reef tourism practices, and are implementing a Tour Guide Certification and Video Training Program in July 2005.

b) Project Timeline

CORAL led the first two modules of the workshop series, *Coral Reef Ecology, Threats and Solutions*, and *Sustainable Tourism*, in June 2004. The third module on "Collaborative Solutions," including the *Take Action* and Taiwanese workshops, was held in September 2004.

c) Results

There was an impressive turnout at all of the Palau workshops, which was the first time MRPs, park rangers, and NGOs came together to discuss local issues.

Table 2: Palau Workshops

	Participants	Summary of Outcomes from Group Exercises
Coral Reef Ecology, Threats & Solutions (June 1&4, 2004)	102 participants: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 65% MRPs (19 businesses) • 25% government • 10% NGO, tourism association, and other community members 	During Threat Reduction assessments, participants identified the following top ten threats to Palau's reefs: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Climate change 2. Sewage 3. Sedimentation 4. Fishing 5. Uneducated/ignorant divers 6. Development 7. Lack of tourism enforcement 8. Site crowding 9. Anchor damage 10. Inexperienced divers
Sustainable Tourism (June 2&5, 2004)	89 participants: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 64% MRPs (17 businesses) • 25% government • 11% NGO, tourism association, and other 	Participants looked at various solutions, and committed to the following: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop plan to reduce dive site congestion 2. Organize community beach and underwater cleanups 3. Stop fish feeding
Take Action (Sept. 21&23)	82 participants: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 63% MRPs (12 businesses) • 10% government • 9% NGO • 5% tourism associations • 8% other 	Workshop participants developed action plans for the following projects: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Dive site management plan to reduce congestion 2. Crown of Thorns removal and conservation club 3. Proposal for Fish Feeding Ban 4. Dive Guide Education 5. Reef Monitoring 6. Trash/reusable grocery bag campaign 7. Educational DVD for airplanes
Taiwanese Sustainable Marine Recreation (September 22)	35 participants: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 92% MRPs (all 6 Taiwanese tour operations). • 8% Koror State government. 	Group identified threats & solutions including: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Site congestion: find more sites, work with other MRPs, set fixed times 2. Reef trampling/coral harassment: tourist education, signs, environmental briefings 3. Boat propellers, oil leaks: proper boating, signs, maintenance

Results from Evaluation Forms:

- 23% perceived increase in participants' knowledge of coral reef ecology, threats & conservation
- 90% motivated to participate in coral reef conservation activities
- 94% pledged to give routine environmental briefs (38% increase from pre-survey)

Selected quotes:

- "I felt that the group exercises conducted during the workshops not only clearly established that, as businesses, we indeed share the same concerns, but they also laid the most positive foundation for future inter-operator cooperation that I have seen in my seven years in Palau's tour industry."
- "Try and educate my customer to not touch coral and to follow the laws of Palau."
- "This is something I always wanted to happen – bring together everybody in this field (marine) to start information sharing and raising awareness."

Additional Outcomes

The workshops revealed a shared concern by all regarding the impacts of marine recreation, in particular rapid tourism growth, overcrowding and inexperienced divers and tour guides. The most predominant concern was the growing numbers of tourists, and "fly-by-night" businesses, in particular cheap package tours from Asia.

More than one group suggested that the government should develop a tour guide certification program – this was apparently suggested without any knowledge of the government's existing plans. This gave Koror State government an opportunity to discuss their plans, and invite feedback from MRPs.

Taiwanese Workshop

The Taiwanese workshop was the first opportunity the Koror State government had to meet with all Taiwanese MRPs to discuss Rock Island management. As one participant stated, "we had an opportunity to give our feedback to the government and exchange some information." The workshop provided participants an opportunity to voice their concerns to the state government about new regulations for jet skis, and a management plan for Jellyfish Lake.

The Chinese translator, Rudy Ko who volunteers for The Wilderness Society, recently followed-up with CORAL in an email, stating: "After the workshop, I had several chances to meet some Taiwan tour operators and they all felt very positive about the workshop. [The Koror State government] finally showed a different side ... the open side." The workshop proved to be a very important stepping stone for future cooperation.

June 2005 Update

Of the seven project plans developed during the September Take Action workshop, four were successfully launched within six months. The Crown of Thorns Club met on a weekly basis following the workshop. A Reef Check training was held in December 2005 at the Palau International Coral Reef Center. MRPs worked with Koror State and

PCS to finalize plans for a Tour Guide Education Program, which is about to be launched in July 2005. Perhaps the most exciting project outcome from the Take Action Workshop is the Dive Site Management Proposal. During the workshop, MRPs discussed the need to create recreational zones in the Rock Islands Southern Lagoon Area to reduce site congestion and reef damage. They met on a weekly basis after the workshop, and in November 2004 they presented their recommendations to Koror State and the House of Traditional Leaders. Their recommendations were accepted and integrated into the Rock Islands management plan, which is now sitting with the Legislature, awaiting further administrative actions.

CORAL also helped with research for a ban on fish feeding, and assistance with the educational DVD for airlines. Both projects are still on hold, although BTA plans to follow-up with Continental Airlines regarding the DVD. BTA is also planning to submit an "Adopt-A-Road" proposal to Koror State to reduce trash on the island.

CORAL selected Palau's Rock Islands as a 2004 Dive In To Earth Day "Park Buddy" site, raising \$3,117 to fund interpretive signs. Koror State has recently hired new staff to focus on the content and layout of the signs, and plans to have them posted by the end of 2005. Tour operators also organized a beach and community cleanup for Dive In To Earth Day 2005.

CORAL was recently written into the 2004-2008 Rock Island Management Plan as a key partner for implementing their sustainable tourism goals. Although we did not receive funding this year, we will continue our support for Koror State's Tour Guide Certification program by providing technical assistance, and building support among local MRPs for the Tour Guide Certification Program.

5) Lessons Learned

a) Preparation and Organization

- Incorporating extra days into the schedule allows for flexibility in rescheduling if numbers are too low (as was the case in Pohnpei), or adding an extra day if numbers are too high (as was the case in Palau).
- A registration deadline for those who would like to receive our materials will prevent overprinting or last minute printing.

b) Workshop Content and Structure

- Language barriers can be successfully overcome by holding separate translated workshops, and by using translators during the English workshops.
- Simplify the content on coral reef ecology and increase interactive group work.

c) Partnerships

- MOU's are effective in defining roles and expectations.
- Train local partners to assist with facilitation for larger groups.

d) Follow-up

- Follow-up is key to helping maintain the momentum gained during the workshops. This was exemplified with the Pohnpei User-Fee Meetings, and the follow-up meeting held in December.

Profiles Document Distribution

1. Review/clearance from the Deep Coral Communities team (done)
2. Transmittal memo (Tom and John) from the DCC team to the NOAA Coral Reef Conservation Program Senior Management Council (CRCP SMC)
3. Review/clearance from CRCP SMC (SMC could ask for LO clearance too)
4. Transmittal memo (David Kennedy) from CRCP SMC to LOs, program offices, NOAA headquarters
5. Post the pdf document on the intranet site; Print document

Timeline

Friday June 24th

- Transmittal memo sent to the SMC with draft Profiles Document for clearance (two week review)
- Discussion on LO clearance at the SMC meeting (10-11:30am)

Friday July 8th

- Clearance from SMC/LO due along with any comments

Friday July 15th

- Comments on profiles document incorporated into final draft
- Transmittal memo from CRCP SMC to LOs, program offices, NOAA headquarters
- Final draft sent for printing
- Final draft posted on intranet site