



A Regional Forum for Oceania on Marine Managed Areas and World Heritage

**28 January – 2 February, 2007
Honolulu, Hawai'i**

Overview:

Oceania is an expansive geographic region dominated by an ocean that covers over one-third of the surface of the earth. This region is larger than the total land area of the entire world and is comprised of numerous island groups collectively referred to as Melanesia, Micronesia, Polynesia, and Australia. Oceania is significant for its vast marine resources and biological and cultural heritage. Protection of marine resources and associated habitats in this region is critically important to conservation of marine biodiversity and ecological processes, as well as the overall health of these ecosystems.

Forum Goal:

Build local and regional pride across Oceania while enhancing natural and cultural heritage through information sharing, relationship building, and adaptive use of management tools regarding marine managed areas.

Forum Objectives:

- highlight current efforts to protect important marine areas in Oceania;
- share and expand technical expertise among managers, community leaders and indigenous practitioners;
- recognize and strengthen leadership capacity;
- develop a shared and informed understanding of attempts to balance the effects of capitalization/westernization with maintaining a traditional way of life in Oceania, particularly with respect to customary marine management practices;
- increase public awareness of the protection and conservation of important near-shore ecosystems within Oceania
- build upon established marine managed area networks across Oceania, and collaborate with ongoing efforts of other organizations such as the South Pacific Regional Environmental Program, the Secretariat of the Pacific Community, the International Marine Protected Areas Congress, the U.S. Coral Reef Task Force and All Islands Coral Reef Initiative; the Pacific Islands Marine Protected Area Community, and UNESCO's World Heritage Pacific 2009 Program;
- increase understanding of UNESCO's World Heritage site nomination process and use of the World Heritage Convention as a marine conservation tool in the Oceania.

World Heritage:

Several of the Pacific states have joined the World Heritage Convention only recently and therefore have few sites inscribed on the World Heritage List. Of the 184 natural World Heritage sites currently listed, only 30 sites have marine protected areas associated with them, and even less are predominantly nominated for their marine features alone. The Solomon Islands (East Rennell) is currently the only Pacific Island state that has a World Heritage site with some marine features.

The World Heritage Committee, the governing body for the World Heritage Convention, has recognized the under-representation of marine sites on the World Heritage List and has mandated its secretariat, the World Heritage Centre, to promote a better representation of both marine sites and sites from the Pacific on the World Heritage List. This regional training meeting in the Pacific is responding to this need.

Work Session Topics:

Oceania is home to numerous marine biodiversity 'hotspots' and harbors an abundance of endemic species. The rich cultural biodiversity of the region often incorporates traditional practices regarding the use and conservation of marine resources. A lack of funding for conservation issues, difficulties in enforcement, and information limitations all act to hinder marine conservation efforts in Oceania. In an attempt to address these issues and increase awareness of marine managed area representation, including World Heritage designations, the following topics have been selected as potential work sessions for the Forum:

- Science: An Integral Element of Effective Management
- Customary Marine Management Practices in Oceania
- Marine Managed Area Representation
- Remote Surveillance and Enforcement
- Conservation Finance
- Using international designations such as World Heritage to add value and benefits to Marine Managed Areas

Expected Outputs:

- Increased participant awareness of ongoing efforts to protect Oceania's unique marine areas
- Leadership and partnership (network) capacities in Oceania recognized and enhanced
- Technical expertise shared among managers, community leaders and indigenous practitioners in areas such as conservation finance, remote surveillance, science and research, customary marine management practices, and marine managed area representation
- Public awareness and strategic action for marine conservation and management issues in Oceania increased through issuance of an Oceania Forum communiqué
- Representatives of Oceania have increased knowledge and understanding of UNESCO's World Heritage site nomination process and the various methods that the World Heritage Convention can be used as a tool to promote marine conservation in the Pacific

Approximately 40 participants from Oceania will be invited to actively participate in the Forum. By bringing key people together from Pacific government agencies, non-government organizations, cultural leaders, and international organizations active in marine protection, the Forum will allow all parties to focus on common issues and to enhance our collective capacity to effectively care for our marine resources and important near-shore areas. It will also provide an opportunity to broaden the involvement of the international community in our efforts to effectively conserve and manage our marine resources. Finally, the Forum will present a regional and global context to better understand the significance of traditional knowledge in managing marine areas, the need for scientific and cultural research and the development of management models that could be applied across the Pacific and beyond.

Our Sea of Islands is an international forum that is being organized as a joint effort by the U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and UNESCO World Heritage Centre and other regional partners and non-governmental organizations.