



# FSM Ridge to Reef (R2R) Project Newsletter

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In February 2021, the FSM Ridge to Reef (R2R) project, through the Kosrae Island Resource Management Authority (KIRMA), completed its wetland rehabilitation activities, covering approximately 7.2 ha of wetlands in 9 different sites in Kosrae. Over 300 hundred community members participated in the restoration activities, 114 of which were women and 190 were men.

The target for each site was to clean river channels by removing debris in the water, and clear at least 2.5 meters from the channels for planting of 100 plant species per site for food security and soil stability. Targets were met, with more than 900 different plants species including *coconucifera*, *artocarpusaltilis*, *pendanus* species, *calophylluminophillun*, *neubergiacelebica*, *horsieldianunu*, *inocarpusfagifer* and *barringtoniaracemosa* planted in 9 different sites covering approximately 72,000 sq. meters or 7.2 hectares of wetlands.

The success of the rehabilitation project was possible through support from community, State and National partners. Next steps will include quarterly monitoring of the rehabilitated sites by the R2R team in Kosrae and KIRMA's Division of Forestry and Wildlife, and continued awareness within the communities to maintain the sustainability of the rehabilitated areas.

### *Pohnpei State R2R team participates in 2<sup>nd</sup> Mangrove Conference*



**“Protect our Home, from Land to SEA”**

On March 17-18, 2021, Pohnpei State's network of natural resource management hosted the 2<sup>nd</sup> Mangrove Conference at the Our Lady of Mercy Catholic Mission. Participants included key stakeholders representing the executive and legislative branches of National, State and Local Governments. Non-Government Organizations (NGOs), village chiefs, community members and church groups also attended the meeting. The 2-day conference provided the opportunity for stakeholders to revisit and gain broader understanding of the current status of mangrove ecosystems in Pohnpei through presentations from research and surveys recently conducted around Pohnpei. These studies include expert endeavors conducted by State Government and NGOs in close collaboration with the United States Forest Service, United States Geological Survey and regional academic institutions. Additionally, management systems such as those required for earth moving, mining and extraction of mangrove resources were also revisited.

During the conference, the participants reviewed and addressed current gaps in mangrove management

measures. Among the many positive discussions, the group identified the need to develop a management plan in order to effectively address existing issues associated with mangrove forests and ecosystems. Discussions on management plan development and the desired contents were covered on the second day of the conference. Facilitators of the conference acknowledged the need to continue working with local jurisdictions (i.e. Municipal Governments) to develop sound management plans and advance engagements with policy makers to improve existing laws and regulations governing mangrove management.

The conference was made possible through collaborative efforts among a team from the State Department of Resources and Development, Environmental Protection Agency, Micronesia Conservation Trust and Conservation Society of Pohnpei. The conference facilitated a fruitful dialogue to motivate stakeholders to strengthen coordination and partnership to improve Pohnpei's vital coastal shield.

## ***FSM R2R Project pays courtesy visit to Yap's Traditional Leaders***

Yap R2R team and its partners, inclusive of the Protected Area Network (PAN) and the Office of Planning and Budget (Yap State Government's focal point for climate change related activities), paid a courtesy visit to the Council of *Pilung* (COP) on February 26, 2021, and to the Council of *Tamol* (COT) on March 15, 2021. Yap State's unique government setup includes a fourth branch – two councils of traditional chiefs, COP comprised of chiefs of the municipalities on Yap proper and COT comprised of neighboring islands' chiefs. The two Councils of chiefs promote and preserve the traditions and customs of the people of Yap – *Waab*. Given that majority of the State's natural resources are culturally tenured, it was only fitting that R2R and its State partners kept the traditional chiefs abreast of the work being done in their communities.

During the courtesy visits, two activities were particularly brought to the Councils' attention: the revival of the Yap's Environmental Stewardship Consortium (ESC), and the launch of the Yap PAN. Created back in 1999 through a mandate of the COP, the ESC was tasked to promote better stewardship of Yap. The group sought to safeguard Yap's tradition, history, culture, communities, and environment, while simultaneously encompassing sustainable economic development. It was made up of municipal representatives and various NGO's and gov't agencies that had a stake in the State's natural resources. Yap's ESC was notably involved in developing the 1<sup>st</sup> Yap Biodiversity Strategic Action Plan (YBSAP). Over the years as members changed, the ESC became inactive. Realizing the important role that ESC played for the island, Yap State indicated in its updated "Yap Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan 2018-2023" to revive the ESC so that it may resume the critical functions

it once performed. R2R project is committed to support Yap State in its effort to support the ESC to work as the State's counterpart to the President's Council on Climate Change and Sustainable Development, as indicated in FSM's National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP).

Furthermore, R2R is committed to help set the groundwork for Yap PAN, currently in its early years, and also to ensure a smooth flow of the work when the Project ends. The Project is supporting the update of management plans of current protected areas (PA) with the hope to fast track these PA's in gaining membership into the statewide protected area network. The project is also assisting PAN in its official launch starting with awareness - informing Yap communities of the criteria their PA's must meet and the process to follow in order to be admitted to the network and the benefits their sites may reap from being members. Additionally, implementing these activities can help boost up the scores of these PAs, using GEF's Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool (METT).

R2R Project and its State partners during the courtesy visits, solicited the support of both Councils with the revival of Yap's ESC and launching of Yap PAN. COP and COT expressed their gratitude to R2R Project and its Partner's for the visit and welcomed the opportunity for future updates.

Yap R2R and PAN representatives is highly appreciative of the State's traditional leaders and look forward to continued collaboration. Lastly, they thank Victor Bamog Director of OPB – for his tireless work in actively supporting R2R and PAN activities in Yap.

**“Protect our Home, from Land to SEA”**

## ***FSM R2R Project Convenes Technical Advisory Meetings for FY2021***



On February 11, 2021, the Chuuk Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) held a meeting at the L5 hotel to provide key updates to the advisory group on the R2R project's 2021 activities, and review pending activities from 2020 which were impacted by COVID-19. This long overdue meeting came after a year without meetings due to State priorities shifting towards COVID-19 measures. Participants include the Chairman of the TAC and Director of the Chuuk State Department of Marine Resources (DMR), Mr. Curtis Graham, and other key members of the TAC *i.e.* Dr. Lolita Ragus, Researcher from the College of Micronesia's Cooperative Research Extension (CRE) – Chuuk Campus, Senator Wisney Nakayama, Chuuk State Legislature (CSL) Mr. Bradford Mori, Acting Director of Chuuk Environmental Protection Agency (CEPA) and the R2R staff based in Chuuk.

During the meeting, the participants reviewed and discussed the activities for FY21, timelines, lead implementing entities and support roles to clarify roles and responsibilities. The group also reviewed the 2020 Annual Work Plan (AWP) to highlight completed activities and discuss ways forward for activities pending due to COVID-19 travel and gathering restrictions.

One highlight was the project's monitoring trips to the Soponoch Protected Area in 2020, conducted by R2R's PA Rangers, an effort aimed to execute more regular monitoring and surveillance of the MPA. As part of their monitoring, the R2R PA Rangers deployed buoys to delineate the sea cucumber and giant clam farms in the PA, cleared invasive species around the island, collected trash and planted an additional 158 sea cucumbers and 37 giant clams. Chuuk's Protected Area Network (PAN) Coordinator, who also participated in the meeting, also highlighted joint efforts and progress made so far with regards to the Chuuk PAN.

As a way forward, the R2R State Coordinator, Ms. Kriskitina Kanemoto-Marar, proposed a schedule of meetings with lead agencies to discuss plans and actions going forward for the project's FY21 activities.

The R2R project acknowledges the Chuuk TAC for always being instrumental in supporting the project and PAN efforts.

## ***R2R Partners Launch Dedication and Signing Ceremony of the Kuplu Mangrove Reserve Management Plan***

On March 29, 2021, a ceremony was held Malem to celebrate the endorsement of the Kuplu Mangrove Reserve (KMR) management plan. More than 50 representatives from government agencies, NGOs and the community participated in the event.

The Kuplu Mangrove Reserve Landowners Association (KMRLA) initially showed interest in designating the site as a protected area back in 2019. Since then, Kosrae Conservation and Safety Organization (KCSO), with support from KIRMA, the R2R Project, Department of Resources and Economic Affairs (DREA), Kosrae PAN and the AF Project, began working with KRLA to develop a management plan for KMR.

In his opening remarks to the participants, the Mayor of Malem, the Honorable Ruben Charley, acknowledged the new mangrove reserve by emphasizing the social, economic and ecological benefits of protecting the area of quote *"mangrove forests help filter silt and sedimentation, prevent flooding, and are a main source of livelihood that*

*people depend on for food, construction, firewood and medicinal use."*



This key milestone signifies the community's support and endorsement of KMR as a PA site. The next course of action will be to officially recognize the community endorsed PA under the Kosrae State Protected Area Act of 2010.

***"Protect our Home, from Land to SEA"***

## *Plans Underway for Demarcation of MPAs in Pohnpei*



The Pohnpei State Department of Resources and Development (R&D) has identified the need to demarcate MPAs around the island of Pohnpei as a priority for the FSM R2R project. Since January 2021, the Pohnpei State R2R team has held multiple meetings with the Director of State Department of R&D, Seaport Manager of Pohnpei Port Authority (PPA), representatives of Sokehs Marine Advisory Council (locally known as Sokehs Meninkatengensed), and other relevant Government and NGO partners to finalize plans to begin MPA demarcation around Pohnpei.

The FSM R2R project, in its effort to improve and enhance management effectiveness of PAs across the FSM, will be collaborating with State R&D, the Sokehs Meninkatengensed, the Conservation Society of Pohnpei (CSP), PPA and other relevant partners to physically demarcate MPAs around Pohnpei. Physical demarcation of PAs is crucial in ensuring that boundaries of PAs are known to both management authorities and local residents/neighborhood users to prevent illegal activities such as fishing, poaching, etc.

Back in February 2021, a ground-truthing mission to validate the number of markers needed to fully demarcate the MPAs was carried out by State R&D and CSP. The team aims to begin the demarcation work beginning April 2021.

## *The FSM R2R Project Team Welcomes New Additions*



Mr. **Akim Moses**, from the island of Uman, joined the R2R project in February 2021 as the third PA Ranger for the R2R project in Chuuk. Prior to joining the R2R project, Mr. Moses served as a conservation officer for the Kuop Marine Protected Area where he helped safeguard

the biodiversity of the MPA by preventing violators from hunting, fishing and boating within the protected areas



Mr. **Taitvin A. Urien**, also from the island of Uman, joined the R2R project in February 2021 as the fourth PA Ranger for Chuuk State. Prior to joining R2R, Mr. Urien participated in the construction of the guardhouse for the Kuop MPA, and later became a conservation officer where his

primary role was to protect, manage and enforce the management regulations of the MPA.

The two PA Rangers are currently based at DMR, and are responsible for supporting the R2R project in Chuuk with implementation of PA activities, including monitoring and enforcement of laws and regulations for protected areas in Chuuk.

## *For more information on the FSM R2R Project, please contact:*

**Project Manager**, Rosalinda Yatilman,  
[rosalinda.yatilman@decem.gov.fm](mailto:rosalinda.yatilman@decem.gov.fm) Tel: +691 320-8815

**National Technical Coordinator**, Rachael Nash  
[nash.fsmr2r@gmail.com](mailto:nash.fsmr2r@gmail.com) Tel: +691 950-8704

**Financial Administrator**, Fritzgerald Weilbacher  
[fritzweilbacher@gmail.com](mailto:fritzweilbacher@gmail.com) Tel: +691320-8815

**Kosrae State Coordinator**, Marston Luckymis,  
[mluckymis@gmail.com](mailto:mluckymis@gmail.com); Tel: +691 370-3646

**Pohnpei State Coordinator**, Jorg Anson,  
[jorgyson@gmail.com](mailto:jorgyson@gmail.com) Tel: +691 320-1780

**Chuuk State Coordinator**, Kriskitina K. Marar,

[krizk66@gmail.com](mailto:krizk66@gmail.com) Tel: +691 330-6729

**Yap State Coordinator**, Debra Laan  
[debra.laan@gmail.com](mailto:debra.laan@gmail.com) Tel: +691 350-2113

**Kosrae State Technical Officer**, Tamae Waguk  
[Kosraer2rto@gmail.com](mailto:Kosraer2rto@gmail.com) Tel: +691 370-3646

**Pohnpei State Technical Officer**, Gorden K. Lebehn  
[kodenlebehn@gmail.com](mailto:kodenlebehn@gmail.com) Tel: 691 320-8151

**Chuuk State Technical Officer**, Francis Stephen  
[francistephen543@gmail.com](mailto:francistephen543@gmail.com) Tel: 691 330 6729

**Yap State Technical Officer**, Elijah Tarofalmaal  
[r2ryapto@gmail.com](mailto:r2ryapto@gmail.com) Tel: 691 350 2350

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