



Note No: 073/MS/2012

The Ministry of State of the Republic of Palau presents its compliments to the UNEP Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity and with reference to SCBD/STTM/SBG/lj/78771, dated 26 January 2012, has the honor to formally submit the attached Palau Protected Areas Action Plan for your reference and appropriate action.

The Ministry further has the honor to officially endorse the said Action Plan and requests the latter's favorable support and consideration.

The Ministry of State of the Republic of Palau avails itself of this opportunity to renew to the UNEP Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity the assurances of its highest consideration.

The National Capitol, REPUBLIC OF PALAU

27 February 2012



ACTION PLAN FOR PoWPA and Target 11

1. Basic Information

Country name: **Palau**

PoWPA Focal Point: **Mr. Joseph Aitaro**

Protected Areas Network Coordinator

Ministry of Natural Resources, Environment & Tourism

Lead implementing agency: Protected Areas Network, Ministry of Natural Resources, Environment & Tourism

Multi-stakeholder Committee: Yes

Total country area:

% terrestrial area protected:

% territorial waters protected:

Site name	Nearshore marine protected (includes mangrove)	Terrestrial protected
Existing PAN Sites	km2	
Ebiil, Ngarchelong	19.11	0.0
Olsolkesol, Ngiwal	1.00	1.0
Ongedechuul SCA, Ngardmau	3.55	6.4
Ngardok Nature Reserve, Melekeok	0	
Mesekelat, Ngchesar	0	0.
Helen Reef	162.7	0.
Ngerderrar, Aimeliik	0	3.
Kerradel Network, Ngaraard	4.91	3.1
Ngelukes, Ngchesar	0.5	
Medal Ngediuiul Conservation Area, Airai	3.18	
Total Area - PAN Sites	194.95	20.2

Total Marine or Terrestrial Area - Palau	2580.00	460.0
% Protected - Current	7.56%	4.39%
PROGRESS towards MC goal (30% / 20%)	25.19%	21.97%
Upcoming PAN Sites (by December 2011)		
Ngerukewid Islands Wildlife Preserve, Koror	8	
Ngerumekaol Conservation Area, Koror	3.5	
Ngeruangel, Kayangel	30	
Total Area - Expected PAN Sites	41.50	8.0
Total Marine or Terrestrial Area - Palau	2580.00	460.0
% protected - Expected	1.61%	1.74%
Total protected (Current + Expected) %	9.16%	6.13%
EXPECTED PROGRESS towards MC goal (30% / 20%)	30.55%	30.66%

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2. Overview of national protected area system

Palau is located approximately 800 km east of the Philippines, and consists of a series of islands ~459 km² in total size. Palau's coral reefs are considered to be one of the "Seven Underwater Wonders of the World." Located on the north-eastern margin of the "coral triangle," Palau's coral reefs have both high species diversity and high habitat diversity. Palau's reefs contain more than 350 species of hard corals, 200 species of soft corals, 300 species of sponges, 1,300 species of reef fish, and endangered species such as the dugong, saltwater crocodile, sea turtles, and giant clams. In addition to Palau's diverse marine resources, it has the highest terrestrial biodiversity of all countries in Micronesia.

In November 2003, the Protected Areas Network Act (PAN Act) was passed by the Palau National Congress. This landmark piece of legislation provides a framework for Palau's national and state governments to collaborate to establish a nationwide network of terrestrial and marine protected areas with the aim of protecting the biodiversity and natural resources of value to future social, cultural, economic, and environmental stability of Palau. The primary goal of this project is to assist in this process using the following ecoregional assessment methodology:

- Identify biodiversity targets (species to communities);
- Map occurrences/distributions of biodiversity targets and maintain a database of information relevant to each target;
- Identify conservation goals for each biodiversity target;
- Identify areas of high biodiversity value (e.g., areas that support multiple targets, rare species, and/or help maintain ecosystem processes);
- Analyze the threats and causes of high biodiversity areas and targets.

As of 2011, there are 5 PAN sites, including the following:

- Three terrestrial sites:
 - Ngardok Nature Reserve, the largest freshwater lake in Micronesia in the State of Melekeok
 - Mesekelat Conservation Area in the State of Ngchesar
 - Ngerbekuu Nature Reserve and Ngemai Conservation Area, an integrated watershed and coastal marine site
- Two marine sites:
 - Ebiil Conservation Area, a grouper aggregation site
 - Helen Reef Atoll, largest atoll in Palau

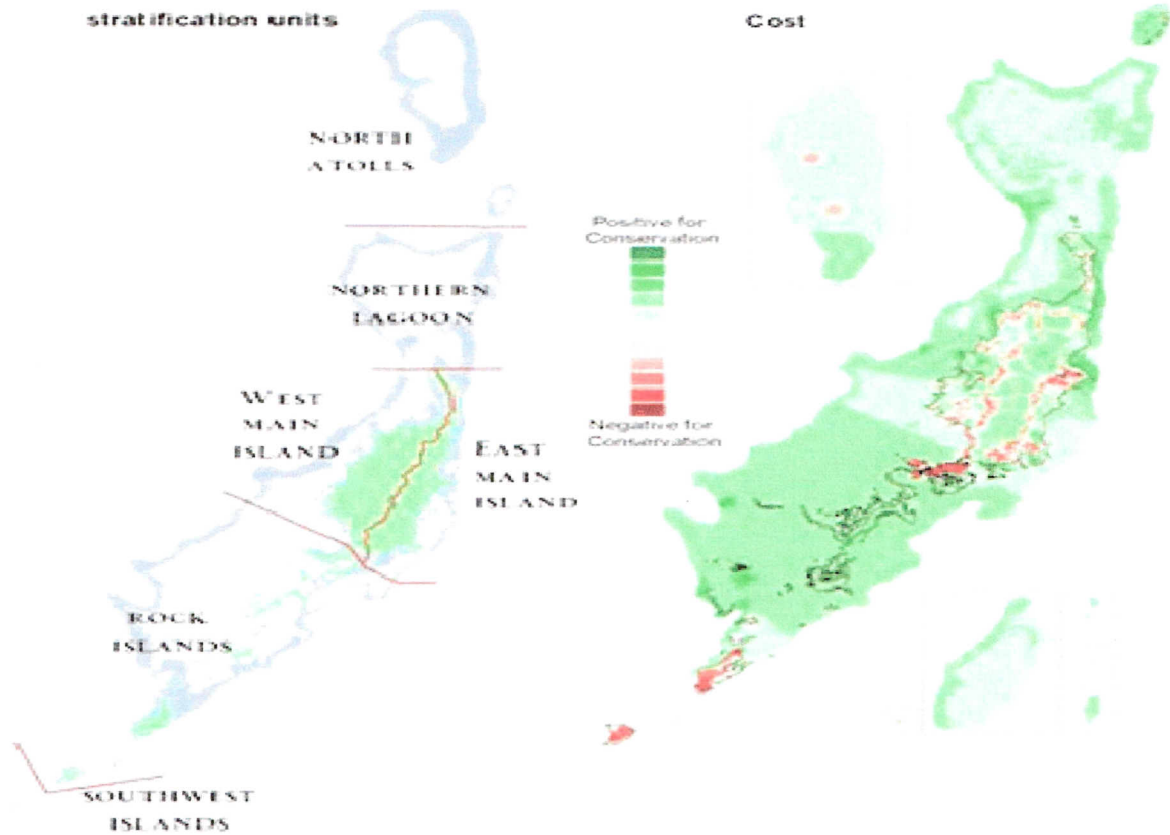
Four other sites are in the process of becoming PAN sites (Aimeliik, Ngardmau, Ngaraard and Airai). These sites have submitted their completed application to the PAN Office. The PAN Office through the PAN Technical Committee will review the application against the PAN ecological criteria and will make recommendations as to whether accept or deny the application.

In May 2008 President Remengesau signed the revised PAN Act, which includes the establishment of a non-government corporation, the PANF, and the creation of a Green Fee (a \$15 fee collected from visitors to Palau upon departure from the airport). This fee is intended to be used for management of PAN sites (a site that becomes part of the protected areas network by meeting certain ecological criteria). To date, close to \$2M dollars have been collected since implementation of the green fee. The PAN Fund has been incorporated and all legal paper works finalized. The membership of the Board include Minister of Finance, Minister of Natural Resource Environment and Tourism, one representative each from The Nature Conservancy and Conservation International, and five appointed members that require confirmation from the Palau Senate. The five appointed members are now awaiting confirmation.

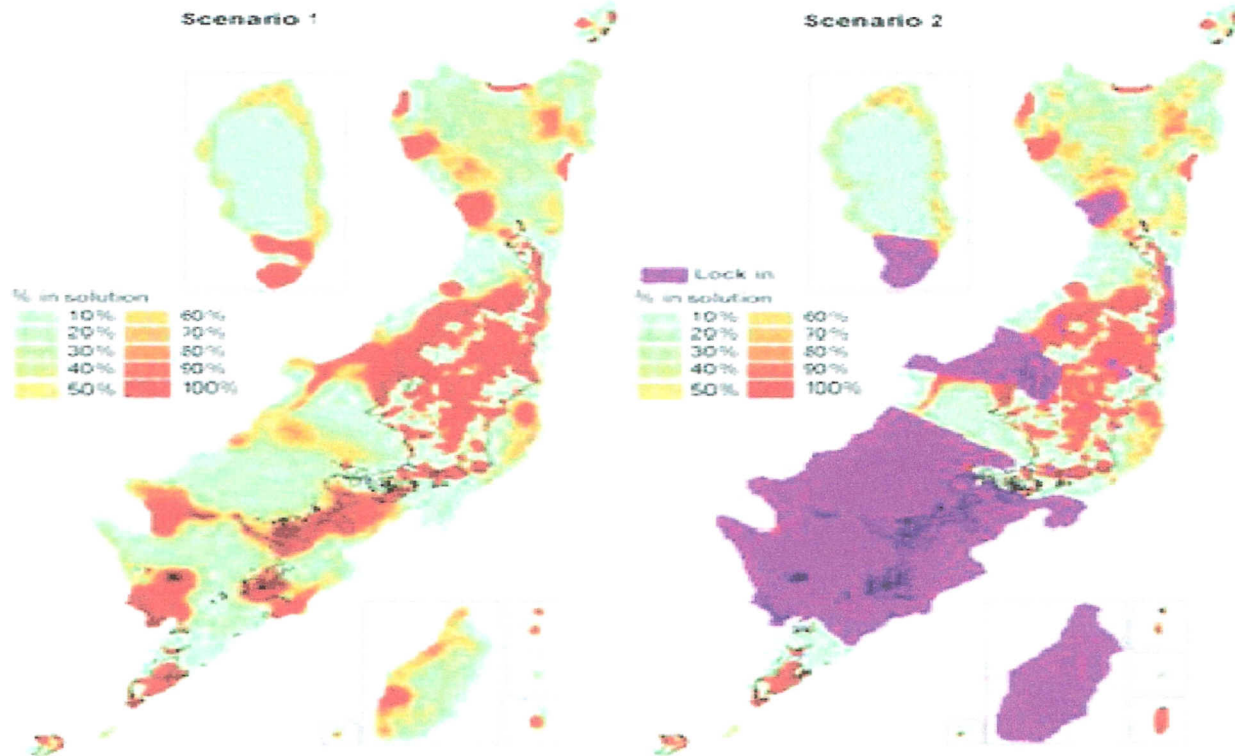
Threats

The immediate threats to Palau's biodiversity result from the inappropriate use of natural resources due to tourism activities, development, population growth, and economic development associated with maintaining a high standard of living. Similar to other areas within Micronesia, climate-induced coral bleaching is an ongoing threat. Having previously suffered high levels of coral bleaching and mortality following the 1998 El Niño event, the predicted increase of El Niño associated bleaching events could create even greater devastation to this area. Despite these threats, Palau's landscapes and seascapes remain relatively intact and provide options for protected area conservation.

3. Gap analysis and national targets for Target 11.



When designing the Protected Areas Network, The Nature Conservancy's model of incorporating effective management, representation and replication, critical areas, and connectivity was used. The Ecoregional Assessment of Palau occurred in multiple steps. First, forty-one conservation targets were selected at a workshop in Palau in 2002. Twenty-four of these targets were selected for the initial analysis using the Spatial Portfolio Optimization Tool (SPOT), which produced a variety of portfolios representing different protected area scenarios. Based on the SPOT analysis, it was determined that a variety of scenarios could accomplish protection goals; however, more work was needed to improve the quality of the data, and to complete the mapping of missing targets. Therefore, the second phase of planning focused on using the **MARXAN** tool.



Two workshops in May of 2006 set out to develop a set of protected area design principles, stratification, conservation targets and goals and to provide a range of Protected Areas Network (PAN) scenarios for review by workshop participants. Multiple PAN variables were considered, including size, landscape context, current condition, threats, costs, and conservation goals. MARXAN was exceptionally useful in this process, as it is designed to help synthesize and automate the selection process by integrating both biodiversity and socio-economic criterion that often conflict. Specifically, MARXAN attempts to identify scenarios that meet conservation goals, with minimal impact on socioeconomic values.

As part of the May 2006 workshops, a GAP analysis was conducted by overlaying the existing protected areas on top of Scenario 1, the unconstrained option of the MARXAN analysis. Scenario 2 shows the priority areas which are not part of the existing protected areas in red.

Based on the gapa analysis realistic national targets for Palau for Target 11 are same as those of the **Micronesia Challenge** that aims to have each country within Micronesia conserve 30% of near shore environments, and 20% of terrestrial environments, by the year 2020.

4. Status of Key PoWPA Actions¹.

PoWPA Action	Progress in completing these assessments in a scale of 0-4 (0- no progress; 1- planning phase; 2-initial phase; 3 – substantial progress; 4- nearly or fully completed

¹ From the reporting framework of 2009. This has to be updated by the POWPA FP

Ecological gap assessment	4
Integration and connectivity	1
Transboundary protected areas	0
Site based PA planning and management	2
Assessment of threats	2
Equitable sharing of costs and benefits	2
Various governance types	4
Participation	2
Policy environment	3
Values	0
Capacity needs	1
Relevant and appropriate technologies	1
Finance needs and development of sustainable finance plans	4
Public awareness and communication campaign	3
Developing minimum standards	2
Management effectiveness	2
Monitoring coverage, status and trends	2
Research needs	1

5. Prioritization and Action plan for PoWPA and for achieving Target 11²

Action	Priority	Timeline	Budget
Integration of protected areas into wider land and seascapes to showcase mainstreaming of biodiversity	x	2015	\$US75,000.00

² Activities included are from COP 10 decision and also from PoWPA goals. These are indicative only, PoWPA FPs are required to include as per their priorities based on ground realities

with other sectors and ecosystem based approaches to adaptation to climate change adaptation and leading to mitigation through carbon sequestration			
Institutionalize management effectiveness assessment towards assessing 60% of the total areas by 2015 and ensure that the results of the assessments are implemented;	x	2015	\$US150,000.00
Diversification of governance types and recognition of ICCAs including through acknowledgement in national legislation or other effective means, formal inclusion in the national systems,	Done		
Development and implementation of sustainable finance plans for protected area systems.	Done		
Assessing the values and contribution of protected areas to the national and local economies and to achieving MDGs	x	2015	\$US50,000.00