

THE BUBU SHELL

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Wiawi plans for a Sustainable Future



Chief Timothy Nihapi (left) discussing Wiawi's marine conservation area boundaries with Warakar Ser

WTEC QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

THE BUBU SHELL CONTRIBUTIONS

The Bubu Shell is a publication for WTEC members and friends. It provides a chance to share your information, experience and conservation stories with the rest of us. WTEC intends to publish the newsletter on a quarterly basis (i.e. end of the months of January, April, July and October). Therefore, we would very much like some contributions or writing from our members and friends. Please forward your contribution for The Bubu Shell to us by post, fax or email - to arrive on or around the 1st day of the month of publication.

The Nabi Conservation Area (NCA) and community of Wiawi in Northwest Malekula now have a plan of action for their village and conservation area thanks to a 4-day workshop facilitated by WTEC in February 2005.

The workshop encouraged the community to define their own challenges and solutions and begin addressing issues of sustainability linked to the conservation area and ultimately their needs and aspirations.

NCA covers over 1,000 hectares of mainly forested land and a long stretch of coastal marine area. The Nihapi brothers, Chief Timothy and Konel, initiated the NCA in 1995 with assistance from a PhD student with the Department of Forestry. Despite the difficulties of geographical isolation and little outside support, they have kept the

project alive for ten years and are very keen to move forward with their plans.

Using different participatory tools and techniques, the workshop gave the community members an opportunity to explore issues relating to land and resource use, population growth, income generation, health, communication and so on. The workshop had been preceded by a week of environmental surveys and monitoring carried out by the WTEC team. This provided basic land use and boundary maps for the community to consider.

The resulting plan lays the foundations for the development of a longer-term management plan that will help meet their current and future needs through sound community-based environmental stewardship.

It is vital that rural communities across Vanuatu begin to assess where they are heading, particularly in terms of population growth and how it will affect the availability of land and natural resources for the next generation. Planning and action is the key to avoiding environmental degradation and related hardships.

For WTEC members, a lack of planning can result in conservation projects being un-

dermined by pressures for land and resources in the surrounding areas, not to mention a raft of other potential pitfalls. It is therefore a priority for WTEC to help members help themselves in addressing these issues.

WTEC will be returning to Wiawi shortly to support the development of a fully fledged management plan and provide some practical training on how to reduce pressures on land and resources.

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WTEC Background and Objectives

The plan to form a locally-based NGO to look after the needs and interests of rural conservation projects was first formulated during a workshop for community-based conservation areas organized by VPAI in 1999.

As enshrined in its constitution, its mission is the care and protection of Vanuatu's natural environment, recognising the importance for all forms of life, for present and future generations and in the sustainable development of the country.

WTEC's approach is people centred. Its main focal area is delivering technical support and other services needed by rural communities, families and individuals directly involved in the

conservation or protection of Vanuatu's wildlife and ecosystems and/or the sustainable management of natural resources. WTEC also has an education programme in schools, is engaged in promoting sustainable income generation (particularly from low-impact tourism) and is involved in species specific conservation and research that is in line with national and provincial conservation priorities.

The primary objectives of the WTEC as can be found in its Constitution are:

1. To facilitate mutual support and co-operation between environmental initiatives and projects through the membership of the Wantok Environment Centre.

2. To encourage and support environmental initiatives and projects consistent with the goal of the organisation, especially those being undertaken by individuals and communities in rural areas.
3. To facilitate better co-ordination and improved co-operation between government and non-government organisations involved in environmental matters, particularly in delivering environmental awareness and support at the community level.
4. To work with schools and other learning institutions to stimulate interest in Vanuatu's environment and increase practical skills and experience in environmental subjects.
5. To facilitate the use of appropriate

technologies that reduces human impact on the environment.

6. To encourage and support income-generating activities that are sustainable and have a low social and environmental impact.
7. To encourage and support the application of traditional knowledge and practices in the management and conservation of natural resources in Vanuatu.
8. To raise awareness of environment issues of importance to Ni-Vanuatu and provide follow-up and support as and when appropriate.

In March 2004 Wantok Environment Centre (WTEC) was incorporated in Vanuatu as a charitable association.

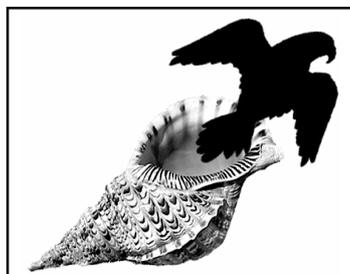
WTEC signs MOU with Sanma Province

On 21 January 2005, a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was signed between WTEC (by Director, Mr Roy Hills) and Sanma Provincial Council (by Secretary-General, Mr Joel Path). The MOU provides a framework for cooperation and collaboration between the two parties in the area of sustainable development and biodiversity conservation within the province. The MOU refers to specific areas of mutual interest where WTEC and Sanma Province can work together, share information and resources to enhance environmental outcomes. The MOU reflects the development of a continuing and growing relationship for a three year period after which time the MOU can be reviewed and/or amended to respond to the changing needs, policy, capacity and responsibilities of either party.

"An agreement of this nature recognises that there is ever increasing devolution and responsibility for provincial councils within Vanuatu in relation to social, economic and envi-

ronmental issues working at the community level" says WTEC's Legal Advisor (Donna Llewellyn).

WTEC is presently consulting with both the Vanuatu Environment Unit in Port Vila and the Malampa Provincial Council - to establish MOU's on similar terms to recognise and develop working relationships for the benefit of its members and ultimately for improved environmental outcomes.



WTEC logo. Bubu shell symbolizes custom and tradition, instrument of calling people together. Bird symbolizes carrier of environmental message out to public.

Coconut Crab Taskforce Update

The Sanma Coconut Crab Taskforce has been busy continuing efforts with community awareness meetings in targeted areas around the province. During March and April, visits by the Taskforce team (Department of Fisheries, Department of Forestry, Sanma Province and WTEC) have been made to two communities on Tutuba Island and to the villages of Natawa, Hog Harbour and Matantas.

The community awareness was aimed at reinforcing the message about the ban season until 2007 - especially because the Taskforce has received some formal complaints about breaches of the ban season regulations from these areas. As well, one of the activities in the awareness workshop was a debate which asked participants to consider, state their position and argue for an extension of the ban season. Overall, the participants so far have given a strong indication that they would like to see the

ban season extended beyond 2007. The main reasons given were that people felt that the coconut crab populations in their area had not yet improved to sustainable levels; and because it takes 10 years for a crab to reach the legal size of 9cm, then the 3 year ban is not long enough for crabs to mature or for females to release large quantities of eggs for future stocks.

The Taskforce must now use its best efforts to secure further funds to continue its work. The Taskforce intends to focus on wider community awareness (including commercial stakeholders) as well as the need to undertake scientific surveying and monitoring that will measure the effectiveness of the ban season. Survey work may provide the support and sound evidence for a continuation of the ban season to achieve long term sustainability of this important species for the province and Vanuatu as a whole.

Sunday, 5 June 2005 will be **WORLD ENVIRONMENT DAY**. This is a good chance for our members and friends to do something special on this day to celebrate and educate others about the environment and the conservation efforts in your particular area.

FOUR MARINE SURVEYS - MALEKULA



Jeana Goddard (left) discusses marine survey results with Wiawi community members

Written by Jeana Goddard

During the month of February, I visited four villages around northern Malekula to survey their marine resources.

The four villages visited were Wiawi, Leviamp I, and Leviamp II on Northwest Malekula, and Uri Island off of the east coast of Malekula. Wiawi, Leviamp II, and Uri each have a marine conservation area in different stages of development. Wiawi's and Uri's conservation areas (or 'Reserves' as they are called in Uri) are several years old, have been zoned, and have known and established rules. Leviamp II's conservation area is less than a year old and has a simple set of conservation rules that the owner has expressed an interest in developing into a more comprehensive management plan. The final site assessed, Leviamp I, has since established a marine protected area after attending a WTEC workshop on marine conservation in April 2005.

In both Wiawi and Uri Island, the current conservation initiatives were started in the 1990's with the needs of each village in mind. In Wiawi, shell collection

is banned every day of the week and fishing is banned all days except Friday (these rules reflect the SDA influence in the village). In Uri, several areas have been totally blocked for all fishing and shell collection at all times. These areas are far enough from the main village and small enough to not infringe on the sustainable dependence on marine resources. Additionally, a cyclic 'take' system has been set up so that certain kinds of marine organisms are taken only at certain times of the year. In my view, so long as appropriate education and awareness is provided to the villagers and surrounding communities, then these two systems of management have very good potential for the future.

Leviamp II's management plan is simple and straightforward. Due to Leviamp II's proximity to Leviamp I, the social dynamics of both villages must be taken into account in any conservation development. As a general rule, any community involved in marine conservation should consider the following suggestions for reducing the negative impact of people on

the marine environment:

- Ban or limit the use of nets, spear-guns, and night-fishing;
- Ban too-small hooks and/or set minimum hook size;
- Implement zoning of fully-closed, partially-closed, and fully-open areas;
- Limit use of marine resources by outsiders;
- Properly mark boundaries of the marine conservation areas or zones;
- Make annual education and awareness to villagers and surrounding communities regarding proper use of their marine resources; and
- Perform periodic (yearly or twice-yearly) monitoring of marine resources that can be compared from year to year.



A traditional cycad leaf marks the new marine protected area at Leviamp I

ENVIRONMENT NEWS

VANUATU

"Saving Nemo"

(www.abc.net.au/foreign)

One of the developing world's latest growth industries affecting Vanuatu's marine ecosystem is the harvesting of tropical fish from its fringing reefs for the aquarium trade. It is a trade accused of exploitation, over-fishing and corruption. A recent investigation by a journalist with Foreign Correspondent has uncovered some alarming facts about this activity. In one example, a company has collected up to S\$5,000 worth of fish in a single morning but the custom reef owner only received US\$120 per month for the right of unlimited access to that particular reef.

Tropical fish are worth their weight in gold, yet the government of Vanuatu also receives a pittance from the trade. For each exotic flame angel fish that sells for US\$80 in the USA or Australia – Vanuatu will receive just 24 cents. Furthermore, with removal of tropical fish from the delicate marine ecosystem, there are fears that the eating fish that people depend on for their food and survival – will also disappear. Marine biologists claim that the aquarium fish trade is having a significant impact on fish numbers, with a 50% reduction in tropical fish numbers on reefs that have been harvested.

PACIFIC

"Call for joint policing of Pacific fisheries"

(www.stuff.co.nz)

Fisheries officials in New Zealand and Australia are entering discussions about forming a regional body to police fisheries resources within the South Pacific. The main objectives of a regional organisation would be to promote good governance and sustainability of commercial fish stocks, and particularly to ensure compliance. However, tuna species would be excluded from the organisation's responsibility because tuna is already subject to other regional conventions for management.

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**ENVIRONMENT NEWS
CONTINUED...**

At a recent meeting of the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), a New Zealand official advised that there are threats posed by illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing which was undermining legitimate commercial operations in the Pacific region.

**INTERNATIONAL
"Experts warn ecosystem
changes will continue to
worsen"**

(www.millenniumassessment.org)
A landmark study (conducted by 1,300 experts from 95 countries) for which secretariat support is coordinated by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) has revealed that approximately 60% of the ecosystem services that support life on Earth – such as freshwater, capture fisheries, air and water regulation, and the regulation of regional climate, natural hazards and pests – are being degraded or used unsustainably; and that the consequences will get worse within the next 50 years.

There was enough evidence for the experts to warn that the ongoing degradation ecosystem services examined is increasing the likelihood of potentially abrupt changes to the environment that will seriously affect human well-being. This includes the emergence of new diseases, sudden changes in water quality, creation of dead zones in coastal areas, the collapse of fisheries, and shifts in regional climate. The study also reveals that it is the world's poorest people who will suffer most from ecosystem changes.

The Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr Kofi Annan, said at the launching of the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment Synthesis Report that the study

"... is an unprecedented contribution to our global mission for development, sustainability and peace... Only by understanding the environment and how it works, can we make the necessary decisions to protect it. Only by valuing all our precious natural and human resources can we hope to build a sustainable future."

NEW STAFF PROFILE

JEANNA GODDARD
(Marine Biologist)
In February, WTEC was pleased to welcome a new staff member. Jeanna is a Peace-Corp volunteer. The first 17 months of her posting was spent in Lamén Bay (Epi). She has now come to WTEC for the remainder of her two year posting to provide assistance with marine issues. Jeanna has conducted a number of marine surveys (including training local youth to conduct future surveys) and will also support WTEC and our members with marine education, awareness, advocacy and management planning for marine conservation.

**THANKS &
VISITORS**

Thank you to **Mr Neville Coleman and the Project Aware Foundation of Australia** - for the donation of books and resources for our Environment Resources Unit. As well, WTEC is very grateful for five school sets of books relating to the marine environment. These books have been donated to primary schools in Luganville.

In the past three months, WTEC has welcomed the following visitors into the office:
Ian and Katherine from Vanuatu Post Limited;
Ross Cassells, the Pacific Programme Manager for Volunteer Services Abroad New Zealand;
Halumi Kobayashi, the Aid Coordinator for Japanese International Cooperation Aid;
Russell Nari, Deputy Director of the Vanuatu Environment Unit along with a team of five French scientists visiting Santo with a presentation and scoping for the Santo 2006 Biodiversity Expedition; and
Paul Willis, the newly appointed New Zealand High Commissioner based in Port Vila.

WTEC MEMBERSHIP DRIVE

WTEC is a member based NGO. Individuals and organisations with keen interest in environmental work and resource use management are encouraged to join WTEC. We have the following membership categories:

Foundation Members: this category includes: (a) those individuals who have played an active role in the establishment of the organisation prior to its incorporation; (b) individuals who have worked as project officers or as full time volunteers or counterparts under the organisation for a period of more than one year in total and have demonstrated a strong commitment to realising the goal of the organisation. Members must accept the goal, objectives and principles of the organisation and act in a way that is consistent with the best interests of the organisation at all times. Membership be only terminated by a consensus vote of the Management Committee or by a letter of resignation. Members may be required to pay annual membership fee. Foundation members are voting members of the organisation.

Rural Conservation Initiatives: This category comprises of community-based initiatives or projects concerned with the sustainable use or conservation of natural resources or wildlife in Vanuatu. Members must agree with the goals, objectives and principles of the organisation to be eligible for membership and may be required to pay a membership fee set by the Management Committee. Associate Members are voting members of the organisation.

Conservation Members: individuals, representatives of Govt and NGOs, representatives of international organisations and other interested parties with an active interest in conservation or

environmental issues in Vanuatu. Must agree with the goals, objectives and principles of the organisation to be eligible for membership. Only members based in Vanuatu will have voting rights

Friends of WTEC: all other interested groups not covered by above categories, particularly those interested in contributing financially to the organisation. Members of this category may be subject to a membership fee and are non-voting members. For more information contact:

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EVENTS

In February 2005, Phyllis Maike participated and gave a presentation at the Climate Change Conference in Santo. WTEC officers were busy in the month of April 2005. Donna Llewellyn and Jeanna Goddard gave presentations and helped with a marine survey at a FSP Youth Workshop about marine conservation. A Community Conservation Workshop was held at Para Conservation Area on Aaraki Island. Follow up workshops and further survey work was conducted at Wiawi, Leviamp I and Leviamp II from 18 – 29 April.

WTEC has a busy time scheduled for the following months. Warakar Ser will conduct further survey work in South Santo. An Agro-forestry workshop will be held at Wiawi from 24-26 May. Jeanna will be visiting Ambae, Loru Protected Area and Vathe Conservation Area to provide assistance with marine issues. A tour to Ambrym with the protection of Namalao project is scheduled for late June. Unfortunately, we will see the departure of two of our volunteers - Jeanna will return to USA at the end of June and Donna will return to New Zealand at the end of July.