



VATU-I-RA COMMUNITY BULLETIN



Ni sa bula vinaka! Welcome to the twelfth edition of the VATU-I-RA COMMUNITY BULLETIN. The bulletin brings together news and results from ongoing activities by the Wildlife Conservation Society within the Vatu-i-Ra group.

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UPSCALING TO VATU-I-RA GROUP

WCS is pleased to announce that it has received funding from the MacArthur Foundation to work with the Kubulau Resource Management Committee (KRMC) to help initiate management efforts in adjacent Wainunu and Wailevu districts. WCS will be continuing to work closely with the communities of Kubulau to expand their excellent model of EBM implementation to other districts across the Vatu-I-Ra.

WCS will be looking to collaborate with other conservation partners, such as USP, Conservation International and the National Trust of Fiji who are already actively working with communities across the Vatu-i-Ra.

So, why is this ecoscape important? This extraordinary 20,000 square kilometer mosaic of

forests, mangroves, seagrass meadows, reefs, deep channels, and seamounts is one of the Pacific's last great wild places. It is home to the largest population of nesting hawksbills in Fiji as well as green and loggerhead turtles. It is one of the few remaining sanctuaries for the highly prized but globally endangered humphead wrasse, which animates the reef alongside bumphead parrotfish and white tip reef sharks. Local people thrill to frequent sightings of resident pilot whales and dolphins as well as humpback whales passing through on their annual migrations. Strong currents run through the deep Vatu-i-Ra channel, nourishing a magnificent diversity of more than 300 species of corals. These, in turn, sustain breeding colonies of frigate birds, black noddies, and red-footed boobies.



Map of Vatu-I-Ra group where the upscaling effort will be concentrated.

EBM PLAN TEMPLATE PRESENTED TO EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS IN SUVA

On 19th of February the Kubulau ridge-to-reef plan template was presented to various stakeholders in Suva. This presentation was attended by Tui Kubulau Ratu Vuki, Tui Nadi Ratu Rasignare, Chairmen of Kubulau Resource management Committee (KRMC) Paulo Kolikata, Coral Reef Alliance, Wildlife Conservation Society-Fiji (WCS-Fiji), Wetlands International-Oceania (WI-O), Fiji Navy, National Trust of Fiji, Birdlife, Ministry of Tourism, and Ministry of Health.

The main agenda of this presentation was: 1) to provide participants with an overview of the draft management plan, 2) discuss with participants the proposed management activi-

ties: 3) discuss with participants the management rules, including compliance and enforcement issues. Since its endorsement and implementation in Kubulau, the EBM partnership has been advocating for a wider adaptation of this model in Fiji, including presenting it at the annual FLMMa meeting.

During this presentation, discussions were also held on the definitions of *i-kanakana*. The Native Lands and Fisheries Commission (NLFC) representative informed everyone that *i-kanakana* is an area that can be accessed by locals and residents of neighbouring district for subsistence fishing.

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Participants of the EBM plan template presentation.

EARTH DAY 2010

Earth Day is a day designed to inspire awareness and appreciation for the earth's environment.

Earth day is celebrated annually since 1970 on April 22nd and this gives volunteers and other stakeholders opportunity to focus activities on environmental issues.

The theme for this year's earth day is 'take action, commit to a low-carbon clean energy future'. The theme is aimed at helping reduce the greenhouse gas emissions which are causing the global climate to change.

The theme was derived to help encourage individuals and organizations to: 1) drive

fuel efficient or hybrid cars; 2) conserve energy at home and at work; 3) increase efficiency with energy star rating of appliances; 4) promote renewable energy resources; and 5) reduce, reuse, and recycle.

There are several environmental activities planned throughout Fiji and all of these activities are being coordinated by local volunteer groups.

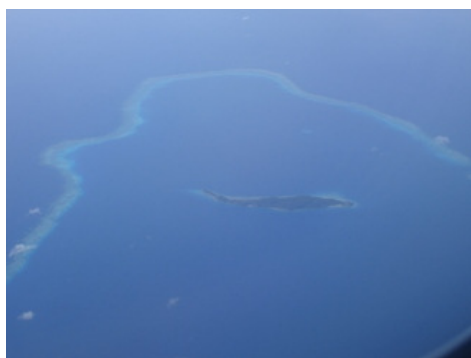
Earth Day 2010 coincides with the World People's Conference on Climate Change, to be held in Cochabamba, Bolivia, and with the International Year of Biodiversity.



The official 2010 Earth Day poster

FISH WARDEN REFRESHER TRAINING FOR KUBULAU

THE GOAL OF ECOSYSTEM-BASED MANAGEMENT IS TO MAINTAIN AN ECOSYSTEM IN A HEALTHY, PRODUCTIVE AND RESILIENT CONDITION SO THAT IT CAN PROVIDE THE SERVICES HUMANS WANT AND NEED.



Part of Namena as seen from air, Kubulau has a large qoliqoli which needs to be well monitored so that illegal fishing can be minimized.

Partners in Community Development-Fiji (PCDF) will be conducting a workshop on fish handling and processing and fish warden refresher training in Kubulau from 26-30th April, 2010.

The first two days of this workshop will be focusing on: 1) theory and practical for fish handling and processing; 2) importance of marine protected areas (MPAs); 3) connectivity of ecosystems; 4) spawning aggregations; 5) Fisheries Act; 6) Convention on International Trade of Endangered Species (CITES) and enforcement. The first part of the workshop with licensed fishermen of Kubulau is aimed to encourage them to sell their catch directly to fishing companies in order to maximum benefits which is usually filtered by middle men.

The second part of the workshop will be focusing on: 1) roles of fish wardens; 2) responsibilities binding to the ID card; 3) techniques of measuring undersized catches; 4) proper procedures for confronting/collecting evidence; 5) identifying the endangered marine species in catches and process taken.

It is expected that this workshop will be attended by 60 participants including rep-

resentatives from PCDF, Fisheries Department, Fiji Police, CITES officer, community fish wardens, and licensed fishers from Kubulau.

Enforcement of community managed marine protected areas has been an ongoing challenge for Kubulau and many communities in Fiji. As part of empowering the Kubulau communities to better monitor its qoliqoli against illegal fishing, fish wardens have been trained since 2005.

The benefits of such training is now beginning to slowly show. Recently, a fisherman who had a fishing license for Wailevu was spotted fishing in Kubulau qoliqoli. Immediate action from community members of Kubulau alerted the Savusavu police department about this matter. The police responded to this call and took the fishermen to Savusavu police station for questioning.

It is hoped that such positive response from police will discourage other illegal fishers from committing such crimes in future.

PRIME MINISTER'S SYMPOSIUM

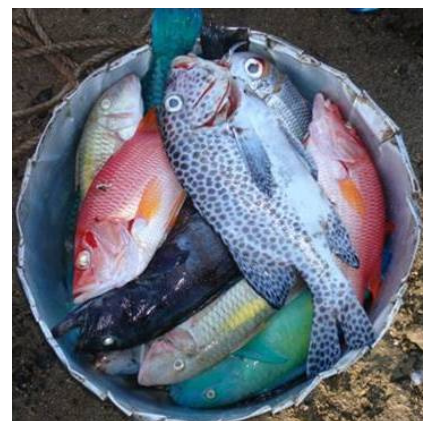
On the 15th of April 2010, Wildlife Conservation Society-Fiji (WCS-Fiji) was invited to attend the Prime Minister's symposium on Food Security and Export Led Growth for Resource Based Sectors. This one day event was organized by various government departments: Ministry of Primary Industries; Department of Fisheries; Forests and Department of Agriculture; Ministry of National Planning; and Ministry of Finance.

One of the main aims of this symposium was to address key threatening issues and to identify practical solutions that can assist government further improve the

performance of resource based sectors.

WCS was part of the group which looked at inshore fisheries resources. The inshore fisheries group explored addressing issues such as live coral and live rock export quota, enforcement of legislation, and sustainable fisheries.

The sustainable fisheries management efforts by Kubulau communities were highlighted and acknowledged at this symposium.



Foodfish such as groupers and emperors need to be managed sustainably so that it can continue to provide income to both communities and government.

CETACEAN STUDY IN KUBULAU

Namena is known as the 'Mecca of diving' by divers which come to dive in Kubulau from all parts of the world. They are attracted to Namena because of its healthy and colorful coral reefs, abundant and diverse fish, and presence of many cetaceans (collective names for dolphins and whales)

Historical observations have indicated presence of several different species of cetaceans (including pilot whale, sperm whale, false killer whale, minke whale, humpback whale, bottlenose dolphins, and spinner dolphins) in the coastal waters at the western end of Vanua Levu (near Kubulau and Namena Island). However, a more detailed understanding of the density and movement patterns of cetaceans in these waters has never been conducted.

"This is mostly due to data collection often being limited by available resources (including time, cost, and accessibility) and irregular or night-time presence of the animals themselves" says Dr. Cara Miller, researcher with Whale and Dolphin Conservation Society (WDCS) and University of the



A humpback whale emerging out of the water (source www.noaa.gov).

South Pacific. A relatively low-cost method being used to address this is the use of acoustic monitoring devices (hydrophones or known as T-PODs) that can be moored for an extended time in one location that can record the presence of cetaceans.

"This approach is viable as each different cetacean species produces a distinctive pattern of clicks (during echolocation), whistles, and/or song during communication and noise production" explained Dr. Miller. The quantification of these acoustic signatures' therefore provides a way to develop an index of the density and movement patterns of a variety of species within the detection range of the hydrophone. "We are proposing of setting up some T-PODs in Kubulau to help us learn more about the different types and numbers of cetaceans present in Kubulau qoliqoli" added Dr. Miller.

"We also hope that some visual observations will be done synchronously with these efforts to assist in the ground-truthing, interpretation, and analysis of the acoustic data" said Dr. Miller. Such visual sighting will be useful to monitor species presence in the area, assess individual call rate, measure group size and document diving patterns.

FIJI ECOSYSTEM BASED
MANAGEMENT (EBM) = HEALTHY
PEOPLE, PROCESSES AND SYSTEMS

Contact:
EBM Kubulau Bulletin Editor
WCS
South Pacific Program
11 Ma'afu Street
Suva
Fiji Islands

Phone: + 679 331 5174

Fax: + 679 331 0178

E-mail: Infofiji@wcs.org

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Namena reef with Namenalala island nestled in between (top), Namena's healthy marine life has led to it being referred to as the 'Mecca' of diving (below) (photos by Lill Haugen © 2009).

ONGOING AND UPCOMING EVENTS

- **Apr** –Good governance course. Kubulau communities and distribution of posters.
- **Apr** –Refresh fish warden training for Kubulau.
- **Apr—May**–Kubulau biological monitoring using resilience indicators.
- **Apr** –Presentation of reef habitats to

STAFF FAREWELL

In March, Wayne Moy left the WCS team to be part of Diver Center. Although Wayne will not be with WCS, he will continue to support the community based resource management work in Fiji. We wish you all the best in your future underwater adventures.



NAMENA IN THE TOP 10 BEST ISLAND REEFS IN THE WORLD

In the recent edition of Islands magazine, Namena reef has been named as one of the best reefs of the world. According to the magazine, the reefs were ranked for responsible travelers based on sustainable opportunities to snorkel, dive, and explore.

The research was done by the editors of the magazine, Ty Sawyer and Jad Devenport, with reef conservation groups, international authorities, local dive operators, and the magazine readers. Rick MacPherson, conservation programs director of the Coral Reef Alliance, describes outer reefs of Namena Marine Reserve as “the marine equivalent of the Serengeti”. He adds, “from swirling schools of hundreds of jack, barracuda and fuseliers to big mature groupers tucked in coral nooks, Napoleon wrasse, bumphead parrotfish, sleeping whitetip sharks, big patrolling gray reef sharks, the entire food chain are on display”.

The Namena Marine Reserve success story comes in part from a community managed no-take marine protected zone that was informally established by the Kubulau District back in the 1990's in response to heavy overfishing by commercial vessels. Back then tourists were asked to pay a dollar per dive. This initiative was developed through successful partnership between CORAL, the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS), local dive operators and the Kubulau community in 2003 to introduce a user fee system based on the Bonaire Marine Park model. Through funds generated by users of the Namena Marine Reserve, a scholarship fund has been set up. Tags are sold through local supporting dive operators and funds deposited into a community managed account. Funds are also managed by the people of Kubulau for activities to ensure the ongoing protection of the Namena Marine Reserve through activities such as regular patrolling.

ANY QUESTIONS...?

Please send your questions and letters to the EBM Bulletin Editorial Team, using the contact details above. The deadline for submissions to the next newsletter is Friday 5th May 2010. Please contact the Editor for further details.

TAQOMAKI NI NODA VEIKABULA



The Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) is a U.S. based international NGO, with conservation programs all around the world, including Fiji. Over the past century, the WCS has worked to establish more than 130 parks and protected areas on land and at sea as well as working on threatened species. WCS works to save wildlife and wild places by understanding and resolving the critical problems that threaten key species and large, wild ecosystems around the world.