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PACIFIC INVASIVES INITIATIVE
The News, July 2007

This summary of recent activities by people and agencies involved in the Pacific Invasives Initiative (PII) is collated and circulated by the PII Coordinating Team. Feedback is welcomed – contact either the people directly involved in projects, or the PII Team PII@auckland.ac.nz. For further information visit our website http://www.issg.org/cii/PII.

2007 PII Steering Group Meeting

A very successful Steering Group Meeting was held at the University of Auckland, New Zealand. All Partners were represented and the newest and eighth member, IUCN ROFO (Regional Office for Oceania), represented by Taholo Kami and Philippe Gerbeaux was welcomed to the Partnership. Alan Tye, the new Invasive Species Officer for SPREP, was also welcomed as he passed through on his way to Samoa to take up his new position.

Three days of lively discussion saw strong participation and commitment from Partners. Much discussion was on the NZAID Review of PII and the recommendations of the review. Agreement was reached on actions for most recommendations.

A draft 5-year Strategic Plan was reviewed and revised. The PII Workplan has been edited to enable Partners to outline their contribution to the Coordinating Team’s work and better reflect the full Partnership.

Greg Sherley (NZDoC), founding Chair of PII, stood down after three years in the position and Warea Orapa (SPC) was elected as the new Chair with Don Stewart (BLI) as his Deputy. ‘Thank you!’ to Greg and ‘Congratulations!’ to Warea and Don.

PII Coordinating Team changes

Steven Bavin has left PII for a position with the Human Resources Department of the University of Auckland. We wish Steven well in his new position.

Karen Johns will be handling both administrative and community participation matters until a new Programme Support Officer is appointed. For contact of a general nature, please use PII@auckland.ac.nz.

Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund

The CEPF Donor Council has approved the strategic investment plan (known as the Ecosystem Profile) for the Polynesia-Micronesia hotspot.

The first step in the expansion for CEPF is developing requests for proposals to recruit a Regional Implementation Team (RIT) for the hotspot, based on new terms of reference and selection criteria, also approved by the Donor Council.

The RIT will provide strategic leadership in the hotspot, building a broad constituency of civil society groups working across institutional and political boundaries toward achieving the shared conservation goals identified in the profiles. The terms of reference for the RIT are on the CEPF website (http://www.cepf.net/xp/cepf/news/polynesia_micronesia.xml).

Many groups involved in conservation across the Pacific are awaiting this source of funding. Clear priorities, rigorous project development and thorough planning will help CEPF applications succeed.

Project progress

BirdLife Pacific

PII is providing advice and organising technical specialists for the following BirdLife Pacific partners -

La Société d’Ornithologie de Polynésie MANU – French Polynesia; A team led by Anne Gouni visited Vahanga and are currently revising the Operational Plan.

The team included PII-coordinated specialists Richard Griffiths (NZDoC) and Gideon Climo (Consultant).

La Société Calédonienne d’Ornithologie (SCO) – New Caledonia; Julien Baudat-Franceschi is arranging a trip to survey Cap Bayes Channel (5 motu), Great Reef of Koumac (9 motu) and Cap Bayes
PII outreach

Karen Johns (PII Community Participation Adviser) presented a paper titled “Communities Applying Science: Learning by Doing” at the Hawai`i Conservation Alliance conference in Honolulu. The conference theme was ‘Conservation Strategies - matching science and management’ and keynote speakers addressed the need to bridge the knowing (research) and the doing (implementation).

This is a niche that PII is filling and Karen’s presentation on the PII approach to applying science (engaging stakeholders, thorough planning, specialist advisers, sound project design, peer review at key stages) showed how projects can be undertaken with the confidence that they will have a greater likelihood of success.

The conference had over 150 presentations on a range of conservation issues and the proceedings will be available on hawaiiconservation.org, the Hawai`i Conservation Alliance website.

Souad Boudjelas (PII Programme Manager) attended the IUCN ROFO meeting in Wellington, New Zealand. Important topics of discussion were invasive species and marine issues. The meeting also provided the opportunity to prepare for the World Conservation Congress in Spain next year.

SPREP/PILN/PII collaboration

Alan Tye (SPREP ISO) and Jill Key (PILN Coordinator) met with the Coordinating Team to discuss synergies between SPREP, PII and PILN and opportunities for further cooperation. This was a very helpful discussion that identified many areas for future teamwork including the review of the Regional Invasive Species Strategy (RISS). The need for the highest standards to be applied to invasive species management without undue complexity was also identified as an issue.
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La Société Calédonienne d’Ornithologie (SCO) – New Caledonia; Julien Baudat-Franceschi is arranging a trip to survey Cap Bayes Channel (5 motu), Great Reef of Koumac (9 motu) and Cap Bayes
Channel (5 motu), with a view to preparing Feasibility Studies for eradicating rodents and cats. PII is coordinating NZDoC specialists for this work.

BirdLife Fiji; Congratulations to the team led by Elenoa Senioli that completed a Feasibility Study on Mabalau Island. Peer review was facilitated by PII and reviewers praised the work done. Just last year the BirdLife Fiji team undertook their first eradication and now they are doing their own Feasibility Studies. After a successful eradication on Vatu-i-Ra and with key staff receiving further experience as part of the IC/CSP training in Pohnpei, the BirdLife Fiji team has picked up the ball and is running hard. A second Feasibility Study is underway in the Ringgold Islands at present.

University of the South Pacific
PII continued to provide advice and facilitate specialist input to the Viwa Restoration Project. The Viwa Mataqali appointed Reverend Veceli Raduva as project co-manager and on-island contact to assist project manager Joape Kuruyawa and project leader Craig Morley. Reverend Raduva provides a direct link to the landowners of Viwa. Baiting for rats was completed in September 2006 and with help from Rob Chappell (NZDoC) the first surveillance programme was set up in May. The importance of this work was made apparent when rat tracks were found in one of the tracking tunnels on a remote part of the island. A rapid bait-distribution response to this discovery seems to have worked as no tracks (or rats) have been seen since.

As a rat was not caught for DNA analysis, it is not possible to say whether the rat tracks resulted from a failed eradication or a new invasion, but the importance of biosecurity planning is obvious.

Already the people of Viwa report major improvements with the rats apparently gone. Children said their feet are no longer being bitten at night, women said they no longer have rats taking food in the house and men and women said they are getting better yields from their gardens and more fruit from trees.

Decisions are now being made on how best to proceed with Stage 2 of the project (eradicating cane toads).

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