MINISTRY OF NATURAL RESOURCES, ENVIRONMENT AND TOURISM

Updates from the Ministry

July 2018

JULY NEWS

Birthdays in July

Trebkul Tellei, BOA (7/8)
Luciano Aderiano, BMR (7/14)
Tito Ringang, BMR (7/22)
Nazaria Tutiy, BMR (7/24)
Ray Marino, BOT (7/27)

Welcome to the Ministry

James Stanford, Biosecurity Specialist

Meet Mr. James Stanford, a biosecurity specialist who has recently taken on the challenge of developing the Regional Invasive Species Coordination Office (RISCO) for the Micronesia Islands Forum (MIF). James and his family moved to Palau in July 2018, so that James could enter the newly created role of Regional Invasive Species Coordinator. The Stanfords most recently lived in Honolulu where James worked for the US Fish and Wildlife Service Pacific Islands Office as an Invasive Species Biologist.

Biosecurity Specialist James Stanford with his son Joshua

James has a long history as a biosecurity consultant and has supported efforts to address invasive alien species concerns in places like Fiji, PNG, Palau and elsewhere in Micronesia. An invasive alien species or IAS is an organism that is native elsewhere, arrives, establishes and causes harm. The Pacific Islands have many established IAS. There are two parts to addressing IAS concerns, 1. preventing new invasive species from arriving and establishment and 2. attempting to control or eradicate IAS after they have arrived and established. Coconut Rhinoceros Beetles, Little Fire Ants and Brown Treesnakes are all examples of invasive alien species which are established on some islands in the Pacific. There are hundreds more.

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FEATURED PROJECT

SPECIAL OPERATION "CLEAN BUSINESS, SOUND TOURISM"

In September 2017, the previous Tourism Task Force was reactivated through the Joint Law Enforcement Special Operation "Clean Business, Sound Tourism", which was declared through Presidential Directive 17-26 and forms part of the Responsible Tourism Policy Framework. The government promotes a sustainable tourism industry by supporting efforts to create or enhance high value, low impact businesses, which in turn can attract visitors outside of the mass tourism spectrum. This strategy is specified in the recent rollout of the Responsible Tourism Policy Framework, which encourages new standards to promote high quality business practices and services that will ensure sustainable tourism for the Republic.

Inspections of tourism operators during the Tourism Task Force had revealed several business operations that were operating secretively or illegally without proper permits, licenses, or certificates. The objectives of Special Operation Clean Business, Sound Tourism are therefore to 1) strengthen compliance; 2) promote a fair and sound business environment; and 3) encourage standards of best practices in the tourism industry to support the government policy of focusing efforts towards a high value, low impact tourism industry.

Members of the Special Operations team. Photo provided by BOT.

Special Operations members inspect a tourism operator. Photo provided by BOT.

Members of the Special Operations include the Chief of Staff as the chairperson; Director Bureau of Tourism as the Co-Chair; The Attorney General, and the Directors of FIB, Bureau of Immigration and Labor, PVA, Bureau of Public Health, Bureau of Maritime Enforcement and Fish and Wildlife, Bureau of Public Safety, Bureau of Commercial Development, Bureau of Customs and Border Control, Bureau of Revenue and Taxation, and the Bureau of Aviation. The Presidential Directive essentially represents a mechanism for all member agencies to collaborate and work together, while still maintaining each agency's respective duties and roles.

Twice a month, as part of the special operations, representatives from these agencies conduct inspections and monitoring of two tourism operators. Each operation targets one business from within the whole tourism industry, which includes accommodations, restaurants and eateries, the airport, transportation, docks and marinas, Rock Island tour sites, and tour companies such as dive and snorkeling shops. Citations issued, whether criminal or civil, are immediately sent to the Attorney General's office for processing. Law enforcement personnel across the government continue to operate with high level vigilance in tamping down on illegal practices as well as collaborating and coordinating efforts with limited resources to address these issues and to ensure a fair and sound business environment.

WHAT'S HAPPENING AT THE MINISTRY?

MINISTRY NEWS AND UPDATES

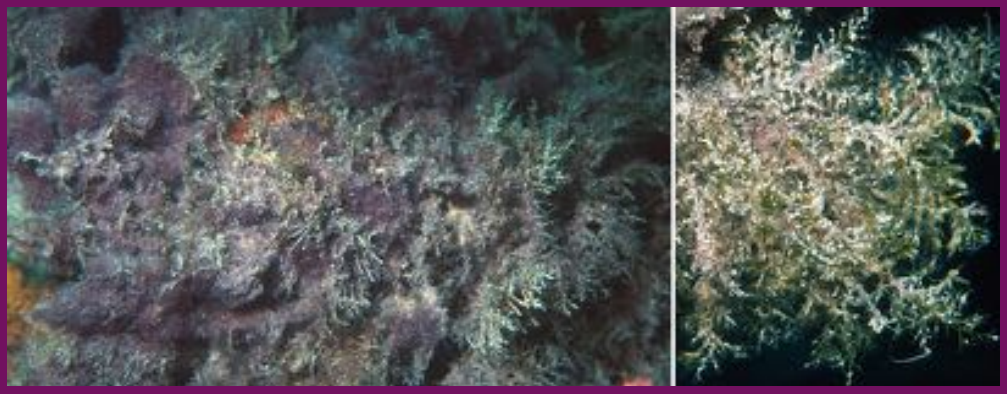
Continued from p.1 - *Welcome to the Ministry*

James Stanford, Biosecurity Specialist

IAS can impact land or terrestrial resources as well as marine and freshwater systems. In fact, invasive species impact all of us, they have negative impacts on all parts of our lives from economics to food safety to health and even cultural impacts. Of course, IAS also can and do impact our native plants and animals.

James is here to assist our communities with these invasive pests and will work with all jurisdictions through their leadership, specialist and conservation offices, and the Regional Invasive Species Council (RISC) to the Chief Executives.

James originally moved to the Pacific in 2004 to serve as a regional invasive species specialist with the US Department of Interior. James lived on Guam through 2013 and then spent time in Fiji before relocating to Hawaii. Prior to moving to Guam, James lived and worked in Latin America for a decade where his focus was supporting local communities with ecological conservation and designing linkages between protected areas. Throughout his career James has also been extensively involved in environmental education and even served as a university professor. James' wife, Cheryl is also a conservation ecologist who specializes in communication and awareness.



Examples of invasive alien species (IAS). Top: the Coconut rhinoceros beetle *Oryctes rhinoceros*, introduced to Palau in 1942. Source: https://dlnr.hawaii.gov Left: the hydroid *Eudendrium carneum*, easily spread by ship hull fouling. Photos from *Marine Environments of Palau*, provided by P.Colin/Coral Reef Research Foundation.

James' plan now that he is in Palau is to set up the coordination office and to supporting IAS prevention and management efforts throughout the region. James is already working with officials in Yap State on the Little Fire Ant and is supporting efforts regionally to address Coconut Rhinoceros Beetle concerns. James is also assisting the FSM with developing a biosecurity project and is reviewing draft biosecurity regulations for Palau. Another top priority for the RISCO is holding a RISC meeting to support the council with planning various IAS initiatives including reviewing, prioritizing and updating of the Regional Biosecurity Plan for Micronesia and Hawaii, originally published in 2015.

WHAT'S HAPPENING AT THE MINISTRY?

MINISTRY NEWS AND UPDATES

Republic of Palau and United Nations Development Programme sign partnership on $4.2M project '*Integrating Biodiversity Safeguards and Conservation into Planning and Development in Palau*'

A project which will link biodiversity conservation to sustainable economic activity in Palau has been launched today with the signing of a partnership between the Government of the Republic of Palau and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

The *Integrating Biodiversity Safeguards and Conservation into Planning and Development in Palau* Project will focus on establishing biodiversity conservation into integrated land and seascape governance, planning and management.

The project recognizes the fact that these land and seascapes underpin the lives and livelihoods of many local communities and that implementation of a coherent strategy to promote sustainable, biodiversityfriendly livelihood options is an integral part of the solution.

“Indeed, one of the principles for this project’s implementation is to support and implement a participatory, consultative bottom-up planning and implementation approach focusing on state and community priorities,” said Minister of State for the Republic of Palau, Honourable Faustina Rehuher-Marugg. “I believe the project will help states as well as the national government to ensure development interests are aligned to our nation’s social, economic and environmental goals. Sustainability, inclusiveness and stewardship are tenets in Palauan culture.”

Speaking at the launch in Koror, United Nations Assistant Secretary-General, UNDP Administrator and Regional Director for Asia and the Pacific, Haoliang Xu, said “UNDP is honoured to partner with the Government of Palau in accessing the funds from the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and implementing the project.”

“Our enduring commitment is to improve resilience of the Pacific island nations and help them protect their rich biodiversity and secure their ecosystems,” said Xu. He added, “This project will address the negative impacts of unsustainable sector-led development practices on biodiversity-rich landscapes of Palau, including its productive coastal and marine ecosystems, while taking into account climate change adaptation needs and inclusive and equitable social and economic development for dependent communities, thereby contributing towards poverty alleviation, food security and sustainable agriculture and gender equality.”

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WHAT'S HAPPENING AT THE MINISTRY?

MINISTRY NEWS AND UPDATES

Cont'd from p.4 - ***'Integrating Biodiversity Safeguards and Conservation into Planning and Development in Palau'***

The project will directly support conservation activities in Babeldaob Island as well as integrated multisector spatial zoning, planning and management in the Southern Lagoon states of Koror and Peleliu. It will also support the establishment of a Joint Coordination Body with representation from states, government, private sectors and non-government organisations. The USD 4.2 million six-year project is funded by the Global Environment Facility and will be implemented from July 2018 through to July 2024.

Source: UNDP Pacific Office, Fiji

Representatives of the Government of the Republic of Palau and the United Nations Development Programme at the project launch on July 6, 2018. From left to right: Special Assistant to Minister of Natural Resources, Environment and Tourism & GEF Operational Focal Point, King Sam; Minister of State for the Republic of Palau, Hon. Faustina Rehuher-Marugg; UNDP Pacific Office in Fiji Country Director and Head of Regional Policy and Programme, Bakhodir Burkhanov; and UN Assistant Secretary-General, UNDP Administrator and Regional Director for Asia and the Pacific, Haoliang Xu (*Photo: UN/Sharon Sakuma*)

WHAT'S HAPPENING AT THE MINISTRY?

JULY TIDBITS FROM OUR BUREAUS

Special Projects under the Ministry - *GEF Pacific R2R IW Project*

BWA Joins Ebiil Camp on Cave & Water Lecture

On Wednesday July 11, 2018 the Belau Watershed Alliance (BWA) Secretariat went again on another great adventure with over 30 Ebiil Society campers and Airai PAN staff and rangers to learn about the relationship between caves and fresh water. By boat, the group cruised through Airai Rock Islands. The tour was led by Airai PAN Office who provided local and traditional knowledge and history of visited rock islands caves.

First stop of the adventure was Metuk er a Bisech and then Olkull er a Risong. During their time together, BWA secretariat, Leena Muller, shared knowledge on formation of caves and how fresh water plays an important part in shaping and developing them. Despite overcast and the occasional rain shower, the campers maintained a positive attitude and asked lots of questions to BWA and Airai PAN. BWA would like to thank Ebiil Society for inviting the Alliance. BWA looks forward to continue working with Ebiil Society on water related projects and activities and awaits its next learning adventure!

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WHAT'S HAPPENING AT THE MINISTRY?

JULY TIDBITS CONTINUED

Special Projects under the Ministry - *GEF Pacific R2R IW Project*

R2R IW and MCN Pilot Water Quality Monitoring

The GEF Pacific R2R IW Project is working with the Melekeok Conservation Network (MCN) to develop a Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation (PM&E) Plan for water quality in and around the Ngardok Lake area. PM&E is a process of self-assessment, knowledge generation, and collective action in which stakeholders in a program collaboratively define the evaluation issues, collect and analyze data, and take action as a result of what they learn through this process.

The water monitoring will include testing for physical, chemical, and biological characteristics such as temperature, turbidity, pH, nutrients, plants, or animals present in Melekeok's watershed area. Actual water monitoring will begin in late August. So far, the group has visited their selected sites, plotted the coordinates on a GPS, and flagged the areas for future monitoring throughout the year.

MCN has dedicated two of their staff to focus on this PM&E Plan for its one year duration on top of their existing work. This water quality monitoring project will help build on more capacity for MCN staff on a number of skills from handling fragile instruments to gathering, inputting, and reading the technical data collected. The R2R IW Project is eager to work more with such an enthusiastic group of people on this project.

MNRET's IW Project/BWA Donate $300 to Ngiwal Ollumel Project

Thursday July 19, 2018 – The Ministry of Natural Resources, Environment, and Tourism's GEF Ridge to Reef International Waters (R2R IW) Project and Belau Watershed Alliance (BWA) donated $300 towards Ngiwal's Ollumel Water Restoration Project at Bkul a Tab. The water source at Bkul a tab has maintained a steady trickle of water for as long as the residents of Ngiwal have known. It has been a backup source during times of water shortage and drought in the past. Ngiwal's plan is to initiate restoration work and water source expansion to maximize output of water for emergency and supplemental drinking water source for the growing Ngiwal population.

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WHAT'S HAPPENING AT THE MINISTRY?

JULY TIDBITS CONTINUED

Special Projects under the Ministry - *GEF Pacific R2R IW Project*

Cont'd from p.7 - MNRET's IW Project/BWA Donate $300 to Ngiwal Ollumel Project

In response to this donation, Honorable Governor Ellender Ngirameketii expresses his gratitude for the generous contribution from R2R IW and BWA. He expresses concern over numerous large development projects in Palau, and reminds us that small projects such as this water restoration project will greatly influence people's livelihoods and wellbeing. He further states that water is a precious resource that is taken for granted, therefore with this project, Ngiwal will ensure cleaner and safer water sources for its community and future generations to come. Now that we are faced with numerous climate change impacts, this project will help prepare us for what will come.

BWA Chairman, Jonathan Temol and Governor Ngirameketii plan to ensure more water related collaboration projects in the future and hope to build on its existing partnership.

For more information, please email belauwatershedalliance@gmail.com.

Pictured (from left to right): Jonathan Temol- BWA Chairman; Honorable Ellender Ngirameketii- Ngiwal Governor; Smerngong Stephanus- Ngiwal PAN Coordinator; Benchas Yobech- Ngiwal Engineer/Carpenter; Honorable Francisco Melaitau- Speaker, Ngiwal State Legislature; and Hosea Inacio- Ngiwal State Public Works Coordinator.

WHAT'S HAPPENING AT THE MINISTRY?

JULY TIDBITS CONTINUED

Bureau of Agriculture (BOA)

National Pork Certification Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs)

The Bureau of Agriculture (BOA) with the help of the Animal Production Project proudly presented Palau's first SOP on Pork Certification on July 11, 2018. The purpose of the National Produce Standard is to provide certification for pig production. This Produce Standard defines requirements for production of pigs for pork meat marketed under Government certification. Its main focus are key areas affecting animal welfare, meat safety and traceability in the primary production of pigs. The end goal is to give the owner of the production herd the ultimate responsibility for complying with the requirements under the National Pork Certifying Standard.

Pork certification group.
Photo credit: Bureau of Agriculture

Pork certification briefing. *Photo: Bureau of Agriculture*

During the workshop, farmers were briefed on how to use Pig Identification and Traceability, Feeds, Herd Health, Medicine, Housing and Equipment, Feed and Water Provisions, Management, and Delivery of Pigs. Once the farmers follow all the requirement on the SOP and are approved by BOA, the pork than can be certified with one of two stamps provided by Bureau of Agriculture. For more information, please call the Bureau of Agriculture and talk with the chief of livestock at (680) 622-5804.

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WHAT'S HAPPENING AT THE MINISTRY?

JULY TIDBITS CONTINUED

Bureau of Agriculture (BOA)

Kayangel Kebeas Project

The Kebeas eradication project headed by Joesph Tiobech from the Bureau of Agriculture, partnered with the Ministry of State, Ministry of Health and Kayangel State has been traveling to Kayangel these past months. There was a total of six planned trips and so far four trips have been completed. On each trip, two staff from the Bureau of Agriculture along with Joe would travel to Kayangel on a Friday, and return on a Sunday after teaching volunteers how to clear and kill Kebeas. During the first trip on April 20, Mr. Joe and the two other staff from the forestry division, Ediwin, and Jason, were able to bring 16 buuch, 5 miich, 2 malchiyanged, 2 kingkang, 2 avocado, 1 mango, and 1 edebsachel, to plant while they cleared the kebeas.

The second trip on May 18, the same forestry staffs were able to bring 200 taro plants and 75lbs of taro meat from the Taiwan Technical Mission as donation for planting and food to the Kayangel state. Mr. Joe was able to get 50 gallons worth of gas from the Invasive project to help with transportation for 20 youth church volunteers from Melekeok to help with the kebeas clean up.

Kayangel kebeas map. *Provided by BOA*

Kayangel kebeas map. *Provided by BOA*

The third trip on June 15 the 3 forestry staffs were able to bring 50 taro plants and 50lbs taro meat as donations to the state during the project. During the fourth trip to Kayangel, there were no plants brought to Kayangel but the work continued as usual. During the whole Kayangel Kebeas project it was estimated that 70% of the Kebeas was cleared and 30% remained left for the State employees to clear and continue to monitor.

Special thanks goes out to Director Eunice Akiwo, and Jeffery Sambal Erungel from the Ministry of State who joined the clean up on the first and second trip. The 20 youth church volunteers from Melekeok state for helping with the kebeas project and hosting church on Sundays before the Kebeas clean up started for the first and second trip. The Ministry of Health men's team for the year of good heath initiative, who helped on the second trip where they provided there own transportation to help clear the Kebeas on that Saturday. The state of Kayangel for providing transportation, food and lodging, and the meals during the four Kebeas clearing project, and to all the other volunteers who helped throughout the projects.

WHAT'S HAPPENING AT THE MINISTRY?

JULY TIDBITS CONTINUED

Bureau of Marine Resources (BMR)

BMR grant to support fish aquaculture

The Ministry through the Bureau of Marine Resources awarded Ngermechau Klobak Association of Ngiwal State $10,000 to support their fish farm. The grant is to expand their existing farms and purchase tools and materials needed to maintain and operate the farms.

Minister Sengebau with Ngermechau Klobak Association members. Photo: MNRET.

The Association is farming klelsebuul (Siganus guttatus, golden rabbitfish). The effort is part of the President's on-going efforts to enhance programs of food security.

Accepting the check on behalf of the Association was its Secretary, Ngirngesechei Leo Ruluked Jr. The Chairman of the Association is Baklim Alfonso Llecholch.

Individuals, organizations and state governments interested in applying for the grant may contact the Bureau of Marine Resources for more information.

'Year of Good Health' Ministry Trash Cleanup Initiative

On July 06, 2018, BMR staff joined the new Director of the Bureau of Tourism, Kevin Mesebeluu, and other MNRET employees to launch the first installment of picking up trash along the Ministry's designated segment of Koror road, namely Long Island Park to Ice Box Park in Malakal, as part of the Executive Branch's 'Year of Good Health' goodwill program.

MNRET employees after the first successful trash pickup exercise. Photo: BMR.

The Friday afternoon walk-and-pick exercise was able to fill a dozen trash bags of road side trash and litter. Going forward, these beach and roadside cleanups will be conducted by Ministry staff every last Friday of the month, with each Bureau cleaning up a designated section of Koror.

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WHAT'S HAPPENING AT THE MINISTRY?

JULY TIDBITS CONTINUED

Bureau of Marine Resources (BMR) cont'd

July 2018 was an especially busy month for BMR as it received two delegations from Japan known as survey or research missions. ROP President had made a request on the sidelines of the recent PALM 8 summit meeting in Japan, upon which Japan's Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF) dispatched two delegations to look into the request.

Palau's coastal or inner reef fisheries have seen tremendous decline, and the President requested that Japan employ available resources to scope out the potential for developing aquaculture of marine species that have historically provided a source of protein and market income for the Palauan people, and which may be developed as specialty seafood products for domestic and overseas markets.

Delegates of the OFCF field survey mission.
Photo: BMR.

The first delegation, which spent July 05 to July 10 in Palau, was an OFCF-led field survey mission referred to as the preliminary survey before another survey team that will be sent in October 2018. For now, 'New Project on Discovering Potential Fishery Products for Market Distribution' is the tentative title for the Japan Government's response effort being drawn by the OFCF as an assistant implementing agency. This mission was headed by Mr. Kunikazu Shimamoto, Assistant to Managing Director, Technical Cooperation Department, OFCF of Japan.

Officials from Japan's MAFF visit field sites.
Photo: BMR.

The second mission led by the Director of the Overseas Fisheries Cooperation Office, Fisheries Agency of Japan, Mr. Koichi Tahara, was a delegation consisting of MAFF officials that came a week later on July 17 and departed July 20, 2018. Both mission teams were able to visit the Northern Reef Fisheries Cooperative in Ollei, Ngaremlengui State Icemaker and Fish Market, Nabeyama Aquaculture in Ngatpang, Aqua Pro in Medalaii, Palau National Aquaculture Center (PNAC) in BMR Compound and the natural milkfish pond in Peleliu, where Peleliu Governor Temmy Shmull made a request for assistance to develop the pond.

Also on their itineraries, which both missions were very pleased to see in Peleliu, was the World War II memorial that the Japanese Emperor had prayed at when he visited Palau.

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WHAT'S HAPPENING AT THE MINISTRY?

JULY TIDBITS CONTINUED

Bureau of Marine Resources (BMR)

'Preparing for the Future' Youth Mentoring Program

On Tuesday, July 24, 2018, Koror State Scoutmaster El' Zeder Eledui and Koror State Legislator Vierra Toribiong visited BMR with over twenty students from different elementary and high schools participating in KSG's 'Preparing for the Future' youth mentoring program. One of their activities is looking after the cultured giant clams being grown at Long Island.

BMR Director gave his own words of advice on life and the vital role of education in preparing them for their future before he went on to give his presentation on spawning the giant clam and the giant clam farming program.

Year of Good Health - Reminder for all MNRET employees

All staff are invited and encouraged to be proactive and participate in the following ongoing activities launched by the Ministry in line with this year's theme, the *Year of Good Health*:

Monthly Trash Cleanups - each Bureau has been assigned a segment of road in Koror to clean up on every last Friday of the month. If you have not done so already, please familiarize yourself with your Bureau's schedule and join your colleagues in this effort.

Annual Physical Exam - each employee is eligible for a paid day off for completing their annual health checkup. This is covered under your MSA and must occur between **June 4 and September 21, 2018**. Details about your health record will not be shared with the Ministry; you need only provide proof of completing the checkup, e.g. in the form of an appointment slip or MSA receipt, to the AO of your Bureau or Program, or directly to Gwen Bai at gwenbai71@gmail.com.

Plastic-reduction directive - please continue to bring your reusable water bottles to work and use eco-friendly plastic alternatives at meetings in our effort to curb single-use plastics.

WHAT'S HAPPENING AT THE MINISTRY?

JULY TIDBITS CONTINUED

Bureau of Tourism (BOT)

Workshop on Strengthening Disaster Management Capacity in Palau

The two days workshop (June 27-28, 2018), was coordinated by Palau's National Emergency Management Office (NEMO) with the support of United States Agency for International Development and United States Forest Service. The goal was to provide an overview of command and coordination systems that can be used to enhance incident management. Specifically to identify incidents (natural and human induced), their impact on the community, strength and challenges, preparing and planning before and during disaster, and roles and responsibilities of each agency in national level. BOT Director Mesebeluu and Officer Apsalom attended on behalf of the Bureau. During the workshop the BOT made it clear that there exists a gap in disaster response SOP's in the industry, accommodations, tour operators, and guides.

BOT will utilize the Incident Command System structure in any SOP development in the Tourism sector to ensure compatibility. BOT has established relationships with key industry personnel, and is the proper authority to engage key stakeholders in the sector.

Taiwan's Local Characteristic Industry - 'One Town, One Product'

Taiwan's "One Town One Product" method has been successful in incorporating various ideas that has resulted in the economic growth of towns and rural areas outside modernized cities from North to South Taiwan. In keeping with its motto, "One Town, One Product" (OTOP) truly embraces the whole of Taiwan. This program was established by the Small and Medium Enterprise Administration (SMEA) of the Ministry of Economic Affairs, in a bid to assist small and medium enterprises, on the basis of cultural industries to create a new economic system of industry cluster. The goal of the program was to effectively integrate local cultural industries as well as linking different industries through comprehensive assistance measures for stimulating local economic prosperity.

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WHAT'S HAPPENING AT THE MINISTRY?

JULY TIDBITS CONTINUED

Bureau of Tourism (BOT)

Cont'd from previous page - Taiwan's 'One Town, One Product' Industry

The OTOP branding concept was introduced to Taiwan in 2006, and has been successful in optimizing the local economy building concept with the infusion of Taiwan's rich history and culture. Through social media marketing, OTOP product items such as agricultural products and handicrafts to festivals and services that epitomizes the historical and the many different cultures only found in Taiwan, has become a multi-million dollar industry.

Many have enjoyed the economic boost that this program has delivered to their areas, but many more are facing uncertainty as the younger generations of Taiwanese are relocating to the big cities like Taipei for example. Retaining the younger generation in these areas has become one of the main issues the Ministry of Economic Affairs faces and have expanded the program to assist and incentivize young Taiwanese families that wish to live in the rural areas. Imperfect as this program may be, the resulting economic benefit far outweighs the negative impact seen in Taiwan as long as we can adopt policies that would mitigate the issues.

The most essential piece that makes OTOP work are the local people and the communities. The locals are the stakeholders and decision makers that will drive this industry.

Impressions of Taiwan: Above: Gator fish. Left: BOT's Ray Marino during the 'Local Characteristics Industry' Trip in Taiwan. Right: Sun Moon Lake in Taiwan. Photos: BOT

This concept is presently utilized by the Babeldaob Eco-Tour funded by Sasakawa Peace Foundation and it aligns well with the Republic's "Responsible Tourism Policy Framework", Palau's vision for achieving sustainable and responsible tourism. OTOP, if the proper mechanisms are in place, will have a great impact in the development of authentic Palauan products, enhanced with Palau's rich culture and traditions; and services that showcases Palau's natural heritage. Retention of young Palauan workers in the local industry will greatly enhance the effectiveness of OTOP and encourages development. The possibilities are endless. This would bode well for Palau's pursuit as a niche tourism market.

WHAT'S HAPPENING AT THE MINISTRY?

JULY TIDBITS CONTINUED

Protected Areas Network Office (PANO)

PAN Office and PAN Fund hand over new 22-footer, twin engine boat to Ngatpang State PAN Program

Ngatpang is the latest state to join the national Protected Areas Network. Upon the completion, review and approval of their protected areas management plan, the State accessed its first annual operational funds at the beginning of fiscal year 2018. This first disbursement of funds included the cost of a boat to be used for enforcement and monitoring of the 3 marine protected areas in Ngatpang.

On June 27,2018, the PAN Office and PAN Fund met with Governor Jersey Iyar and representatives of traditional and elected leaders to hand over the 22-footer, twin 85hp motor boat to the Ngatpang State PAN Program and State PAN coordinator, John Techitong. During this first year of operations, the Ngatpang State PAN program has focused on recruiting staff, establishing the office, and procuring necessary equipment.

Minister endorses PAN Strategic Plan

Minister Sengebau has endorsed the Strategic Plan 2016-2020 of Palau's Protected Areas Network (PAN). Since its inception in 2003, the PAN has demonstrated success in fostering an effective mechanism that allows the national government to integrate management efforts with state governments and the communities. The PAN can be understood as a framework of policies, practices, knowledge, funding mechanisms, virtual and real-world tools, and government and non-government employee positions that support the long-term sustainable use and protection of environmental and ecological resources. Communities and their livelihoods are at the very heart of this work. Accordingly, the PAN Strategic Plan was developed in active participation and consultation with diverse network members who represent the wide array of agencies and partners working towards the success of protected areas in Palau.

In his foreword, Minister Sengebau notes ' *We are committed to make the Palau Protected Area Network a thriving coordinating platform for effective management of protected areas. This plan shows us the way. Understanding and pursuing the four goals in this plan now becomes the task of every PAN site, PAN Office, PAN Funds and partners who share its aspiration.'*

WHO IS...?

RAY MARINO

COMPLIANCE SPECIALIST, BUREAU OF TOURISM

Ray joined the Ministry in August 2015, taking up his position at the recently established Bureau of Tourism. His main focus, the drafting of tourism regulations, currently has him working on tour operator licensing. 'Green Fins for example *(featured in our May Newsletter)* is part of the tour operator regulations, and we'd like to enmesh it into the operator licensing process.' A second project Ray is heavily involved in is the Special Operations 'Clean Business, Sound Tourism' *(see Featured Project on p.2)*. Despite some of the challenges these investigations bring, Ray enjoys his work: 'It's a new office, with a lot of work to be done. Since tourism is so big in Palau, we have a hand in everything. This gives me a very broad exposure, which is both good and bad: I get the satisfaction of being able to contribute to the potential of Palau, but I also see the dark side of tourism.'

Before joining the Ministry, Ray spent ten years working for the US navy. In 2012, he came back to Palau and started working at Clear Ground Demining as an explosives ordnance technician. 'In my time at Clear Ground, we collected 30,000 pieces of ammunitions in two years, from Kayangel to Angaur. That made me very proud.' What is an inevitable, perhaps even charming part of island life to some, is this man's biggest pet peeve: Palauan time. 'Don't get me started', he says, so we leave it at that and move on to the next question: What insight would you share with a younger colleague about to start working with you? 'I'd tell them not to worry about what other people are doing, and not to get distracted by other people's work. Don't look left or right, just focus on the task at hand and get it done. Focus on what you're doing and in the end it all comes together as the big picture.'

In his free time and on weekends, Ray does a lot of fishing and trekking in the hills around Koror, often in the company of his five-year-old son Metfidza. When asked where he would go if he could visit anywhere in the world, he doesn't have to think for long: 'The North Pole. It would be a whole different scenery to here.'

Speaking of different sceneries, we go on to talk about his roots in the Southwest Islands; his mom is from Sonsorol, his dad from Tobi. Despite not having lived there – he grew up in Echang, Koror - Ray is evidently proud of his heritage. Of his son's Tobian name he says 'it relates to the red color of blood, representing our ancestors and relatives. I think it's important for us to keep these names, this culture alive.' Ray's commitment to the Southwest Islands recently took on a more formal dimension, too: 'I just got elected as a legislator for Tobi State. In that role I'll be working on legislation regarding Tobi, which means working with the community. I look forward to that.'