Greetings from Your Ministry

The year 2020 has certainly been unprecedented, full of uncertainties and unique challenges that have tested our resiliency as a people. Thanks to our front liners, our diplomatic partners and relief programs - we have continued to endure despite the COVID19 pandemic and, we have learned more about ourselves and our environment.

The slow pace has, in effect, nurtured our spirits as families have found more time to go fishing, farming and enjoying a unique natural heritage that many of us have taken for granted. It’s become so much easier and cheaper to access seafood and local produce - a reminder that much of our work still lies ahead if we want to make a meaningful and positive impact on our food security systems.

Exciting and innovative strategies for establishing a domestic market for tuna and other pelagic fish species are underway and we acknowledge and highly appreciate the important contributions our partners bring to the table to support these efforts.

Once again, we are excited to share some of the work and services the ministry provides, as well as other interesting and related stories and I hope you find this edition of our newsletter useful and informative.

Minister Umiich Sengebau

Employee Birthdays

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May all of life’s blessings be yours, on your birthdays and always.

May all of life’s blessings be yours, on your birthdays and always.
As the global community is called to re-examine our relationship to the natural world, one thing is certain: despite all our technological advances we are completely dependent on healthy and vibrant ecosystems for our water, food, medicines, clothes, fuel, shelter and energy, just to name a few. The theme “Our solutions are in nature” emphasizes hope, solidarity and the importance of working together at all levels to build a future of life in harmony with nature.

2020 will witness the final period of the 2011-2020 Strategic Plan on Biodiversity and its 20 Aichi Biodiversity Targets, as well as the UN Decade on Biodiversity, leading to the transitional phase for the start of other new pivotal biodiversity-related decades for the period 2021-2030: the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development and the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration; and the UN Biodiversity Summit, in order to highlight the urgency of action at the highest levels in support of a post-2020 global biodiversity framework.

Did you know?

* One new infectious disease emerges in humans every 4 months. 75% of these emerging diseases come from animals.

* A healthy ecosystem helps to protect us from these diseases. Biological diversity makes it difficult for pathogens to spread rapidly.

* It is estimated that around one million animal and plant species are now threatened with extinction.

* Current negative trends in biodiversity and ecosystems will undermine progress towards 80% of the assessed targets of 8 Sustainable Development Goals.

* Three-quarters of the land-based environment and about 66% of the marine environment have been significantly altered by human actions.
MINISTRY NEWS AND UPDATES

Bureau of Agriculture Welcomes Dr. Ryo Suzuki

The Bureau of Agriculture has the pleasure of introducing our newest team member, Veterinarian Ryo Suzuki. Dr. Suzuki studied at the Tokyo University of Agriculture and Technology from April 2003 to March 2009. During his education, Dr. Suzuki was part of the Laboratory of Reproduction and researched on killer whale reproduction.

He has been a licensed Japanese veterinarian since April 2009 and a licensed Palau veterinarian since 2019. As a licensed Japanese veterinarian, Dr. Suzuki’s work experience includes 8 years of meat inspection at Shibaura meat sanitary inspection station in Tokyo, Japan where he inspected over 20,000 pigs and 90,000 cows yearly. He also made sure the slaughter house met the Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point sanitation control standard of the Food and Drug Administration. Dr. Suzuki is also experienced in analysis, outreach and presentation of zoonosis, which is infectious disease transmittable from non-human to human.

He also worked at the Palau Dolphins Pacific where he took great care of the dolphins’ diet plans, health conditions, dolphin feed preparation, room sanitation control and education & outreach to guests and staff both in English and Japanese language.

Since Dr. Suzuki joined our team, he has inspected all dispatched pig meat that go through the national slaughter house. He also makes farm visits and responds to farm calls for sick or distressed animals. Dr. Suzuki recently participated and completed an online course on African Swine Fever Preparedness for any transboundary animal disease.

We are very fortunate to have a new member of the team with an extensive background and hope to expand the quality of work, production, inspection and overall operation of the livestock division. If you have any questions relating to the services available please call 544-5804 and we will be happy to assist.

Field Work on Trochus Survey Completed

The Bureau of Marine Resources (BMR) in collaboration with the Palau International Coral Reef Center (PICRC) have finally completed the much awaited 2019-2020 trochus survey. BMR technicians and PICRC researchers were able to survey more than 100 sites by June. Inclement weather presented great difficulty but the team completed the survey sites from Kayangel to Peleliu. The data is being reviewed and analyzed by PICRC before a report is released. As COVID-19 disrupts our economy, some community members are understandably waiting to see if it’s possible to open a trochus-harvesting season. However, the law and good governance require that a harvest
Season can only be declared if the assessment shows that there are sufficient numbers and adequate sizes to deem harvesting sustainable.
Ngeremlengui MPA Restocked with 200 Giant Clams

On June 19, technicians from BMR and Ngeremlengui State Government were able to transport and plant 200 giant clams in Mecherong, the state’s conservation area. The restocking of Mecherong was based on a formal request from Ngeremlengui Governor Ilolang Sisca Vogt who was able to purchase 100 clams from a private farm with the other 100 matched by BMR’s own inventory. The state government was also provided with an underwater camera and computer tablet to monitor the clams as well as track the previously released rabbit fish fries. A formal agreement was signed by BMR Director Leon Remengesau and Governor Vogt which designates the state’s conservation rangers to conduct regular monitoring and active surveillance of Mecherong and to safeguard it against poaching.

Aimeliik Site Identified for FAD Deployment

On June 4, BMR technicians Erbai Yukiwo, Roman Mongami and PICRC Fish Biologist Dr. Alex Filous, surveyed an area outside Bilis Reef in Aimeliik as a potential site to deploy a Fish Aggregating Device (FAD). This comes in response to Aimeliik Governor Browny Simer’s request to deploy a FAD to support their
community fishermen. The team looked at deploying a FAD at a depth of about 1000 meters and were able to identify an area between three to four miles from the outer reef of Bilis, a designated PAN site, for the FAD placement. BMR continues to work with communities and experts in an effort to develop and strengthen Palau’s domestic fishery.

**Youth from Choll Plant 200 Giant Clams**

On July 4, BMR and a youth group from Choll planted 200 giant clams in front of Choll beach in Ngaraard. In an effort to provide the youth with worthwhile summer activities, Chief Ngirameketii Elbuchel Sadang and Choll County Legislator Saburo Remoket organized the weekend activity for them. BMR, with support from The Nature Conservancy, was able to source the 100 large clams *Derasa* (kism) from Mr. Marciano Ulechong and matched them with another 100 from its own inventory. The BMR Director presented the 200 clams to the youth and gave a short talk on the sustainable use of marine resources and the importance of giant clam aquaculture, restocking wild populations and protecting the relocated giant clams.

After the clam planting, Chief Ngirameketii, who also served previously as executive director of Palau Conservation Society, said to the youth that they not only planted clams on that day, but planted in their hearts a sense of responsibility to take care of the clams and the environment.

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*General setup of an anchored FAD.*

*Young ladies sorting giant clams for planting.*

*Young men towing clams to suitable habitat.*

*Mother and daughter taking part in activities.*
High value tourism is a strategic objective for Palau’s future growth and sustainable development. This market segment is crucial for low-environmental impact and high revenue streams that benefit communities over the long term.

Prior to 2015, Palau attracted around 80,000 tourists per year and thereafter began to experience a huge influx of visitors, reaching 160,000 due to more tourists coming from mainland China, with the cumulative effect of placing additional pressures on the environment and infrastructure.

Aligning with environmental objectives, the Bureau of Tourism (BOT) and its partners made an effort to move to a new restart to tourism. New laws, including the Responsible Tourism Education Act, have been passed making businesses accountable for educating visitors. Businesses are also now responsible for the behavior of their guests and enforcing the laws around responsible tourism as articulated in the Palau Pledge that is signed and stamped by visitors upon arrival in Palau.

To help business owners and further promote environmental protection, BOT, Taiwan’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the International Cooperation and Development Fund, Sustainable Tourism International and the Palau Legacy Team have devised a carbon offsetting program that will be rolled out over the next six months to be initiated with the development of a carbon calculator.

This will allow visitors to calculate their carbon footprint based on flight origin, where they stay, where they eat, which sites they visit and how they visit them. This project will include an assessment of the industry for the most current carbon footprint baseline, the development of a blue carbon investment portfolio, assistance and communication with all tourism businesses and a domestic and international promotion and launching event to correlate with the Our Oceans Conference, 2020.
Bureau of Tourism Welcomes Mr. Keyan Solomon

Please join us in welcoming Mr. Keyan Solomon. Keyan joins the Bureau of Tourism as an Administrative Assistant, tasked to provide clerical and administrative services and to support compliance officers. He is a 2016 graduate of Palau High School and in 2018 earned an Associate Degree at Palau Community College in Tourism and Hospitality. While in high school, Keyan had the opportunity to work at Dolphins Pacific, which helped him realize how special and unique our environment was and the importance of preserving such an exceptional natural heritage. Keyan describes himself as outgoing, optimistic, energetic and a flexible dude. He loves meeting new people as well as new colleagues because it gives him a chance to network and develop professionally. Keyan loves outdoor activities, particularly swimming and fishing and he hopes that the Bureau of Tourism will continue to open new doors and opportunities for him as a young professional.

Green Boots is Finally Here

BOT is proud to announce that the Green Boots code of conduct and guidelines has been developed in partnership with the Palau Conservation Society. Green Boots is a guide for terrestrial tourism that encourages best practices and can potentially be a tool that is administered for training and certification.

BOT’s Senior Compliance Specialist, Dave Orrukem is leading efforts to develop the Green Boots curriculum and training guide which will closely resemble Green Fins, a guide for best practices in marine-based tourism. The Ministry of Education will be a key partner for the integration and successful implementation of these tools.

The Green Boots has been endorsed by the Palau Conservation Society, the Association of State PAN Coordinators, Ridge to Reef International Waters Program, Babeldaob Eco-Tourism Project with the Sasakawa Peace Foundation, Palau Visitors Authority, Bureau of Cultural and Historical Preservation, Sam’s Tours and the Belau Tourism Association.
**Student from Carnegie Mellon University Interns with Bureau of Tourism**

Mr. Abhi Devarapalli is an intern from Carnegie Mellon University helping BOT develop a registration and database system for tour operators and the Boat Owners’ Association for Tourism. Abhi has a Bachelor of Science degree in Information Systems and Computer Science and is enrolled in a 10-week internship that is in its 4th week, and if time permits, he would also develop the office website, enabling it to easily integrate and disseminate information such as updates and public announcements to stakeholders in the private sector and to local and international partners.

The summer internship program with Carnegie Mellon University has roots in Palau with previous students working with the Financial Institutions Commission which saw the development of their corporate registry systems as well as Belau Medical Clinic with work on a patient registry system. In light of the pandemic, Abhi had to forgo the cultural exchange component of the program, which normally allows him to live in Palau for the duration of the internship and learn about our culture. Hence, through a partnership with the Ministry of Education, BOT is conducting the cultural exchange virtually through online interactions.

**Tidbits from PAN**

For the past few months, the Protected Areas Network Office has been in the midst of coordinating an ongoing enforcement collaboration aimed at developing a conservation academy curriculum to meet the needs of states’ conservation programs and its rangers. Interviews with partner agencies and key stakeholders to help with the development of the curriculum was pushed back due to COVID-19.

Another ongoing project is the standardization of uniforms, signage and assets such as boats to advance law enforcement presence and public awareness for all PAN sites. This is also to promote a professional brand image and convey consistent messaging about PAN’s conservation efforts. Standard signs are being piloted in Aimeliik’s terrestrial site, Ngerdenar Conservation Area.

Efforts are also ongoing to update PAN’s operational guidelines, which include revisions to its organizational structure and procedures as well as the 2020 annual report and a new communications strategy.
Over 500 Crown of Thorns Starfish Removed from Ngatpang MPA

On May 16 and 17, Ngatpang rangers and community members collected and properly disposes of over 500 Crown of Thorns Starfish or Rrusech, in Palauan. Much of the state’s marine protected area, called Oruaol Ibuchel, had been overtaken by the starfish. The site is known to house a rich diversity of marine life but is now struggling to recover with the recent population boom of the starfish, known to prey on hard or stony coral polyps.

Airai and Ngarchelong Mourn the Passing of Rangers in their Ranks

The Network recognizes and honors two fellow rangers who have recently passed. Mr. Kosam Mongami of Airai passed away in April. His age, experience and traditional knowledge made him an asset to the Airai team.
Ranger Coordinator for Airai, Mr. Kammen Chin, says they were blessed to have known and worked with Senior Ranger Mongami and that he will forever be missed and remembered in all that they do.

In May, Ngarchelong Ranger Skiwo Johnson passed away. Mr. Johnson was a young, determined and hardworking employee who had much potential to succeed in his field. His sudden passing was difficult for the Ngarchelong team. During his funeral, his fellow rangers were never more than an arms-length away, signifying that they will always be by their fallen comrade’s side.

**Forestry Unit Continues Monitoring Efforts**

In late 2019, the ministry launched a national forest monitoring program aimed to capture the status of Palau's forest resources and measure the effectiveness of protected terrestrial sites. Currently, the program is focused on nine PAN sites and other areas across Babeldaob, Koror and the Rock Islands Southern Lagoon.

The program is spearheaded by the Forestry Unit under the Bureau of Agriculture and the team includes Mr. Omekrael Sadang, Mr. Mickey Towai, Ms. Beverly Subris and Ms. River Thomas. Depending on the weather, the team conducts surveys up to four days a week that are often difficult to trek. On average, each site may take up to a month and a half to complete, and to date, five of the nine PAN sites have been surveyed. These are Ngerderar in Aimeliik, Ngermeskang Bird Sanctuary and Nature Reserve in Ngeremlengui, and Ngerkall and Ngerchokl in Ngaraard.

The team is currently surveying Mesekelat in Ngchesar and their goal is to complete field work for the remaining sites by December 2020. The program aims to conduct field surveys every 3-5 years and, overtime, the data will help us better understand the health of Palau’s forest resources.

**Ms. Jodean “Ongly” Remengesau Joins the Ministry**

Ms. Jodean “Ongly” Remengesau joined the Environmental Planning Unit under the GEF 6 national project in June as the Production Sector Support Specialist. She will be working to provide technical support for agriculture development and to ensure project activities are communicated effectively. Bringing a unique set of language skills and work experience, Ongly recently completed a United Nations junior professional placement program at the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization Headquarters in Rome where she worked with the agribusiness development team in hosting conferences, publishing technical documents and overseeing national projects in parts of Africa, the Caribbean and Eastern Europe. Her academic background in agribusiness, fluency in Mandarin Chinese and excellent communication skills enabled her to succeed as the first Palauan to work under the UN system at the FAO Headquarters.
Ongly holds a bachelor of science degree in agribusiness from National Chung Hsing University, Taiwan and a high school diploma from California. “Living abroad and working on tackling sustainable development challenges similar to our own, I couldn't help but constantly think I should return and try to share my accumulated knowledge at home”, said Ongly. She credits her parents for inspiring her career choice, work ethic and instilling her passion for food and culture. Ms. Remengesau looks forward to pursuing further education by completing a master of arts degree with a focus on human resource development in a few years.

**Updates on Global Environment Facility (GEF) Projects**

**GEF5**

**Sustainable development**: The GEF5 project is making good progress on the development of several sustainable land management (SLM) strategies. Through a partnership with PCS, SLM strategies on housing, agro-ecological planning, stormwater and infrastructure are nearing completion. These SLM strategies will feed into the ministry's GEF6 project.

**Capacity assessment**: 28 ministry employees responded to the environmental coordination capacity assessment survey sent out in April. Some initial findings indicate that most survey respondents felt that the ministry had good capacity to build partnerships and access data and information, and has the authority and mandate to implement its objective of coordinating and aligning environmental actions and programs for Palau's environment sector. There was mixed feedback on organizational capacity in terms of skillsets and knowledge, and most respondents felt that the ministry needed to build its capacity in terms of oversight and internal feedback systems. In terms of activities, respondents perceived that the ministry had good organizational capacity in many areas, including: building partnerships, engaging stakeholders in planning and adaptive management, collaborating on field activities, reporting externally, negotiation and facilitation. Topics where respondents felt the ministry had the lowest organizational capacity were analysis and review of data and reporting indicators, sharing information internally, and political advocacy. At the individual level, respondents reported high individual capacities in areas requiring collaboration, such as documents and field activities. The data is currently being analyzed and will form the basis of a capacity building plan for the ministry as a GEF5 deliverable.
GEF6

State Partners: The EPU worked with seven GEF6 partner states on Babeldaob plus Peleliu to identify on-the-ground restoration and rehabilitation activities, thus enabling each state to access over $5,000 in funds. The ministry and PCS facilitated each state planning team through an annual work plan and a table with project outputs and activities and helped them start writing restoration action plans that identified best practices for reforestation or stream restoration. Koror also began its planning process by reviewing updates to the Rock Islands Southern Lagoon Management Plan. Altogether with the 9 state partners, NGOs, and several government agencies, the EPU is now coordinating budgets and activities among 19 different partners.

Joint Coordination: In its efforts to establish a more formal national planning framework, the EPU met with 10 governors from the Babeldaob states and formed the Babeldaob Joint Coordination Body (JCB). The Babeldaob JCB held its first meeting on June 17 where it self-organized by selecting Officers and reviewed the year-long process of planning for Babeldaob.

The Babeldaob JCB will negotiate and agree on sites and plans covering housing, agriculture, aquaculture, fisheries, forestry, sustainable tourism, and invasive species management. The ministry has one voting seat on the Babeldaob JCB and will also act as the Secretariat. A similar process is underway to set up a Southern Lagoon JCB with Koror and Peleliu.

Safeguards: The EPU, Bureau of Agriculture, Biosecurity Division and the National Invasive Species Committee worked together to create a policy on native and non-native plants. While the policy applies specifically to activities funded by GEF6, it lays the foundation for more streamlined and biodiversity-friendly approaches. The policy states which introduced species must be avoided at all times and which introduced species may be used with conditions. It also provides limits to controls on nuisance native species. At the same time, the EPU identified additional biodiversity, social, financial and climate safeguards. These
safeguards will better protect cultural heritage and endangered species, ensure gender balance, maintain financial transparency and fair benefits, and avoid increasing climate risks. One of the main goals of the GEF6 project is to mainstream these safeguards into all aspects of planning and management across multiple sectors.

**Communications:** The GEF6 project launched a website that we invite you to check out at [https://sites.google.com/view/gef6palau](https://sites.google.com/view/gef6palau) for maintaining transparency and improve knowledge management. Documents produced by the project such as safeguards, landscape plans and meeting agendas will be posted on the website. The website also enables access to national policies and plans and to a growing body of best practices and scientific knowledge to better manage land and water impacts. In addition to launching social media channels, the EPU also started sending out a weekly #MainstreamingMondays email to project partners to better coordinate activities. Photos from the project are being shared on the project’s Flickr account.

Great Reads - Locally based, inspiring and educational books

**The Diver Who Fell from the Sky: The Story of Pacific Pioneer Francis Toribiong**

Paperback – June 25, 2020

Available on Amazon

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This is the inspiring tale of an absolutely unique life, illustrated with images (black & white in this, the standard paperback, / colour in the e-book) of the beautiful islands of Palau, above and below the water.

Maverick, innovator, entrepreneur, environmentalist and sheer force of nature, Francis Toribiong is the father of Palau tourism, a scuba diving pioneer and an effective, tireless ambassador for both his country and its abundant marine and land resources.

He was born poor, had no academic leanings and no talent for diplomacy. Yet he was driven to succeed by a combination of duty, faith, a deep-seated determination to do the right thing and an absolute refusal ever to compromise his values.
Grandpa and the Baby Sea Turtles

Limited copies available on paperback at PCS for $20.00

“The day is now evening with a big full moon, and Grandpa wants to find a turtle soon.” This is how the new bilingual book *Grandpa and the Baby Sea Turtles* begins, a book authored and illustrated by staff members at Palau Conservation Society. “The story is really about finding balance in nature, learning from elders, but also listening to the voices of young people,” says Bola Majekobaje, PCS Executive Director.

When asked about inspiration for the book, she said, “My inspiration was my own daughter and wanting her to have contemporary books that reflects who she is as a Palauan.” The book was illustrated by Ms. Heather Ketebengang, Communications and Community Outreach Manager at PCS, and initial translation was done by local poet, Ms. Hermana Ramarui.

Meet Ms. Nazaria Tutiy

Our Ministry’s Profiled Employee for the Quarter

Originally from Peleliu, Ms. Nazaria Tutiy was born on July 24, 1967 and grew up in Meyuns in Koror. She attended Meyuns Elementary School from 1973 to 1980 and went on to attend Palau High School from 1981 to 1985. Nazaria began working as a cashier at Western Caroline Trading Company (WCTC) before moving to the government in 1997 and has now worked for the national government for over 20 years. She was a Medical Records Technician for the Ministry of Health from 1997 to 2016. After her time with the Ministry of Health, Nazaria began her tenure with BMR on May 8, 2017 as the Coastal Fisheries Officer. Her duties and responsibilities include issuing permits and inspecting fish and marine products before they can be exported. She also collects and enters data on fish catch and fisheries exports. Nazaria is known to be diligent and very helpful as she always assists or advice exporters on proper documentation and procedures for exporting marine products. She enjoys her work in the office and considers her colleagues family and often wants to assist when possible.

Besides her professional life, Nazaria has been happily married to Mr. Chiva Rii for more than 30 years and are looking forward to growing old together yet, staying young at heart. They have three sons - Chris, Chioney and Chaves, and one daughter - Chiana. She enjoys spending time with her family and friends and often likes to go out fishing for personal consumption and as gifts to family members and relatives. Naturally she loves to eat Palauan food such as fish and taro.

We hope you found this edition of our newsletter informative and invite you to check out our previous newsletters by going to [www.palaugov.pw/executive-branch/ministries/natural-resources/](http://www.palaugov.pw/executive-branch/ministries/natural-resources/). We’ll be sharing more stories and updates with you in our next edition coming out at the end of September.