RAMSAR implementation in the Pacific

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Background on the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands

- Oldest of the global environmental conventions
- Only global convention focusing attention on an ecosystem (wetlands)
- Covers very wide range of wetlands - from the “ridge to the reef”

**Ramsar Convention: Mission Statement**

“The conservation and wise use of wetlands through local and national actions and international cooperation, as a contribution towards achieving sustainable development throughout the world.”

(Ramsar Strategic Plan 2009-2015)
Ramsar’s definition of “wetlands”

“Wetlands are areas of marsh, fen, peat land or water, whether natural or artificial, permanent or temporary, with water that is static or flowing, fresh, brackish or salt, including areas of marine water the depth of which at low tide does not exceed six metres” (Article 1.1)

and

“May incorporate riparian and coastal zones adjacent to wetlands, and islands or bodies of marine water deeper than six metres at low tide lying within wetlands” (Article 2.1)
1899 Ramsar sites or wetlands of international importance at the global level with a total area of 186,549,792 hectares. Of the designated Ramsar sites, there are 77 of coral reefs with a total area of 14,539,457 hectares.

Regarding Ramsar regions:
- the Neotropics has 21 Ramsar sites with coral reefs with an area of 4,483,415 hectares;
- Africa with a total of 12 sites representing 2,681,603 ha.;
- Oceania with 10 sites and a total area of 2,710,953 ha.;
- Europe with seven sites with a total area of 2,389,648 ha.;
- North America has 17 sites with an area of 1,991,482; and
- Asia has 10 sites representing 282,356 hectares.
Wetland types in the Regions

- Drano or salt lake in Savusavu
- Coral reefs
- Mangroves
- Inland swamps
- Inland Swamp
- Rivers
- Coral reef ecosystems
- Freshwater lake
- Lake Lanoto’o - Samoa
- Marine lakes/ lagoons – Kiritimati Is. - RMI
- Freshwater marshes and swamp lands
- Mud flats
- Lake Ngardok - Palau
- Navua River Gorge - Fiji
- Rivers – Sepik River and Kikori/Rurai Rivers - PNG
- Freshwater marshes and swamp lands
- Coral reef ecosystem
Status of Ramsar in the Pacific Region

- August 2010 Regional workshop to review and update the 1999 ‘Regional Wetlands Action Plan for the Pacific Islands’ (RWAP).
- Workshop was financially supported by Governments of France, Australia, United States and Norway.
- Main Workshop Output: 3-year Regional Wetlands Action Plan for the Pacific Islands (2011-2013) with activities designed for 28 priorities in the areas of management, capacity building, research and monitoring for wetland ecosystems, including Coral reefs.
- MOU signed bet. SPREP and Ramsar Secretariat to promote wise use.
- Parties(6) - Republic of the Marshall Islands, Palau, Samoa, Fiji, Papua New Guinea, New Caledonia /France
- Non-Parties(7) - Vanuatu, Solomon, Nauru, Tonga, Wallis and Futuna, Cook Islands, Kiribati
- Partners - WI, USP, WWF, CI, WCS, Australian Scientific Institute, SPREP, Ramsar Secretariat, L M M A network
Importance of Wetlands in the region

• Critical to our livelihood, culture and traditions
• Source of water for communities and nation
• Food and health security for communities
• Generates economic benefits e.g. Tourism, medicines, food products
• Environment Protection and security e.g. Water purification, flood controls, sediment retention, etc.
• Spawning grounds and nurseries for most marine and freshwater organisms
• Migration corridors for migratory and trans-boundary species e.g. Turtles, seabirds, freshwater and marine fish
• Protects high diversity of wetland biodiversity, most of which still unknown
• Ensures continuity of wetlands functions / ecosystems connectivity
Regional Wetlands Action Plan 2011-2013

Issues

• Land tenure ship – a challenge for compensation and management
• Political will
• Public awareness, appreciation & perception of Ramsar Convention
• Population pressures
• Land-Use Developments
• Climate change
• Research/monitoring/law enforcement capacity
• Community awareness/ willingness/support/capacity & governance
• Baseline information
• Partnerships/synergies
Challenges

- Absence or inadequate support for legal protection
- Lack of national inventories of wetlands
- Absence of mapping and management plans
- Lack capacity to undertake wetlands survey/management.
- Lack of integration of wetlands management into policies and plans e.g. Land-Use, Climate Change, NBSAPs, which undermines importance of wetlands functions
- Absence of dedicated Ramsar officer at national level
- Absence of national forum eg. Steering Committees.
- Community and sectoral misconceptions/understanding of Ramsar objectives and importance of wetlands
- Lack of information on TK and practices on wetlands
- Increasing development and Invasive Alien Species
- Lack of integrated approach to land-use planning
- Waste Disposal and Pollution
Regional Wetlands Action Plan 2011-2013

Priorities

- National Inventories of wetlands
- National Action and Management Plans on wetlands
- Sharing success stories of wetlands management
- Establishing national wetlands steering committees
- Improve community understanding of wetlands connectivity
- Improving regional and national capacity for wetlands through academic institutions and scholarships
- Strengthening partnerships on formulation of RIS, CEPA etc
- Integrate wetland management into policies/plans e.g. CC, LU, NBSAPs, NSDPs, NES
- Establish national invasive management plans
- National / regional workshops on community based management for community ownership
- Regional resource materials & CEPA on wetlands
- Improve/strengthen development regulation and permitting e.g. EIA, Waste management, trade etc.
Opportunities for wetlands wise use

- Manado Ocean Declaration (Adopted on 14 May 2009, in Manado)
- Coral Triangle Initiatives
- Micronesia Challenge
- Coral Reef Initiatives for the Pacific (CRISP)
- Locally Managed Marine Areas
- Program of Work on Protected Areas (POWPA)
- Pacific Ocean 2020 Challenge
- Other MEAs eg. UNCBD and UNFCCC
VINAKA!!