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Editorial

The events of December 26, 2004, will hardly be news by the time this newsletter reaches you. Reconstruction efforts will hopefully be well underway in the affected countries and thoughts will be turning to how they can better prepare for future tsunamis. Pacific nations have much they could contribute to this given their history of tsunamis and the Pacific Tsunami Warning System created as a result (pp.3-4).

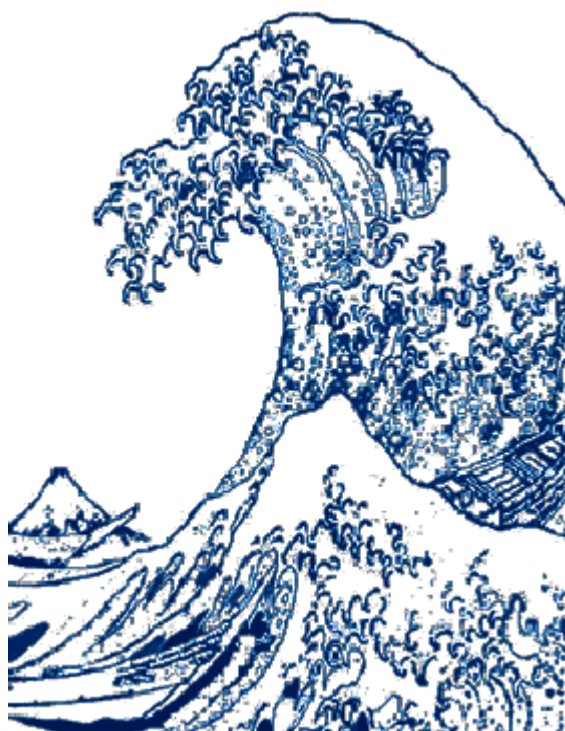
In addition to natural disasters, human conflicts have arisen as a consequence of our exploration and exploitation of the seas. Commercial fishing leaps to mind, so the creation of the new Tuna Commission which will manage the vital migratory fish stocks in the Western and Central Pacific (p.8) is welcome. Non-living marine resources can be just as contentious, though. News of submarine vents rich in gold and other minerals (p.5) may excite our imagination, but all too often research and discovery leads to disputes over ownership and utilization, especially when "black gold" or traditional rights are involved (p.7).

All of these examples demonstrate the need to understand the marine environment and manage the resources we take from it responsibly. PIMRIS supports this by improving access to information and this includes contributing records to ASFA, the global database of marine literature (p.9). You can help us in this by sending documents for inclusion and we encourage you to do so. As the region's experiences in dealing with tsunamis and managing marine resources demonstrate, lessons learned in the Pacific can be of benefit around the world. Fa'afetai,

Chris Nelson, PIMRIS Coordinator

Contents

New Faces, New Places	2
Tsunamis in the Pacific	3
Bathymetry Chart of the Lau Basin	5
Undersea Minerals, Organisms Discovered	6
Seabed Resources Disputed	7
New Fisheries Commission Established	8
Agency News	9
New FAO Publications	10
Announcements & Conferences	11
Other News from the Region	12



Directory

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New Faces, New Places

Suzie Davies, Manager of Library & Image Services at the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority was elected new Chair of the IODE Group of Experts on Marine Information Management (GEMIM) in September. She has been a librarian in the marine & environmental sciences in Australia for 20 years. IODE, the International Oceanographic Data and Information Exchange, was established by UNESCO in 1961 to enhance marine research and development by facilitating the sharing of oceanographic data.



Transform Aqorau has rejoined the Forum Fisheries Agency as Legal Counsel after working for a year and a half as Legal Adviser at the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat in Suva.

Former PIMRIS Coordinator **Ganeshan Rao** returned to Suva briefly in November/December, to conduct training sessions in ASFA input (p.9). Ganeshan now resides in sunny Brisbane, where he has been completing freelance indexing for ASFA and other work. He also maintains his Pacific connections as Acting Chair of the Pacific Islands Regional Group of IAMSLIC. He wishes PIMRIS well for 2005.



Marijane Porter is currently on leave from her post as Head of Information and Education at the Dept. of Marine and Wildlife Resources in American Samoa, on military duty in Iraq. At present Deborah Vaoalii is assisting staff and the librarian is Maria Mauga.

Simione Kuruvoli, PIMRIS Library Assistant for the past 3 years, will finish at the Coordination Unit in January 2005. USP Library policy is to rotate library assistants between positions every two years, so Simi's extra time at PIMRIS is appreciated. We wish him well in his new role in Reader Services and will welcome Sushila Lal as his replacement in 2005.



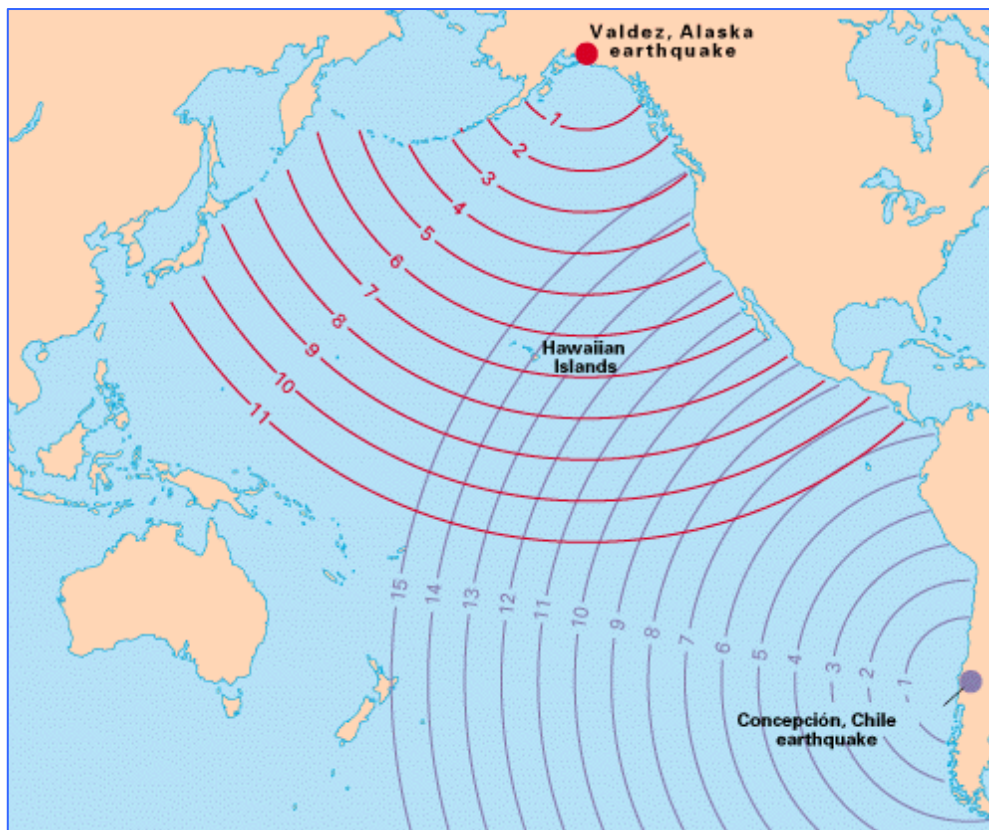
Tsunamis in the Pacific

The Indian Ocean tsunami was caused by the largest earthquake in the world for 40 years, but seismic activity and tsunamis are more common around the Pacific. Last century, almost 800 tsunamis were recorded in the Pacific Ocean, of which more than 100 caused damage and loss of life, mostly in their immediate vicinity. Around 10 caused destruction across the entire Pacific basin, but several of these also prompted development of a tsunami early warning system for the region.

Earthquakes and resultant tsunamis are more common in the Pacific because of the configuration of plates which make up the Earth's crust. The largest of these plates lies beneath much of the Pacific Ocean. The Pacific Plate grows as hot material from the mantle wells up at "mid-ocean" ridges, but is destroyed where it is subducted under other plates, such as in the Tonga-Kermadec Trench or off the Kuril and Aleutian Islands. In other places it grinds laterally past other plates. All of these movements generate seismic and volcanic activity, giving the Pacific boundary its "Rim of Fire" nickname.

Plate motions are normally imperceptible, on the order of a few centimetres per year. At subduction zones, however, the slow slide of one plate under another occasionally stalls and stress builds up until tens of metres of crust slip suddenly, causing a "megathrust" earthquake. This is what occurred near Sumatra in December and off the coasts of Chile and Alaska in 1960 and 1964, respectively (the latter two being the largest earthquakes recorded in the past century).

Seafloor uplifted by a large earthquake displaces an enormous amount of seawater, generating waves often less than half a metre high but travelling at up to 800 kilometres per hour. These can cross the Pacific Ocean in a matter of hours, as shown here for the two major tsunamis of the 1960s.



What happens as the waves approach a coastline depends upon a variety of factors, including depth of water, topography, weather and tides. Generally, however, friction slows the waves, causing water to accumulate vertically and either smash into the shoreline or create a fast-moving flood "tide". Since a tsunami consists of a series of waves, the first sign of one approaching is often water receding from a shore – the trough of the initial wave. This can draw curious people out into the path of the wave.

Not all earthquakes create tsunamis. Where two plates grind past each other, such as in the northern Lau Basin, friction may cause earthquakes but no vertical displacement of seawater. And tsunamis can have other causes, such as volcanic eruptions or submarine landslides. A combination of causes is not uncommon. The devastating tsunami which struck the northern coast of Papua New Guinea in 1998, for example, is believed to have been generated by a massive underwater slump of sediments, triggered by an earthquake.

Despite their far reach, Pacific-wide tsunamis can be less dangerous than smaller localised events like the one in Papua New Guinea, because early alerts of threats can be sent out by the Pacific Tsunami Warning System. Following the 1946 Aleutian earthquake and tsunami which caused damage across the Pacific, the US established a Pacific Tsunami Warning Centre in Hawai'i. This remains the centre of operations for the PTWS, which has grown into an international cooperative effort of 26 countries overseen by the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (an UNESCO body). Member states, which include Fiji, Samoa and the Cook Islands, monitor seismological and oceanographic recording stations across the Pacific. If the location and size of an earthquake match criteria known to generate a tsunami, warnings of an imminent hazard are issued to governments and media. These bodies pass on the warnings to the public, usually by commercial radio and television broadcasts.

Critics have argued that the PTWS is too reliant upon seismographic data, leading it to issue too many false alarms (for earthquakes which do not produce tsunamis). These undermine the credibility of the system by creating unnecessary fears and expenses. In May 1986, a tsunami warning that led to the evacuation of Honolulu cost the city more than \$25 million in lost salaries and business revenue. Technological improvements in the form of pressure recorders on the ocean bottom linked to surface buoys and satellite transmitters have been added in recent years to improve the ability of the system to determine when tsunamis have been created following seismic events.

Another inability of the system is unlikely to be solved by technology. Coastal areas close to the source of a tsunami will never have much warning of waves approaching. A locally-caused tsunami may reach a nearby shore in less than ten minutes, giving no time for the PTWS or local authorities to issue any alerts. In these situations, education can make a crucial difference.

In 1999, for example, a submarine landslip off the coast of Fatu Hiva, a tiny island in the Marquesas in French Polynesia, created a local tsunami. The islands here, as in Hawai'i, have very few offshore reefs and are thus particularly vulnerable to high waves; the 1946 tsunami that originated in Alaska claimed two lives here. These facts have probably contributed to a high awareness of tsunamis and how to react to them. The local headmistress of the school at Omoa on Fatu Hiva recognized the tell-tale sudden recession of seawater and immediately directed her students to run for higher ground. When the tsunami struck several minutes later, the school building was destroyed but no students were harmed.



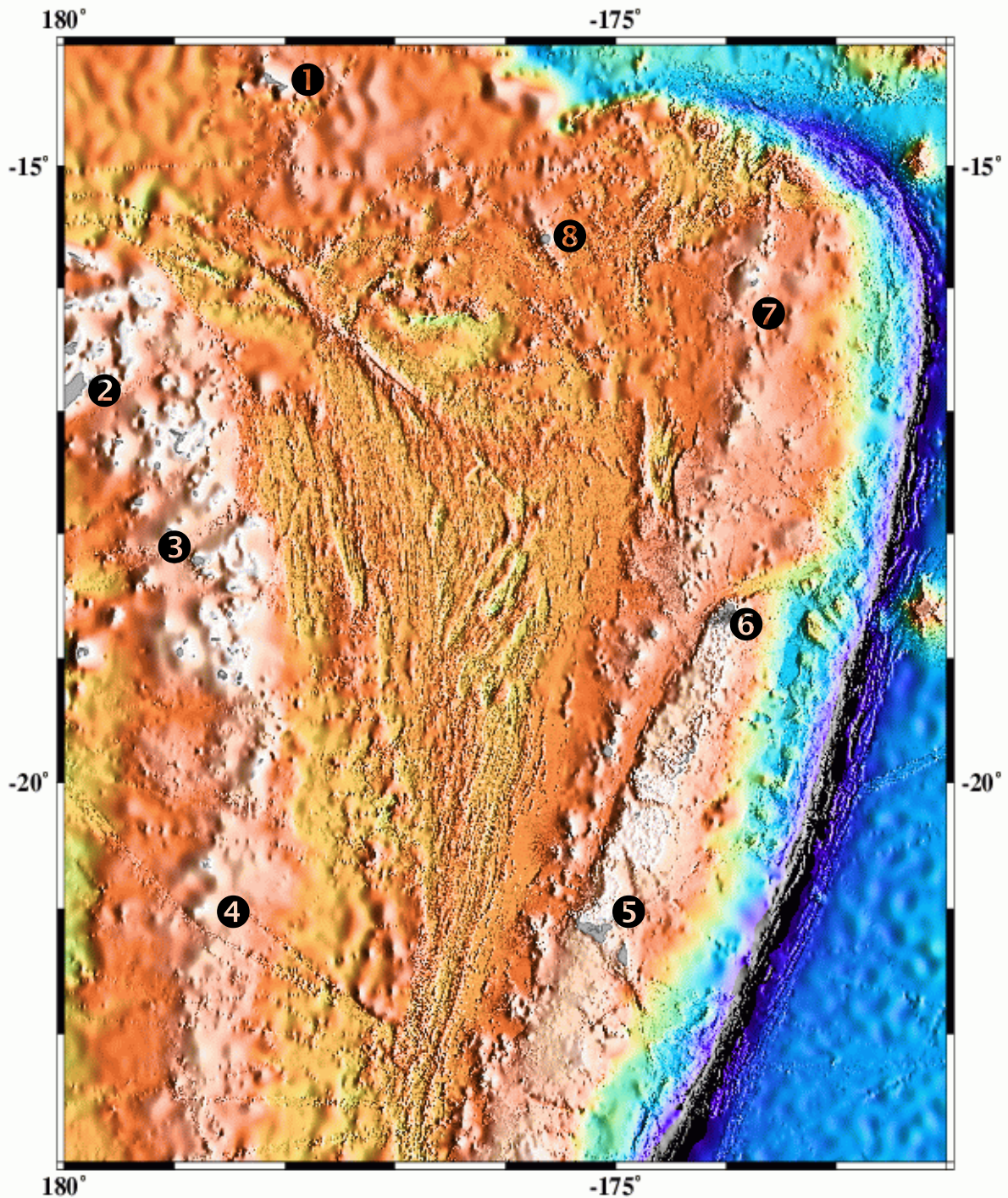
Tsunami resources available on the Internet include:

International Coordination Group for the Tsunami Warning System in the Pacific	(http://ioc.unesco.org/itsu/)
International Tsunami Information Center	(http://www.prh.noaa.gov/itic/)
Life of a Tsunami	http://walrus.wr.usgs.gov/tsunami/basics.html
Pacific Tsunami Museum	http://www.tsunami.org/index.htm
Pacific Tsunami Warning Center	http://www.prh.noaa.gov/ptwc/aboutptwc.htm
Science of Tsunami Hazards [journal]	http://epubs.lanl.gov/tsunami/

Bathymetry Chart of the Lau Basin

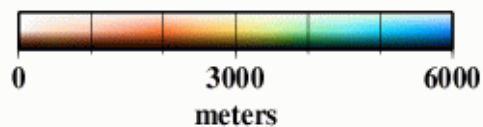
The V-shaped Lau Basin is bounded by submarine mountain chains which, above sea level, form the Lau and Tongan Islands. Further east, the deep Tonga-Kermadec Trench occurs where the Pacific Plate is subducted under the Australian Plate; in the north, the two plates slide past each other. It is friction from both movements that generates earthquakes and volcanic activity in the region.

(Source: USGS)



- ① Futuna
- ② Taveuni
- ③ Lakeba
- ④ Ono-i-Lau

Key to Depths and Surface Locations



- ⑤ Tongatapu
- ⑥ Vava'u
- ⑦ Niuatoputapu
- ⑧ Niufo'ou

Undersea Mineral Resources, Organisms Discovered

An expedition involving the world's deepest diving research submarine discovered rich deposits of gold and other minerals around undersea volcanoes in the South Pacific in September and October. It was the second cruise in a series of five collectively known as the South Pacific Odyssey.

Part of the larger Ridge 2000 Program exploring the ocean floor around the world, the South Pacific Odyssey aims to locate, map and study unique volcanic vents in the Lau Basin. This is a seismically very active part of the Pacific Ocean between Tonga and Fiji (see chart on previous page). Locating the vents is quite difficult as they are only a few metres in diameter.

According to chief scientist Charles Langmuir of Harvard University, researchers use an underwater vehicle called Autonomous Benthic Explorer (ABE) to find the vents. ABE crisscrosses the search area determined by the team at about 250 meters above the bottom, searching for plumes of warm water and suspended particles rising from the vents. Once a likely plume is detected, ABE searches the area again just 50 m from the bottom until it detects the plume again, usually directly beneath it now. The vehicle then moves in to 10 meters to snap pictures of the seafloor and vent.

Easy though this may sound, Langmuir says shifting ocean currents and tides can make the plume locations change on a daily basis. ABE was supplemented by a state-of-the-art manned submersible.

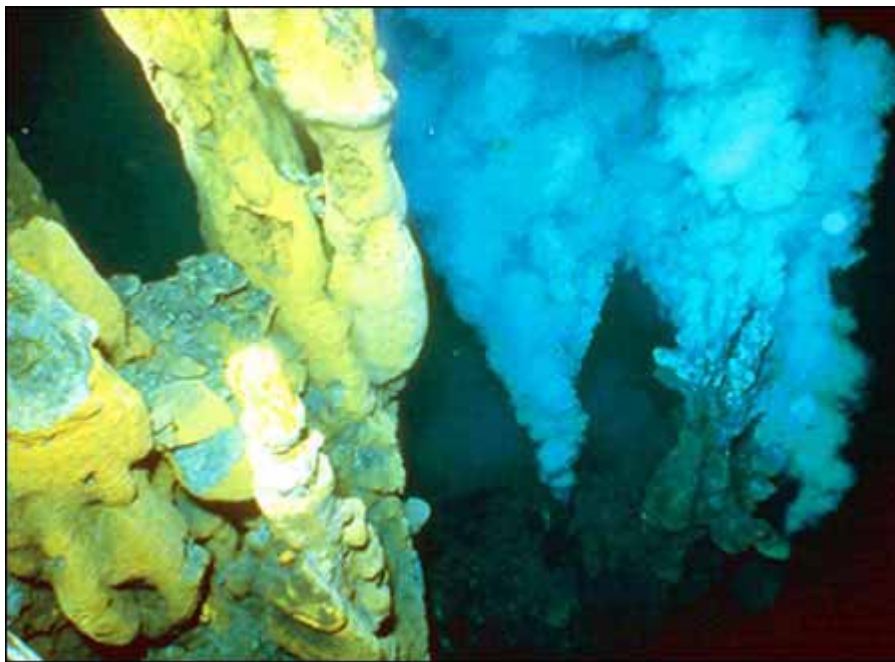


Photo: Daniel Desbruyeres, IFREMER

The Japanese *Shinkai 6500* submarine, which can reach depths of 6.5 kilometres, studied the submarine vents in the Basin during October.

“They are very, very rich in minerals, including gold,” scientist Ken Takai of the Japan Agency for Marine-Earth Science & Technology said. A number of samples were taken for further study. Iron, copper, manganese and zinc are all expected to be found in them, he told reporters.

In addition to the mineral wealth, later cruises will investigate the biological diversity surrounding the undersea vents. Life at this depth relies upon energy from heat and chemicals expelled from the vents instead of solar radiation, which plants and bacteria on the surface use for photosynthesis. Plants and animals dependent upon hydrothermal vents are thus different in ways that may help biologists learn how life on Earth first evolved.

The next expedition of the South Pacific Odyssey will be to the Brothers and Healy volcanoes in deep waters off New Zealand, to collect more geological samples, hot fluids and gases, and organisms.

(Sources: *Harvard University Gazette* 14 Oct 2004; PACNEWS 3: 22 Oct 2004; <http://www.ridge2000.org>)

The logbook of the South Pacific Odyssey can be found at: <http://www.southpacificodyssey.org/>

Seabed Resources Disputed

Crucial Timor Sea oil talks collapse

Critical talks over the rich Timor Sea oil and gas reserves broke down in October, creating a potential crisis for East Timor and putting in doubt lucrative Australian projects. Australian negotiators walked out of talks in Dili, saying they were "perplexed and disappointed".

Woodside Petroleum warned it would drop development of the Greater Sunrise field, worth more than \$10 billion to the Timorese and Australian governments, if a development treaty was not ratified by Christmas. A spokesman said it needed "physical and regulatory certainty before we proceed. Our concern remains for the Timorese. Unless we have an agreement they don't have a project, and neither does Australia."

By year's end negotiations had not resumed and the East Timorese Parliament had introduced legislation allowing other foreign companies to obtain oil and gas exploration licences. Both Chinese and Malaysian operators are keen to become more active in the area. East Timor believes better agreements over the oil and gas fields are essential to secure its economic future. It had argued for Woodside to build a pipeline to process the natural gas from the Greater Sunrise field in Dili, instead of Darwin as planned. The Australians rejected this, saying location of the processing plant was a commercial decision for Woodside.

Australia also rejects Timor's claims that the sea boundary should be halfway between the two countries and has withdrawn from the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea, which could be used to challenge the initial Timor Sea Treaty signed in May 2002.

The talks in Darwin had centred on a "creative solution" under which Australia offered to split revenue from the Greater Sunrise deal 50-50, instead of 80-20 in favour of Australia. In return East Timor would have had to agree not to challenge the seabed boundaries between the two countries within the next century. Greater Sunrise is closer to Timor than Australia.

An Australian official said all the ideas they had proposed had been rejected by East Timor. "We are very disappointed, but we weren't able to come up with a solution," he said. "I'm out of ideas and out of creativity." East Timorese President Xanana Gusmao has accused Australia of robbing food from the mouths of East Timorese children in its approach to the oil reserves.

(The Age, Oct 28; The Australian, Dec 13, 2004)

New Zealand seabed legislation "evil", says submission

New Zealand's proposed seabed and foreshore legislation was labeled "evil" by Hauraki's Maori Trust Board's submission to a select committee in October. The board made its submission on behalf of 12 *iwi*, including the tribe from Coromandel, Ngati Maru, in Wellington.

The Board said the bill was "evil, discriminatory and in breach of international human rights". It said its people were among the most landless in the North Island, with only 2.6 per cent of dry land staying with the tribe. "The bill trashes us -- it cuts across our legitimate legal rights of due process," the board said. "No region is so intertwined with the foreshore as Hauraki, with Coromandel Peninsula home to more than 6500 Maori archaeological sites."

Hauraki viewed the bill as a continuation of attempts since the 1980s by government to alienate *iwi* from their customary rights to the foreshore. They said they were against the bill because it was not supported by *Tainui* and prevented *iwi* from establishing the full extent of their customary rights. The bill has drawn criticism from many Maori people.

(PACNEWS 3: Mon 4 Oct 2004)

New Fisheries Commission Established

The Inaugural Session of the Commission for the Conservation and Management of Highly Migratory Fish Stocks in the Western and Central Pacific Ocean (commonly referred to as the Tuna Commission) was held in Pohnpei, capital of the Federated States of Micronesia, on 6-7 December. It followed immediately on from the final preparatory conference (PrepConVII).



Michael Lodge, the head of the interim secretariat for the preparatory conference, was selected to head the new body by representatives of the attending nations. More than 250 officials from 29 nations met although only 17 of the countries have actually ratified the convention so far: 12 Pacific island nations, plus Australia, China, Korea, New Zealand and Taiwan.

Both China and Taiwan acceded to the Convention only in November, in time to participate in the inaugural meeting. For other attending nations, like the United States, the approval process will be a formality. Some, including Japan, Indonesia and the Philippines, were expected to indicate their intentions to formally join the Tuna Commission at the meeting.

“Japan didn’t sign when the convention was initially opened for membership,” said Bernard Thoulag, Executive Director of the National Oceanic Resource Management Authority for Micronesia. “It then went around, trying to derail the convention. But now, they see no other way and don’t want to be sidelined.” The European Commission “is anxious to be a member,” he said. “But we have to clarify the implication of EC membership in terms of voting in the Commission.”

To be based in Pohnpei, the Commission will be the first attempt to regulate and manage commercial fishing on the high seas (areas outside the 200 mile exclusive economic zones of Pacific nations).

The Pacific’s tuna resource accounts for 40 percent of the world’s total, and is worth an estimated \$2 billion annually to the fleets from the distant water fishing nations (DWFN) that ply the region. But that resource is under pressure: scientists agree that big eye tuna is already being over-fished, and yellow fin tuna — which is in huge demand for sashimi markets in Asia, Europe and the United States — is at its maximum sustainable catch levels.

In addition to the hundreds of currently licensed fishing vessels from Asia and the U.S., dozens more from the European Union, the Russian Federation and South America are eyeing what may be the world’s last vibrant fishery. Added to this is concern about unlicensed vessels fishing illegally in the region, Thoulag said.

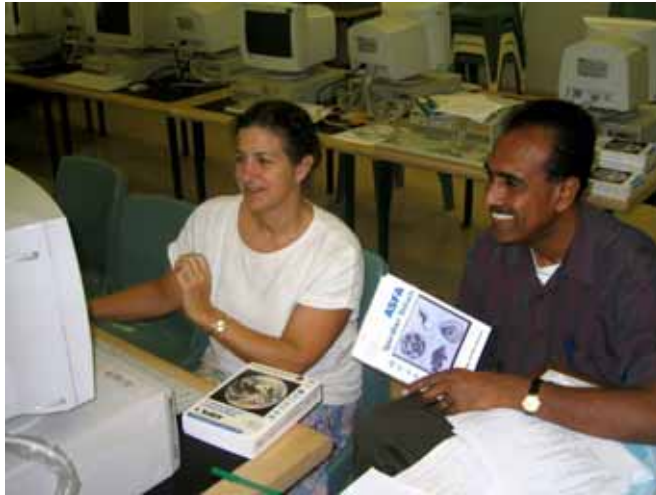
The inaugural meeting did not address details of how fishing will be controlled. “A key issue that needs to be decided is compliance with the regulations of the Commission and how the regulations are to be enforced,” said Thoulag. “There is a debate about the rights of vessels on the high seas and compliance with Commission regulations. The convention puts a lot of responsibility on the flag states to help enforce” (that is, to ensure that vessels flying their flags are abiding by the regulations). “But I don’t know how this will work in practice.” Control options being considered include limiting the number of vessels, putting quotas on tuna tonnage, and reducing fishing days.

FSM President Joseph Urusemal stated that fishing limits that “err on the side of caution” were needed, but said at the same time the Tuna Commission moves to regulate fishing, new management efforts should take into account “the special interests of developing states, particularly small-island developing states.” He warned island officials not to miss potential opportunities for developing their domestic fishing industries and urged foreign fishing companies “to undertake meaningful (vessel) basing, production and employment in the islands so that together we build a mutually beneficial long-term relationship with the overall goal of a sustainable fishery.”

(PACNEWS: Tues 30 Nov, Mon 6, Tue 7, Thu 9 & Fri 10 Dec)

Agency News

SPC, USP librarians trained in ASFA input



Three librarians from the Secretariat of the Pacific Community and the University of the South Pacific attended a workshop in ASFA input conducted at the university in November/December. Sponsored by FAO, the training was conducted by none other than Ganeshan Rao, the former PIMRIS Coordinator.



Rachele Oriente (SPC Librarian, shown at left with Ganeshan), Lusi Ravuvu (Chief Cataloguer, USPL), and Chris Nelson spent a week learning how to create professional abstracts and bibliographic records to be

added to *Aquatic Sciences and Fisheries Abstracts*. This is an international database, the largest in the world covering literature on marine, freshwater and brackish water environments. It contains around 1 million references, with coverage dating from 1971. Thousands of records are added each month by ASFA partners in a co-operative effort designed to improve access to information on aquatic sciences and marine resources.

Every record added includes details of the indexed document in its original language (all non-English titles are also translated into English); an English language and/or non-English language abstract; and subject, taxonomic and geographic index entries as needed. To ensure database uniformity, a series of publications issued by FAO covering indexing, abstracting and data entry procedures, as well as subject categories and ASFA thesaurus terms, must be used when completing new records. All ASFA partners submit records in a standard machine-readable format to the publisher, Cambridge Scientific Abstracts (CSA) which processes them to create a master file. From this, a variety of information products and services are made available to users around the world. The full database is published as a journal and on CD-ROM and made accessible over the Internet by subscription.

The ASFA partnership consists of 4 United Nations co-sponsors (FAO, IOC, UNDOALOS & UNEP), 9 regional or international agencies (including PIMRIS and now SPC), 39 national partners and CSA. PIMRIS became a partner in 1997 and SPC was invited to join as a separate member in 2004. The PIMRIS Coordination Unit and SPC Library in Noumea will now share responsibility for contributing records to ASFA of new aquatic books and journals published in the Pacific region.

SPREP changes name – but not acronym

An official name change for the Pacific's leading environmental organization was formally approved at its 15th annual meeting in Tahiti in November. The former South Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP) is now the Pacific Regional Environment Programme, while its administration has become the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environmental Programme.



The internationally known acronym "SPREP" will continue to be used both for the organization and the Secretariat. "This is a minor but important change for the organization. Our members feel the new designation better reflects our mandate, as well as the geographical spread of our members in both the south and the north of this vast region," said Director Asterio Takesy.

New FAO Publications

Conservation and management of shared fish stocks: legal and economic aspects / Gordon Munro, Annick Van Houtte & Rolf William. Rome, 2004. (FAO Fisheries Technical Paper No. 465) 78 pp. ISBN 92-5-105142-9. TC/M/Y5438/E

The effective management of shared fish stocks stands as one of the great challenges towards achieving long-term sustainable fisheries. These resources account for as much as one-third of world marine capture fishery harvests. This paper explores the legal and economic aspects of the management of each of the several different categories of shared stocks, namely transboundary, highly migratory, straddling and discrete high seas stocks. The economics of the issue point to the conclusion that, with few exceptions, effective cooperation between and among states is a fundamental prerequisite for sustainable resource management.

Global aquaculture outlook in the next decades: an analysis of national aquaculture production forecasts to 2030 / Cécile Brugère & Neil Ridler. Rome, 2004. (FAO Fisheries Circular No. 1001) 54 pp. ISSN 0429-9329. TC/D/Y5648/E

Aquaculture production is expected to play a crucial role in forthcoming decades in compensating for stagnant capture fisheries and in meeting increased demand for aquatic products. This report is designed to ascertain the compatibility of national aquaculture production forecasts with the global prevision of the sector's growth to 2020 and beyond.

Historical trends of tuna catches in the world / Makoto P. Miyake, Naozumi Miyabe & Hideki Nakano. Rome, 2004. (FAO Fisheries Technical Paper No. 467) 80 pp. ISBN 92-5-105136-4 TC/M/Y5428/E

This paper reviews historical trends of the catches of the major commercial species (albacore, bigeye, bluefin, skipjack and yellowfin) of tunas. The total world catch of these species has increased during the last 50 years (from 0.4 to 3.9 million tonnes), but the pattern of increase has varied among species, oceans and fishing gears. The causes of those variations are analysed in this paper. In the world catch, the Pacific Ocean has been predominant throughout. In recent years catches from the Indian Ocean have exceeded those from the Atlantic.

Report of the Technical Consultation to Review Progress and Promote the Full Implementation of the International Plan of Action to Prevent, Deter and Eliminate Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing and the International Plan of Action for the Management of Fishing Capacity, Rome, 24-29 June 2004. (FAO Fisheries Report No. 753) 50 pp. ISBN 92-5-105058-9. TR/M/Y5681/E

The Technical Consultation made major recommendations on how to strengthen international cooperation on managing fishing capacity and combating IUU fishing. It also asked FAO to undertake a series of actions to facilitate effective and full implementation of these two IPOAs. Noting in particular and ongoing build-up of capacity in tuna fisheries in the western and central Pacific Ocean, the Technical Consultation suggested that governments in the region should lend priority attention to addressing the situation, including halting introductions of additional large-scale fishing vessels.

Threadfins of the world (family Polynemidae). An annotated and illustrated catalogue of polynemid species known to date / Hiroyuki Motomura. (FAO Species Catalogue for Fisheries Purposes No. 3) Rome, 2004. 138 pp. ISBN 92-5-105128-3. TC/M/Y5398/E

This is the third number in the new FAO series of worldwide annotated and illustrated catalogues of major groups of organisms that enter marine fisheries. The present volume on the family *Polynemidae* includes 41 species belonging to 8 genera. There is an introductory section with general remarks on habitat and fisheries of the family, a glossary of technical terms, an illustrated key to each genus and all species, and a detailed account for all species. Species accounts include an illustration of each species, scientific and vernacular names, and information on habitat, biology, fisheries, size, relevant literature and distribution. Following the species accounts are a list of nominal species in the family, a table of species by major marine fishing areas and colour plates. A list of all nominal species and their present allocations is given. The work is fully indexed and there is a comprehensive list of references to pertinent literature.

Announcements

Ocean Yearbook (Vol. 20) - Call For Papers & Student Competition

For over 20 years under the senior editorship of the late Elisabeth Mann Borgese, the *Ocean Yearbook* has published leading edge articles, reports and reference materials devoted to the issues and concerns affecting the world's oceans. Marine biologists, oceanographers, and specialists in foreign policy, ocean development, coastal zone management, international law, and strategic studies around the world have found the *Ocean Yearbook* an invaluable tool for research on this vital global resource. Editorship of the *Ocean Yearbook* is a cooperative effort of the International Ocean Institute and Dalhousie University Law School.

The *Ocean Yearbook* editors are now inviting submissions for volume 20 before March 31st, 2005. Research articles, think-pieces, and surveys on one or more of the following topics will be considered for publication: Issues and prospects; ocean governance; living resources of the ocean; non-living ocean resources; transportation and communications; environment and coastal management; maritime security; military activities; regional developments; training and education. For further details: http://as01.ucis.dal.ca/law/law_3986.html#CallForPapers

Research papers on marine affairs subjects by current students are invited for our annual competition. For details see: http://as01.ucis.dal.ca/law/law_3986.html#prize2005.

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Conference & Workshop Notices

2005

- March 7-11 26th FAO Committee on Fisheries Meeting ([COFI](http://www.fao.org/fi/body/cofi/cofi.asp)), Rome, Italy. *For more information:* <http://www.fao.org/fi/body/cofi/cofi.asp>
- March 23-25 International Workshop on Marine and Coastal Protected Areas, University Moulay Ismail, Merknès, Morocco. <http://www.deu.edu.tr/inoc>
- April 4-8 Pacific Islands Coastal & Community Fisheries Legislation and Management Workshop, Nadi, Fiji. Contact Ueta Fa'asili, SPC Coastal Fisheries Management Section (uetaf@spc.int) for more details.
- May 9-13 World Aquaculture '05: International Annual Conference and Exposition, Bali Convention Centre, Indonesia
<http://www.was.org/Meetings/ConferenceInfo.asp?MeetingCode=WA2005>
- May 16-21 7th Indo-Pacific Fish Conference, Taipei, Taiwan
<http://www.ipfc7.org/title.htm>
- May 17-19 8th International Conference on Remote Sensing for Marine and Coastal Environments, Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada
<http://www.waterobserver.org/event-2005-05/>

Other News from the Region

Niue: Niueans to concentrate on fishing

The Niue government is encouraging local fishermen to supply fish to the new NZD\$3 million (USD\$2.153m) Reef Group processing plant in Alofi. The current offer to back-up licensed New Zealand long liners are a NZD\$750,000 (USD\$538,425) purchase of 16 plastic six-metre boats with an open deck and protected steering position. Capable of holding 500kg of fish each has a long line capability of 300 hooks. The boats will be powered by 40-horsepower outboard capable of reaching speeds of 20 knots and would carry a crew of two.

Fourteen craft would be allocated to the island villages and two to the Canoe and Fishing Associations. Three trailers would be provided and the boats would be stored on skids near the wharf area. The government is offering interest free loans to finance the boats with a no interest repayment period of five years. Villagers and their councils are at present discussing the proposal. Meanwhile the factory, opened in October, has yet to process any fish and is waiting supplies from New Zealand long-liners expected to start working in Niue waters early New Year. Most fishing vessels have left the South-east Pacific due to the cyclone season which extends from November to May. (Source: PACNEWS 2: Mon 27 Dec 2004)

Somewhere in the Pacific: Mystery whale song

A solitary whale with a voice unlike any other has been wandering the Pacific for over a decade, according to marine biologists at the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution. Using hydrophone recordings made by the US Navy to track submarine manoeuvres, now partially declassified, they traced the movement of whales in the Northern Pacific and discovered that a lone whale singing at a frequency of around 52 hertz has been cruising the ocean since 1992. Its calls identify it as a baleen whale but do not match any of the known species, which include blue, fin and humpback whales. These whales all normally make calls or pulsed sounds at frequencies of between 15 and 20 hertz. The unusual whale does not follow the migration patterns of any other species either, according to team leader Mary Anne Daher. The calls have deepened slightly over time, probably as a result of ageing, but are still recognisable. Daher doubts that the whale belongs to a new species.

(*New Scientist*, 11 Dec 2004, after a paper published in *Deep-Sea Research*, vol.51)

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