

PACIFIC INVASIVES INITIATIVE

The News, January 2007



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

NZAID review underway

PII is being reviewed by New Zealand's International Aid & Development Agency (NZAID) as the end of a three-year contract draws near. The review starts formally on 13 February with the reviewers being briefed by NZAID in Wellington, but the reviewers, Ed Peek and Sophie van der Meeren, are currently reviewing programme information provided by the PII Coordinating Team and are taking an enthusiastic interest in the work of PII.

NZAID's involvement started in 2001 with support for activities of the Cooperative Initiative on Invasive Species on Islands (CII) including development of the Pacific Programme (PP-CII). At the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) in Johannesburg, New Zealand identified the CII as one of the "Type II" partnerships it would like to support.

In July 2004, NZAID signed a three-year contract with the Invasive Species Specialist Group (ISSG) to coordinate a regional partnership for invasive species management in the Pacific. The PP-CII partnership was renamed the Pacific Invasives Initiative, or PII, in October 2005.

NZAID has set two objectives for the review; 1) Evaluate impact achieved with NZAID support at the objective and output levels, 2) Drawing on the results of objective one, advise NZAID on future inputs to invasive species management in the Pacific.

The reviewers will visit some projects (yet to be decided) and may want to talk with those involved in PII Demonstration Projects. Please give them your support as it is important for NZAID to continue to support invasive species management in the Pacific.

Pest control progress in New Caledonia

A symposium jointly hosted by Province Nord Government, Conservation International and Association Dayu Biik (a collective of local tribes), in Kone, New Caledonia, reflected an important step forwards as virtually all key agencies and stakeholders attended and expressed their support for a cooperative, experimental approach to pest control in the vicinity of Mont Panié. PII recommended initiating two projects, a steering group was established and arrangements were made for a follow-up technical meeting early in 2007 where plans for both projects will be refined. While much more work remains to be done these are exciting developments in one of the world's biodiversity "hotspots" – and one of the original PII Demonstration Projects.

Hatohobei training

During his time in Koror the study team leader conducted a comprehensive 3-day training programme on invasive ant management for the Helen Reef conservation officers, officers from the quarantine agency, crew of the MV Atoll Way, Hatohobei State representatives, Sonsoral State representatives, the entomologist and a research associate from the Belau National Museum (a total of 20 participants). This programme was designed to prepare the participants for their roles in the implementation of the project. Skills learned during this training were successfully applied by Mr. Jesse Czekanski-Moir who made the site visit in November 2006. The study team also undertook awareness raising activities within the Tobian community in Koror and with several Government agencies.

Vanua research on Fiji projects

A post-operational review of Vatu-i-Ra and Viwa Demonstration Projects incorporating indigenous research methods (*vanua* - where people tell the story of the project in their own way) has almost been completed. Peni Sakitora from Foundation of the Peoples of the South Pacific International (FSPI), Fiji, and his team have interviewed and filmed community members and implementing agency staff in both projects. The footage taken will be made into a 55 minute DVD This will be in Fijian and subtitled in English and will be available through PII

Pohnpei trial eradications

PII is working with The Conservation Society of Pohnpei (CSP) and Island Conservation (IC), through the Pohnpei Rat Eradication Demonstration Project, to enhance the biosecurity of Pohnpei's island ecosystems, and that of other similar ecosystems throughout the Pacific. The Demonstration Project will provide training for NGO and government conservation organizations and help develop the capacity to plan, fund, and implement subsequent rat eradications in threatened island ecosystems.

PII Coordinating Team development

Team retreat

The coordinating team held a three day retreat in November on Auckland's West Coast organised by Karen Johns (PII Community Participation Adviser) and Souad Boudjelas (PII Programme Manager). The purpose was to "be a team that supports and values each other". We worked on issues to increase team effectiveness - in structure, decision making, and in our interactions with key stakeholders. On the third day we involved our specialist advisers from Austral Foundation, NZ Department of Conservation and NZ Landcare Research. The retreat was a great opportunity for us to work in a relaxed (and beautiful)

environment and take the time to go a little deeper than we are able to in the normal hectic working week. Thanks to Anne Bailey of 'Co-Operacy' for facilitating and to our advisers for making themselves available to join us.

Strategic Planning

To follow up from the retreat the Coordinating Team has this month undertaken a strategic planning exercise to see what PII may look like in 2012. The ideas are being refined and a draft document will be circulated to partners for input within the next month.

PII outreach

Our website is constantly being updated by Steven Bavin (PII Programme Support Officer). Keep an eye on it!

A poster prepared by Bill Nagle (PII Project Coordinator) describing the work of PII was presented at poster sessions at the UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum in Jersey and at the Australasian Wildlife Management Society Conference in Auckland.

Alan Saunders (PII Director) was invited by the Argentine National Parks Authority and Wildlife Conservation Society to Tierra del Fuego in December to advise Argentinean and Chilean agencies on the prospects of eradicating invasive North American beavers from the area. Alan's suggestion that a Feasibility Study, using PII Guidelines, should be undertaken to answer critical questions was accepted and key agencies are now collaborating to finalise Terms of Reference and secure funds for this study.

A growing number of requests through the PII for advice, indicates not only a growing international awareness of invasive species issues, but also recognition that PII (including its partners and collaborators) may be able to assist.

2007 PII Steering Group Meeting

The 2007 PII Steering Group Meeting will be at the University of Auckland, New Zealand from Tuesday 3 July to Friday 6 July.