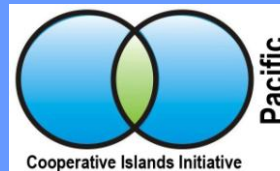


Pacific Invasives Initiative

(a programme of the Pacific Invasives Partnership – a Working Group of the Roundtable for Nature Conservation in the Pacific Islands)



The News, November 2008

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 (PII CT). 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>.

PII and PILN Partnerships merge

At a joint meeting in Suva, Fiji (17-21 Nov 2008), the partner organizations of the Pacific Invasives Initiative (PII) and the Pacific Invasives Learning Network (PILN) agreed to form a single united partnership, called the Pacific Invasives Partnership (PIP), to provide continued guidance and support to PII and PILN, as well as to other invasive species initiatives in the Pacific.

The new joint partnership also agreed to be merged with the Invasive Species Working Group (ISWG) of the Roundtable for Nature Conservation in the Pacific Islands, thereby encouraging coordination and collaboration between all agencies working to tackle invasive species in the region.

PIP is dedicated to ensuring the success of the Guidelines for Invasive Species Management in the Pacific, which were endorsed by the member countries and territories of SPREP and SPC this year and should be published early in 2009.

All members of PIP strongly endorse the essential, distinctive and mutually supportive roles that PII and PILN play in building the capacity of Pacific agencies and organizations to carry out invasive species prevention and management, and in ensuring the success of the Guidelines.

PII assists Pacific agencies and organisations with their invasive species management projects by providing technical support, access to experts, and peer review. Through the formation and support of multi-sector invasive species teams in Pacific island countries and territories, PILN facilitates peer learning, networking and exchange of information. Both PII and PILN contribute to planning, skill sharing and training in the region.

The work of PII and PILN complements that of SPC and SPREP, the lead agencies for invasive species management in the region, and the merging of PIP and the ISWG should improve coordination not only between these agencies but also with others working on invasive species in the Pacific.

The Partner organisations of PII and PILN that formed PIP are: Birdlife International, Conservation International, IUCN Invasive Species Specialist Group, IUCN Oceania, National Park of American Samoa, New Zealand's International Aid and Development Agency, Palau Office of Environmental Response and

Coordination, Secretariat of the Pacific Community, Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme, The Nature Conservancy, University of the South Pacific, USDA Forest Service.

New PII Coordinating Team member

We welcome Batiri Thaman Hughes to PII and to the Pacific invasive species management family. Batiri joined the Coordinating Team on 21 October as the Programme Support Officer. She has a Master of Science in Environmental Management from James Cook University of North Queensland and a Bachelor of Science in Environmental Studies from The University of the South Pacific in Fiji.

Batiri emigrated to NZ from Fiji in 2007. Prior to this, she worked for 7 years at the University of the South Pacific as an Assistant Project Manager with the Institute of Applied Sciences (IAS). Her work involved a range of environment-related activities including; environmental baseline assessments, Environmental Impact Assessments, marine resource management, development of awareness materials, organizing and facilitating environmental workshops, coordinating a major project involving the Fiji government on Integrated Coastal Management.

Farewell to PILN Coordinator

Jill Key, PILN Coordinator, left PILN in mid-November. Invasive species management in the Pacific has lost a tireless worker. Jill starts a new post in the international training centre of the Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust in the UK (they led the Island Species Led Action course in Guam in February 2008).

We wish Jill well for the future and as her new job involves training and capacity building in the Pacific region, we look forward to meeting her again.

It is expected that a new PILN coordinator will be recruited in the New Year and in the meantime all network business will be handled by Alan Tye, SPREP Invasive Species Officer, and Mark Bonin as interim coordinator. Correspondence to piln@sprep.org.

Emergency Response Planning for ant incursions

PII and other PAPP members responsible for biosecurity in the Pacific drafted a detailed Emergency Response Plan (ERP) for ant incursions at a workshop conducted by SPC in Suva, Fiji between 6th and 8th October 2007. The ERP can be used by Pacific Island Countries and Territories (PICTs) as a basis for ant-specific emergencies - especially for Red Imported Fire Ants (*Solenopsis invicta*) and Little Fire Ant (*Wasmannia auropunctata*) both of which are known to be extremely destructive.

The document covers pre-incursion planning and initial detection and response and outlines a generic management structure, including the functions and responsibilities of key players, that can be adapted to suit each country's unique circumstances. Additional sections include: Standard Operating Procedures; resources; contact details for taxonomists; chemicals and equipment that may be necessary.

It is recommended that each PICT should ensure that any exotic ants not already present in the country or jurisdiction have been, or can easily be, declared under relevant legislation so that action can be taken should an incursion be reported. Additionally, it is important that a mechanism exists to allow the fast allocation of emergency funds from other budgets. This should be part of a wider preparedness for incursions of exotic pests and diseases. Countries and SPC will need to up-date the document and any other related plan annually. The document should also be reviewed during and after an incursion.

In its function as Secretariat to the Pacific Plant Protection Organisation, SPC has the duty to inform other countries about incursions in the form of Pest Alerts.

ISSG Chair stands down

After 15 years as Chair of the Invasive Species Specialist Group (ISSG) of the Species Survival Commission (SSC) of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN), Mick Clout is standing down. Mick supported the formation of the Cooperative Initiative on Invasive Alien Species on Islands after COP6 which led to PII.

At the World Conservation Congress in October in Barcelona, Spain, IUCN presented Mick with the Sir Peter Scott Award for Conservation Merit. The Sir Peter Scott Award is the "senior" SSC award, dating back to 1984, and is presented to individuals in recognition of significant and long term service to conservation through their work with the SSC or associated institutions. The award was presented to Mick in recognition of his unflagging and successful efforts to bring invasive alien species issues to the forefront of IUCN's

work and his dedicated leadership of the IUCN SSC Invasive Species Specialist Group.

We thank Mick for his efforts on behalf of PII, congratulate him on this most recent award and wish him well for the future. Mick will still be involved with ISSG and will continue to support PII in that role and also in his main work as a Professor at The University of Auckland.

IUCN World Conservation Congress Barcelona, 5-9 October, 2008

PII, with help from IUCN Oceania, NZDOC, Landcare Research NZ and TNC, presented Alliance #290 "Celebrating success of a partnership approach to invasive species management to safeguard biodiversity and livelihoods" on Tuesday 7 October.

The lively exchange of ideas that followed presentations about projects supported by PII covered topics such as; the diversity of target species (including conflict species), the inclusion of countries with islands as well as island states in this initiative, the importance of people and livelihood issues with respect to biodiversity issues, lessons other regions can learn from PII.

There is growing interest in the PII model and its project development protocols from Europe, the Indian Ocean and the Caribbean. Participants discussed potential funding sources ranging from the private sector to development aid programmes, the importance of cooperation and institutional relationships, and how to take PII's momentum beyond its NZ supported start-up.

Partners are planning a workshop on regional cooperation on IAS threats to be hosted by NZ, possibly early in 2010. The workshop will look at differences, similarities, opportunities and challenges in order to crystallise existing work and build cooperation. The contribution that PII can make as a catalyst will be highlighted at the workshop.

(Thanks to Michael Browne (ISSG) for this report)

ALIENS Newsletter

Many stakeholders are mobilized against invasive species, but in spite of geographical and ecological differences, they face similar difficulties: weak public awareness, poorly accessible scientific data, lack of coordination, and unsuitable legal instruments. We must share invasive species data and information with others around the world because this information will improve everyone's ability to respond to invasive species more effectively.

If you have any invasive species articles/stories that you would like to share with other practitioners, send them to Carola Warner at the ISSG Secretariat (c.warner@auckland.ac.nz) for possible inclusion in the Aliens Newsletter.