

Collaborative relief efforts for FSM Outer Islands ongoing

FSM Information Services

February 29, 2024

Palikir, Pohnpei--Responding to recent tide surges and persistent droughts in several outer islands of the FSM, the national government, through the Department of Environment, Climate Change, and Emergency Management (DECEM), has mobilized emergency relief supplies for affected communities in Pohnpei, Yap, and Chuuk. MV Navigator, which departed Weno on February 5, 2024, carried relief items for Yap's outer islands. MV Narik Mataw, departed on February 13, 2024, served the Northwest Islands of Chuuk, while MV Caroline Voyager covered the Mortlocks Region and Pohnpei's outer islands. This relief effort includes the delivery of 13,578 cases of water and 13,161 sacks of rice.



In solidarity with FSM's relief endeavors, the International Organization for Migration provided 500 jerry cans, 27 hygiene kits, and deployed assessment personnel with a reverse osmosis (RO) unit capable of producing 360 liters per day, funded by USAID. UNICEF contributed 754 buckets and 587 wash kits containing essential sanitation items. The Australian vessel Reliant dispatched 116,000 liters of fresh water for drought response in Pohnpei, while the U.S. Coast Guard aided in transporting relief supplies and RO units to Kapingamarangi and Nukuoro.

Deliveries to Yap and the Northwest region of Chuuk are ongoing. Pohnpei's delivery and assessment concluded with the team's return on February 27, 2024.

In tandem with emergency aid, joint damage assessments will be conducted by state and national governments, alongside local and international partners such as the International Organization for Migration (IOM), Micronesia Red Cross Society, and



the Catholic Relief Services. These assessments are vital for understanding the impacts on affected islands to ensure appropriate response measures.

The FSM government extends its gratitude to all partners involved for their invaluable support and solidarity in addressing the urgent needs of our affected communities.

FSM Office of the President announces progress on US passage of Compact terms

FSM Information Services

March 4, 2024

Palikir—The Office of the President is pleased to inform the public that significant progress has been made regarding the COFA Amendments Act, which has been included in the six-bill FY24 appropriations package recently released by the House of Representatives.



As Congress prepares to vote on this package to avert a potential partial government shutdown on Friday, March 8, we are informed that Speaker Johnson intends to present the appropriations bills collectively, as a single legislative package also known as a "minibus", streamlining the legislative process for swifter passage, contingent upon sufficient support from both chambers.

The COFA Amendments Act, remains identical as the version previously approved by the House and Senate committees of jurisdiction in November 2023, with minor

MiCare Expands Healthcare Access through new and renewed Partnership Agreements

FSM Information Services

March 5, 2024

Pohnpei—In a move towards bolstering healthcare accessibility and fostering international health care partnerships, MiCare Administrator Jackey Salomon and the MiCare Board have recently established partnership agreements with its Philippine medical providers after a detailed facility inspection and extensive review and agreement of new terms and conditions. Both new and renewed partnerships were

made official with the signing of MOUs between hospital executives and MiCare executives, Administrator Jackey Salomon and Chairman Samson E. Pretrick.

Medical providers that have joined the partnership with MiCare include Cardinal Santos Medical Center, St. Lukes Quezon, St. Lukes Global City, and Medical City Hospitals. These hospitals are listed in the top ten hospitals in the Philippines and will join other medical providers currently in the

MiCare international network which include Guam and Hawaii hospitals and clinics.

Continuing its efforts to establish partnerships with hospitals and organizations that can provide further medical care at a reasonable cost that otherwise our citizens cannot access at home, Administrator Salomon continues to seek out potential medical providers and organizations that can fit that criteria which may include potential partnerships in

Fiji,, India, and the US mainland.

Other updates include MiCare currently updating its health plans and regulations to be more inclusive in its membership and expand its benefits for its members. For more information on these updates citizens are encouraged to contact the office of their local MiCare representative.




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Bill Jaynes
Managing Editor

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THE KASELEHLIE PRESS
WILL BE RELEASED ON:

March 20, 2024

Deadline for submission of articles or advertisements for this issue is the end of working hours on:

Monday, March 18, 2024

U.S. bipartisan leaders call for action to secure Pacific defense rights by passing COFA amendments

By *Bill Jaynes*
The Kaselehlie Press

March 2, 2024

Washington D.C.—Rep. Steve Womack (R-AR), Rep. Ed Case (D-HI), and 46 other House members sent Speaker Johnson a letter advocating for the inclusion of the COFA Amendments Act in the next available legislative vehicle.

This bipartisan letter was signed by 28 Republicans and 20 Democrats, including the ranking members of the House Foreign Affairs Committee (HFAC) and the Natural Resources Committee, as well as the chairs of the China Select Committee and HFAC Subcommittee on the Indo-Pacific.

The urgent plea contained in the letter highlights the critical importance of the COFA agreements in securing defense rights and fostering partnerships in the Pacific region, particularly amid escalating tensions with the People's Republic of China (PRC).

The letter emphasizes the strategic significance of the COFA agreements, which provide the United States with vital defense rights in the Pacific, an area increasingly contested by the PRC. These agreements, which include non-expiring provisions, grant the U.S. basing rights and operational control in Palau, the Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI), and the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM). Additionally, the U.S. is responsible for the defense of these nations, reinforcing

its presence in the region.

In their plea to Congress, the signatories stress the importance of passing the COFA Amendments Act of 2023, which would update and extend economic assistance provisions for another 20 years. Failure to ratify these agreements, negotiated over multiple administrations and signed by all three nations, would not only undermine U.S. credibility but also present a significant advantage to the PRC in the Pacific.

The letter warns of the consequences of delaying approval, stating that each day without action creates an opportunity for adversaries to exploit doubts about U.S. commitment and strength in the region. It stresses that the delay in approving the COFA agreements contrasts sharply with the PRC's success in establishing diplomatic relations with other Pacific Island nations.

The urgency of passing the COFA Amendments Act is underscored by the support from various quarters, including the Heritage Foundation, the Select Committee for Strategic Competition with the Chinese Communist Party, and the Administration. With the Indo-Pacific region at a critical juncture, the letter urges Congress to prioritize the inclusion of this legislation in any available vehicle, emphasizing the vital importance of upholding commitments and bolstering alliances in the face of growing geopolitical challenges.

Yap State Government: Office of Planning and Budget new Director sworn in

Yap Department of Youth and Civic Affairs

February 26, 2024

Colonia, Yap—In the Governor's Office at 2:00 PM on Friday, February 23rd, 2024, Julius Liyon Tun was officially sworn in as the new Director of the Office of Planning and Budget in the State of Yap, with responsibilities including overseeing the development, implementation, and monitoring of financial plans and budget to ensure alignment with organizational objectives.

The oath of office was administered by Associate Justice Johnathan Machieng Tun and witnessed by Governor Charles Chieng, Lt. Governor Francis Itimai, DHS Director Maria Marfel, DPW&T Director Joe Giltug, R&D Director Leelkan Southwick, OAS Director Joseph Giliko, OPB Chief of Planning Jonathan Fathal, Attorney General Joses Gallen, and Chief of Staff Paul Ayin.

National Election Director releases unofficial winners of Congress special election in Chuuk and Kosrae

By *Bill Jaynes*
The Kaselehlie Press

March 1, 2024

FSM—FSM National Election Director Ausen T. Lambert, on March 1, transmitted the unofficial results of the special elections to fill the vacant two-year seats in the FSM Congress for Kosrae and Chuuk. The letter said that as required by law, he would certify and declare the winning candidates of the February 29, 2024 special election.

According to the transmitted results, Julio M. Marar will fill the seat for Chuuk's Election District 1, The Mortlocks that was formerly occupied by Florencio Singkoro Harper. Kosrae's two-year seat vacated by Paliknoa Welly will be filled by Johnson A. Asher.

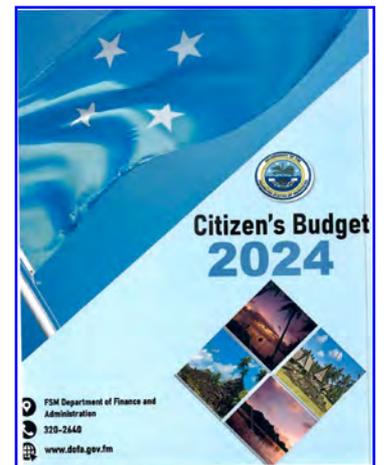
Both Chuuk and Kosrae's seats were vacated when the two Senators died while in office.

FSM Department of Finance and Administration launches first Citizens' Budget

FSM Information Services

February 26, 2024

Pohnpei—On February 16, 2024 the Secretary of Finance and Administration launched the National Government Fiscal Year 2024 Citizens Budget. While presenting the Citizens Budget, T.H. Rose N. Nakanaga shared "I am excited and pleased to be part of the launch of our first Citizens Budget." The Citizen's Budget is a crucial step of the Simina-Palik administration's efforts towards putting transparency into action and exercising fiscal responsibility.



linked to the policy priorities of my Administration."

The intention of the Citizens Budget is to present to the public in non-technical language the approved FY2024 Budget. The rationale is to increase budget transparency both in regards to what is appropriated and how the budget process works. In this way the intention of the Citizens Budget is to be both informative and educational.

"The preparation and implementation of our Budget is a collective effort that shows the benefits of working together to achieve growth and prosperity today for the benefit of future generations."

The Citizens Budget starts with a brief questions and answers section on how the budget is prepared, approved, and implemented where key budget terms are also explained. The intention throughout is to inform the public where government money comes from and how government money is spent. In the Foreword H.E. President Wesley W. Simina writes "We aim to ensure through the budget process that our spending is responsible and

The Department of Finance and Administration plans to publish the Citizens Budget annually. Secretary Nakanaga calls on the public to provide feedback to the Budget and Economic Management Division, so that they may continue to improve the way the National Government shares budget information with the public.

A copy of the Citizens Budget along with all contact information can be found at: <https://dofa.gov.fm/.../2024/02/Citizens-Budget-2024.pdf>

Ambassador Kagoyima hosts reception in Pohnpei to honor Emperor Naruhito's birthday—Japan's National Day

By Bill Jaynes
The Kaselehlie Press

February 22, 2024

Pohnpei—Each year, the people of Japan celebrate their National Day on the date of the Emperor's birthday. As part of that celebration, the Embassy of Japan to the FSM held a ceremony this evening for invited guests at Ambassador Kagoyima and his wife's residence in Pohnpei.

"His Majesty, the Emperor of Japan, Naruhito, will become 60 years old on his birthday tomorrow," Ambassador Kagoyima said. "I am delighted to celebrate His Majesty's birthday here with a distinguished group. The Japanese constitution provides that the emperor shall be the symbol of the state, and that the people have the supreme power. Hence, it becomes customary for us to celebrate the Emperor's birthday as our national day..."

The Ambassador used his time at the podium to talk about the relationship between the FSM and Japan. He expressed delight that since the COVID entry restrictions to the FSM have been lifted, FSM has witnessed the return of visitors and volunteers and people-to-people exchanges that had, for the safety of FSM people, been impossible for two years.

He spoke of the face-to-face high-level meetings that have occurred between FSM and Japanese government leadership with more to come.

"I am pleased that the Japan Overseas Cooperation volunteers, the volunteers



dispatched by the Japan International Cooperation Agency or JICA, are gradually coming back to the system after COVID-19 and will resume their numbers soon. These volunteers have made significant contributions to grassroots economic and social activities in this country, such as education, health, and even sports," the Ambassador said.

He also spoke of the number of important guests from Japan that have visited Pohnpei just in the last four months of his ambassadorship to the FSM. Including "a member of Parliament, academic researchers from archaeology to medical sciences, students, businessmen, and others, and I feel the number of visitors from Japan is now increasing. Reflecting on these recent developments, I am reinforcing my wish to promote further friendly and cooperative relations between the two countries in various ways."



He compared the national anthems of Japan and the FSM saying, "I am so much impressed that the anthem emphasizes devotion to and unity of the country. Another impressive part for me is the phrases, to make this island another promised land. I understand these as the ideals of the founding fathers of this country, and real objectives of the current government leaders. As a Japanese ambassador to this country, I sincerely wish our efforts, not only by government but also by private sectors, will help economic and social development of this country and help to make this country has substantial potential for the development."

He listed three advantages that the FSM has to realizing its dream of development. Firstly, he said, the FSM is "bestowed with great natural conditions, not to mention the wide economic zone of oceans full of fishery resources and possibly seabed" resources. "Secondly, peaceful society and stable conditions. That is the quintessential condition for the development. Thirdly, honest, gentle, and friendly people here. I was so much impressed by the friendship of these kinds of people. Academic economists argue that the most important factor for economic development is the accumulation of human capital or knowledge and skills which lead to productivity. I believe that the people here have great potential for cultivating their human capital. I may add the fourth very important factor, digitalization."

He added a fourth factor, digitalization, a factor that he said links these small islands to the rest of the world both for access to information and for enlarging



the marketing of products in a way that was not available before the Internet was widely used in the FSM.

At closing, he offered a toast to unity and prosperity.

FSM Secretary for Foreign Affairs Lorin Robert represented the FSM as its speaker during the event. He expressed congratulations to the Emperor on the event of his birthday and all that it stands for in Japan and remarked on the spirit of "Kizuna", the close relationships forged through mutual trust and support between the FSM and Japan.

He also spoke of the important visitors from Japan that the FSM had received since it was able to reopen after the COVID closure. It "shows and demonstrates the extent of the friendship that we have in Japan through family and blood relations. So, we welcome very much and we look forward to more visits in the future," he said.

"I visited Japan in the latter part of 2023," he said. "I visited Japan at the invitation of my counterpart, the Foreign Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Honorable Yoko Kamikawa. During this visit, we signed an economic and social development program for the provision of road-paving equipment for our four states to improve road infrastructure. Along this agreement, the FSM continues to work with Japan on even small, not small but big, other arrangements such as co-funding for the East Micronesia Cable, EMC."

Continued on next page

...Japan reception

Continued from previous page

He mentioned all of the Japanese offices located in Pohnpei such as JICA, and the Overseas Fisheries Cooperation Foundation (OFCS). "On this note, I would like to also express the FSM government's strong desire to further enhance the friendship, and I can assure you that the FSM will continue to support Japan at all levels for the betterment of our people and our two countries," he said.

He closed his remarks for the evening with a toast to the good health, happiness, and prosperity of His Majesty Emperor Naruhito.

Attending the event were members of the Diplomatic Corps including the new Ambassador of Sweden to the FSM. Pohnpei's Governor Stevenson Joseph was also in attendance along with other representatives of Pohnpei and FSM governments. Other invited guests from the Japanese community and FSM private sector were also in attendance.

The evening concluded with a magnificent Japanese meal prepared to Japan's expected culinary perfection.



Governor Joseph welcomes Pohnpei assessment team following outer islands damage assessment

Pohnpei Public Information

February 27, 2024

Pohnpei—Governor Stevenson A. Joseph extended a warm welcome to the Pohnpei Assessment Team upon their return from a 10-day comprehensive damage assessment of the Outer Islands. The assessment, conducted onboard the M.V. Voyager, was in response to drought conditions and inundation resulting from El Niño weather conditions.

The assessment team, comprised of representatives from various Pohnpei State agencies and the National Government, collaborated with local officials in the outer islands to evaluate the impact of the adverse weather conditions. Their findings, aimed at understanding the extent of damage and identifying areas of immediate concern, will be submitted to the Governor's Office for thorough review.



The team also brought supplies that were generously donated in Pohnpei by various organizations and individuals.

Governor Joseph personally greeted the team at the pier and expressed gratitude for their dedicated efforts on behalf of the Pohnpei State Government and its people. In his brief remarks, Governor Joseph acknowledged the importance of the work undertaken by the assessment team, emphasizing the significance of their findings in guiding future



response and recovery efforts.

The collaborative effort between the assessment team and local officials reflects a commitment to addressing the challenges posed by El Niño-induced conditions. Governor Joseph reiterated his appreciation for the team's dedication and emphasized the collective responsibility to safeguard the well-being of the residents in the affected outer islands.

Anti-Human Trafficking efforts underway throughout the FSM



FSM Information Services

February 24, 2024

Weno, Chuuk--FSM Department of Justice has led a public awareness workshop in Chuuk regarding human trafficking. The Simina-Palik administration is fielding a team to the FSM States starting in Chuuk this week in order to reach out to all stakeholders and the communities for the purpose of expanding awareness on the current progress of FSM national efforts towards combating human trafficking.

Similar public awareness campaigns will be conducted in Kosrae, Yap and Pohnpei in the coming weeks in order to build partnerships and cooperation among communities and stakeholders. The workshop was attended by relevant Chuuk State departments and agencies

as well as community and civil society representatives with interest in building capacity around human trafficking issues. Partnering with the Department of Justice in conducting this workshop included officers from the U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM).

H.E. President Wesley W. Simina encouraged everyone "to break the silence and stigma surrounding human trafficking, and to extend compassion and support to survivors." and has committed to working with all partners on finding "lasting and effective solutions on human trafficking issues that are supported by all stakeholders."



...Compact

Continued from front page

adjustments related to Veterans Affairs (VA) benefits. The new language in the VA provisions mainly stipulates the necessity of government-to-government agreements between the United States and each of the three Freely Associated States (FAS) countries to facilitate expanded veterans care and services. More information on this will be shared in due course.

The bill ultimately retains all core elements, including mandatory funding, education provisions, and the inclusion of CIFA (Compact Impact Fairness Act) without alterations.

In terms of next steps, should the package pass in the House this week, it would then proceed to the Senate for final approval, before it would go to President Biden to be signed into law.

This turning point is the result of months of collective efforts of

Courtesy call on Japanese Ambassador by Nippon Maritime Center and the Japan Association of Maritime Safety

Embassy of Japan

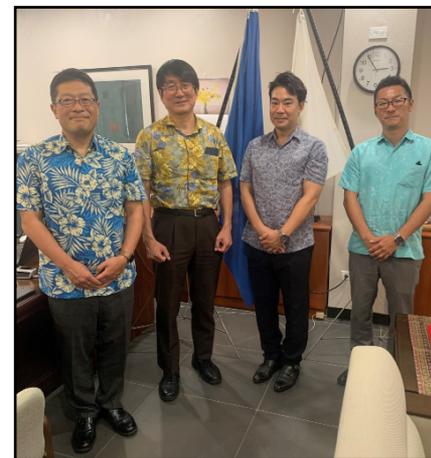
February 20, 2024

Pohnpei--On February 20, Ambassador Kagomiya received a courtesy call by Mr. Seiya Ishikawa, Managing Director of Nippon Maritime Center (NMC), Mr. Yu Ishizumi, Deputy Director of NMC and Mr. Takafumi Hashimoto, Director of Japan Association of Maritime Safety (JAMS). They visited the FSM to repair the "Unity" security boat, which the Nippon Foundation provided in 2012, and to conduct a needs survey of this country. The Nippon Foundation, NMC and JAMS have continued to provide necessary fuel and maintenance support even after the provision of the security boat.



security boat 'Unity' and received a detailed explanation from them on the progress of repairs and its activities.

Following the courtesy call, Ambassador Kagomiya inspected the



many people and the engagement and collaboration between our governments, demonstrating our shared commitment to advancing our mutual interests and the strong and enduring partnership between the FSM and the United States.

The FSM government is optimistic about the forward movement of the legislation. President Simina stated, "This development reinforces our confidence in the strength of our

partnership with the United States. We are committed to working together to ensure the successful implementation of the Compact, which is vital for the well-being of our citizens and the stability of our region."



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CRE Coordinator (Yap)

Position is supervised daily by the Campus Dean while administratively responsible to the Director of CTE. Duties are split into two major areas: 50% FTE Extension and /or Research and 50% FTE Program Supervisor/Administration and Budget management.

Administrative Specialist III (Kosrae)

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Fishing for consensus: harmful subsidies talks intensify as MC13 nears end

Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat

February 29, 2024

UAE—As the 13th WTO Ministerial Conference (MC13) nears its conclusion, Pacific Island countries have been calling on the biggest subsidisers to halt subsidies to overcapacity and overfishing, and to pledge to lower bad subsidies in future, this week.



The world's biggest subsidisers provide US\$20 billion a year to their own fleets to empty the seas of fish.

As these countries deplete their own stocks, they need to expand ever further abroad – supported by massive handouts. It is only these toxic subsidies that allow the biggest subsidisers to fish far away.

“They should freeze and lower their subsidies, as mandated by the UN Sustainable Development Goal 14.6,” says Fiji’s Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Trade, Co-operatives, SMEs and Communications, Hon. Manoa Kamikamica.

UN Sustainable Development Goal 14.6 mandates members to prohibit certain forms of subsidies to OCOF, and to refrain from introducing new such subsidies.

Three-quarters of total harmful subsidies comes from the top seven subsidising WTO members alone.

A handful of distant water fishing companies shapes the positions of the world’s biggest members.

“This threatens biodiversity, and produces unfair outcomes for developing countries like ours which depend on fisheries for their economies, livelihood and culture,” said Hon. Kamikamica.

The fingerprints of a few companies’ narrow interests can be seen in the watered-down text. Taxpayers are paying for these distorted outcomes.

These narrow interests are scuppering

the only chance of achieving a WTO agreement that might achieve meaningful change.

In light of this, the region is asking the large distant water fishing nations to keep their subsidies at current levels and to cut subsidies in the future.

For decades the big subsidisers have pumped money into their fleets to over-exploit their own waters. They shouldn’t now be coming to the Pacific to overfish its waters.

Amongst other demands the Pacific is also proposing a clause that asks the biggest subsidisers to stop the subsidies that are only there to allow them to fish in distant waters.

These are the only ways to meet the mandate that the world’s leaders laid out in the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

Like many other developing nations, the Pacific island countries also need the policy space and flexibility to develop their own fleets, increase downstream and onshore processing, and create jobs, food security and livelihoods for its people.

“What our Pacific Island nations want this

week is fair. We urge the top subsidising WTO members to freeze their subsidies at current levels and cut them in the future. We are concerned that over-exploiting one’s own waters should not, through subsidies, become a license to over-exploit Pacific waters,” added Hon. Kamikamica.

Joined at these talks by Vanuatu Deputy Prime Minister Matai Seremaiah, and Trade Ministers from Papua New Guinea, Samoa, and Tonga, and senior officials from the Solomon Islands, Hon. Kamikamica noted the growing support from other like-minded countries to tackle the problem.

Deputy Prime Minister, Hon. Kamikamica iterated that “More and more countries are coming behind our proposal and we must take the time now to listen and do what is necessary for the health of our oceans, as too much is at stake”.

As custodians of the largest ocean and healthiest tuna stocks, nothing less than the economy, and livelihoods are at stake. Any agreement struck now will decide the future of the world’s fisheries.

The Pacific urges WTO members to reaffirm their commitment to safeguard our global fisheries for the collective benefit of present and future generations



16-year-old student archaeologist and tourist from Detroit shares her experience of visiting Pohnpei

By Grace Sui

February 21, 2024

Detroit, Michigan—After enduring six connecting flights spanning 36 hours and covering over 8,000 miles from Detroit, Michigan, USA, we finally got off of the United Airlines Island Hopper, ready to set foot on the enthralling island of Pohnpei. We were immediately greeted by the island's lush mountainous landscape, hot and steamy climate, and the beautiful blues of the sky and ocean.



My brother Grant and I came here to conduct archaeological fieldwork centered around the enigmatic site of Nan Madol, alongside esteemed experts Dr. Takuya Nagaoka, Dr. Akira Goto, and Doug and Jake Comer. I love Nan Madol. I believe it is the most interesting archaeological site in the world. I find it remarkable how a population of just 30,000 was able to move over 175,000 metric tons of basalt rock across the island of Pohnpei, into the intricate, immense, criss-cross pattern of megalithic structures that still stand on the Pacific shores of Pohnpei today.

For the past two years (since I was fourteen), I have been researching both the site's archeological work and the associated rich oral tradition of the Pohnpeian people. Seeing the site in person, as well as working with its experts, was purely a dream come true, surpassing all my expectations.

While the archaeology was certainly the highlight of our trip, it is truly the genuine interactions and connections we forged with the locals of Pohnpei that made it the most memorable.

Before our first day of fieldwork, Grant and I decided to try the local favorite Namiki Donuts (as locals David and Leah recommended). Upon arrival, we were welcomed by Einstein and his mother, the owners of this family-operated shop. We ordered a bag of ten donuts for just

\$1.25 (back in the donut shop I work at in Detroit, just one donut costs even more than this). The warm, breadly, crispy-on-the-outside-but-soft-on-the-inside, pieces of fried dough delighted our taste buds and satisfied our hunger. We conversed with Einstein for a while, as he educated us about Pohnpei, the surrounding islands, and their complex cultures and inspiring people.

With smiling faces and donut-filled stomachs, we were on our way to the Pohnpei Historic Preservation Office to meet Takuya and the team.

Our days in the field were marked by collaboration and discovery. Armed with existing LiDAR data (from Doug, Jake, and Takuya's 2019 work), we were able to unravel the mysteries of Nan Madol and the lives of its residents. Incredibly, when you take a look at the LiDAR map, there are several grid-like patterns made up of thick lines of long mounds around the island. We believe these mounds may have been used in large-scale agricultural cultivation,

potentially predating the Saudeleur dynasty of Nan Madol. Doug believes that yams were grown on top of the mound, on dry land, while taro crops would have been grown in the swampland below.

Before any of this fieldwork was done, we went through the process of asking the locals for permission to explore their land. Though many of them did not speak English (this is where Takuya's Pohnpeian skills come in), interacting with these local families in their U-shaped nahs traditional feathouses taught us so much about the history of Pohnpei.

For example, one man, Haruo, is a half-Pohnpeian and half-Japanese 90-year-old man. We stood there outside of his home, mesmerized, as we listened to his life stories spanning several different eras of Pohnpei's history.

After gaining permission, we trekked through the jungle all day, plodding through muddy terrain, skulking through thick arrangements of tree branches, and fighting the heat of the scathing tropical sun, all with bugs crawling on our skin. Without the help of locals Elson, Martin, and Elperson's agile machete skills, we would not have made it through. Compared to the frozen, minimally-elevated, often snowy, climate of Detroit this time of year, I felt like an alien on a new planet. The Michigan forests I once played in were nothing compared to this. It was incredibly amazing.

One of the most exciting parts of the expedition was when just as we were leaving one of the areas of interest, Grant and I noticed some rocks lying between two distinct mounds. As we followed the pattern of the rocks, we realized they were in a linear formation. They nearly perfectly aligned with the mounds on the side, like a manmade drainage system. This was a remarkable discovery because evidence of a drainage system would indicate that these mounds did indeed hold an agricultural purpose for the people of Pohnpei.

Aside from our fieldwork with Takuya's team, Grant and I also wanted to explore Nan Madol on our own. Days prior, we had explored Nan Dawas (but not to its full extent, because you can never be done exploring). We wanted to see more, so we drove out to Madolenihmw once again. Upon reaching the Silbanuz residence behind the site, we met Masao. We talked with him about his family's historical connection to the site. He explained to us how his family once had a house on the Usendau islet.

After being further educated by Masao, Grant and I ventured behind his house into the jungle until we reached Nan Dawas. Even seeing it a second time was just as compelling as the first. Perplexed by the magnificently mysterious engineering techniques, we decided to venture further into the site out to the seawall. The underwater mix of mud and seagrass on the ground



Continued on next page

...Archaeologist

Continued from previous page

gradually turned into a sandy, beach-like surface as we crossed each of the three basalt seawalls. We stood in awe as we watched the bright blue ocean waves crash into the massive, black basalt walls.

As the tide got higher, it became harder for us to wade around the canals of Nan Madol, so we headed back to the Silbanuz residence hoping to find Floyd, Masao's grandson whom we had met during our first visit to the site.

Eagerly, we trekked through the jungle, knee-deep in the high-tide waters. Upon our return, we were greeted by Floyd. He said in this high tide, he could take us on a boat to explore the islets further. The grins on our faces grew as Floyd took us to meet Ailer, the minister of tourism here in Pohnpei, at his yam farm.

Soon, we embarked on a journey through the Pacific waters into the channel of the good lizard, which has recently been dredged by the

tourism office. Floyd and Ailer knew exactly where to take us, and we could visit the major islets of Pahn Kadira and Idehd and see the great Pahnwi, Lemenkau, and others. They showed us sakau stones, eel pools, turtle ovens (from the Pahn en Saphw ceremony), and the home of the Saudeleur rulers. Floyd and I compared our knowledge of those islets, and both taught each other a few things. I asked Floyd for his theory on how the construction of the site was carried out, and he explained "I think they used magic spells."

As we returned to the mainland, the two men extended a gracious invitation to a feast at the home of the Nahmwarki of Madolenihmw, a living link to Pohnpei's

storied past. They introduced him to us, just as the sakau ceremony began. Floyd, with three other men, sat at the stone, aggressively pounding the kava plant, and then subsequently squeezing out its juice with a dried hibiscus leaf. Suddenly, the feast went silent, as the first four cups were poured and drank. When the silence was broken, Grant and I were able to chat with the nahmwarki about how his lineage traces back hundreds of generations to Isokelekel, as well as our adventures at the site today in the modern world. This conversation, which connected both ancient ancestry and new exploration, was the culmination of our expedition.

After the ceremony, we said kalangan to the chief and attendants of the feast and were on our way back to Kolonia.

In just a few hours, we would be on the United Airlines Boeing 737 Island Hopper jet once again, the first step in our journey back home to Detroit. As we bid farewell to the island, grateful for our enriching experiences and newly-forged friendships, Pohnpei's exceptional



warmth and hospitality, from Sokehs to Madolenihmw, will remain etched in our memories.

(Editor's note: I overheard Grant and Grace chatting with Einstein at Namiki and was impressed with their enthusiasm to be in Pohnpei. They had just the right inquisitiveness. I asked them if they'd be willing to write an article about their impressions of touring in Pohnpei. Grace excitedly took me up on the opportunity. Thank you, Grace!)



SOON TO RISE

PALIAIS CELL-TOWER



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- > Sector 1, Red: Coverage to Kahmar (Doweneu, Nett Municipal Govt offices, Nantehlik area) and to some part of Meitik.
- > Sector 2, Yellow: Coverage to Nett School, Pohnpei State and Genesis Hospital, Black Sand, Luwi, Bank of Guam, Etscheit's and Adam's Compound, Nanpepper, PICS High School, SDA school and some parts of Dolonier.
- > Sector 3, Blue: Coverage to the Public Market Street and all of Pahmi area, Causeway to Airport, some areas on Sokehs Rock and Kolonia, and all of Danpei.



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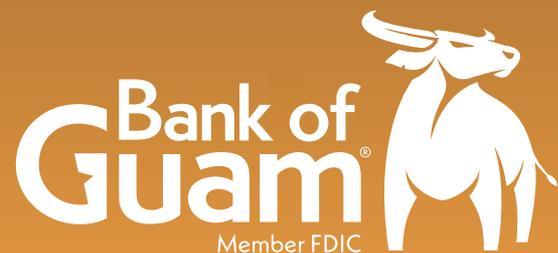
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Class 9: On-line downloadable and electronic downloadable publications, namely, newsletters, brochures, pamphlets, and flyers relating to health, beauty, skin care, oral health, sun care; computer application software for mobile phones, namely, software to assist in tracking allergy information and controlling allergy symptoms; virtual assistant in the nature of a downloadable mobile chatbot software application for simulating conversations in the field of beauty, beauty products, and beauty product recommendations; downloadable mobile applications that enable users of a cosmetic medical device to receive

education and training about use of the device, chatbot software for simulating conversations in the field of beauty, beauty products, and beauty product recommendations; downloadable computer chatbot software for simulating conversations leveraging artificial intelligence in the field of beauty, beauty products, and beauty product recommendations; downloadable mobile application to provide guidance concerning use of an otoscope for performing basic self-diagnostic tests and examination, to transmit the results of such tests and examinations to a healthcare provider, and to allow communication between the user and the healthcare provider; virtual consumer health products; downloadable multimedia files containing artwork, text, audio, and video files and non-fungible tokens featuring consumer health products; downloadable loyalty cards, incentive cards, reward cards that may be redeemed for or used towards the purchase of consumer health products.

Class 10: Medical device and apparatus for the cosmetic and medical treatment of skin conditions; Adhesive compression wrap bandages for medical purposes; Heat or cold releasing packs for therapeutic purposes; Heat releasing wraps for therapeutic purposes; medical apparatus, namely, a smartphone enabled otoscope that allows a patient to perform basic self-diagnostic tests and examinations, and for transmitting the results of such tests and examinations to a healthcare provider and allowing communication between the user and the healthcare provider; phototherapeutic light delivery apparatus for medical purposes.

Class 21: Dental floss, dental flossers, refills for dental flossers; toothbrushes.

Class 35: Providing consumer product information relating to skin and hair care, sun care, wellness, healthcare and healthy living, fitness, nutrition and lifestyle wellness; Online retail store services featuring skin and hair care, sun care, dental, cough, cold, allergy, nutritional products, cosmetics; online retail services featuring virtual consumer health goods and the physical delivery of same.

Class 41: Educational services, namely, conducting on-line programs in the fields of beauty, health care, hair care, pregnancy, baby care, and printable educational materials about skin and health care distributed therewith; Providing non-downloadable educational materials in the nature of articles and brochures in the field of beauty and health care; Providing on-line non-downloadable publications in the nature of articles, newsletters, and blogs relating to beauty and health care; entertainment services, namely, providing online, downloadable, virtual consumer health care products for use in virtual environments for entertainment purposes.

Class 42: Product research and development in the field of beauty, wellness, hair care, allergies, child care, baby care, and health care products.

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MUNRO LEYS

Ambassador Kagoyima receives call from ADB delegation

Embassy of Japan

February 23, 2024

Pohnpei—On February 23, Ambassador Kagomiya received a courtesy call by the delegation of Asian Development Bank (ADB) led by Mr. Jung Ho Kim, Principal Operations Coordination Specialist, Pacific Department, accompanied by Mr. Ganiga Ganiga, Senior Project Officer (Project Team Leader for the Roads project). Ambassador Kagomiya welcomed their visit to the Embassy and exchanged views with them on various development challenges facing the FSM.



Japan Ambassador hosts virtual signing ceremony of the grant contract for the project for “Oil leakage countermeasure project from WW II Wrecks of Chuuk State”

Embassy of Japan

February 14, 2024

Pohnpei—On February 14, 2024, Ambassador Kagomiya Nobuo and Mr. Kishikawa Kimihiko, President of Japan Mine Action Service (JMAS) signed the grant contract totaling 672,074 US dollars for oil Leakage Countermeasure Project from WW II Wrecks of Chuuk State.

The objective of this project is to take responsive measures, knowing the updated information on the shipwrecks, to oil leakage from Japanese ships which had sunken during the World War II and eroded with lapse of long time thereafter, because the leakage is likely to give negative effect on the natural environments of Truk Atoll.

While Mr. Kishikawa expressed his wish to strengthen the bilateral relationship between the two countries through this project, Ambassador Kagomiya held in high esteem achievements of the project so far and encouraged JMAS to pay due attention to safety and achieve a good result of the project, as the FSM has high expectations for this project.



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New Philippines ambassador to the FSM presents credentials to President Simina - migrant worker agreement advances

FSM Information Services

February 26, 2024

Palikir-Pohnpei—H.E. Wesley W. Simina has accepted the letter of credence of the newly appointed Ambassador of the Republic of the Philippines to the Federated States of Micronesia, H.E. Mylene J. Garcia-Albano in a Presentation of Credentials Ceremony held in Palikir yesterday.

The ceremony was attended by members of the diplomatic corps, including all resident Ambassadors to the FSM, as well as cabinet members of the Simina-Palik administration and government officials and members of the Filipino community residing in Pohnpei.

In her remarks, Ambassador Garcia-Albano highlighted the importance of people-to-people relations between the Philippines and the FSM, underscored

by the historic meeting of the two heads of state that took place between President Simina and President Marcos in October of last year. The Ambassador further expressed the Philippines' desire to “open up a new era of cooperation” between the FSM and the Philippines, given the unique opportunities to collaborate on issues such as climate change and disasters that are prevalent to island nations like ours, and emphasized the important role the FSM and the Philippines plays in the Indo-Pacific which further extends to the growth of the global economy.

In President Simina’s remarks, he shared “Your accreditation today signifies another important chapter in the political and diplomatic history of FSM-Philippines relations. It is also an important development, recalling that the first Ambassador of the Philippines to the FSM presented his credentials



in 1989 to then-president John R. Haglelam, following the opening of the first Embassy of the Republic of the Philippines here in Pohnpei. After 4 years of operations, the Embassy closed its doors and since then the FSM received coverage from the Philippines' Consulate General Office in Guam. Accepting your credentials today expresses the strong desire and commitment of my government to elevate and further strengthen engagement and development activities between the FSM and the Philippines.”

and more expeditious for all involved. The President thanked the Ambassador for this welcome news and conveyed the FSM’s hope for these services to ultimately be moved to Guam for even greater convenience, to which the Ambassador affirmed that they are moving in that direction as well. Further meetings set for this week between the Ambassador’s delegation and relevant agencies including the FSM Dept. of Justice are expected to finalize these details, at which point further pertinent information will be made available.



Immediately following the ceremony, President Simina, and Ambassador Garcia-Albano took the opportunity to sit down for a meeting to further discuss areas of mutual interest. At the outset, President Simina expressed that the people of the Federated States of Micronesia have been “feeling the effect of the labor ban” and expressed the FSM’s gratitude for the progress that’s been made towards implementing the labor ban lift, as agreed during his meeting with President Marcos last October. Ambassador Garcia-Albano acknowledged this issue and confirmed that a draft agreement is being worked

Other topics that were discussed between President Simina, Vice President Palik and Ambassador Garcia-Albano included maritime support, police academy training and training opportunities for diplomats at the Philippines Foreign Service Institute. President Simina also expressed the FSM’s appreciation for the healthcare that is provided to many of the FSM’s citizens who are referred to the Philippines.



The meeting ended with the exchange of cultural gifts from both sides.

on and reviewed by both the Philippines Dept. of Migrant Workers and the FSM, including a list of Contact Persons for the facilitation of the verification of contracts. The Ambassador also confirmed that these services will be processed out of Manila and not Wellington, in order to make the process easier



"Most rewarding experience": UOG professor Chief Scientist on National Geographic expedition

University of Guam

February 20, 2024

Guam—The waters around Guam bore witness to a significant coral bleaching event several years ago. Rising sea temperatures during the last El Niño stressed corals to the point of expelling their symbiotic algae, draining them of color and leaving behind whitened skeletal frames along the ocean shallows. Corals around Guam were not the only victims of this climate stressor. Reefs in the Federated States of Micronesia were not spared from the bleaching event, but the story differs for reefs in the FSM's remote atolls. There, researchers are finding that more corals managed to survive the event compared to those around the main islands in the FSM.

Scientists anticipated that, with more fish around to help promote growth and less pollution affecting them, reefs in these atolls would have a greater chance for recovery. But scientists had "no clue" corals there would also be more resistant to bleaching, according to Dr. Peter Houk, Professor of coral reef and



fisheries ecology at the University of Guam's Marine Laboratory.

"In fact, based on what we know about global scientific literature, it wasn't clear that they would be," Dr. Houk said.

These observations were made during an expedition into the FSM atolls - a major collaboration between UOG, FSM national and state governments, National Geographic Pristine Seas, Micronesia Conservation Trust, Scripps Institution of Oceanography, and Waitt Institute.

Unique UOG tie with National Geographic

The collaboration marks the first relationship of its kind between UOG and the National Geographic Society, according to Dr. Houk, who served as the Chief Scientist for the expedition. Click here for a National Geographic Society video of the expedition <https://www.instagram.com/reel/C3TsoCOvgYZ/?igsh=NDZ3M256enM3enJk>

He credited the opportunity to the development of a larger scientific network fostered through the University.

Since coming to UOG in 2013, Dr. Houk has received small-level grants to work on coral reefs and fisheries, which has been supporting his students. The students are doing great work in places like Yap, Kosrae and Saipan, each in different systems with a focus on management, Houk said.

"People started realizing, 'Hey, this is a pretty powerful network.' And we had a chance to help engage the Federated States of Micronesia."

A network involving National Geographic is a big win, Dr. Houk said.

"The amount of marine resources in FSM waters is insane ... and having UOG in and working with that and getting students in the mix on that is awesome," he said.

In addition to coral reefs, scientists are assessing deeper and open waters around the FSM atolls to get a comprehensive look at their resources.



The expedition took almost two months and ended in late November 2023. Starting from Kosrae, the expedition covered more than 2,000 miles and visited 10 to 12 atolls before reaching the end of its journey in Yap.

"The expedition is one example of the role some of our faculty play in impactful research," said UOG President Anita Borja Enriquez. "And as they take leadership roles alongside nationally recognized research institutes, in this case with National Geographic Pristine Seas and other partners on the health of corals and reef ecosystems in the Western Pacific, they bring more depth in how they teach in UOG classrooms."

With climate change well underway, one of the main goals for the expedition is to understand coral resistance to bleaching, their recovery or lack thereof, and the impact of human presence.

Those two words – "resistance" and "recovery" – combine to form "resilience," or how prepared organisms are to "fight the future," Houk said.

Another major goal is to inform resource management guidance for the outer atoll communities and management policies for FSM national government. The project is also meant to enhance the capacity of local scientists, with 12 scientists from the FSM states participating in the expedition.

Opportunities at UOG for Western Pacific region students

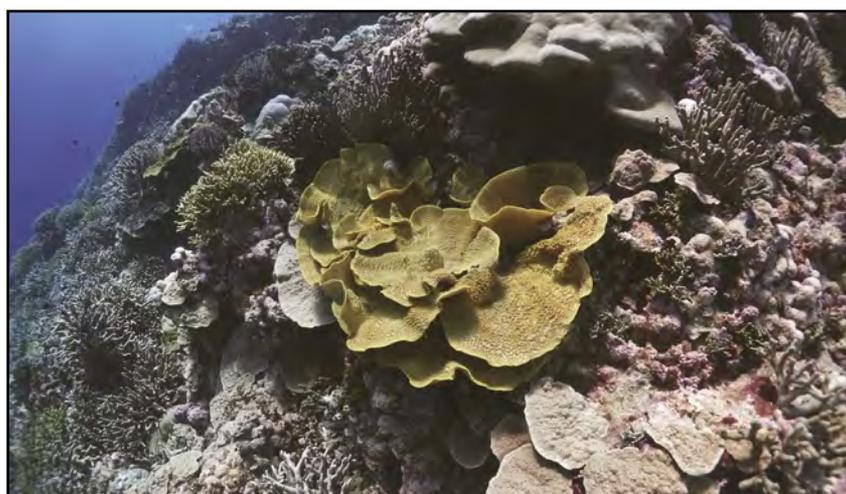
It was also an opportunity to tell regional students about opportunities at UOG. According to Dr. Houk, the expedition team reached out to marine science students in community colleges at each stop of their journey.

"It's one thing to hear about UOG's program, it's another thing to hear about UOG's program while you're standing on a National Geographic boat next to a submarine looking at new species of coral found in (their) waters," Houk said.

Some of his graduate students on the expedition were "getting the most rewarding experience of their lives," he added, "It's amazing."

Houk has begun incorporating information from the expedition into his lessons.

"And this will all continue," he added.



Japan Ambassador receives courtesy call from Swedish Ambassador

Embassy of Japan

February 23, 2024

Pohnpei- On February 23, Ambassador Kagomiya received a courtesy call from H.E. Mr. Pereric Högborg, Ambassador of Sweden concurrently accredited to the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM) with residence in Japan. Ambassador Kagomiya welcomed Ambassador Högborg ‘s visit to the Embassy and described the special bond “KIZUNA” between the FSM and Japan. Ambassador Kagomiya and Ambassador Högborg talked about beautiful nature and warm personality of the people in the FSM and exchanged their thoughts on the economic development of the FSM.

On February 21, Ambassador



Kagomiya attended the ceremony of the presentation of Credentials for Ambassador Högborg held at the President Office.

PASAI director visits Kosrae State and the Marshall Islands

PASAI

February 22, 2024

Auckland, New Zealand--Performance Audit Director for the Pacific Association of Supreme Audit Institutions (PASAI), Mike Scott, visited the Marshall Islands last week to provide in-person technical support on performance auditing. This immediately followed a weeklong visit to the Office of the Kosrae Public Auditor in the Federated States of Micronesia.

The Kosrae State Legislature had recently specified three audit topics for the Public Auditor, Palikkun Kilafwasru, to carry out performance audits on.

Mr Scott explained, “A performance audit is an objective examination of whether citizens are well served by the spending of public money. Performance Audits examine how economically, efficiently, effectively, and equitably public money is spent.

“To take one example, the Kosrae Public Auditor will audit the government’s construction of the Utwe Gym. By planning the objective and scope of the audit, and considering how to engage with the auditee, we set the Kosrae team up to make insightful findings and provide valuable recommendations to action.”

Mr Scott also worked with the Kosrae audit staff to plan the other two audits and provided guidance on how to document audits according to international standards, which will help them in making enhancements to their methodology following a recent peer review.

In the Marshall Islands, Auditor-General, Junior Patrick, and his staff at the Office of the Auditor-General hosted Mr Scott during his mission.

Mr Scott undertook a quality assurance review of one of the office’s audits, noting a well-documented audit file and a high-quality draft report, and offering advice on areas to support them in continuing to advance the quality of their work.

He also spent two full days on staff capacity building, enhancing the auditors’ skills on topics ranging from report writing to risk management and compliance with auditing standards.

PASAI acknowledges the support of the New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT) and the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT).

Pasifika NiuNet: a new collaborative platform for an integrated approach to coconut research and development in the Pacific

Secretariat of the Pacific Community

February 26, 2024

Suva, Fiji--From February 21 to 23, coconut experts from 14 Pacific countries and territories convened a Board meeting at the Pacific Community (SPC) offices in Suva, Fiji. This first face-to-face meeting for the coconut research and development platform, Pasifika NiuNet, gave the space for actionable outcomes towards a resilient and sustainable coconut sector in the Pacific.

In 2021, a review by researchers from SPC’s Land Resources Division (LRD) demonstrated that the coconut remains a top priority in terms of food security and supporting economies in the region. Despite this, no real change has been observed in coconut development for many years, which has led to missed opportunities and low global market share. Therefore, a more inclusive and collaborative approach to the coconut sector in the region is crucial to improving the livelihoods of the peoples of the Pacific.

Dr Ramona Sulifoa, Research for Development Adviser at LRD, spoke on the need to tackle this gap: “At LRD, we are working in silos on concomitant coconut programmes and projects. We want to bring the studies together to address all the research’s needs. An integrated programme would do that by improving efficiency, effectiveness, management and impact, as well as preventing duplication of research and development in the coconut area.”

Several outcomes came out of the three-day workshop, such as a

consolidated vision for Pasifika NiuNet and the finalisation of the foundational documents (Terms of Reference, Board and Technical Working Groups structure that will guide the development of the Theory of Change and Strategic Framework) towards a Pacific agenda for impact. Country profiling has demonstrated the strengths, capacities, priorities of each country and territory and the commonalities among them that feed into a regional profile. Participants also approved the final composition of the Governance Board and agreed on criteria for members of the Technical Working Groups, ensuring balance between sectors, as well as country representation.

Mr. Itaia Lausaveve, a participant in the Board meeting and Chief Technical Advisor for the NGO Live and Learn Environmental Education, reflects on the critical relevance of the workshop: “In Tuvalu, coconut is one of the main tree crops that we use for consumption. However, we didn’t have any opportunities to revive the interest in the coconut, so this consultative workshop and the Pasifika NiuNet platform are very important initiatives. Whether it is for the purpose of livelihoods, food security or economies, we have to work on coconut together moving forward, because it will sustain our countries, whether from small islands or big islands.”

The interim Governance Board is now in place, and the inaugural Board meeting will be held in June 2024. A coconut strategic action plan will be discussed, to support uptake and further development of Pasifika NiuNet.



New PICRC study on coral recovery following typhoon damage published in international research journal



Palau International Coral Reef Center

Two super-typhoons, Bopha and Haiyan, smashed into Palau in 2012 and 2013 and caused catastrophic loss of corals on some eastern outer reefs. Many sites where corals were previously abundant were left bare, but some reefs have started to recover in the decade since.

A new study of Ngetngod reef, led by Dr. Piera Biondi and Dr. Liam Lachs of the Palau International Coral Reef Center (PICRC) and Newcastle University, respectively, has revealed that recovery occurred rapidly for some types of coral but not for others. While the usual approach to monitoring reef health is to track the percentage of seabed covered with live corals, this study, recently published in the

scientific journal, *Coral Reefs*, went a step further by also measuring the size of each individual coral colony as part of a long-term dataset that PICRC has gathered since 2001. This analysis gave further insights into the coral populations, such as the density of corals and the distribution of different coral sizes.

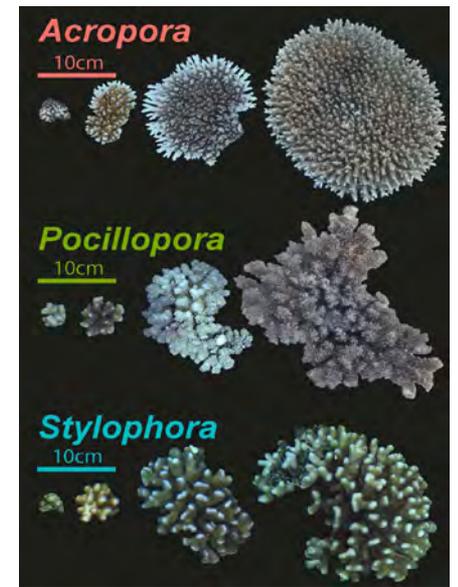
Coral reefs are facing increasingly damaging disturbances under climate change, including destructive storms and marine heatwaves. They need sufficient time for recovery between these events, but recovery intervals are becoming shorter. The demographic recovery of populations (i.e. having a population with mix of large coral colonies and small coral colonies) is critical for populations to remain viable, yet the time needed for such recovery has

remained poorly understood.

As the super-typhoons removed all the coral colonies from Ngetngod reef, an opportunity arose to measure the time needed for recovery. The study focussed on the three most-common branching coral genera (Acropora, Pocillopora, and Stylophora), and found contrasting recovery times.

By 2020, Pocillopora colony density far exceeded pre-typhoon levels. However, despite the recovery of Acropora colony density by 2020, populations remained dominated by smaller colonies. The study shows that demographic recovery varies depending on the life history of the coral. The research indicates that it takes around four years for pocilloporids to recover because this coral genera spawns year-round, but Acropora, which typically have only one spawning event per year, requires more than eight years to recover. Interestingly, the study also demonstrates that tracking coral colony density (i.e. the number of colonies per m² of seabed) instead of coral coverage can predict recovery two to four years earlier.

This work highlights the insights on coral population dynamics that can be achieved



from demographic monitoring. With the new computer tools that automatically measure the size of corals in underwater photos, there is a great new opportunity to improve monitoring efforts to give more detailed information on the health and status of coral populations. The study also showcases the importance of long-term monitoring data to understand how coral populations can recover after acute disturbances like storms or mass coral bleaching.

FSM Public Auditors annual conference kicks off in Pohnpei State

Pohnpei Public Information

March 4, 2024

Pohnpei—The annual FSM Public Auditors Conference commenced today in Pohnpei State, bringing together a gathering of auditors from throughout the nation. The opening keynote address was delivered by the Honorable Vice President Aren B. Palik, highlighting the administration's priorities of integrity, transparency, and accountability.

In his address, Vice President Palik acknowledged the pivotal role of auditors in ensuring proper and effective stewardship of public resources, noting the challenges and responsibilities inherent in their roles, stating "I encourage you to always keep in mind the significance of your roles as guardians of public finances and promoters of good governance."

Vice President Palik reiterated the Simina-Palik Administration's commitment to transparency and accountability, citing initiatives such as the recent issuance of the national government's first ever "Citizens Budget" and increased dissemination of information to the general public and citizens through the Office of the President's

Public Information Office.

The conference agenda includes capacity building and training sessions on performance auditing, aiming to enhance auditors' understanding and skills in conducting efficient and effective audits. Vice President Palik encouraged auditors to embrace new tools and ideas to navigate the complexities of governance with agility and effectiveness.



Governor Joseph collaborates with Health and Education officials to enhance Cultural Day preparations

Pohnpei Public Information

February 27, 2024

Pohnpei—Governor Stevenson A. Joseph held a productive meeting with key officials, including Acting Director of Health Services Norleen Oliver Deorio, Chief of Social Services Noriekka Lekka, Chief of Elementary Education Peter Ramirez, and Mr. Santos Abraham from Social Services. The purpose of the meeting was to provide updates on the preparations for Cultural Day, celebrated on March 31st, a public holiday in Pohnpei State.

During the meeting, the officials presented their existing plans to showcase the rich culture and heritage of Pohnpei, primarily organized by the youth. Governor Joseph offered valuable input to enhance and complement the proposed activities, ensuring a more vibrant and inclusive celebration. Governor Joseph's suggestions will be incorporated into the existing plans, and a comprehensive review will take place at a later date to ensure that the Cultural Day festivities align with the vision of showcasing Pohnpei's diverse cultural identity.

Cultural Day holds significant importance as it provides an opportunity for the community to come together, celebrate their heritage, and foster a sense of pride and unity. The collaboration between Governor Joseph and the relevant departments underscores the commitment to creating a memorable and culturally enriching experience for the residents of Pohnpei.

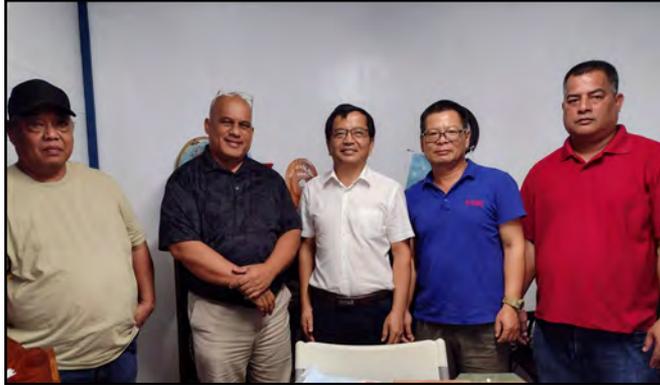


Courtesy visit of FSM-China Pilot Farm Project leaders to Governor Joseph: A vision for sustainable agricultural development

Pohnpei Public Information

February 28, 2024

Pohnpei—The Office of the Governor played host to distinguished guests from the FSM-China Pilot Farm project. Mr. Hu Xunxiang, the project leader, accompanied by Coordinator Mr. Liu Xiongping, Mr. Eugene Eperiam, Acting Director of the Department of Resources and Development, and Mr. Edward Roland, engaged in a productive courtesy visit with Governor Stevenson A. Joseph.



The meeting commenced with warm greetings and introductions, setting the stage for a constructive dialogue on the progress and future direction of the China Pilot Farm project. Mr. Hu, with translation assistance from Mr. Liu, informed Governor Joseph that the project, situated at Pohnlangas, Madolenihmw, is currently in its 2nd year of the 12th phase, which began in 1998.

Mr. Hu discussed the imminent completion of the 12th phase in about

a year and emphasized the necessity of submitting a proposal at the end of each phase to secure the continuity of the project. He expressed that this juncture provides an opportune moment to infuse new ideas into the project, inviting Governor Joseph's input for its future trajectory.

The three focal areas of the project - vegetable cultivation, Bio-Gas digesters (with 50 currently on the island), and livestock (primarily pigs) - were highlighted by Mr. Hu. He also shared plans for an artificial insemination station near Kolonia and the construction of greenhouses, 12 of which are yet to be erected.

Governor Joseph, while expressing appreciation for the ongoing efforts, inquired about the possibility of installing greenhouses at elementary schools, recognizing the importance of integrating agriculture education at an early stage. Additionally, he raised concerns about the prolonged "pilot" status of the project since its initiation in 1998.

Governor Joseph proposed a forward-thinking approach, suggesting a phase where the technical expertise developed at the Pilot Farm could be disseminated across all Municipalities. This envisioned scenario involves teams of agricultural experts training local populations in their respective municipalities, fostering a decentralized and sustainable model of agricultural development.

The meeting concluded with a commitment to further collaborative discussions, focusing on integrating innovative ideas into the project's future phases and exploring avenues for wider knowledge sharing and skills transfer across all municipalities.

FSM Development Bank CEO, Ms. Anna Mendiola, pays a courtesy call on Governor Stevenson A. Joseph to strengthen collaborations

Pohnpei Public Information

February 29, 2024

Pohnpei—The Chief Executive Officer of the FSM Development Bank, Ms. Anna Mendiola, recently paid a courtesy call on Governor Stevenson A. Joseph to foster closer ties and discuss opportunities for collaboration between the FSM Development Bank and state-owned lending institutions.

Governor Joseph extended a warm welcome to CEO Mendiola, expressing his commitment to furthering cooperation between the FSM Development Bank and key state entities, such as the Pohnpei Housing Authority and the Small Business Finance Guarantee Corporation.

Both parties emphasized the importance of aligning strategies to better serve the needs of the community, particularly in areas related to housing development and small business financing. The discussions highlighted the potential for joint initiatives that could have a positive impact on the economic landscape of the region.

CEO Mendiola expressed her gratitude for the opportunity to meet with Governor Joseph, acknowledging the pivotal role that collaborative efforts can play in advancing the socio-economic development of the region.

The courtesy call between CEO Anna Mendiola and Governor Stevenson A. Joseph marks a significant step towards

strengthening partnerships that are crucial for the continued growth and prosperity of the Pohnpei State and the Federated States of Micronesia.



Courtesy visit by Mr. Stanley Lorennij, Executive Director of the College of Micronesia Land Grant, and staff to Governor Stevenson A. Joseph

Pohnpei Public Information

February 27, 2024

Pohnpei--Governor Stevenson A. Joseph welcomed Mr. Stanley Lorennij, Executive Director of the College of Micronesia Land Grant, and his staff during a courtesy visit at the Governor's Office. The purpose of the visit was to extend congratulations to Governor Joseph provide updates and discuss potential collaborative efforts.

During the courtesy call, Mr. Lorennij conveyed his congratulations to Governor Joseph. Governor Joseph expressed gratitude for the well-wishes and emphasized the significance of a close partnership with the College of Micronesia Land Grant to benefit the lives of the local population.

Governor Joseph shared insights into a new Food Security Policy aimed at addressing local food production. Furthermore, he revealed plans to merge the division of agriculture into the office of aquaculture, creating a unified Department focused on addressing Food Security comprehensively.

Both parties highlighted the importance of engaging non-governmental organizations (NGOs), particularly at the grassroots and community levels. Governor Joseph cited successful examples of NGOs cultivating sea cucumber and rabbitfish, contributing to sustainable practices and economic development.

In a closing remark, Mr. Lorennij informed Governor Joseph about the upcoming construction of a new building for the College of Micronesia Land Grant. Governor Joseph expressed his full support for the new office and its programs, emphasizing the pivotal role of collaboration in advancing the well-being of the people.

The meeting concluded with a shared commitment to continued cooperation, highlighting the mutual dedication of both parties to working together for the greater good of the community.

College of Micronesia (COM) Land-Grant Program is a US Government program under the National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA),



a department in the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). As part of the Compact of Free Association agreement in the 1980s, an 1862 Land Grant status was accorded to three Micronesian nations of Federated States of Micronesia comprising four states (Yap, Chuuk, Pohnpei, and Kosrae), the Republic of Palau and The Republic of the Marshall Islands.

The College of Micronesia (COM) became the College of Micronesia Land Grant, with its Central Office in Pohnpei, Federated Micronesia. The COM started operating based on the COM Treaty agreement among the three Micronesian governments (FSM, Palau, RMI). You can find out more about COM Land grant at their website: <https://comlandgrant.org/>

Governor Stevenson A. Joseph hosts courtesy call with Philippine Ambassador Mylene Garcia-Albano

Pohnpei Public Information

February 27, 2024

Pohnpei—Governor Stevenson A. Joseph welcomed Her Excellency Mylene Garcia-Albano and her delegation for a courtesy call, fostering diplomatic ties and exploring potential collaborations between the Republic of the Philippines and the Pohnpei State Government.

Ambassador Garcia-Albano, in a warm exchange, sought to understand the specific interests and areas where the Republic of the Philippines could extend support to Pohnpei. Governor Joseph, appreciating the gesture, discussed various potential avenues for collaboration, including the establishment of a sister-city or province relationship and assistance in agriculture, aquaculture, food

processing, and vocational training.

The Ambassador mentioned TESDA, an organization specializing in technical education and skills development, as a potential partner for vocational training initiatives. Governor Joseph, noting the ongoing discussions about the development of a vocational skills academy in Pohnpei, expressed receptivity to exploring partnerships with TESDA.

The discussion further delved into the Governor's plans to address food security by merging agriculture and aquaculture services. Both parties acknowledged the potential for significant cooperation in this critical area.

The atmosphere during the courtesy call was friendly and collaborative,

with Governor Joseph expressing optimism about the promising future of collaboration between the Pohnpei State Government and the Republic

of the Philippines. The exchange sets the stage for further discussions and potential partnerships that could benefit both regions.



Governor Joseph hosts courtesy call from Rotary Club of Pohnpei leadership

Pohnpei Public Information

February 28, 2024

Pohnpei--Governor Stevenson A. Joseph welcomed Mr. Rick Dereas, President of the Rotary Club of Pohnpei, and Mr. Melner Isaac, President-Elect, during a courtesy call at the gubernatorial office today.

During the meeting, Mr. Isaac provided an insightful overview of the Rotary Club's ongoing activities, emphasizing the upcoming annual quiz night. This event serves as a vital fundraiser for scholarships and community projects aimed at fostering educational opportunities and community development in Pohnpei.

As part of their commitment to community engagement, the Rotary Club of Pohnpei presented Governor Joseph with the 2024 Rotary Club calendar. The calendar features captivating photos from across the Federated States of Micronesia, showcasing the rich diversity and beauty of the region.

President Rick Dereas also took the opportunity to share details about a noteworthy project initiated by the Rotary Club in local high schools. This project specifically addresses absenteeism



among girls, emphasizing the importance of education and providing support to overcome barriers that hinder regular attendance. Other noteworthy projects are the street mirrors, notably at the intersection in Sokehs before heading down to Palikir and supporting the State Spelling Bee.

Expressing gratitude for the warm reception, Governor Joseph thanked Mr. Dereas and Mr. Isaac for their visit and commended the Rotary Club for its impactful initiatives. The Governor also shared that he was a Rotarian in previous years and acknowledged the significance of their efforts in promoting education, community well-being, and cultural appreciation.

The Rotary Club of Pohnpei continues to play a vital role in enhancing the quality of life for the people of Pohnpei, and Governor Joseph looks forward to ongoing collaboration to achieve shared goals and aspirations.

UNDP Resident Representative and Deputy Resident Representative pay courtesy call on Governor Stevenson A. Joseph

Pohnpei Public Information

March 1, 2024

Pohnpei—Governor of Pohnpei, Stevenson A. Joseph, welcomed a courtesy call from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Resident Representative for the Pacific Subregion, Ms. Munkhtuya Altangerel, and Deputy Resident Representative, Mr. Kevin Petrini, based in Pohnpei and staff.

Resident Representative Altangerel, who is on her second mission to the Federated States of Micronesia, recently presented her credentials. The meeting provided an opportunity for her to share insights into UNDP's ongoing initiatives, particularly in the areas of climate resilience, Emergency Operations Centers, and governance.

Governor Joseph expressed his keen interest in leveraging UNDP's expertise in public service delivery facilitation. The discussions delved into strategic development plans, capacity building, digitalization of government services, and access to financing, with a particular focus on climate financing, where UNDP is an accredited entity.



The conversation also touched upon the implementation of compact resources, where Governor Joseph candidly noted challenges, especially in the timely execution of infrastructure projects. Both parties recognized the need for further collaboration, emphasizing the importance of addressing climate-related challenges, a central concern for Pohnpei.

Resident Representative Altangerel highlighted the invaluable role that Deputy Resident Representative Kevin Petrini plays in facilitating priorities in Pohnpei. Governor Joseph welcomed the support and collaboration, citing Petrini's local presence as a key asset. The meeting concluded with a commitment to strengthen collaboration between the Pohnpei State Government and UNDP, with a focus on addressing pressing issues such as climate resilience and efficient utilization of compact resources.

Assistant Secretary and FSM Sports Development representative discuss Micronesian Games preparations with Governor Joseph

Pohnpei Public Information

February 28, 2024

Pohnpei—The Office of the Governor, welcomed esteemed guests Stuard Penias, Assistant Secretary for the Social Division of the FSM Department of Health and Social Affairs, and Sebastian T. Tairuwepiy from FSM Sports Development. The visit was centered on discussions regarding the upcoming Micronesian Games scheduled for June this year in Majuro.

Both Mr. Penias and Mr. Tairuwepiy were tasked by the President of the FSM to engage with State Governments on Micronesian Games budgets and explore opportunities for collaboration with the FSM National Government to ensure the success of the event. The meeting with Governor Stevenson A. Joseph focused on enhancing coordination and support for a

successful Micronesian Games.

One of the key topics of discussion revolved around the development of sports programs in Pohnpei. Governor Joseph shared his vision of consolidating youth sports programs under the Department of Education, emphasizing the holistic benefits of sports for the physical and mental well-being of the younger generation.

Governor Joseph, Mr. Penias, and Mr. Tairuwepiy collectively acknowledged the importance of sports and physical activity, agreeing that organized sports participation should commence as early as the Junior high level. The meeting highlighted the shared commitment to fostering a culture of sports and providing opportunities for youth to engage in healthy activities.

The participants expressed optimism

about the collaborative efforts between the State Government and the FSM National Government in supporting sports development and ensuring the success of the upcoming Micronesian Games in June.

The discussions concluded with a commitment to ongoing dialogue and cooperation to advance sports programs and initiatives for the benefit of the youth in Pohnpei and across the Federated States of Micronesia.



Governor Stevenson A. Joseph granted audience with Traditional Leadership of Pohnpei

Pohnpei Public Information

March 1, 2024

Kolonia, Pohnpei—Governor Stevenson A. Joseph, accompanied by Lieutenant Governor Ioanis and key members of his cabinet, including Attorney General Belsipa Mikel-Isom, Director of the Department of Land Luciano Abraham, Director of the Department of Education Stanley Etse, and Administrator of the Office of Transportation and Infrastructure Daniel Isaac, Chief of Staff Kapilly Capelle and Public Affairs Officer, Peteriko Hairens had the honor of a lunchtime audience with esteemed traditional leaders of Pohnpei.

The distinguished guests included Wasalapalap Isipahu, Nahnmwarki of Madolenihmw, Nanpwutak Pikiniap, Nahnmwarki of Sokehs, Pwoud Lepen Nett, Nahnmwarki of Nett, IsoNahnken of U, Likend Kelekel Madolenihmw, and Nahnalek Nett. This gathering provided a unique opportunity for open dialogue and collaboration between the elected government and the traditional leadership of Pohnpei.

The primary purpose of the meeting was to formally inform and extend an invitation to the traditional leaders to attend Governor Joseph's first State of the State Message. Scheduled to take place on March 7, 2024, at 10:00 am in the chamber of the Pohnpei State Legislature, the address aims to update the community on the current state of affairs, achievements, and vision for the future.

Additionally, the lunchtime audience served as a platform to announce and inform the traditional leadership of the start of Women's Day activities which will culminate on March 8, 2024, a public holiday, Pohnpei International Women's Day and to engage in discussions on various areas of concern, fostering a spirit of cooperation between the government and traditional authorities. The Governor expressed his commitment to working hand in hand with traditional leaders for the overall development and prosperity of Pohnpei.

The meeting concluded with a mutual understanding and appreciation for the roles both the elected government and traditional leadership play in shaping the future of Pohnpei. This collaborative effort signifies a commitment to unity and progress for the betterment of the state and its people.



Acting Secretary of FSM Department of Education Wayne Mendiola and team update Governor Joseph on FSM Skills and Employability Enhancement (FSM SEE) project

Pohnpei Public Information

February 27, 2024

Pohnpei—Governor Stevenson A. Joseph welcomed a delegation led by the Acting Secretary of the National Department of Education, Mr. Wayne Mendiola, along with Ms. Rachel Salomon, Ms. Hyunjeong Lee project manager, FSM Skills & Employability Enhancement Project, and Angelyne Aten, Project Assistant. The courtesy visit aimed to update Governor Joseph on the FSM Skills and Employability Enhancement (FSM SEE) Project, a transformative initiative addressing skills development and employment opportunities in the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM).

Ms. Lee shared key details about the FSM SEE Project, highlighting its focus on vocational programs at the former PATS High School campus. The project aims to establish a solid foundation for skills development and employment opportunities, and Ms. Lee provided insights into the establishment of a project steering committee, which includes state Directors of Education. Future plans, including an estimated start date of 2026, were also discussed during the meeting.

Acting Secretary Mendiola explained that the concept for the FSM Skills Academy originated from the recent Micronesian Presidential Summit (MPS). Governor Joseph inquired about the involvement of



the College of Micronesia-FSM (COM-FSM) in the project. Ms. Lee clarified that the FSM Skills Academy is designed as a partnership with COM-FSM, emphasizing their full support for the project.

Ms. Lee elaborated on the program, stating that the FSM Skills Academy is tailored for high school graduates, offering one year of vocational training after graduation. Participants can choose to continue their vocational training at CTEC COM-FSM or enter the workforce equipped with practical skills. The program ensures the continuation of math and language subjects during the vocational training period.

Governor Joseph expressed his

commitment to supporting students interested in pursuing vocational studies, emphasizing the importance of providing diverse paths beyond academics. Acting Secretary Mendiola shared research findings indicating that most high school dropouts occur during the Junior year due to a lack of alternative paths. The FSM Skills Academy aims to address this by offering a vocational option, and providing students with a tangible goal.

Governor Joseph conveyed his full support for the FSM SEE Project and offered assistance as needed. The meeting concluded with a shared commitment to empowering the youth through enhanced vocational education and creating pathways for a successful future.

Governor Stevenson A. Joseph strategically amends Legislative Bill No. 14-24 Ld.1, signing into law State Law 11L-02-24

Pohnpei Public Information

March 5, 2024

Kolonia, Pohnpei—Governor Stevenson A. Joseph has taken a considered approach to address the fiscal challenges faced by the State of Pohnpei, signing Legislative Bill No. 14-24 LD.1 into law as State Law 11L-02-24 with significant modifications. The bill, aimed at amending the FY2024 Budget Act, underwent careful scrutiny, resulting in a targeted veto by the Governor, who preserved only essential line items from the original proposal.

In an official communication to Speaker Yamaguchi, Governor Joseph underscored the prevailing financial uncertainty within the State of Pohnpei, citing the unresolved status of sector grants under Compact III pending approval by the U.S. Congress. Given the fluidity of the current financial situation, Governor Joseph emphasized the need for prudence as the state's best course of action.

The retained line items from the original bill are as follows:

Sports Commission - \$9,010 for the Kaselehlie Softball tournament

Speaker's Office - \$8,485.00 for Personnel, \$20,000.00 for Travel, and \$6,000.00 for Representation fund

Governor Joseph's official communication conveyed a comprehensive veto of most proposed appropriations. The veto was guided by a commitment to fiscal responsibility and the absence of an accompanying Standing Committee report validating urgency and justifying needs, particularly during financial austerity.

The total appropriation proposed under Legislative Bill 14.24 L.D. 1 amounted to \$184,395.00, comprising \$63,372.00 for new items and \$121,023.00 for increases over certain existing line items. Governor Joseph's veto reflects a measured response, ensuring that the State exercises restraint and due diligence in financial matters.

Governor Joseph signed the amended State Law 11L-02-24 on March 4, 2024, and promptly transmitted it to the 11th Pohnpei Legislature. The revised law stands as a testament to the Governor's commitment to navigating the state through economic uncertainty while making prudent fiscal decisions.

More UOG students taking pathway to mechanical engineering jobs through partnership with UH Mānoa, Navy Shipyard

University of Guam

March 1, 2024

Guam—A year and a half since the start of a collaboration that allows University of Guam engineering students to attend their junior and senior years at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, the first graduates are expected to receive diplomas by the end of this year. And more UOG first-year students and sophomores plan to take this career pathway.

Under a program called "2+2," students who completed the first two years of their engineering education at UOG can apply to UH Mānoa, carrying over their credits with them. At UH Mānoa, they can major in Mechanical Engineering and upon graduation they get a shot at jobs with the Pearl Harbor Naval Shipyard in Hawaii and subsequently with the Shipyard's future detachment in Guam.

The Shipyard joins the partnership as it aims to grow a pool of local engineers and expand its ship repair capabilities into Guam.

"We are grateful to our partners for providing this excellent pathway for engineering students at the University of Guam to pursue a career in mechanical engineering on the island," said Dr. Anita Borja Enriquez, UOG President. "We agree that our collective partnership provides incredible value to support workforce development opportunities on Guam for our UOG graduates."

There are now seven engineering students from Guam at UH Mānoa, and four of them are in the Mechanical Engineering pathway, said Dr. Marvin Young, Professor of Mechanical Engineering at UH Mānoa.

During his return visit to UOG in early February 2024, following a visit when the partnership was launched in 2022, Dr. Young said he received feedback from 15 UOG freshmen and sophomore students that they also plan to take the 2+2 career path.

Clifford Imamura, a Guam representative for Pearl Harbor Naval Shipyard, joined Dr. Marvin Young, Professor of Mechanical Engineering at UH Mānoa in the recent meeting with UOG's engineering students.

UOG's Pre-engineering Program evolved into a four-year Bachelor of Science in Civil Engineering Program in 2019. The first 12 graduates from the Civil Engineering program graduated in December 2021.

The UOG School of Engineering welcomed 170 declared Civil Engineering majors in Academic Year 2022-2023.

UOG held a groundbreaking ceremony for the construction of the \$7.9 million, 16,500-square-foot School of Engineering Building on December 15, 2023.

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United for Economic Growth: Yap Hosts 3rd FSM R&D Conference

FSM Department of Resources and Development

February 23, 2024

Yap—The FSM Department of Resources & Development convened the 3rd R&D Conference hosted in the State of Yap, Federated States of Micronesia from January 29th to February 2, 2024.

The conference aims to bring together public and commercial sectors to boost productivity over the next two years. To provide and establish implementation and monitoring strategies to promote economic growth in all areas, including trade, investment, statistics, energy, marine resources, agriculture, and tourism. The week's agenda was focused on taking stock of R&D's key sectors, reporting back on progress based on the recommendations made in the last conference hosted in Chuuk, and creating a platform for the nation to discuss the challenges and opportunities.

Lt. Governor Francis Itimai delivered the Welcoming Remark on behalf of T.H. Governor Charles Chieng, welcoming the 165 representatives of the National, State, and Municipal Governments, private sector, banking institutions, civil society, NGOs, and several development partners, including Secretariat of the Pacific Community, Micronesia Conservation Trust, the Waitt Institute, Rutgers University, Asian Development Bank and U.S. Agency for International Development. The State Head of Delegations delivered their remarks, followed by the Honorable Vice President Aren B. Palik, who opened the conference with his remarks.

The conference was held over 5 days, with the first three days focused on FSM R&D's mandate for the nation's productive sectors (Trade & Investment, Statistics & Data Collection, Energy & Water, Marine Resources, Agriculture, and Tourism), providing a forum among technical staff from both State & National government along with National, Regional, and International partners to maximize the opportunities and reach for solutions way forward and to be targeted within the next two years.

Trade & Investment Sector

In Trade and Investment's presentation, they highlighted opportunities in the

region. They covered topics such as policies, market access, investment promotion, and business networking. They provided a platform for business investors and policymakers to explore potential collaborations and partnerships. They also highlighted the outcomes of the recent national trade facilitation committee recommendations and adoption of the trade-policy review report.

This will encourage and facilitate local and foreign direct investment in agriculture, fisheries, tourism, human resources development, and other supporting services to enable the private sector to produce value-added, quality, and competitive goods and services both for the local and the export market, to promote export-led economic growth, self-reliance, and sustainable development, with the ultimate objective of creating employment, alleviating hardship and raising the living standards of FSM citizens.

Statistics Sector

The Statistics and Data Analytics highlighted the importance of data and statistics in decision-making and policy formulation. The team covered topics such as data collection, analysis, visualization, and data-driven decision-making in the context of resource and economic development.

The team presented an overview of its preliminary results of the 2023 Census highlighting out-migration in the past decade. Natural increase contribution to the growth is becoming significant, according to the preliminary analysis of the Kosrae results. Preliminary counts of the 2023 census points to the following breakdown of population and housing by the States: Pohnpei – 36.3%, Chuuk – 44.0%, Yap – 13.0%, and Kosrae – 6.7%. NSO identified the following areas with much room for improvement: data sharing by States to NSO and vice versa; capacity and capability enhancement (having more staff, staff retention, skills improvement); modernization of statistical processes. Based on their sector's progress in data and statistics, they identified the tasks, activities, and events that needed to take place.

Energy Sector

The Energy Sector highlighted the energy-related topics such as renewable



energy sources, energy efficiency, and sustainable energy solutions. Their presentation brought together experts, policymakers, and industry leaders to discuss the latest advancements and challenges in the energy sector.

The Division works in partnership with each State utility companies – CPUS, PUC, KUA & YSPSC – to achieve FSM's Energy Master Plan Targets. Some of the discussions ensued around high tariffs impacting business competitiveness and the already low income of FSM households. Affordability is critical and members suggested that utility companies should balance profit against tariffs for their customers. The participants welcomed renewable energy and highlighted the need to manage grid stability & consider tariff reductions on ongoing energy initiatives. A significant portion of the total project funds went towards hiring consultancy firms, owner's engineers, and technical experts.

After the productive engagement, the National and State leaders agreed to support the sectors' primary goals of:

- Scaling up renewable energy in the power sector to be at 70% by 2030
- Increase energy access to 100% by 2030
- Reduce Greenhouse gasses emission by 65% to 2000 level
- Sustainable Development of the WASH Sector

Marine Resources and Fisheries

The Marine Resources sector addressed the issues related to marine resources, including sustainable fisheries management, marine conservation, ocean pollution, and the blue economy. Their presentation brought together scientists, policymakers, and stakeholders to discuss strategies for the sustainable use and protection of marine resources.

The team presented on the National and State Departments of Resources and Development's dedication, fostering and promotion of the sustainable development of the nation's economy by utilizing its natural resources. Representatives from both the National and State Marine Division and Natural Resources Division presented updates on its accomplishments, ongoing and pending projects, challenges, and proposed recommendations. They also presented their issues and challenges that include limited capacity building, inadequate staff, and insufficient funding to assist in the effective implementation of proposed activities.

Delegations further discussed the Aquaculture Center in Kosrae and its transition to private ownership. Members noted that despite its privatization, the Aquaculture Center continues to effectively assist the FSM R&D in its efforts, particularly in clam-related activities.

Lastly, they highlighted the importance

Continued on next page

...R&D

Continued from previous page

of conducting educational awareness to the local communities, to translate scientific concepts into information easily understood by the people. Science oriented areas including the Blue Prosperity Initiative, the bill for Marine Spatial Planning, SPC led programs underline the significance of incorporating science into these efforts.

Agriculture Sector

The Agriculture sector highlighted their innovative practices, technologies, and policies in agriculture. The team covered topics such as precision farming, agrotechnology, sustainable farming methods, and agricultural research and development.

A joint presentation was conducted by the National and State representatives on the overview of the agriculture sector. Proposed recommendations from the previous FSM R&D Conference include updating the National Agricultural Policy & Strategic Plans, with comprehensive capacity building and training programs, and developing an Agriculture Implementation Plan with clear targets. Delegations further noted the accomplishments, and the ongoing and pending projects presented.

Each state provided emphasis on its highlights including Pohnpei's completion of the Food Security



Policy, Chuuk's Revival of the Forest Stewardship Program and Reactivation of the Chuuk Invasive Species Taskforce, Yap's Invasive Program-monitoring of fruit fly traps and landscape scale restoration, and Kosrae's reactivation of the Kosrae Invasive Species Taskforce. It was noted that Chuuk's revival of the Forest Stewardship Program means access to funding from foreign donors.

In addition to the ongoing efforts, projects extend to further encompass livestock, as seen in the ADB Food Security project. There is potential to utilize the labor and skills of the FSM local communities, as well as locally grown products to develop the agricultural sector and the economy as a whole.

Tourism Sector

The Tourism sector highlighted FSM's development strategies, marketing, and sustainable tourism practices. The team

highlighted topics such as destination management, tourism infrastructure, cultural heritage preservation, and community-based tourism to allow better exposure to the islands.

The FSM Tourism Division presented its initiatives to enhance the tourism sector, recognizing the collaborative efforts of each state, as well as their distinct unique experiences. The team highlighted the accomplishments of the development and promotion of domestic travel, the recent 2nd micro expo held in Kosrae, and the amendment of some Chuuk State Laws to be conducive to the communities and business. There have also been developments in the community business which have been beneficial to the economy. These include new dining areas, hotels, and local markets. Lastly, the team discussed the ongoing and pending projects with the tourism offices having opportunities in the expansion of air services, accommodation, capacity building, and labor force.

The Yap Visitors Bureau provided updates on its status in marketing and product development. It was noted that the main reason for visitors to Yap was for business purposes, and Leisure/vacation was second. The visitor exit survey has been revived to collect information on visitors. Expanded air services provide the potential to increase the number of visitors to Yap. It was emphasized that marketing initiatives will result in exposure and interest in Yap, allowing for more visitors. This can be done through international advertising on social media platforms and apps to promote the islands. The YVB is committed to enhancing its sites and promoting its cultural practices.

Based on each sector's development, they determined the tasks, actions, and events that needed to be completed, with recommendations supported by the principles. The Conference provided participants with a better understanding of the difficulties and concerns facing the productive sectors, as well as the opportunity to share their knowledge, solutions, and ideas for moving forward. The conference ended with a formal signing ceremony on the outcome document of the conference by the leaders who are The Honorable Vice President Aron Palik, The Honorable Charles Chieng, Governor of Yap State, The Honorable Stevenson Joseph, Governor of Pohnpei State, The Honorable Arthy Nena Lt. Governor for Kosrae State, and Mr. Roger Mori, Head of Delegation for Chuuk State.

Pacific Island auditors trained on best performance auditing practices

PASAI

February 29, 2024

Auckland, New Zealand--The Pacific Association of Supreme Audit Institutions (PASAI) is delivering a series of 12 webinars covering key performance audit concepts for its members from today.

Fifty staff from the government audit offices of American Samoa, the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM) National office, FSM Kosrae, FSM Pohnpei, Fiji, Guam, the Marshall Islands, New Caledonia, Samoa and Tonga have registered to participate in the remotely accessible capacity building training.

The first webinar will cover "What is performance audit, and economy, efficiency, effectiveness and equity?"

The remaining webinars will cover concepts from performance audit standards that underpin good practice from planning to reporting and follow up.

PASAI will typically release webinars in the series twice a month into late August 2024. A video, together with a practice sheet on the relevant concept covered, will be made available to participants on

PASAI's online Learning Platform. There will also be a quiz to complete on the key points covered in each webinar.

Additionally, in late April 2024, PASAI will facilitate an in-person workshop in Fiji to strengthen performance audit practice across member audit offices.

PASAI Director Performance Audit, Mike Scott, was delighted by the response of member audit staff who want to ensure they apply best practice to their performance auditing of government expenditure

and service provision.

"Through the webinars and the workshop, our members will share and build understanding together of good performance audit practice, and how they can use performance audits to promote transparency, accountability and value for Pacific people," he said.

PASAI acknowledges the support of the New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT) and the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT).

UOG professor leads efforts to document little-known wartime past of Chuuk Lagoon

University of Guam

February 27, 2024

Chuuk—The remnants of World War II echo deep throughout the Pacific, and that's no truer than in Chuuk Lagoon, where dozens of Japanese military ships have met their watery graves. Nearly 7,000 tons of ammunition were dropped onto Chuuk over 18 months, during U.S. bombings that began in February 1944. At least 50 to 60 major ships were sunk in the lagoon, and more than 5,000 Japanese and 1,000 Chuukese died.

Today, shipwrecks are a major attraction for Chuuk, drawing in tourists and researchers alike. But having been a significant military base for Japanese forces in the Pacific, there is more to the story of World War II in Chuuk than what can be found underwater.

A team led by Dr. William Jeffery, Associate Professor of Archaeology and Micronesian Studies at the University of Guam, is hoping to shed light on underrepresented stories and sites at Chuuk Lagoon and develop a more comprehensive view of the war in this area. Tonoas, an island in the lagoon, served as the wartime headquarters of the Japanese in Chuuk. This is where Dr. Jeffery has been concentrating his focus.

"The war remains are not just shipwrecks. There are all these other sites on Tonoas. It was heavily bombed. It had a submarine base. It had a seaplane base," Dr. Jeffery said. The island had a small town of about 800 people, he added.

Several outcomes are planned for the project, including tourism aspects, such as developing signs for certain sites, informative content for online, and a brochure. Click here to see a video of the project <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PcteUfP46Vg>

"The other thing we're doing on Tonoas, which is very significant, is that the war and the bombings bombed traditional Indigenous sites on Chuuk and had a big impact on traditional cultural heritage. So, we want to bring that out," Jeffery said.

Further project outcomes include developing training programs for Tonoas residents employed as tour guides and for prospective employment in historical site preservation and diving.

Dr. Jeffery also wants to connect with students from Chuuk, including those attending the UOG, as part of raising awareness about relics that serve as reminders about how the locals were affected during the war.

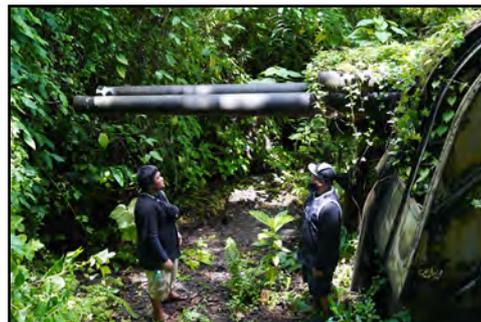
The project includes efforts to survey three new shipwrecks, and to document marine biology at these sites and other shipwrecks.

The project is funded through a grant from the American Battlefield Protection Program. UOG obtained the grant in 2021, but the COVID-19 pandemic delayed work on the project. A three-week survey was conducted in July 2023.

"The University of Guam is committed to advancing research that delivers public value," said Dr. Anita Borja Enriquez, UOG President. "Dr. Jeffery's research illuminates some of the untold stories of our region's history and fosters a deeper understanding of the Pacific's wartime past and its lasting impact on Micronesia."

Also supporting the project from UOG are Dr. David Atienza, Professor of Anthropology, and Dr. Peter Houk, Professor at the Marine Lab who is advising on marine biology. Participating from outside the university are Maria Kottermair, a geographic information systems specialist; Kalle Applegate-Palmer, a marine biologist; photographer Greg Adams; and Hiroshi Ishii, a Japanese maritime archeologist.

Other partners include the Tonoas mayor's office, members of that community in Chuuk, and staff from the Chuuk Historic Preservation Office.



First Multi-Country Programme Steering Committee Meeting: Steering Digital Transformation in Micronesia

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15 February 2024

Micronesia – On February 12, 2024, the inaugural Multi-Country Programme Steering Committee (MCPSC) meeting was held at the UNRC Conference Room in Kolonia, Palikir, with other Micronesian governments, development partners, and civil society organizations participating online.

This meeting marks a significant step towards digital transformation in Micronesia—bringing together a pool of stakeholders from United Nations entities, national government bodies, and civil society organizations. The meeting served as a platform to establish a strategic direction for the implementation of the Joint Programme in Micronesia dedicated to leveraging digital technology to accelerate the achievement of sustainable development goals (SDGs) and enhance community resilience in the region. This is to ensure that digital transformation strategies are cohesively aligned across vital sectors such as education, agriculture, nutrition, and employment, among others.

Mr. Jaap van Hierden, the UN Resident Coordinator for Micronesia, highlighted the meeting's strategic importance in bringing together diverse stakeholders to foster a unified approach towards digital transformation.

Regional Director Atsuko Okuda, International Telecommunication Union (ITU), underscored the critical role of Digital Transformation Frameworks being developed for nations like FSM, Kiribati, and Nauru. Okuda emphasized the ITU's commitment to enhancing community resilience through tailored digital strategies, showcasing the UN's support in navigating the complexities of digital transformation.

Discussions at the meeting highlighted several key initiatives including the finalization of Digital Transformation Frameworks with ITU support for nations like FSM, Kiribati, and Nauru; launching the Smart Islands Initiative to model digital innovation across

select islands; and promoting sector-specific strategies for addressing unique challenges.

The meeting also highlighted the position and digital progress, efforts, and strategies of Micronesia governments. Acting Secretary Philip Hardstaff of the Department of ICT of Nauru articulated the country's perspective on the MCPSC as a vital platform for mutual learning and knowledge exchange—emphasizing the opportunity to learn from fellow governments to accelerate digital transformation. Director Conrad Ellechel of the Ministry of Finance of Palau focused on the country's innovative efforts to establish a seamless digital payment platform, aiming to enhance government service delivery. Assistant Secretary Edward Albert of the Department of Transportation, Communication and Infrastructure of FSM brought attention to their strategic advancements in digital transformation, including the creation of the Digital Transformation Committee and the Digital Transformation Office. These serve as central hubs for coordinating digital transformation efforts across FSM. The representative from FSM also outlined various policies being advocated, such as Cybersecurity Policy and Rights to Information/Data Privacy.

In response to these discussions, development partners and civil society organizations emphasized the importance of inclusive digital transformation effort. Atty. Marstrella Jack, President of PIANGO representing the civil society organizations highlighted the need to cater to all segments of society, including those across different genders, abilities, and socio-economic statuses. The enhancement of digital skills at both community and governmental levels was recognized as crucial for the successful adoption of digital technologies. Mr. Kevin Petrini, the UNDP Deputy Representative further emphasized the need to ensure that digital transformation cuts across various disciplines and should be leveraged to advance socio-economic opportunities and justice, particularly for marginalized groups.

The first MCPSC meeting laid the groundwork for impactful and sustainable digital advancements in Micronesia, setting a collaborative course towards a digitally empowered future. Through strategic alignment and a unified approach, the committee aims to drive forward initiatives that not only meet the region's unique challenges but also leverage digital technology's potential to foster a more resilient and prosperous Micronesia.



The meeting was concluded by Mr. Christian Viegelahn, the Labor Officer of the International Labour Organization (ILO). He underscored the paramount importance of fostering decent job opportunities through the upskilling and reskilling of both current and future workforce members. Mr. Viegelahn emphasized the necessity for industries and governments to proactively embrace digital transformation by establishing an enabling environment and crafting responsive national employment plans that harness the power of digitalization. He further stressed the imperative of ensuring inclusivity, whereby no individual is left behind in the process of economic advancement and technological integration.

The Joint Programme funded by the Joint SDG Funds, Accelerating SDG achievement through digital transformation to strengthen community resilience in Micronesia, is led by the ITU and managed by UNOPS with the strategic guidance of the UNRCO, and technical expertise of FAO, ILO, UNESCO, UNICEF, and UNODC.

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Pacific Groups join global call for WTO to target big fishing fleets

PANG

February 29, 2024

Pacific—Pacific civil society groups have joined others from around the world in an open letter calling on trade negotiators at this week's World Trade Organization (WTO) Ministerial to ensure that any outcome on fisheries subsidies targets those fleets most responsible for overfishing, protects small-scale fishers and doesn't stop small-island states from developing their own fishing fleets.

“The negotiations on subsidies that contribute to overfishing are failing to address the real problem – those historically responsible for overfishing – and is instead creating loop holes that the big fleets will be able to use. The current agreement lets those most responsible off the hook”, commented Mr Adam Wolfenden, Deputy Coordinator of the Pacific Network on Globalisation.

The open letter has been endorsed by over 65 organisations from around the world, including in the Pacific Islands region. The letter calls on Ministers to make sure that any outcome on overfishing and overcapacity subsidies targets those who have the greatest historical responsibility for overfishing and stock depletion, excludes all small-scale fishers from any subsidy prohibitions, prevents the WTO from ruling on the validity of conservation and management measures of members, and upholds the sovereign rights of countries under UNCLOS.

“The global response to this letter shows that there is concern around the world about what is being presented to Ministers to negotiate on. This is an agreement that is not living up to the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) mandate as not only is it failing to reign in the problem but it is offering inadequate flexibilities to developing countries”, added Mr Wolfenden.

Negotiations on fisheries subsidies in the WTO were renewed from the SDG14.6 mandate which aims to “prohibit certain forms of fisheries subsidies which contribute to overcapacity and overfishing, and eliminate subsidies that contribute to IUU fishing, and refrain from introducing new such subsidies, recognizing that appropriate and effective special and differential treatment (SDT) for developing and least developed countries should be an integral part of the WTO fisheries subsidies negotiation”.

“We're deeply concerned about the 'sustainability' flexibilities that will be available to the big fishing fleets and how these will be largely unavailable to developing countries, in addition to how these will also open up a country's fishing conservation measures to challenge in the WTO. The WTO has no expertise on sustainable fishing and has a horrid track-record of striking down environmental legislation”, continued Mr Wolfenden.

“We're calling on Ministers, both the Pacific Island Country WTO Member and those around the world to stand up for genuine sustainability and development and not accept a text that undermines development and sustainability and gives the big fishing fleets a free pass”, concluded Mr Wolfenden.

Trade Ministers from around the world are meeting in Abu Dhabi for the World Trade Organization Ministerial Conference (MC13), which runs from February 26-29. The meeting will cover talks on fisheries subsidies, e-commerce, agriculture and WTO reform among others.

The civil society open letter can be found at: <https://www.tradepac.org/mc13-fisheries-open-letter>

New Philippines Ambassador to the FSM presents credentials to the Filipino Community in Pohnpei

Alvie B. Cabañez

Kaselehlie Press Volunteer Contributor

On February 25, 2024- the new Philippines Ambassador to the FSM, Her Excellency Ambassador Mylene J. Garcia-Albano made her first official duty tour at the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM) for a meet and greet. It was held at OLMCHS gym. She presented her credentials to the Filipino community in Pohnpei and had a courtesy call with FSM President Simina.



Filipinos flocked to the venue with the hopes of meeting and greeting the new Ambassador. She did not disappoint. Upon arriving to the venue, she briskly went around exchanging smiles shaking hands with the audience before settling on the Presidential table. She was greeted by the Filipino community anticipating to meet her and listen to her speech. Ms. Evangeline Ong Jimenez Cucroca, Minister & Consul, Philippine Embassy in Japan, introduced the Ambassador before she graced the podium.

Each delegate was also introduced and their respective roles. Representatives from the Philippine Embassy in Japan were: Mr. Victor Atangan, Administrative Officer; Ms. Evangeline Ong Jimenez Cucroca, Minister & Consul; Ms. Maria Alilia G. Maghirang, Agriculture Attaché; and Mr. Ramon C. Pastrana, Labor Attaché. The Philippine Consulate General (PCG) in Agana was also present Honorable Rosario P. Lemque, Consul General, together with Mr. Fritz Gerald A. Fernandez, Communications Officer, PCG.

The audience had the chance to ask the delegates labor questions, and consular services during the open forum. Filipinos have been meaning to get clarification from the Department of Migrant Workers represented by Mr. Pastrana. There were questions raised on employer contract, updates on recruitment, and the ban that was lifted late last year. Chuuk Filipino Community President Dudley Jordan was also present and raised a few issues and concerns of the Chuuk community.

The delegation is scheduled for a courtesy call with President Simina on Monday, February 26. They are also scheduled to meet with Governor Stevenson A. Joseph on February 27. Other agencies like NORMA, WCPFC, NFC, the Australian Embassy and US Embassy were also scheduled for a courtesy call. On February 27, 2024 Speaker Esmond B. Moses is set to host a dinner at his residence in Awak wherein the delegates will feast their eyes on local foods and delicacies. The delegation is set to leave on February 29, 2024.

The meet and greet did not only serve its purpose but for the Filipino community to gather as one for one goal. It has been a while since the pandemic that the Filipino community gathered for an occasion like this.

The event was made possible by the support of every Filipino on the island. It was facilitated by the UFCP Officers headed by the Officer In-Charge, Ms. Girlie Figueras with much appreciation from the regional officers and honorary member Ms. Araceli Perez-Pendergraft. The event ended with a sumptuous dinner filled with Filipino dishes and delicacies shared by generous individuals.

The event was hosted by Ms. Margarita Almazan and Ms. Tess Delos Reyes.

