

Pacific Island trained to manage marine invasive species

A week-long marine invasive species training workshop was recently concluded in Samoa for nine Pacific Island countries. The training was aimed at empowering managers of marine conservation areas to address marine invasive species. Nineteen participants attended the training run by Professor Chad Hewitt, Director of the National Centre for Marine & Coastal Conservation, Australian Maritime College, to learn and to share their knowledge and experience on the issue. The participants acknowledged marine invasive species to be a serious issue especially to vulnerable Pacific Island countries.

"Invasive species are a serious issue in small Pacific Island countries, and we only have to look at the impacts of the taro blight, and the Giant African snail to the Samoan economy and the people to remind us that we are no longer living in isolated communities," says Posa Skelton, resource participant and Director of the International Ocean Institute (Australia). The lack of information and capacity to address marine invasive species in the Pacific region makes the job of marine conservation managers difficult. "We know a lot about invasive species on land, but we know next to nothing about marine invasives," says Malama Momoemausu, Government of Samoa. "The Samoan Government acknowledges this gap and has recently completed surveying high-risk areas for marine invasive species". The training was organised by the Pacific Invasives Learning Network (PILN) and the International Union for the Conservation of Nature.

The International Ocean Institute (Australia) presented the results of its surveys for marine invasive species in the Pacific, and was part of the resource panel for the training. The economic loss caused by marine invasive species has exceeded billions of dollars world-wide. The cost relates to loss of commodities, eradication of unwanted species and the rehabilitation of impacted sites. For the Pacific Islands the potential impact of marine invasive species will be more profound due to their reliance on the marine environment. The loss may not be in dollar value but in the sustainability of communities.

The participants pledged to raise awareness on marine invasive species in their countries and encouraged the global community to assist them in building the capacity to address this threat.



Pacific Island participants at the Marine Invasive Species training