



SPREP-tok

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Quarterly newsletter from the Secretariat - September 2006
'tok' being island pidgin English for talk...

Contents:

Protecting biodiversity	1
Turtle tagging lessons	2
Protection of cetaceans	3
Looking after the land	4
Recent SPREP Publications	4

This newsletter, SPREP-tok, goes hand in hand with the monthly e-briefs launched in July 2006. Called 'SPREP Highlights' the material from the first issue is reproduced here as an insert. We normally send it out by email only - let us know if you would like to be on the mailing list.

This newsletter will be available on the SPREP website. If you are having trouble downloading from there, we're happy to mail you the hardcopy.

We welcome suggestions for improvement and contributions in the form of text and pictures.

*The SPREP Communications team:
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Protecting our Biodiversity: It's Everybody's Business!

Thirty-five kilometers inland from Suva in south-central Viti Levu in Fiji lies Sovi Basin, a biodiverse terrestrial ecosystem. Sovi's 20,700 hectare of lowland forest is home to many terrestrial animal species, including 19 endemic birds.

The aim of the Sovi Basin Conservation Project is to create a nature reserve to protect its biodiversity.

An initiative by the traditional landowners with support from Conservation International (CI) Fiji, it is an example of the collective responsibility regional organisations and Pacific Island Countries and Territories (PICTs) need to take charge of to ensure that our natural resources remain sustainable 50 years from now.

SPREP shares that responsibility through the work of its 25 Members. Challenges that

impact biodiversity are wide-ranging from climatic, socio-economic, political, to cultural.

Is there cause for the region to celebrate its existing marine and terrestrial wealth?

Ana Tiraa, SPREP's new Islands Biodiversity Officer, thinks so. Tiraa believes that "biodiversity within the Pacific islands is a part of people's livelihood." However, our biodiversity is increasingly coming

under pressure from extraction activities and if we are not careful this could be cause for sorrow.

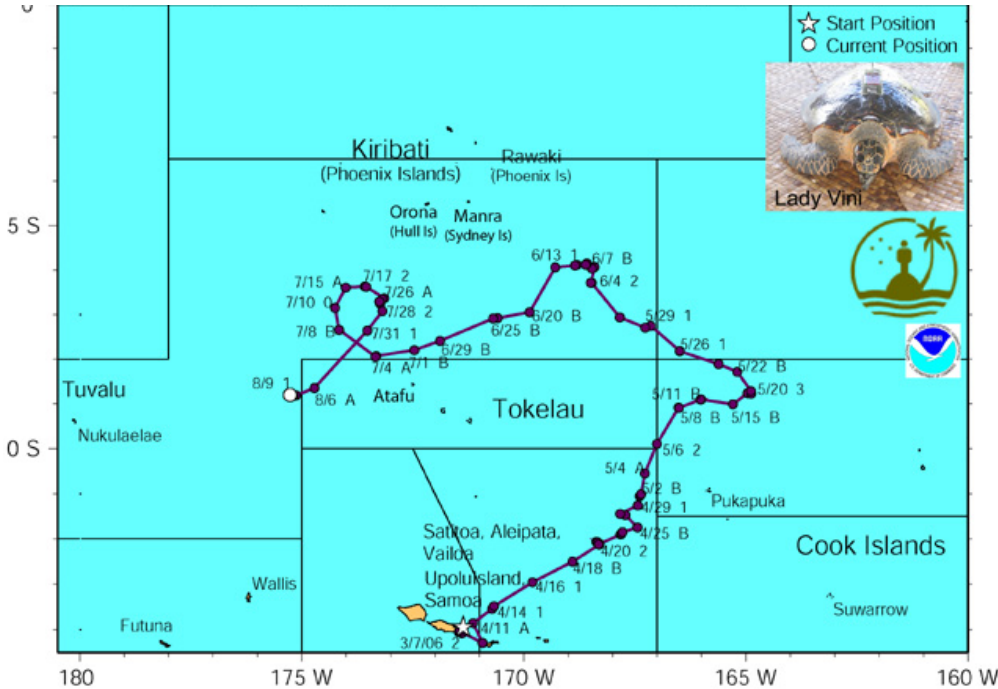
To further protect and manage that livelihood and overall island life, a Programme of Work on Island Biodiversity was adopted at the 8th Conference of the Parties (COP 8) of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) in March 2006. This



Turtle Tagging: Lessons from the Deep

The 2006 Pacific Year of the Sea Turtle, which is coordinated by SPREP, has resulted in a number of positive outcomes. These include partnerships that will

sustain long-term conservation; waste control initiatives such as the Turtle Bags; turtle conservation awareness; and lessons to be learned from tagging the movements of



marine turtles.

Palau's Marine Turtle Conservation and Monitoring team say that to protect the future population of marine turtles in Palau, more information is needed about

Biodiversity: continued from p. 1

Programme of Work sets priorities and a plan of action to implement the objectives of this Convention.

The Programme of Work recognises six points why Pacific Islands are so special: they rely on biodiversity for sustainable development; there are close ties between culture and environment; they have special concerns and particular vulnerabilities; land area is limited; and there are high levels of endemism, and wide coastal and marine biodiversity.

"The Programme of Work is a welcome initiative because it solely concentrates on islands and has a holistic and integrated approach to addressing island biodiversity issues."

The region's biodiversity is being lost. SPREP members identify, in the Action Plan for Managing the Environment, a goal of significantly reducing bio-diversity loss. What this loss means to ecosystems and the way Pacific islanders live their lives is slowly being understood.

Tiraa: "People might say invasive species are a big problem for island biodiversity. If I had to pinpoint a major problem I'd say people. People have the biggest impact on biodiversity through their actions and have the biggest opportunity, if not obligation, to do something about managing these impacts. A lot of the time, invasive species are put there by people, whether accidental or intentionally introduced.

"The amount of development that island countries are experiencing now, such as reclama-

tion of land and mangrove areas and deforestation are all done by people. We're lucky here that we do not have the large populations such as in Asia. Despite that, many of our resources are being depleted for short-term monetary gains. However, there is increasing awareness amongst Pacific Islanders of the need for more sustainable development and knowledge of how to achieve it, so there is cause for optimism."

Participants at the 7th Conference on Nature Conservation and Protected Areas in 2002 recognised the following: "conservation can best be achieved when conservation values become part of everyone's decisions including government, private sector, and the community."

where they migrate and feed. In July 2006 the team tagged Dilioulomekang, a hawksbill turtle. Through satellite tagging, the team hopes to learn more about the movements of the critically endangered sea turtle species.

Six species of sea turtles exist in the Pacific region: leatherbacks, green turtles, loggerheads, hawksbill, olive ridleys, and flatbacks. With the exception of flatbacks, all these have migratory characteristics. These traditional icons of the Pacific are threatened as a result of over-harvesting and the disturbance of nesting grounds.

Tag recoveries from conventional flipper tagging have shown turtles migrate vast distances between Pacific islands. For example, a green turtle that was tagged in the Marshall Islands in 1992 was recovered on Kung Island in the New Ireland Province of Papua New Guinea in 2005. A hawksbill turtle with a satellite tag released in Samoa in March 2006 as part of the Year of the Sea Turtle campaign has crossed Exclusive Economic Zones of 5 different countries and territories (see map, p. 2).

SPREP coordinates the implementation of the regional Marine Turtle Action Plan 2003-2007, under the Regional Marine Turtle Conservation Programme (RMTCP). The Plan prioritises actions needed for the conservation of sea turtles in the region under areas including education and awareness, regional turtle database, management, capacity building, research and regional and international cooperation.

SPREP-tok September 2006



More Info Needed on Pacific Cetaceans

The Pacific Island region spreads over Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZ) spanning more than 30 square kilometres of ocean that is home to whales and dolphins. These cetaceans hold both cultural and aesthetic values and substantially add to the biodiversity of island life.

A group of experts attended a technical meeting to review the regional Whale and Dolphin Action Plan (WADP) in August at SPREP headquarters in Samoa. Participants heard there is dire need for more research into the sustainability levels of cetaceans occurring in the region. In the Solomons, for instance, we don't know what the numbers are. Data limitations stop nations putting in place management frameworks.

Historical whaling occurring in the early 20th Century is a known contributing factor to the decline in whale stocks in the region. An estimated 2 million whales may have been harvested in the Southern Hemisphere alone between the early 1900s and 1980.

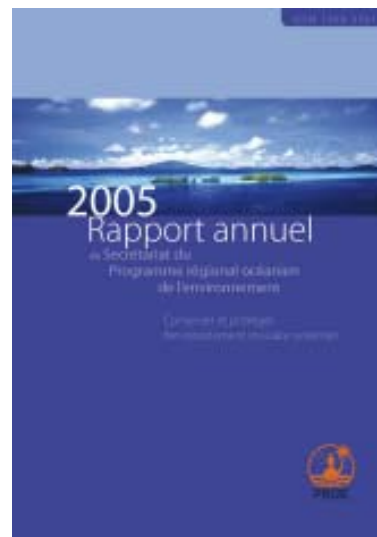
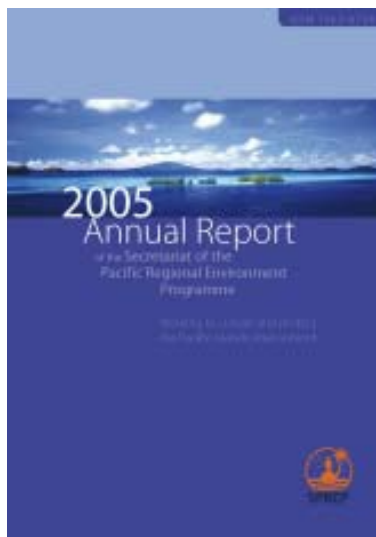
Like marine turtles, cetaceans are a migratory species and Pacific Islands need to undertake a concerted joint effort to ensure their protection and sustainability under legally binding instruments such as the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the Convention on Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS) - Bonn Convention, and Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES).



Photo credits:
p.2 Palau's Marine Turtle Conservation and Monitoring team.
p.3 (both images) Fagatele Bay National Marine Sanctuary.

New SPREP Publications

The SPREP Annual Report 2005 (in English and French) has been printed in preparation for the Annual SPREP Meeting. Subject to endorsement by the Members, hardcopies of the report will be available in September 2006 (44 pages A4, English: ISSN 1562-675X, French: ISSN 1990-3561). 'Celebrating Pacific island biodiversity: Case studies of Island Life' is an interesting overview of issues relevant to the Island Biodiversity Programme of Work approved at the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biodiversity, held in Brazil in May 2006. An easy read with many interesting examples from the Pacific (64 pages A4: ISBN 978-982-04-0327-7). Pictured on front page of this SPREP-tok issue.



To obtain any of the printed works, send your order to the SPREP Information Resource Centre: irc@sprep.org. A charge may apply. All publications can also be downloaded free of charge as pdf file from the [sprep website](http://www.sprep.org).

Building Regional Coordination Mechanisms and Networks for Looking After the Land

The need for establishing a coordinating mechanism was earlier recognised by the Council of Regional Organisations in the Pacific (CROP), resulting in the formation of the Land Resources Working Group (LRWG). For various reasons the earlier LRWG was not that active and the heads of CROP Meeting in Vanuatu during July 2004, recommended that the LRWG be disbanded. The same meeting also concluded "that future work through the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) may necessitate its re-establishment"

SPREP has been instrumental in promoting the re-establishment of this coordination mechanism for regional organisations to address challenges to sustainable land resources management. Consultations began during a recent regional workshop on sustainable land management held at SPREP in July and steps are now being taken to have the

working group formally re-established.

The Pacific Islands RoundTable for Nature Conservation is an additional important mechanism that can contribute to strengthening coordination of work in the region to address land degradation. SPREP has an important role in the functioning of the RoundTable and has established strong links with NGOs and institutions in the region that are involved in conservation work.

SPREP is also a partner in an initiative to establish a Pacific Agriculture and Forestry Policy Network, led by the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) with support from the Centre for Tropical Agriculture (CTA). Once established, the network could promote the mainstreaming of sustainable land management and environmental conservation into national agriculture and forestry sector policies in the region.

About SPREP

The Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP) is an inter-governmental organisation that works with Pacific Island Countries and Territories to strengthen environmental management and promote sustainable development. Its main focus areas are climate change, waste control, and biodiversity.

SPREP's 21 Pacific Island member countries are: American Samoa, the Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, French Polynesia, Guam, Kiribati, Republic of the Marshall Islands, Nauru, New Caledonia, Niue, Northern Mariana's, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tokelau, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu, Wallis and Fatuna. As well there are four "metropolitan" members with interests in the region: Australia, France, New Zealand and the United States.

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Highlights

Welcome to SPREP Highlights, the first edition of the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme's monthly electronic briefs. Through SPREP Highlights we aim to keep you in the loop on events that the Samoa-based regional Secretariat was involved in a given month.

Turtle Bag Launch in Samoa

Members of the private sector in Samoa joined forces with SPREP to develop the Turtle Bag initiative offering a viable, attractive alternative to plastic bags in Samoa. An initial soft launch was held in July with Turtle Bag media partner Samoa Broadcasting Corporation (SBC) and built up to launch in early August. The initiative supports the new regulations banning the importation of non-biodegradable plastic bags into Samoa and is a key strategy of the 2006 Pacific Year of the Sea Turtle campaign facilitated by SPREP. A key component of the Turtle Bag initiative is the ANZ Save the Turtle Fund. For every bag sold, ANZ Samoa donates SAT1.00 towards the Fund that will be distributed to community-based turtle conservation initiatives in Samoa. The Fund sets a precedent of corporate philanthropy in the country and SPREP hopes to replicate

this initiative throughout the region. The Turtle Bag initiative exemplifies private-public partnership in which members of the Samoan community have come together to promote sustainable development. Partners in the Turtle Bag initiative are: ANZ Samoa, SPREP, AQM (distributor), Pacific Forum Line (shipping agent) and SBC (media partner). The blue Turtle Bags are available for sale in Apia supermarkets for SAT4.00. The Honourable Minister of Natural Resources, Environment and Meteorology (MNREM), Faumuina Tiatia Liuga, launched the Turtle Bag campaign on Tuesday 1st August at the Apia Yacht Club. For more information contact Tamara Logan, Education and Social Communications Officer, TamaraL@sprep.org or Mark Ricketts, Solid Waste Officer, MarkR@sprep.org

Roundtable for Nature Conservation

Representatives from conservation organisations, government and donor bodies met in Suva, Fiji, from July 24 to 29 to attend the 10th Roundtable for Nature Conservation in the Pacific Islands. Facilitated by SPREP, the Roundtable for Nature Conservation is the

Pacific's largest cross-sectoral network of partners working in nature conservation issues and activities. An important agenda issue was the upcoming Nature Conservation Conference to be held in PNG in late 2007. This regional meeting will discuss the level of implementation of the Action Strategy for Nature Conservation in the Pacific Islands Region (2003-2007). Endorsed by Pacific island countries and territories, the Strategy presents, among other things, a regional consensus on priorities for actions to promote the mainstreaming of conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity. For more information on the Roundtable and other upcoming conference, check out the Roundtable website hosted by SPREP: www.sprep.org/roundtable or contact Kate Brown, Action Strategy Advisor, KateB@sprep.org

Pacific Youth Develop Vision for Region

More than 1000 young people from around the region met in Tahiti from July 17 to 22 to attend the Pacific's first Youth Festival. Coordinated by the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation

(UNESCO), the Youth Festival provided opportunity for young people with varied backgrounds and interests to develop a vision for the region. That vision is in the Pacific Youth Charter, which will be delivered at the World Youth Festival in 2007 in Mexico. The Charter highlights the need for youths in the Pacific region to have proper access to basic rights such as health, employment and education to enable them build a sustainable future. A representative from SPREP attended the Festival and supported a presentation on sustainable consumption in the Pacific. SPREP acknowledges the importance of engaging young people in sustainability issues. In late 2006, SPREP together with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the Pacific Youth Environmental Network, and USP will deliver the SPREP Future Leaders Forum and leadership programme for young people in the Pacific. SPREP will distribute information on this Forum in mid-August. For more information on the SPREP Future Leaders Forum contact Tamara Logan, Education and Social Communications Officer, TamaraL@sprep.org

Land Management

A National Action Plan is one of the most important requirements of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD). It's a Plan Pacific Island countries need to develop to address land degradation. Out of 14 countries, Palau and Niue have completed their planning. A few are about to complete theirs and others are in the

development stage. Frank Wickham of SPREP had assisted countries in furthering their national action programmes as required under the UNCCD. Countries are implementing another project funded by the Global Environment Facility (GEF) called the National Capacity Self Assessment (NCSA). Under this project, countries are expected to carry out self assessments of their capacity to address environmental issues under three multilateral environment conventions: United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), UNCCD, and the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity (UNCBD). An introductory document, factsheet and poster on Land management are available on the SPREP website under www.sprep.org/Landdegradn For more information contact Frank Wickham, Human Resource Development/ Training Officer, FrankW@sprep.org

Hazardous Waste Reporting

SPREP will assist Member countries improve their reporting procedures to the Waigani and Basel Conventions. Barriers to proper reporting were identified at a regional hazardous waste management workshop held at SPREP from July 3 to 7. Under the regional and international frameworks, parties to the Conventions are obligated to submit a report each year on the status of hazardous waste materials within their respective countries. The Secretariat aims to raise country knowledge on obligations to the two Conventions; improve expertise; facilitate hazardous waste reporting workshops in-country; and raise the working

relationship between member countries and SPREP. The Waigani and Basel Conventions oversee and promote the proper management of hazardous waste in the region. The Secretariat urges Member countries to develop defined hazardous waste databases. Such inventories will assist and ease reporting procedures by designated Member country's focal points. Kiribati, Samoa, Papua New Guinea, Tonga, Tuvalu, Niue, Cook Islands, Solomon Islands, Marshall Islands, Nauru were represented at the workshop. For more information contact Dr. Frank Griffin, Prevention Pollution Coordinator, FrankG@sprep.org or Clark Peteru, Environmental Legal Advisor, PeteruC@sprep.org

Ozone-Depleting Substances (ODS)

The aim is to reduce the use of ozone-depleting substances and raise ODS awareness. To this end Cook Islands completed a workshop in Refrigeration Training on Good Practices on July 17 to 21 in Rarotonga. Niue completed its workshop late June. Both countries were supported by SPREP. Most of the participants at the Cook Islands workshop, represented by members of various refrigeration and air-condition companies on the island, were aware of environmental issues relating to substances that negatively impact the ozone. Apart from SPREP, the Multilateral Fund Secretariat for the Implementation of the Montreal Protocol; UNEP; and the Institute of Refrigeration, Heating and Air-conditioning Engineers NZ (IRHACE NZ) also supported the workshops.

What's next for Niue? As a party to the Montreal Protocol, Niue is obligated to introduce a licensing system to regulate the consumption of ozone-depleting substances within the country. Niue has a target to achieve zero consumption of Chlorofluorocarbons (CFC) by the end of 2006. For more information contact Nirupa Ram, Associate Ozone Depleting Substances Officer, NirupaR@sprep.org

Pacific Invasives Learning Network (PILN)

Following through from three Fiji meetings: Fiji intends to join the Pacific Invasives Learning Network. At a meeting on 17 to 18 July, Dr. Jill Key, PILN Coordinator at SPREP met with members of the proposed PILN founding team and noted that the process now is identifying appropriate team members and priority projects. Meetings were held with key people from Birdlife International, USP Institute of Applied Science, Koronivia Research Station, the Plant Protection division of the Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of Environment. Following that at the Pacific Invasives Initiative (PII) Partners meeting from July 19 to 21, the complementary roles of PII and PILN were extensively discussed. PII occupies a valuable niche in the selection and implementation of demonstration projects across the Pacific and could usefully focus on novel species or situations. As the PILN teams consist of both practitioners and policy level decision makers, and are also multi-sector and multi-agency, PILN plays a complementary role as a mechanism for both

outscaling (to new species, places and countries etc) and upscaling (generating support at the policy level). The two partnerships function as follows: PII - Research and development via demonstration projects and outscaling; PILN - Outscaling and upscaling; SPREP and SPC - Upscaling at the political level; Information Systems Support Group (ISSG) - outscaling beyond the Pacific region.

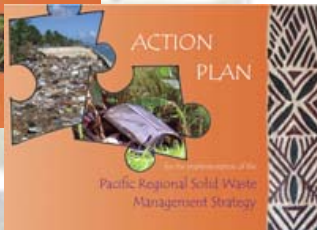
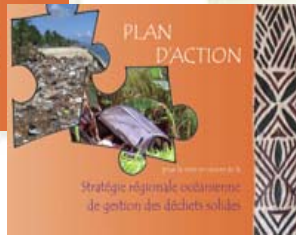
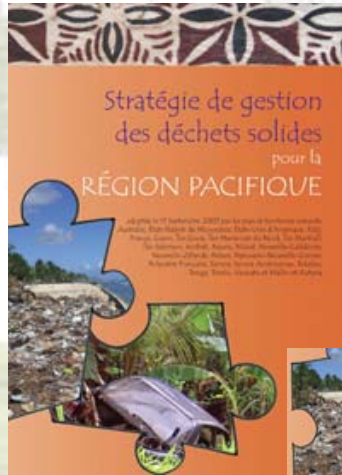
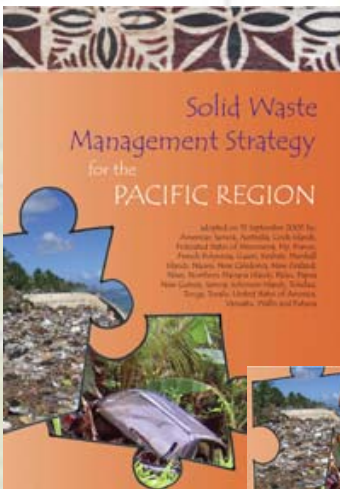
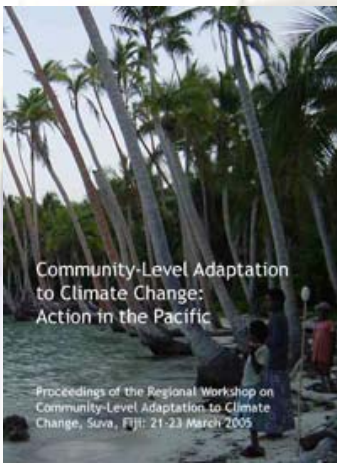
Dr. Key also attended the Roundtable for Nature Conservation meeting from 24 to 27 July to present PILN to the invasive species working group and the conservation training and leadership working group to see how the network can be integrated in current activities. For more information check out the PILN website hosted by SPREP: www.sprep.org/PILN or contact Dr. Jill Key, PILN Coordinator, JiIK@sprep.org

Publications

(i) Adapting to Climate Change
Two long-awaited SPREP publications dealing with adaptation to climate change are now available in printed form (request from irc@sprep.org) and in electronic form from the SPREP website www.sprep.org. The first is called: "Community-Level Adaptation to Climate Change: Action in the Pacific -- Proceedings of the Regional Workshop on Community-Level Adaptation to Climate Change, Suva, Fiji: 21-23 March 2005". It presents an overview of papers and discussions at that important conference. (34 pages A4 B&W in colour cover). A related publication, which was developed by Taito Nakalevu of SPREP

over the same period is the: "CV&A: A Guide to Community Vulnerability and Adaptation Assessment and Action". In an attractive format, the 48-page colour booklet outlines the six major phases in coming to an assessment of risks and actions to be taken by the vulnerable Pacific islands, in order to adapt to changes in climate. *(ii) Dealing with Solid Waste in the Pacific*

Some important SPREP publications have recently come off the printing press, concerning the approach to Solid Waste in the Pacific Islands. From their summary: "Waste Management [has] the potential to cause negative impacts on national development activities, including tourism and trade, food supplies, public health and the environment. This Waste Management Strategy and Action Plan sets out a long-term programme for addressing waste management issues in the region so as to avoid these adverse effects." The full titles of the documents speak for themselves. The first is the "Solid Waste Management Strategy for the Pacific Region, adopted on 15 September 2005 by: American Samoa, Australia, Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, France, French Polynesia, Guam, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Nauru, New Caledonia, New Zealand, Niue, Northern Mariana Islands, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tokelau, Tonga, Tuvalu, United States of America, Vanuatu, Wallis and Futuna." (72 pages B&W A4 in colour cover). The companion document is called: "Action plan for the implementation of the Pacific Regional Solid Waste



To receive SPREP-tok and Highlights on a regular basis free of charge, email the Associate Media and Publications Officer, Mere Tuqiri: meret@sprep.org

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Management Strategy". It is an attractively designed booklet (36 pages full colour A5 landscape) that makes specific recommendations for SPREP Members on how to turn the ideas of the strategy into reality. Both publications are available in English and French, in printed form (request from irc@sprep.org) or in electronic form from the SPREP website www.sprep.org

(iii) *Ozone-Depleting Substances in the Pacific*
A report on an important conference dealing with ozone depletion of the atmosphere is

now available from the SPREP publications database. The full title is "Report on the 3rd Regional Thematic Meeting For the Implementation of the Montreal Protocol in Pacific Islands Countries 24 - 27 January 2005, Suva, FIJI." Published in electronic form, it is accessible on the SPREP website. Incidentally, the Regional Thematic meeting held in 2005 was the third and final one under the Regional Strategy to implement the Montreal Protocol in the Pacific, as the Regional Strategy draws to a close.

(iv) *IWP Publications Programme Back on Track*
After a lull in getting out publications produced under the International Waters Project, a range of new titles is currently being distributed in hardcopy. They are now part of a formally established publication series, the IWP-Pacific Technical Reports (ISSN 1818-5614). The series counts 17 titles that have been prepared for publication in 2004 and 2005. Much of the backlog is expected to be cleared soon as an expert editor comes on board under temporary contract with IWP.