



Our Sea of Islands
A Regional Forum for Oceania on Marine Managed Areas and World Heritage

28 January – 2 February 2007
University of Hawai'i, East-West Center
Honolulu, Hawai'i

Executive Summary

Our Sea of Islands: A Regional Forum for Oceania on Marine Managed Areas and World Heritage brought together participants from over 20 countries, states and territories around the Pacific. The Forum was co-sponsored by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), the Department of the Interior, and the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) World Heritage Programme.

The purpose of the Forum was to highlight current efforts to protect important marine areas in Oceania, to share and expand technical expertise, and to develop balanced management practices by incorporating science and customary marine management techniques. Additionally, the Forum was an opportunity to build upon established marine managed area networks across Oceania and collaborate with these ongoing efforts.

The islands of Oceania (an area that includes the regions of Micronesia, Melanesia, Polynesia, and Australia) are connected by common history, culture, and ancestry. Indigenous Oceanic cultures and traditions have evolved over many generations connected to these natural resources. These cultures also have a rich heritage in natural resource stewardship, management practices, and knowledge. The similarities between these islands make it important to renew these ties across Oceania and to share lessons learned, challenges, and opportunities.

The Forum was a six-day event co-chaired by UNESCO and NOAA's Northwestern Hawaiian Islands Marine National Monument. Forum participants engaged in work sessions on topics including: Science—An Integral Element of Effective Management, Customary Marine Management Practices in Oceania, Marine Managed Area Representation, Remote Surveillance and Enforcement, Conservation Finance, and World Heritage Designation. Although participation in the Forum was for invited individuals, the public was able to learn about Forum outcomes at an evening event.

As part of the *Our Sea of Islands: A Regional Forum for Oceania on Marine Managed Areas and World Heritage Report*, a communiqué was developed that summarizes Forum outcomes and recommends needed action to further marine protection across the region. Some of these include strengthening relationships and peer learning exchanges across marine managed areas in Oceania, integrating customary resource management into national and regional marine management policies, and ensuring that scientific research is driven by local and national needs.

For more information on *Our Sea of Islands: A Regional Forum for Oceania on Marine Managed Areas and World Heritage* or for a copy of the report, please contact the NWHI Marine National Monument at 808.397.2660 or see www.hawaiiireef.noaa.gov.