

# In Fiji, marine protection gets local boost

August 22 2012

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This shows community representatives of Totoya Island placing a cibicibi tree to mark the establishment and boundary of their new marine protected area. Credit: Copyright Keith Ellenbogen

A new study by researchers from the Global Change Institute at the University of Queensland, the ARC Centre of Excellence for Coral Reef Studies at James Cook University, and the Wildlife Conservation Society has found that locally managed marine protected areas within Fiji are playing an increasingly important role in the nation's strategy to protect inshore habitats.

The study estimates that by 2020, locally managed [marine protected areas](#) within the [Fiji](#) Locally Managed Marine Area (LMMA) network will effectively protect between 12-18 percent of all coastal and inshore [marine habitats](#) in Fiji. The authors conclude that through local, grassroots management alone, Fiji is on target to achieve approximately

half of the national government goal to protect at least 30 percent of Fiji's inshore habitats.

The study appears online in the early view of the journal *Conservation Letters*. Authors include: Morena Mills of the ARC Centre of Excellence for Coral Reef Studies at James Cook University and Global Change Institute at the University of Queensland; Vanessa Adams, Robert Pressey, and Natalie Ban of the ARC Centre of Excellence for Coral [Reef Studies](#) at James Cook University; and Stacy Jupiter of the [Wildlife Conservation Society](#).

This 'people power' approach will have substantially delivered on the Aichi [Biodiversity Target](#) – an international commitment by signatories to the Convention on Biological Diversity to effectively conserve 10 percent of the world's coastal and marine areas by 2020.

This locally focused approach to marine resource management is not limited to Fiji or the broader LMMA network, which also operates in Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Indonesia, Palau, Pohnpei, the Philippines and Vanuatu. For example, in the Philippines, over 1,500 additional local marine protected areas have been established outside of the LMMA network. However, both Fiji and the LMMA network play a leading role in this movement.

"The results of the study are remarkable given that locally managed marine area networks in Fiji and the Western Pacific region are generally established only to meet local objectives, most notably to improve food security," says Dr. Morena Mills, lead author of the paper.

Yet, not all habitats are being protected equally, and some of the habitats that require the most protection, such as mangroves, intertidal mudflats, and [coral reefs](#), still require stricter management. Full achievement of the national targets by 2020 will require additional incentives to protect

these sensitive ecosystems. Such incentives could include cash payments and/or more subtle approaches, such as national public recognition, in exchange for protecting larger or more specific areas.

"Such incentives are critical," says Dr. Stacy Jupiter, Director of the Wildlife Conservation Society Fiji Country Program, "We cannot expect local communities to bear the full cost burden of contributing to national objectives."

Provided by Wildlife Conservation Society

Citation: In Fiji, marine protection gets local boost (2012, August 22) retrieved 20 March 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2012-08-fiji-marine-local-boost.html>

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