



U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
Pacific Southwest/Region 9



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Communities and Ecosystems Division
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U.S. EPA PACIFIC ISLANDS NEWSLETTER APRIL 2013 - INAUGURAL ISSUE

Covering American Samoa, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI), Guam, Hawaii, and the Freely Associated States of the Federated States of Micronesia, Marshall Islands, and Palau.

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PACIFIC ISLANDS NEWS

American Samoa EPA Completes New "Green" Office Building – the first designed to achieve LEED certification between Hawaii and New Zealand!

In October 2012, the American Samoa EPA completed a new "green" office building designed to meet the highest Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certification. EPA Regional Administrator Jared Blumenfeld toured the building with former American Samoa EPA Director Fanuatele Dr. To'afa Vaiaga'e in August 2012, and sent a congratulatory video to American Samoa EPA for the opening ceremonies. The new building has a green roof, and can generate 60 kW of electricity through photovoltaic solar panels. Its power bill dropped from over \$2000 per month to just \$5 in the first full month of use. The building is capable of achieving a net zero energy performance standard, meaning it will produce as much or more energy through renewable power than it will consume annually. American Samoa EPA's former building was damaged in the 2009 tsunami. The new building was funded by EPA, DOE, NOAA, and FEMA.



American Samoa EPA's new "green" office building



EPA Region 9 Administrator Jared Blumenfeld (center) tours American Samoa's new "green" building in August 2012.

Guam Heads toward Zero Waste!

In November 2012, Guam EPA announced its first-ever calculated island-wide recycling rate of 17.85%. Over 29,000 tons of material were recycled during calendar year 2011, according to the recycling measurement data. Guam EPA worked closely with EPA Region 9, Department of Defense, and island recyclers and disposal companies to establish the recycling measurement system that will be used to track Guam's progress toward Zero Waste. Guam announced the recycling data on America Recycles Day, November 15. Also on that day, the University of Guam joined EPA's National Food Recovery Challenge, a voluntary program to limit food waste through charity donations, reducing unnecessary consumption, and composting. Guam EPA celebrated the day by reaching out to over 500 elementary school students, hosting events at the University of Guam and Andersen Air Force Base, and publicizing the accomplishment through a variety of local media outlets.

Governor Eddie Calvo announced plans to increase Guam's recycling rate in 2013 by 3%, and Guam EPA Administrator Eric Palacios proposed to increase Guam's recycling rate by 3% every year to make progress toward Zero Waste. For more information on Guam's recycling efforts see the fact sheet here:

www.issuu.com/guamepa/docs/111512_factsheet_solidwaste_recyclingrate2



America Recycles Day
Thursday, November 15, 2012



Students in Guam celebrate America Recycles Day

Social Media Spurs Guam Ocean Cleanup Event

In December 2012 a team of about 30 divers from Guam EPA, UnderWater World, and the Micronesian Divers Association participated in a large-scale ocean cleanup effort off the coast of Agat, where piles of trash had collected on the ocean floor. The garbage included thousands of metal cans, plastic bottles, children's toys, and other coastal debris. The cleanup event was motivated by local videographer Mike McCue, curator for the UnderWater World aquarium in Tumon. McCue discovered the trash while diving, and later returned to the site to film the polluted underwater landscape. He shared his video on YouTube and Facebook, which attracted the attention of Guam EPA staff, who organized the cleanup event. To view the video that inspired the cleanup, see: www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=ft7zpYy2qyY



Image of the ocean floor off the coast of Agat, Guam before the cleanup effort, prompted by Mike McCue's video footage (Photo: Mike McCue)



Diver participating in the ocean cleanup event (Photo: Guam Pacific Daily News, www.guampdn.com)

American Samoa Governor Appoints Ameko Pato as Director of American Samoa EPA

Governor Lolo Matalasi Moliga recently appointed Ameko Pato as the new Director of the American Samoa EPA. Pato has spent his career in education as a former high school principal and administrator. Pato took command of the agency after the departure of former American Samoa EPA Director Fanuatele Dr. To'afa Vaiaga'e.



New American Samoa EPA Director Ameko Pato (center) presents lab certifications to the agency's laboratory branch after their successful completion of "Independent Demonstrations of Proficiency" training.

EPA Recognizes Guam Environmental Education Committee with Award

In September 2012, EPA recognized the Guam Environmental Education Committee for their efforts to promote environmental awareness throughout Guam. EPA Regional Administrator Jared Blumenfeld presented the award through a video connection. The committee, which began work in 2004, organizes over a dozen environmental education and outreach events each year, and has taken a comprehensive approach to unify the island's environmental education resources. The committee includes local and federal government agencies such as Guam EPA, nonprofit groups, teachers, students, and the private sector.

CNMI Responds to Nonpoint Source Water Quality Issue at DPW Beach, Saipan

The CNMI Division of Environmental Quality (DEQ) achieved success from a months-long collaboration with the Commonwealth Utilities Corporation (CUC) to identify and respond to microbiological contamination at a beach in Saipan. DEQ first found the problem when water quality data showed that a sampling site near DPW Beach was exceeding microbiological criteria for recreational water use more frequently than any other monitoring site in the CNMI. DPW Beach is popular among local residents for fishing, picnicking, and swimming. One of CNMI's only mangrove wetlands is directly adjacent to the monitoring site.

DEQ staff and local residents noticed the frequent odor of sewage near the site, and naturally assumed the source of the contamination to be related to sewage. DEQ's initial investigation, including a dye-trace study at a nearby sewage pumping station and labor-intensive inspections for leak-detection, found no obvious source of sewage contamination. DEQ and CUC then turned their attention to old sewage infrastructure, examining historic infrastructure maps, suspecting that perhaps one of the old sewers had not been fully abandoned or had ruptured. Finally, DEQ and CUC discovered a large sewage overflow significantly upstream of any previously suspected contamination source, which had gone unnoticed due to the dense vegetation of a nearby mitigation wetland. CUC determined that the sewage overflow had been caused by a clogged line. The utility started work immediately to remove the clog, which stopped the overflow. After two months, DEQ water quality monitoring data showed substantial improvements. There have been no bacterial exceedances for the past year.



Aerial view of DPW Beach in Saipan, where CNMI DEQ and CUC worked together to respond to bacterial contamination traced to a sewage overflow.

Guam EPA Recognized through Guam MagPRO Awards

The MagPRO Awards are a government-wide employee recognition program within Guam's Executive Branch that recognizes "magnificent professionals" spanning over 40 departments and agencies. This prestigious honor is bestowed by the Governor of Guam each fiscal year. The 2012 MagPRO awards recognized Guam EPA employees and achievements with twelve different awards:

- Tammy Jo Anderson-Taft, Public Information Officer: *Personnel Administration, Equal Employment & Public Information Employee of the Year*
- Peter Cruz, Environmental Health Specialist Supervisor: *Environmental Health Supervisor of the Year*
- Helen Gumataotao, Special Projects Coordinator: *Customer Service Professional of the Year: Front Office & Support Services (Small Department/Agency)*
- Angel Marquez, Engineer Supervisor: *Technical & Professional Engineering Supervisor of the Year*
- Michael O'Mallan, Environmental Health Specialist: *Behind the Scenes (Small Department/Agency)*
- Rudolfo "Rudy" J.B. Paulino, Chemist II: *Laboratory Services Employee of the Year*
- Jun Quezada, Special Projects Coordinator: *Customer Service Professional of the Year: Out & About (Small Department/Agency)*
- Edwin "Bob" Salas, Biologist II: *Wildlife, Biology, Agricultural Science & Related Employee of the Year*
- Pesticides Enforcement Program: *Customer Service Team Excellence (Small Department/Agency)*
- Environmental Monitoring and Analytical Services Division: *Unit of the Year (Small Department/Agency)*
- Guam EPA: *Photo of the Year: "Public Service & the Environment"*
- Guam EPA: *Photo of the Year: "Public Service is Wonderful"*



Hawaii Ship Repair Company Fined \$710,000 for Water Pollution at Drydock

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the Hawaii State Department of Health reached a \$710,000 settlement with Marisco Ltd. for water pollution control violations at its ship repair and drydock facilities at Kalaeloa Barbers Point Harbor on Oahu. This is the largest Clean Water Act civil penalty ever imposed on a ship repair facility. EPA found that the company failed to implement water pollution controls required by its Clean Water Act discharge permit at its main ship repair facility and at its 3,500-metric-ton "Lil' Perris" floating drydock. During an inspection, inspectors observed storage of leaking equipment, workers washing down work areas directly into the harbor, and sandblast material discharged into the harbor. The settlement requires Marisco to use clean water to wash the drydock after paint removal and sandblasting, collect the wash water, and treat it to prevent polluting the harbor.



CNMI Leads Efforts to Protect Coral in Laolao Bay

The CNMI Government has led a "Ridges to Reef" effort to protect the coral reefs of Laolao Bay. The site is famous in Japan among scuba divers for its beautiful coral and clear water, and is a source of revenue for CNMI tour and dive operators. In recent years, increased tourism and associated traffic along a dirt access road has resulted in erosion and sedimentation, threatening the water clarity and coral. An interagency group led by the CNMI DEQ Nonpoint Source Program has begun a long-term effort to protect the reef by improving watershed protection upstream, paving the access road, and reconfiguring stream crossings. To improve watershed protection upstream, approximately fourteen acres of deforested upland area were revegetated with 1600 plants, representing 12 native species, and 5000 linear feet of vetiver grass. CNMI DEQ, working with the CNMI Coastal Resources Management Office, recently completed construction of the road (funded by NOAA) and improved stream crossings (funded by EPA).

Sign indicating construction efforts at Laolao Bay (top). Reconfiguring a stream crossing at Laolao Bay (bottom).

Tommy Remengesau, Jr. Elected President of Palau

TIME Magazine "2007 Hero for the Environment" Tommy Remengesau won Palau's recent presidential race, and was sworn in this January. This marks Remengesau's return as President after a four-year term as a Palau senator. Remengesau has served Palau as senator, vice-president, president, and again senator, before assuming his third term as president in January. He is widely regarded as a champion for conservation and environmental issues.



Illustration of Palau President Remengesau, as featured in TIME Magazine 2007 "Hero for the Environment" (Illustration: Olaf Hajek)

Guam's "What's On My Food?" Project

On January 31, 2013, the Guam EPA, in collaboration with the Guam Department of Public Health and Social Services (DPHSS), the island's Department of Agriculture, and the University of Guam, hosted a meeting with local supermarket operators, distributors and restaurant owners about pesticide residues on fruits and vegetables. According to Guam EPA, the goal was "to bring everyone to the table that handles fruits and vegetables in Guam . . . By meeting with large grocery stores and distributors, we hope to ensure every fruit and vegetable consumed in Guam is not affected by residual pesticides."

During the January 31 meeting, there were presentations on agricultural use of pesticides, potential health concerns, sampling of produce to test for any residual pesticides, and information about organic farming techniques. Guam DPHSS collects samples of fruits and vegetables quarterly from markets and stores. The samples are sent to an FDA-certified lab in California for analysis. If there are higher levels of pesticides than allowed by U.S. EPA guidelines, DPHSS and Guam EPA take action to inform the public. Participants discussed ways that large grocery stores and distributors on Guam can help ensure that their produce suppliers are adequately trained in pesticide safety. They also expressed interest in improving the turn-around time for analysis of samples collected by DPHSS. The meeting was one of many planned in 2013 for outreach to supermarkets, distributors, and consumers. Funding for the project was provided by U.S. EPA.

Marshall Islands and Federated States of Micronesia Laboratories Recertified

The Marshall Islands EPA's Majuro water quality laboratory, along with the water quality labs of Pohnpei and Kosrae, recently earned recertification through EPA's U.S. Freely Associated States Water Quality Laboratory Certification Program. The two-year certifications are valid through January 2015 for the Marshall Islands Majuro lab, and through February 2015 for the Pohnpei and Kosrae labs. These labs analyze drinking water and coastal and marine waters for contaminants, and provide municipal water quality monitoring. Clarissa Bearden and Vinny Sablan from CNMI DEQ led the Majuro laboratory recertification, while Josephine Regis from American Samoa EPA led the lab recertification for Kosrae and Pohnpei.



Clarissa Bearden (left) of CNMI DEQ leads the laboratory recertification at the Marshall Islands EPA's Majuro water quality laboratory. Abe Hicking (right), lab manager, stands next to past certifications of the Majuro lab.

UPDATES FROM EPA

Coral Reefs

EPA works with Pacific island governments and other federal agencies to protect coral reefs. As a member of the U.S. Coral Reef Task Force and its Steering Committee, EPA partners with its sister agencies in the Pacific to prevent land-based sources of pollution, such as stormwater runoff, sediment, or sewage spills from harming coral reefs.

- **EPA Region 9 Coral Reef Strategy**

EPA Region 9 is finalizing a coral reef strategy to improve the protection of coral reefs in Hawaii and the U.S.-affiliated Pacific Islands. The strategy aims to increase the visibility of coral reef protection efforts, highlight the impacts of climate change on coral, and utilize the Clean Water Act and other authorities to protect coral reefs in the Pacific. The Coral Reef Strategy will be posted on EPA's website in the coming weeks. Look for it at www.epa.gov/region9/water/oc/coralreefs.html

- **NOAA Releases Proposal to List 66 Species of Coral Under the Endangered Species Act**

On November 30, 2012 NOAA announced its proposal to list 66 species of coral under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). The Pacific is home to 59 of those species, of which seven would be listed as endangered and 52 as threatened. The other seven species are found in the Caribbean, where five would be listed as endangered and two as threatened. NOAA's proposal is based on the best available science. A final decision by NOAA is expected in December 2013. For more information, refer to: www.nmfs.noaa.gov/stories/2012/11/82corals.html



Photos of coral from EPA Regional Administrator Jared Blumenfeld's trip to Ofu, American Samoa in August 2012.

EPA Region 9 Creates New Enforcement Division

On February 11, 2013, EPA Region 9 Administrator Jared Blumenfeld and Enforcement Division Director Kathleen Johnson welcomed staff and managers into the new Enforcement Division after two years of evaluation and planning. The new division consolidates and strengthens EPA's regional enforcement program. The division staff includes inspectors, planners, and state and tribal liaisons whose mission is to achieve high rates of environmental compliance and to target administrative and judicial cases strategically through collaboration with states, territories, tribes, and local governments, as well as the U.S. Department of Justice. Compliance is essential to protecting human health and the environment and ensuring a level playing field for regulated industries and sources. To learn more about EPA's enforcement program: www.epa.gov/enforcement.



Enforcement management team: Ken Greenberg, Doug McDaniel, Amy Miller, Jim Grove, Lisa Hanf, David Wampler, Julie Anderson, Joel Jones, Kathleen Johnson, and Regional Administrator Jared Blumenfeld (seated).

CONFERENCES & FUNDING ASSISTANCE

Upcoming Conferences:

June 26-28: Save Date for Pacific Islands Environment Conference
The 27th Pacific Islands Environment Conference is set for June 26-28, 2013 in Tumon, Guam. An announcement with additional details will be released soon.

Funding assistance from EPA

EPA provides funding to local environmental agencies for their environmental programs, and to utilities to improve drinking water and wastewater infrastructure. EPA also has funding opportunities for individuals and non-government organizations.

- **Water infrastructure funding for Pacific Island utilities**

Since 2009, EPA has provided more than \$120 million in water and sewer construction funding to American Samoa, CNMI, and Guam – more than all prior years combined. This is a result of American Recovery and Reinvestment Act funding in FY09, and, more importantly beginning in FY10, a new set-aside for the U.S. Insular Areas within EPA's national drinking water and wastewater infrastructure funds. Utilities in all of the territories are using EPA funds to improve the availability of safe drinking water, including increasing water storage, improving water distribution, and enhancing water treatment and disinfection. Utilities are also using wastewater grant funding to protect public health and the marine environment. For example, grant-funded projects have extended sewer systems to underserved parts of the islands, upgraded sewage treatment plants, and in Guam and CNMI, built new sewer outfalls to protect swimmers, fishermen, and coral reefs. In addition, EPA grant funding is used to make strategic, systemic improvements, such as asset management, better electronic monitoring, and developing long-term master plans for wastewater and drinking water infrastructure.

Did you know?

- The CNMI DEQ Drinking Water Office has led over 150 sanitary surveys in past three years. Everyone in the office can enter data in the Safe Drinking Water Information System database, and they administer electronic operator certification testing.
- American Samoa EPA and CNMI DEQ were the first and second jurisdictions in EPA's Pacific Southwest Region to submit their Integrated Water Quality Assessment Reports to EPA.

Ongoing Grant Opportunities

EPA routinely offers a variety of grants that can provide assistance to environmental protection efforts throughout the Pacific Islands. For a complete list of ongoing grant programs that are available within EPA's Pacific Southwest Region, refer to the [Funding Sources for Communities](#) webpage. Some of these grant programs include:

- **Environmental Justice Small Grants**

- Purpose: To provide financial support for communities working on solutions to local environmental and public health issues. The program assists recipients in building collaborative partnerships to help them understand and address environmental and public health issues in their communities.
- For more information: www.epa.gov/region09/funding/funding-sources/enviro-justice.html

- **EPA STAR Grants and Fellowships**

- Purpose: EPA's Science to Achieve Results (STAR) program funds research grants and graduate fellowships in numerous environmental science and engineering disciplines through a competitive solicitation process and independent peer review. The program engages the nation's best scientists and engineers in targeted research that complements EPA's own intramural research program and those of our partners in other federal agencies.
- For more information: <http://epa.gov/ncer/>

- **Pesticide Environmental Stewardship Program (PESP)**

- Purpose: PESP provides funds for projects that address pesticide risk reduction, integrated pest management (IPM), IPM in schools, children's health issues related to pesticides, and research methods for documenting IPM adoption or the reduction of risks associated with changes in pesticide use.
- For more information: www.epa.gov/pestp/grants/index.html

- **Pollution Prevention Grants for States**

- Purpose: To build and support state pollution prevention capabilities and to test, at the state level, innovative pollution prevention approaches and methodologies.
- For more information: www.epa.gov/region09/funding/funding-sources/pollution.html

- **Solid Waste Assistance Grants**

- Purpose: To fund cooperative agreements that promote recycling, solid waste reduction, and energy conservation through source reduction, product stewardship, reuse and composting, market development and job creation, education and outreach, or the procurement of postconsumer recycled content products.
- For more information: www.epa.gov/region09/funding/funding-sources/solid-waste.html

- **Wetland Program Development Grants, under Clean Water Act §104(3)(b)**

- Purpose: To help states, tribes, and local governments protect their wetlands. Funds can be used to develop new wetland protection programs or improve existing programs.
- For more information: www.epa.gov/region09/funding/funding-sources/wetlands.html

CNMI American Reinvestment and Recovery Act Success Stories

The CNMI made good use of the \$3.5 million it received from EPA in American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) funds. The Commonwealth Utilities Corporation (CUC) was awarded \$3.3 million for three water and wastewater construction projects. Each project employed local contractors, was completed on time and within the original budget, and met EPA's requirements for a "green" project. In addition to CUC, the CNMI Division of Environmental Quality (DEQ) used \$200,000 in ARRA funds to do an important study of water quality impacts to groundwater in unsewered parts of Saipan.

\$1.9 Million: Drinking water well isolation project. CUC used this project to increase availability of drinking water, improve water quality, and reduce long-term energy costs. Specifically, CUC redirected the water from 25 wells, which previously pumped directly into the distribution system, to instead pump into storage tanks. This allowed CUC to centralize disinfection, reduce the amount of pumping from wells, and completely eliminate one booster pump station.

\$1.1 Million: Wastewater treatment plant upgrades. CUC used ARRA funds to make major upgrades at the Sadog Tasi wastewater treatment plant, including a modification of the aeration system. The upgrades will save CUC significant operational costs through reduced operations and maintenance (O&M) costs and energy usage.

\$350,000: Sewer line replacement and pump station improvements. ARRA funds allowed CUC to reroute sewer collection lines and abandon two sewer pump stations. The project will significantly improve operations, reduce O&M costs, and reduce energy costs.

\$200,000: Environmental study in unsewered areas. CNMI DEQ used ARRA funds to assist in the planning process for parts of Saipan which do not yet have piped sewer collection systems. Specifically, CNMI DEQ completed an on-site disposal system survey of unsewered homestead villages and collected water samples from groundwater wells near the unsewered areas. DEQ also conducted water quality analyses of potential groundwater contamination from inadequate treatment and disposal of domestic wastewater from homes.



ARRA funds have been put to good use funding water construction projects in the CNMI.

This is the inaugural EPA Region 9 newsletter for the Pacific Islands. We would appreciate your input on improvements to future editions. Please send any questions, comments, or feedback to John McCarroll (McCarroll.John@epa.gov).

For more information from our sister agencies in the Pacific, please refer to these websites:

- American Samoa EPA: <http://asepa.gov/>
- CNMI DEQ: www.deq.gov.mp/
- Guam EPA: <http://epa.guam.gov/>