

IWRM in Palau : an achievement story

By Governor Victoria Kanai



Collaborative Development of a Watershed Management Plan in Airai State



Above: Governor Kanai speaking at the Palau National Water Summit

Before the IWRM project there was no water project that considered helping Airai State manage their watersheds. Projects carried out in Airai were usually on assessments of the watershed or water quality. These projects made recommendations at the end on what Airai State could do but they didn't fully carry out management planning with the community's input.

Airai State was asked at the IWRM Project inception phase to become members of the steering committee as the project is taking place in the Ngerikiil Watershed located in Airai State and through this involvement I came to know of the IWRM project. The project was going to be able to help us understand Ngerikiil Watershed fully and we were finally going to get someone to help us with the monitoring of the state of the watershed. From the beginning I was optimistic that the project was going to achieve progress on the environmental goals through trialling best management practices.

Lynna Thomas, the IWRM Project manager had been keeping me informed about what the project was doing and Umai Basilius and Palau Conservation Society were partners in the IWRM project. I asked them to use their expertise and what they had learned from the project to draft a watershed management plan so that we can use this plan to access funding for the management of Airai State Watersheds. I was happy because Lynna and Umai were able to guide my State Watershed Taskforce in the management planning process,

They kept me involved the entire time so I knew what was needed in order to get the job done. In my capacity as governor, I was happy to be able to bring in community members to the community consultations so that we could draft a plan that was truly for Airai State instead of coming from someone outside. I was also happy because they were able to help my staff increase their capacity for management planning so that if the IWRM Team members are not around later we could still carry on the work.

I have learned a lot and gained a deeper understanding about water and how our actions in the watershed affect the quality of water and eventually our near shore fisheries and communities.

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Through participating in the plans development the capacity of our staff increased by teaming them with people who could guide them through that process. I have learned the importance of proper practices in the watershed as it not only affects the quality of the water that we drink but also the environment and the oceans where the river drains. Water issues are now something that I am involved in and as a result of this engagement have been an active participant at all Water Summits, providing input to policies and taking these back to the Governors Association.

My team and I now understand more deeply that it is important for the communities that host sources of water in Palau to take care of them and that our actions affect the sources of water and eventually the oceans where we get our food. Only by working together with the community members as well as partner agencies can we overcome our lack of capacity at the State level so that we can accomplish such things as formulation of an Airai State Watershed Management Plan.



Above: Governor Kanai (middle) with Micronesia's Presidents, tree planting during the Micronesian Chief Executive Summit 2011