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Press Release

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Socio-economic research begins for PNMS

In 2019, the Palau International Coral Reef Center (PICRC) was charged with the mission of conducting research and monitoring the Palau National Marine Sanctuary (PNMS). In 2020, one of the first components of that research has begun: a socio-economic study to determine the potential benefits of the PNMS for local Palauans and track them over time.

The first phase of the study is a series of focus group meetings which were held last week from February 3 to 6. The focus group meetings consisted of individuals from different areas of society from the state of Airai to voice their opinions on the possible benefits of the PNMS for Palauans and people living in Palau. These groups included female and male community members, fishermen, the private sector, and professionals working in the environmental and conservation sector. The responses from these group discussions will be used to form a questionnaire, which will be administered to households in Airai later this year. In turn, this household surveys will be used to create a baseline of data to track, over time, whether the PNMS is delivering on its expected benefits. This pilot survey will be done in Airai and later administered to all other states of Palau.

The lead researchers on the project are Ms. Shirley Koshiba and Ms. Lincy Lee Marino. The focus group meetings were facilitated by Dr. Supin Wongbusarakum, Principal at Sustaining Nature and social scientist affiliated with the Social Science Research Institute of the University of Hawaii with 20 years of experience; her focus is to help ensure that community well-being is integrated into sustainable stewardship of natural resources and climate adaptation. Dr. Wongbusarakum will also help build local capacity by engaging the lead researchers in training in socio-economic monitoring as the project moves along.

Outreach and awareness regarding the PNMS is one of PICRC's priorities, and involving the community members is one way to address this priority. As such, CEO Dr. Yimnang Golbuu, expressed, "PICRC would like to extend sincere gratitude to the participants of the focus groups for their input, and will continue to communicate progress on this project as it continues throughout the year."