

**KOLONIA, Pohnpei** – On March 13 - 26, 2019, the FSM Ridge to Reef Project, led by the Pohnpei State Environmental Protection Agency (Pohnpei EPA), commenced its Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Analysis Workshop at the Pohnpei State Governor’s Conference Room. Over 40 participants representing State and National Governments, NGOs, regional agencies and other community based organizations participated in the 2-weeks intensive workshop.

In his opening remarks, the Governor of Pohnpei State, Honorable Marcello Peterson, highlighted that *“the SEA is very timely as the state is currently working on reviewing and updating its Strategic Development Plan and the results of the SEA process will help guide and provide sustainable development recommendations”*. The Governor applauded the EPA and the SEA team for their efforts in undertaking the preparatory work which has led to the workshop and urged participants *“...to provide their support and contributions to the SEA”*.



Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) is a new concept in the FSM that has never been previously applied. It is an analytical and participatory approach applied to policies, plans and programs at the very earliest stages of decision-making to integrate environmental considerations and evaluate the inter linkages with economic and social considerations. This ambitious assignment is a large component under the R2R project, aimed to protect the environment, demonstrate approaches to foster sustainable development and provide better understanding of links between terrestrial, freshwater and marine ecosystems to improve sustainable land use and protected area management in the FSM.

A scoping study was conducted between October 14 to November 15, 2018 to define the



geographic scope of the project and identify main interests and concerns of key stakeholders. It also identified key existing environmental and social threats and issues, accessible datasets and crucially important gaps in information. Recent, ongoing and planned projects with relevance to the SEA were identified, and the process and evaluation methodologies to be used for the SEA and preparation of an Integrated Environmental Management Plan (IEMP) were agreed. Pohnpei State was selected to be the focus of a pilot SEA in the

FSM.

An SEA team was established to facilitate the SEA (consisting of the international consultant hired to lead the assignment, Professor Barry Dalal-Clayton, the R2R Technical Coordinator, Ms. Vanessa Fread and Pohnpei R2R State Coordinator, Mr. Jorg Anson), and a State Expert team was set up. Preparatory work included the development of a National and Pohnpei State Environmental and Socio-economic Baseline Profiles combining existing information and new information from the State of Environment Report and revised National Biodiversity Action Plan (NBSAP). A capacity assessment of government departments/agencies and NGOs likely play a role in the IEMP was also undertaken and community consultations were conducted in each municipality on key environmental and socio-economic issues. Four economic growth scenarios (stagnant/contracting, business-as-usual - low growth, moderate and high economic growth) were developed.

During the workshop, participants assessed the environmental and socio-economic impacts of developments and activities likely to arise for fisheries, agriculture and tourism under the four growth scenarios, and identified what needs to be done to minimize and mitigate these. The next course of action will be to draft and finalize the SEA report and an Integrated Environmental Management Plan for Pohnpei. The challenge will then be to implement the plan.

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