

Pacific Islands target live reef fisheries management

The 6th South Pacific Conference on Nature Conservation and Protected Areas (the premier regional and international event for nature conservation in the Pacific Islands region) was held in Pohnpei, Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), from September 29 to October 3, 1997. It was co-ordinated and run by the South Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP) and hosted by the FSM National and Pohnpei State governments.

The outputs of the conference included revisions to the 'Action Strategy for Nature Conservation in the South Pacific Region 1994-1998' for the coming four year period, a TOOLBOX based on the results of the various working group sessions, and a number of resolutions adopted by the Conference. A full report of the meeting should be available later this year from SPREP, PO Box 370, Apia, Western Samoa. E-mail: sprep@pactok.peg.apc.org

One of the resolutions was focused specifically on the live reef fish trade in the Pacific islands region. The resolution reads:

Resolution 5: Control and management of the live reef fish trade in the Pacific Islands region

The Sixth South Pacific Conference on Nature Conservation and Protected Areas:

NOTING with concern the destructive impacts of the live reef fish trade and associated use of sodium cyanide on the environment, economies and rural communities of Southeast Asia and some Pacific islands;

RECOGNISING the real threat to Pacific reefs due to the uncontrolled expansion of the live reef fish trade, and associated use of chemicals and illegal fishing methods;

REALISING the importance of coral reefs to Pacific island communities for subsistence, economic and cultural needs;

NOTING that this is the Pacific Year of the Coral Reef;

MINDFUL of the continued increase in demand for live reef fish for the aquarium and restaurant trade, and the potential long-term value of this trade to Pacific island reef fisheries, if properly managed:

REQUESTS that SPREP inform its member governments of the potential environmental impacts of the uncontrolled expansion of the live reef fish trade within the region; and

URGES SPREP to work in partnership with other relevant regional agencies (such as the SPC Fisheries Programme), and appropriate public and private organisations and individuals to:

- Encourage and assist SPREP member governments to recognise this fishery regionally and nationally as one requiring careful and separate management, monitoring and strict enforcement;
- Undertake effective programmes of resource protection and monitoring particularly for protection of grouper aggregation and spawning sites;
- Encourage and assist the establishment of a regional three year moratorium on the export of Napoleon wrasse (*Cheilinus undulatus*) to permit research to be conducted on its life history, and develop appropriate management and protection strategies for this species; and
- Implement educational awareness programmes to enable more informed decisions on issues relating to this trade and encourage reef-friendly fishing methods; and to encourage certification programmes that ensure the sustainable capture of live reef fish.

