

## A Trip Report:

### The Samoa Wetland Conservation Experience

Mr. Wendolin Roseo Marquez, Program Manager of the Conservation Society of Pohnpei's Terrestrial Program participated in an exchange program from March 26 to April 05, 2007 in American Samoa and Western Samoa. The South Pacific Regional Environmental Program (SPREP) through its financial support made this exchange possible.

The overarching objective of the trip was to meet with resource managers in wetland conservation and management to share skills and approaches.

The rationale is that the Mangrove ecosystems have long been an important source of livelihood for coastal communities not only in Pohnpei but throughout the Pacific. They have provided food, income, as well as protection for people and other sensitive marine habitats. Despite their invaluable contributions to our daily subsistence, mangrove areas have been destroyed to make way for coastal reclamation as well as development. This intensifying destruction of mangrove areas has raised concern as to its potential impacts on the marine environment and resources, which are important for coastal community survival.

### American Samoa Exchange Program

Mr. Marquez was housed by the American Samoa Coastal Management Department of Commerce. During the one-week program, he had several chances to meet with the managers and field personnel involved in wetland management in American Samoa (AS). Discussions were based on mangrove rehabilitation projects in American Samoa and raised the issues of coastal pollution and community resistance. Mr. Marquez shared how these issues are dealt with in Pohnpei. He had the opportunity to meet with the heads of the American Samoa Land-grant, AS NOAA project coordinator, AS RARE project coordinator and AS USDA director. The objectives of the meetings were to share conservation approaches and experiences in wetland conservation. Several site visits were undertaken to see the mangrove rehabilitation project in Nu'uuli Village and other coastal areas.

### Western Samoa Exchange Program

Mr. Marquez was hosted by the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environmental Program (SPREP) in Western Samoa. On the first morning Mr. Marquez was honored to join other Pacific Leaders in environment and key SPREP staff to open the first Pacific Youth Environmental Network (PYEN) meeting. At the meeting Mr. Marquez had a chance to meet and chat with the future leaders in environment around the Pacific. The rest of the week, he met with SPREP staff obtaining more support for the Conservation Society of Pohnpei's efforts. One important meeting was with the Ramsar officer in an effort to facilitate the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM) to become an official member of the Ramsar Convention. Becoming a member of the Ramsar convention will entitle the FSM to technical and financial support for the nation's wetland and mangrove conservation. Most importantly, it will allow for a network of mangrove-protected areas to be established in Pohnpei and eventually in the FSM.

Mr. Marquez was very happy to have the opportunity to participate in this exchange program. He would like to thank SPREP for making it possible. At the end of the exchange he was very excited to return to Pohnpei and put into practice all the skills and knowledge he obtained.