

The concept of the Coral Propagation and Coral Ark project.

The goal of the main coral farming and restoration project would be to involve 45 villages simultaneously growing 1,000 pieces of coral (each) per month.

This project is a very realistic goal to reach given the hands on experience and results reached to date by Walt Smith International so far and since 1998.

The main reason that this goal has not been reached to date is dependent on the overall size of the export market and the funds made available to limit the activities solely to reef restoration.

While Walt Smith developed and pioneered the concept of coral farming it has taken the market longer than expected to accept the new idea of farmed corals and currently this product has reached market saturation. However, the main focus has always been to turn profit from this part of the operation into large scale reef restoration projects. With private funding this dream will become reality sooner than later and the obvious benefits to science and the environment will be made available at an accelerated rate.

All of this work can be directly related to main thesis of a "Coral Ark" idea where all the species in a given geological destination are preserved for future generations in the case of oceanic acidification. As the PH continues to drop (and it will) our coral reefs will continue the decline. When the PH lowers the corals lose their ability to reproduce the foundation of their coral skeleton through the lack of much needed calcium in the water column. As science continues to address the problem and eventually come up with solutions corals can be preserved in a combination of land based and inshore coral farms that will have site specific corals available for replanting when the conditions eventually improve through careful scientific intervention.

Fiji reefs are nowhere near as bad as those in Florida, but Florida is a good example of where all reefs are likely to be heading in the future if we don't plan now. Now is the time to plan carefully to protect Fiji's reef treasures while they are still in reasonably good shape. Gathering up all of Fiji's coral species (I think there are about 200-300 coral species in Fiji) and growing them in one location (underwater and on land) may be a good way to get a start on a plan for the future. We need to be able to culture and grow more species than just those that the coral-reef aquarium industry demands. Many other reef animals (plants too) will also need conservation "assistance".

One thing is certain and that is the technology and science is available today to begin to accelerate the program already in place that has been a proven success in Fiji since 1998 when Walt Smith first conceived of the idea of coral farming to minimize the impact of both human and natural negative impact on the coral reef.