

Hi Walt,

Thanks for your very thoughtful answer, significant because you really know coral.

We are forwarding you this link, because if Palau truly bans all commercial fishing, then it makes it a more attractive place relative to Fiji. Perhaps Fiji can consider similar bans.

FYI -

Palau just banned all commercial fishing

Hi (name withheld),

Thank you for the continued interest and information.

Although your suggestion regarding the Palau commercial fishing ban is interesting I feel the need to explain what this really means when considering its effects on the coral reef and how it relates to our proposed project.

For decades Palau has been bombarded with commercial fishing vessels (both licensed and poachers) from Japan, China and Taiwan just to name a few. The same thing is happening from the Solomon Islands right through the South Pacific. The target for these vessels is large pelagic fisheries made up mostly of Tuna and Snapper caught in open water as they migrate. Each country has a designated "Economic Zone" that is protected by their own forces. Most countries are financially unable to provide adequate protection for this zone and many are corrupt. This economic zone is basically a two mile radius surrounding the land mass of that country. If you are wishing to fish within this zone you must be licensed by that country.

Palau has mandated that there will be no more commercial fishing licenses allowed within its economic zone. This decision was based on the fact that they were abused for so many years by their close neighbors mentioned earlier.

Some countries in the South Pacific have a very controlled policy to issue outside commercial fishing licenses on a limited basis and some

governments are corrupt and just take the money offered. A good example is the difference between Fiji and Tonga.

Tonga had issued an unsustainable amount of licenses to Taiwan and China because Taiwan and China invested large sums of money into the Tongan Royal Family. For many years the Tonga local commercial fisheries was a sustainable enterprise run by local companies that provided much needed export revenue and employment. Once these outside licenses were issued within a few years the fishery collapsed and all of the local companies went belly up while the outside vessels remained in the harbor as rusty hulks that no longer (or very seldom) catch fish. They never did any good for Tonga anyway since they came with their own fishermen and hired no locals and the export dollars were kept offshore in the receiving country.

Many years ago Fiji had a similar problem but they have managed to rectify the situation with the new government (in place since 2006) but the fisheries was damaged and it is slowly recovering with new, more restrictive, laws in place.

However, I would like you to understand that the economic zone and the coral reef have little to do with each other.

The fringing coral reefs that surround the islands rarely stretch out more than a mile from shore and this area is generally referred to as the inshore fisheries. There are a few exceptions to this such as the Great Barrier Reef but even the Great Sea Reef in Fiji is still considered the limit of an inshore fishery since it is much closer to shore.

The economic zone stretches out 200 miles from shore and the fisheries that it protects are the deep water open ocean where that larger vessels (long line, gill net and purse Seine) activity takes place. You will never see these vessels inshore because those fish are rarely caught in the shallow waters of the inshore fisheries.

My proposal focuses on the inshore coral reefs for rehabilitation and increased habitat and well as providing a platform of structured analyses that will allow us to learn more about coral growth, natural settlement and inherent resilience both real and genetically modified.

The inshore fishery provides substance fishing to provide protein and income for the local fisherman and their clan and it is these areas that will benefit from our program. Of course, education is a large part of the proposed plan as one of our goals is also to teach the villagers how to manage their resource and create new habitat as well as protect areas for the future with the implementation of restrictive MPA's and FLMMA's that limit but not totally restrict fishing within their Qoliqoli. By providing them an income we can help insure that some of the current destructive fishing practices will cease such as crow bar and dynamite fishing. However, we can never expect (nor should we demand) that they stop fishing for their local substance diet. Why would we want to take their food away? Management and education is the key to awareness and responsible behavior. My proposal can provide that.

I am sure if you look closer you will find that Palau has not banned its own people from eating but rather eliminated the competition from outside from depleting their resource.

If you are still willing I would like to focus more on what my dream can accomplish to provide a better understanding of the coral reef and its habitat along with our ability to create a better world for the future.

Kindest regards, Walt