



Fall 2005

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### Cover Story

## **Fijian Coral Reef Conservation – In Brief**

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### **CONSERVATION AND INCOME**

“The coastal villagers in Fiji are closely connected with the sea and very much want to conserve and protect healthy marine communities. But they also have to live, and harvesting from reefs has been important for both food and income. Our challenge is to build conservation efforts that are economically viable – to create ways of making money from conservation. Ours is an approach that the National Institutes of Health's Fogarty Center realized was viable and wanted to promote.”

– **Mark Hay**, Georgia Tech Professor of Biology

photo by Gary Meek



Mark Hay

### **EMPLOYING "NO-TAKE" AREAS**

photo courtesy Julia Kubanek



“Our approach of helping communities set up ‘no-take’ areas in the reef ecosystem, dealing with pollution and other threats gives villagers tools to solve their problems. The use of local monitoring ensures that benefits are known by the communities, and if things are not working as planned, changes to the management can be discussed. In addition, the idea of a no-take area is also a traditional one used when resources are short or to honor a dead chief (but perhaps really to ensure a good feast when the mourning period is over). The no-take areas are only closed periodically, and the data we are beginning to

gather shows, in many cases, small, permanent closures are better.”

– **Bill Aalbersberg**, Professor at the University of the South Pacific

## ***CULTURAL LITERACY***

“In Fiji, the support of the chief is a necessary condition for any project. Not only do you need good projects that can benefit the village, but scientists need the cultural tools to succeed. In Fiji, these cultural tools include a lengthy kava ceremony. The ceremony includes many rules and rituals.... Fijian cultural literacy is still crucial for gaining the support of the local community and the chief.”

– **Kirk Bowman**, Georgia Tech Associate Professor of International Affairs

photo courtesy of Terry Snell



Kirk Bowman

## ***BENEFITS FOR FIJI***

photo courtesy Julia Kubanek



“The Fijians are enthusiastic about our research and conservation efforts there. They are interested in seeing their coral reefs conserved. They see the cultural, as well as the natural resource, value of the reef, which they own. Agreements already negotiated will give the Fijian villagers a direct financial benefit if we market a drug derived from a reef organism there. And the federal government in Fiji will benefit, too.”

– **Julia Kubanek**, Georgia Tech Assistant Professor of Biology, Chemistry and Biochemistry

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