



Support for Palau's National Marine Sanctuary Office: Enforcement and Sustainable Finance Capacity at 5 sites

Proposed by: OneReef

The Republic of Palau boldly established an EEZ-wide national marine sanctuary in November 2015. We outline a brief proposal to support Palau's Office of National Marine Sanctuary (PNMS) and the Monitoring, Control, and Surveillance (MCS) Plan for 2016-2021.

Project Overview:

Deliverables at five sites, after two years:

1. Science-based spatial management plans, reviewed and vetted by local communities
2. Site-based enforcement and management teams are trained, equipped, and certified
3. Innovative radar/satellite telemetry systems developed by the Anthropocene Institute installed at two or three sites, designed for nearshore surveillance, with capture and interpretation of vessel traffic data, and an alarm system that alerts enforcement staff when vessels enter no-take zones
4. Site financing mechanisms that support core management operations for at least the next five years
5. Site documentation, peer-to-peer learning systems, integration with relevant State and National entities, and processes in place for rapid replication to other sites

Outcomes:

1. Cessation of unauthorized fishing out to at least 12 nautical miles
2. Protection of no-take zones
3. Independently collected and digitally transmitted spatial data on vessel traffic patterns in critical nearshore areas
4. Science-based monitoring for ecological change and expected outcomes identified in management plans
5. Predictable and adequate financing of core management, monitoring, and community engagement functions
6. Clear protection of natural assets that are critical to biodiversity, long-term ocean health, and retaining the vibrancy that is critical to Palau's tourism sector

Estimated cost of this two-year project: Y1 - \$US 570,000, Y2 - \$US \$384,000

Narrative:

We see an opportunity to support the PNMS by integrating low cost, tech-enabled marine enforcement and finance mechanisms that are ideal for small-island developing states – systems that we are replicating across the region.

Palau’s MCS Plan outlines the steps required to implement the national marine sanctuary. OneReef will address numerous priorities outlined in the MCS document, specifically by: establishing “shore-based radar stations at Kayangel and Hatahobei state, Sonsorol... Angaur, Peleliu,” developing financial structures at each site to support MCS, and ensuring robust communications between the Coordinator Center and the Southwest Islands and Kayangel (page 2). The MCS document focuses on both shore-based systems and enforcement beyond 12 nautical miles, and recognizes the need for strong training and technologies to effectively protect Palau’s ocean. Our project will increase the capacity of the communities that play a key role in enforcement as eyes and ears for the National Marine Sanctuary in some of the most remote and critical parts of Palau’s ocean territory.

Under an existing MoU with the Palau Government, OneReef and partners are positioned to rapidly establish stewardship capacity at five of these strategically located sites: Helen Reef, Kayangel, Angaur, Peleliu, and Sonsorol. We will demonstrate a new radar/satellite telemetry system at two-three of them, and solidify a public/private financing mechanism that directly supports marine managers, enforcement capacity, and continued training.

PNMS has outlined a broad strategy of aircraft surveillance, nationwide tourism planning, and extensive boat patrolling of the EEZ. We will focus on enhancing nearshore protections, where smaller foreign and domestic vessels can still do irreparable harm to reef health. Through community engagement, conservation officer trainings, enforcement infrastructure, and sustainable financing, we will build effective long-term projects that support broader PNMS success.

Thus, our two-year project is based on site-specific and nationwide objectives. We anticipate moving forward with Helen Reef, Kayangel, and Peleliu during Y1, then progressing to Angaur and Sonsorol in Y2, in addition to nationwide projects both years:

Management capacity: At each of the 5 sites, we will prioritize community engagement to ensure that local needs are understood and addressed. As part of this process, we will create site-specific management plans, or review and improve existing plans as needed, and in close consultation with resource owners.

Equipment: We have identified the basic needs at each site. Kayangel, Peleliu, and Angaur already have patrol boats, which would need to be outfitted with the appropriate enforcement tech, while Helen Reef and Sonsorol require new boats and engines (capable of open-ocean work). These varied needs are reflected in a draft budget. We have also identified sites where a radar system would benefit enforcement efforts; we have secured

funding for two of these systems, and propose that Oceans 5 support the remaining radars. Finally, we have included basic fuel costs as required for non-Protected Areas Network (PAN) sites (who must rely on non-PAN funding until they become members).

Finance mechanism: Part of our model includes building finance structures that support long-term management with annual funding that is adequate, predictable, and used transparently. The overall goal is to create a mechanism that serves core management and community engagement functions in a highly direct fashion, shielded from political influence.

In practice, this will involve building simple budgeting, banking, and accounting systems, training and enabling local managers as needed, and incorporating replicable financial and site governance systems that can spread further through peer-to-peer exchanges. Our financing mechanism will also:

- (i) Align public and any private sources needed to fill gaps, and
- (ii) Allow for modest financial reserves that can be used to maintain cash flow and address unanticipated needs (accessed directly by site managers, with appropriate governance and oversight).

Nationwide Initiatives: We are excited about the growing network of conservation projects in Palau, and will combine efforts across the country to more efficiently implement programs. We will host critical enforcement trainings for approximately 20 officers per training, to instruct them how to identify poaching, board vessels, and process violations. Each training certifies the officers for conservation enforcement techniques, based on internationally-recognized US standards, that will enable them to protect the PNMS.

We have also identified a need for management training, so that officers can manage budgets, generate reports, and supervise other staff. As a corollary, we propose that officers engage in site exchanges so that officers can learn from each other, and participate in other projects to gain lessons-learned and best practices. Moreover, there are ongoing legal questions about the enforcement obligations for state and national officers, and we anticipate some legal expertise will be required to ensure proper compliance with the PNMS and other state and federal laws.

Finally, we recognize that enforcement cannot succeed without clear and respectful engagement of local communities, owners of near shore resources. Thus, we will employ and refine a set of best engagement practices, which can be shared with other partners.

DRAFT LETTER OF SUPPORT

To the Palau National Marine Sanctuary Executive Committee:

The Palau National Marine Sanctuary is setting an example for the world by protecting our entire nation's marine environment. We have outlined the Monitoring, Control, and Surveillance (MCS) Plan for implementing the PNMS, which includes working with partners to make sure the sanctuary is a success.

We have received an exciting proposal from OneReef Micronesia ("OneReef") to focus on conservation at five Palauan states of national relevance: Helen Reef, Sonsorol, Angaur, Peleliu, and Kayangel. These sites are home to precious reefs and are located in some of the most remote parts of the country, where it is difficult to enforce fishing laws and prevent poaching on diverse and delicate ecosystems.

OneReef's proposal outlines the key steps for success at these MCS priority sites. OneReef proposes to:

- Engage communities and develop management plans in line with the PNMS
- Certify conservation officers to enforce no-fishing bans and use relevant technologies
- Install innovative radar systems at two of the sites (Helen Reef and Sonsorol)
- Develop site financing mechanisms to ensure long-term project management

As we focus on offshore enforcement like aircraft surveillance and extensive boat patrols, it is important to also focus on nearshore management, where illegal fishing can still damage valuable and fragile coral reefs. OneReef's work will compliment our nationwide goals and provide us with support and increased capacity in Palau's island community.

I would like to ask you to join me in supporting OneReef's proposal and for our partnership with them moving forward.

Sincerely,

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