



September 21, 2018

Palau Visitors Authority  
Medalaih, Koror  
Palau 96940  
**Press Release # 2018-48**

## **CORAL REEF REHABILITATION PROJECT INITIATED**

As an innovative intervention to raise awareness to all resource users about the crucial necessity to conserve marine resources as tourism assets for community and conservation of marine biodiversity, a collaborative activity with the Palau Visitors Authority, Koror State Government (KSG) and Palau International Coral Reef Center (PICRC) has been created to support a coral reef rehabilitation program.

This support of Palau's President Tommy E. Remengesau Jr.'s directives began with the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the three agencies. This project is in urgent response to a 2018 study by Nestor et al, which observed reef damage of living corals by snorkelers, impacting with a much higher abundance of coral fragments in popular visited sites as opposed to non-visited sites. As conditions or health of corals affects the coral reef as a whole, it is necessary to rehabilitate and conserve these shared resources in order to increase the ecosystem function of coral reefs as nursery ground, feeding ground and spawning ground of marine biodiversity, increase local community awareness of the importance of coral reef rehabilitation and conservation and to improve coral reef condition at a popular recreational site at Koror State's Rock Island Southern Lagoon.

The project will include implementation of tourist and community-based artificial coral reef construction activities, use of coral transplantation samples as a model on coral reef rehabilitation and conservation that supports tourism and local community activity, increasing skill of community groups and NGO's active in conservation, establishment of education and/or awareness project on coral reefs, and a "Coral Adoption Project" which could be sold to community members, tourists, visitors, tour operators or hotels.

Coral reefs are a living resource necessary for not only tourism, but for local communities sustenance fishing, and the challenges we face with climate change, similar to many sites around the world, in the future may include serious coral threats due to impacts caused by global warming, ocean acidification, increased storm frequency and anthropogenic related events, in addition to accidental tourist contact with the reef, calls for strategies which are quickly and efficiently implemented. Involving local stakeholders such as tourism industry businesses, visitors to Palau, fishermen and communities at the beginning of the project is crucial to its success.

As Palau is very close to the Coral Triangle, the world's center of marine biodiversity, our oceans have a high diversity of soft and hard coral species, as well as some of the most resilient to climate change in comparison to other destinations. Planting to restore reefs to their full potential is our environmental stewardship for both our island country and the globe.

### **Palau Visitors Authority**

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PVA is a semi-autonomous body created by law to promote and encourage the development and marketing of tourism as one of the primary economic sectors of the Republic. We strive to follow our Mission Statement, "*We are committed to promote our heritage and the unique attractions of Palau through sustainable tourism development and the encouragement of responsible practices*" for a tourism industry which benefits our country and people.

For additional information, please contact 488-1930/2793 or email to [pva@pristineparadisepalau.com](mailto:pva@pristineparadisepalau.com).

For more information about the Palau International Coral Reef Center and this initiative, visit <http://picrc.org/picrcpage/news/>



*Left to Right: Koror State Governor Franco Gibbons, PICRC CEO Dr. Yimnang Golbuu, PVA BOD Chairman Ngiraibelas Tmetuchl*

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*Photo Credit: Hiroshi Akino*

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