

## Hong Kong's divers and marine conservationists target of Yap's tourism representatives

*Yap Visitor's Bureau*

**Colonia, Yap-** Ruud Van Baal, General Manager of Manta Ray Bay Resort and Yap Divers, attended the Diving & Resort Travel Expo in Hong Kong recently where he joined the Yap Visitors Bureau's booth with Jan Mok, public relations representative in Asia for the Yap Visitors Bureau.



*Two Ladies (visitors), Ruud Van Baal, Manta Ray Bay Resort, General Manager, Jan Mok, Asia Public Relations Rep, at the Yap Visitors Bureau Booth in Hong*

"The DRT show is an excellent tool for us since it brings together the largest gathering of diving enthusiasts, marine conservationists and those who simply have a passion for the underwater world," said Van Baal. "We've seen an increase in inquiries and bookings from that market since we first began participating in the show in 2017."

media." Follow-up after the show included sending digital booklets about Yap's many options for adventure travelers who requested more information.

With attendance estimated at 50,000 visitors, Mok added that they "talked to many visitors, dive operators and the

The Shanghai DRT Show is next on YVB's 2019 schedule on April 12-14 followed by the Taiwan show on May 31-June 2.

## The Supreme Court of the FSM hosts gender and family violence Workshops

*FSM Supreme Court*

The Supreme Court of the Federated States of Micronesia and the Pacific Judicial Strengthening Initiative (PJSI) hosted local Gender and Family Violence Workshops in Pohnpei from 7-11 January and Kosrae from 14-18 January, 2019.

The two Gender and Family Violence Workshops were attended by National, State and Local court staff, FSM Health, National and State law enforcement officers, Micronesian Legal Services Corporation, women organizations, faith-based organizations and civil society representatives.

The aim of the workshops were to enhance awareness of issues surrounding family violence in the Federated States of Micronesia and across the Pacific. Some of the topics that were discussed included gender-based violence and its causes, gender inequality, victim-focused services and perpetrator accountability. The workshop discussed how the Courts could reflect and make incremental changes to improve its response to family violence following discussions around

the Gender and Family Violence Toolkit. Contextualising issues in the Pacific the two weeks also looked at how to address specific challenges around cultural perspectives and religious interpretations on the work towards gender equality and addressing family violence.

"I am a perpetrator and I am ashamed about it. I grew up seeing domestic violence in my family. I am grateful and thankful to be invited to this workshop as I now understand that culture does not condone domestic violence. I've learnt that witnessing domestic violence should not be used as an excuse for a person who chooses to perpetrate domestic violence" said one of the Kosrae male participants.

"I am glad I attended this workshop as I can use what I learned to teach the youth in my church" says a Pohnpei participant. The Gender and Family Violence Workshop is one of the many workshops held by the Pacific Judicial Strengthening Initiative within the Pacific. The initiative is funded by New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, which has supported promoting the rule of law across the Pacific over recent years.

## NORMA & fisheries sector learn about biodegradable FADs

*FSM Information Services*

**PALIKIR, Pohnpei**—Our Nation, the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), relies heavily on fish for cultural, nutritional, and economical reasons. While the FSM has taken the lead in many areas when it comes to simultaneously maximizing revenue, protecting the environment, and ensuring the sustainability of our fish populations—such as the Technology for Tuna Transparency (T-3) Challenge initiated by His Excellency President Peter M. Christian at the fifth Our Oceans Conference in October 2018—there's still much our country can do to improve. It was with this in mind that, on January 23rd 2019, representatives of the National Oceanic Resource Management Authority (NORMA), Pohnpei State's Department of Public Safety's Division of Fish & Wildlife (DFW), National Fisheries Corporation (NFC), Caroline Fisheries Corporation (CFC), Diving Seagull, and Dongwon Industries, attended an International Seafood Sustainability Foundation (ISSF) workshop on biodegradable fish aggregation devices (FADs). The workshop's goals included educating the fishing sector on new regulations from the Western & Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC) on FADs, producing buy-in on how the sector can use biodegradable FADs, and scientific projects in our part of the Pacific.

Citizens unfamiliar with FADs (Micronesians frequently call them "payao") may appreciate the definition from ISSF: FADs are "man-made floating objects specifically designed to encourage fish aggregation at the device. They can be anchored to the ocean floor or set to drift in the open ocean." Aggregation means putting together, so a FAD essentially attracts lots of fish together. Historically FADs are useful insofar as they can gather lots of fish together in one place, but in recent decades FADs have been made of synthetic materials (like nylon) and they have relatively negative publicity from being associated with problems such as bycatch (i.e. when you're looking for tuna but you accidentally get sharks and turtles instead), reef damage, and overfishing.

The discussions in the morning focused on the history of FADs and their relationship with countries and fisheries, including in the FSM. Standout observations included multiple local fisheries advising that

approximately 80% of their FADs are variously lost, stolen, or drift beyond the legal boundaries of their fishing area—and worldwide approximately 10% of all ocean pollution is from lost fishing gear, and 640,000 tons of fishing gear end up in the sea every year (including FADs). Citizens will recall that the aforementioned T-3 Challenge that NORMA and The Nature Conservancy are implementing intends to use electronic monitoring to quash the overfishing problem, and in conjunction with fishing fleets using biodegradable FADs ideally ocean pollution and bycatch issues from entanglement (i.e. when a fish gets stuck in a net) will become less pronounced.

Matthew Chigiyal, Assistant Director of NORMA, advised that "It's...in your interest that there is some authority to see what is happening with your FAD... register your FAD per NORMA's requirement."

ISSF has been conducting numerous experiments in the past several years in countries such as Ghana (in Western Africa) and the Maldives (an island nation in the Indian Ocean) with biodegradable FADs, and has determined that natural materials like raw twisted cotton perform similarly to contemporary synthetic materials like nylon. (Banana fiber is also potentially useful, though there isn't presently the industrialization necessary to support its use in large-scale development of FADs). By the end of the discussions in the afternoon, NORMA, the local fishing companies, and ISSF were discussing what a long-term scientific project in the Western Pacific might look like.

The countries in the Parties to the Nauru Agreement (PNA), where more than 90% of purse seine fishing occurs, are developing a biodegradable and non-entangling program to reduce the adverse impacts of non-biodegradable materials, as well as the destruction, loss, or abandonment of fishing gear.

The FSM Government is dedicated to protecting its ocean resources while simultaneously maximizing their use for the development and well-being of our people. Partnerships between the public sector (i.e. NORMA) and private sector (e.g. CFC, NFC, Diving Seagull) augmented with support from scientific leaders (i.e. ISSF) will help ensure a positive future for both our fish as well as the citizens of our Nation.