Women tending taro patches in Palau. Taro patches like this are important for soil conservation and watershed management. Photo © Fautsina Rehuher-Marugg

PROJECT SUMMARY

Palauans rely heavily on ecosystem goods and services for their livelihoods and cultural practices. Extreme weather events linked to a changing climate have caused major damage to ecosystems, such as coral bleaching and saltwater intrusion. Poor agricultural practices have further worsened these problems.

This project works to revive traditional croplands and promote sustainable watershed management in order to increase the food, environmental, and economic security of rural communities in Babeldaob, the largest island in Palau. The Palau Conservation Society will partner with communities and the government in restoring neglected taro patches. Taro cultivation utilizes traditional soil conservation practices, including mulching and planting vegetation around farm boundaries, which helps control erosion and sedimentation. Functioning taro patches will not only benefit the ecosystem, they will also provide a readily available source of taro for consumption, ceremonial gift exchanges and other social obligations, and sale in local markets.

The project will also build the capacities of local and state governments to manage their watersheds, with a focus on storm water. Lastly, improved understanding of climate change across all local sectors will strengthen adaptive capacity and enhance community and ecosystem resilience in Palau.
PROJECT ACTIVITIES

1. Conduction training workshops for local and state
governments to manage their watersheds, focusing on
storm water
2. Develop storm water management protocols based on
traditional soil conservation practices
3. Develop a state/taro patch owner partnership to ensure
sustained taro patch production
4. Implement soil conservation and other best practices to
increase taro production on select farms
5. Conduct climate change awareness activities in villages
throughout Babeldaob
6. Develop guidance documents on watershed management
and traditional taro farming

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

1. Institutional and human capacity for effective watershed
management strengthened in at least two states
2. Sedimentation reduced by 25 percent in select Babeldaob
watersheds
3. Area of land in test villages devoted to taro production
using traditional techniques increased by at least 25
percent
4. Communities in all 10 states in Babeldaob have access to
Palau-specific climate change information and best
practices for increasing community adaptive capacity
5. Soil conservation best practice directory available for state
government agencies
6. A set of resources for implementing watershed
management and traditional taro farming available for
decision makers and communities