

REGIONAL INITIATIVE TEMPLATE

Please complete each section below.

1. Contact Details

Please provide the following contact details:

Name of individual or group submitting initiative	PACIFIC ISLANDS RAINFOREST FOUNDATION
Name and position of primary contact Email address	PHILIP GERLACH CHAIRMAN AND ACTING EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR tahilapasifika@connect.com.fj
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Phone number Fax number Mailing address	+679 – 9923462 Not applicable P.O. Box 4781 Samabula Suva Fiji

2. Name of Initiative

Ecotourism Program Development for Protected Areas

3. Background and Rationale

You may consider: What is the issue being addressed by this initiative? What are the causes of this issue? Are there relevant studies that have been carried out to support the issue? Are there links to national, regional or international goals/policies?

Please limit your response to no more than 750 words.

Our aim is to demonstrate to resource owners the enormous economic opportunities of ecotourism which outstrip the economic gains of logging endemic timbers from rainforests.

The program is based on the development of a funding proposal for the establishment of a comprehensive ecotourism program as a sustainable rainforest finance mechanism for protected areas of the Pacific Islands.

There exists enormous potential for unique ecotourism initiatives in the Pacific through exploitation of the numerous pristine forest environments, and local reserves. A lack of capital, human resources and understanding has, to date, restricted sustainable development of forest reserves which are now in danger of being cleared indiscriminately for plant and timber sales, human settlement or for agricultural purposes.

International recognition for the need to manage the world's forests to address issues such as climate change has provided new funding sources for the sustainable, long-term development of protected areas. Strategic development of ecotourism for sustainable forest management would enable forest resource holders in Pacific to tap into the growing market that targets ecotourists, a market that, research shows is traditionally well-financed and seeks experiences that foster environmental and cultural understanding, appreciation and conservation. The program aims to provide incentives for the indigenous resource owners to conserve the forests in their care, while bringing benefits such as capacity building and long term alternative employment opportunities.

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4. Description

Please provide a brief overview of this initiative. Try to address the following: Does this initiative contribute to a positive change to the region? What makes this initiative of importance to the Pacific region as a whole? Who would implement this initiative? Who are the main beneficiaries? Are regulatory or legislative changes required at the national level to implement this initiative? How would the initiative be funded? Has this initiative been carried out previously? What are the key risks in implementing this initiative? Are there any complementary projects and programmes currently active? What is the proposed timeframe for this initiative? How would the initiative be sustained over the proposed timeframe?

Overview of Program Activities

- Establishment of two pilot projects; one in Fiji and one in Solomon Islands aimed at demonstrating the value of forest ecotourism;
- Selection of sites and fundraising activities for the establishment of additional ecotourism sites in the Pacific Islands;
- Highlight ecotourism as a potential high revenue income earner for Fiji through showcasing, existing underutilised and under- exploited natural resources.

Overview of Operations

Phase One

Phase One would see the establishment of the two pilot projects to demonstrate the full potential of forest ecotourism in the Pacific and the promotion of 'ridge to reef land-seascape management'.

Part 1

Establishment work includes design and construction of information centres, food kiosks, cafes, camping grounds, eco-lodges, walk- ing trails and viewing platforms, etc. This would follow the development of business and marketing strategies and independent operation plans for the pilot projects/businesses.

Part 2

Establishment involves compliance with ecotourism certification principles and criteria and the eligibility to participate in schemes such as REDD+ in order to optimise marketing opportunities and gain enhanced recognition in the international conservation arena to ensure further development framework.

Phase Two

Phase Two may run concurrently with Phase One and involves the selection of under utilised and under-exploited natural resources and active fundraising for the establishment of additional ecotourism sites in the Pacific.

Overview of Objectives

The overall objective of Program is to proposal with the following sub-objectives:

- To design construction for two pilot projects to demonstrate and highlight forest ecotourism in Fiji and the Solomon Islands.
- To ensure that the two pilot projects are eligible for the highest level of internationally recognised ecotourism certification and participating in climate change initiatives.
- To prepare business and marketing strategies and master plans with indicative building designs and costing for the two pilot projects/businesses.
- To prepare a funding program and lodge applications for funding and/or Expressions of Interest for joint venture or Public Private Partnerships.

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Overview of Program Initiatives

- A tour of the proposed pilot project sites by the proposal developers to prepare designs for property development – Master Plan, (i.e. walking trails/boardwalks, rest-stops, food/drink kiosks, information centre, accommodation & restaurants). The pro- gram will identify and recognise all natural features and assets.
- Actual designing for the above mentioned property development with suitable architects and engineers.

- Research into ecotourism certification schemes to ensure that the above mentioned property designs are compliant to certifiable principles and criteria.
- Research into climate change initiatives such as REDD+ to ensure that the above mentioned developments are eligible to benefit from the initiatives.
- Formulation of business and marketing strategies and plans for the pilot projects, taking into account ecotourism certification schemes and climate change initiatives.
- Drafting and consultation the Ecotourism Program proposal.
- Drafting of a funding strategy and identification of possible partners.
- Establish base line business operations to start the economic development.

5. Alignment to Regional Vision, Values and Objectives

Briefly describe how your initiative supports the vision, values and objectives set out in the Framework for Pacific Regionalism. These can be found in the Framework for Pacific Regionalism document or in the submissions guideline document.

Please limit your response to no more than 500 words

Expected program outcomes include:

Property development designs and business plans for two pilot projects. The designs compliant with international best practices for ecotourism. Business, funding, management strategies, and plans for the two pilot projects. A started up viable operation in both sites encouraging local employment and engagement as a basis for growth

6. Additional Information

Please provide or attach additional information in support of this initiative.

Please limit your response to no more than 5 pages.

ABOUT THE PACIFIC ISLANDS RAINFOREST FOUNDATION

Mission

The mission of the **Pacific Islands Rainforest Foundation (PIRF)** is to provide support to the people of the Pacific Islands generally, and specifically, to assist the traditional indigenous populations of Pacific Island rainforest areas in their efforts to protect their environment and fulfill their rights.

It is intended this mission be delivered by way of:

- Securing and providing methods for maintaining natural resources for the benefit of Pacific Island communities, and the wider global community, and providing assistance with establishing viable and sustainable methods for managing these resources in ways that do not harm the environment, violate the local culture, or compromise the future of the local community;

- Developing means to protect the natural rainforest resources for future generations, both individual and collective rights and obtain, shape and support the participation of the state and wider global community in this work;
- Reducing or eliminating logging of natural rainforests in the Pacific Islands;
- Creation of support for new business alternatives for governments and traditional landowners and immigrants in rainforest areas under a Climatic Change Structure.
- Bringing forth jurisprudence relative to the inscription of conservation areas under private ownership, traditional ownership or government control and either reinforce or establish in Pacific Island countries, systems of National Protected Areas and the inscription of ecological corridors; and
- Developing and engaging in educational programs, seminars and workshops, and using mass media and other outlets to promote awareness and raise support for the preservation and maintenance of the rainforests generally and Pacific Island rainforests specifically.

Approach

While the world has been focused on the major rainforests of the Amazon, South America, Australia, and other areas, to date no concerted effort, organization or foundation had been established to focus on rainforests of Pacific Island nations. The Pacific Islands Rainforest Foundation is being established in response to this need, and the need to address the growing threat to the rainforests worldwide and in the Pacific. Rainforests of the Solomon Islands are already critically threatened, and those of New Caledonia, PNG, and Fiji are subject to indiscriminate and unlawful logging and unplanned clearances. The Rainforest Foundation's approach reflects the 'forestry' based approach of other foundations, recognising the traditional owners and their rights, and the wider needs in the Pacific Islands for education and legislation, combined with developing new economic strategies to preserve these natural and critical assets for future generations.

Structure

A Not for Profit organization, established in Suva, Fiji, registration number 871, PIRF was registered on 18th June 2008, and released by the Fiji government in September 2013. The Foundation was formed to raise funds from a 'global awareness' perspective while meeting its aims and objectives. Key structural elements for the Foundation are that donations to the Foundation be tax deductible in as many tax precincts as possible, and that the Foundation works in all Pacific countries with viable and preservable rainforest biomass. PIRF will be required to be adequately staffed and resourced to fulfill its objectives.

Board of Trustees

The Foundation Trustees, or Board of Directors, is limited to 12 members. In due course PIRF will have representatives from French Pacific Island countries, PNG, Solomon Islands and the Fiji Islands. Currently Foundation Trustees include a senior representative of the legal profession; a prominent and experienced forester working in the commercial forestry sector; and a media, marketing and policy management professional. As of September 2013, the principle management roles of the board were established and are as follows:

- Chairman and Executive Director* Philip Gerlach
- Director in Charge of Program Development and Management* Paul Evers
- Directors in Charge of International and Regional Relations* Rex Horoi and Pio Manoa
- Director in Charge of Communications* Mandy Kennington
- Trustees as Legal Advisors* Hemendra Nagin and Pio Manoa

Current Projects and Staffing

PIRF is currently providing on a 40 month (renewable) contract 10 staff to the EU/ SPC Re – Forest Fiji. 9 qualified forest staff employed and being trained at a high level in the process of facilitating planting of some 7.5 million tree's in the Sugar cane belt, A number of other projects are being discussed with Fiji National University including a joint research centre.

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