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Pacific Island Forestry Leaders Gather in Koror

KOROR, PALAU – Forestry and conservation leaders from western Pacific Islands came together this week for a meeting in Koror, Palau. This meeting was hosted by the Western Forestry Leadership Coalition (WFLC) and was established for the Pacific Island Forestry Committee, a committee of WFLC. The meeting served as an opportunity for Pacific Island Foresters to come together to discuss and carry out work planning for regional efforts associated with protecting and enhancing natural resources in the Pacific Islands.

The Pacific Islands Forestry Committee (PIFC) is comprised of forestry leaders from the U.S.-Affiliated Pacific Islands, including: Territory of American Samoa, Commonwealth of Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI), Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), Territory of Guam, State of Hawaii, Republic of Marshall Islands, and the Republic of Palau. The USDA Forest Service's Institute of Pacific Islands Forestry and Pacific Southwest Region are also members of the PIFC. The PIFC serves as a platform for technology transfer, training, and cultural information exchange related to the unique forest management challenges of the Pacific.

The meeting kicked off on Tuesday, October 23 with a field tour to the Ngardok Nature Reserve in Melekeok. The visit included a welcome from the Honorable Governor Henaro Polloi and Jefferson Thomas, Chairman of the Ngardok Nature Reserve Board. Field tour attendees visited the Ngardok ForestGEO forest monitoring plot and the savanna restoration sites, and participated in a native orchid tour and a tree planting.

On Wednesday, October 24 Fred Sengebau, Director of the Bureau of Agriculture, Ministry of Natural Resources, Environment & Tourism, provided a welcome to attendees at the Palasia Hotel. Throughout Wednesday's meeting, attendees heard from various partners including the Micronesia Conservation Trust, the Ebiil Society, The Nature Conservancy, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, and the Belau National Museum. PIFC members in attendance, including Guam, CNMI, Hawaii, Marshall Islands, Palau, and the USDA Forest Service, reported out on programs and projects in their respective islands. Pua Michael, who was also in attendance, is the PIFC representative for Palau.

The meeting will conclude on Thursday, October 25 with a business session for PIFC members to discuss items of priority across the Pacific and areas they wish to undertake work on together in the coming year.

Contact information for all PIFC members and more information about forestry in the Pacific Islands is available at <http://www.thewflc.org/committees-task-forces-networks/pacific-islands-forestry-committee>.

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About the Western Forestry Leadership Coalition

The Western Forestry Leadership Coalition (WFLC) represents a unique partnership between the Council of Western State Foresters and federal government forestry leaders. WFLC is comprised of 34 members from across the federal and state agencies of the West which include: 23 state members (also known as the Council of Western State Foresters) which include State, Territorial, and Commonwealth Foresters of the West and U.S.-Affiliated Pacific Islands; and 11 USDA Forest Service members, which include: seven Western Regional Foresters, three Western Research Station Directors, and one Forest Products Lab Director.