



Applying knowledge to improve water quality

Southwest States & Pacific Islands Regional Water Program

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Water Issues are a High Priority in the Pacific

Water quality coordinators from Guam, American Samoa, the Republic of Palau, the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI), and the Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI), collectively developed and conducted a region-wide water issues survey based on a model developed in the Pacific Northwest (Mahler et al., 2004, 2005). Survey respondents were asked to describe each of 10 water issues as not important, somewhat important, very important, extremely important, or having no opinion. When the *very important* and *extremely important* responses were added together (high priority), the majority of respondents considered all 10 water issues to be high priority (Table 1).

Table 1. Pacific Island respondents rating the following water issues as high priority (extremely important + very important)

Water Issue	High priority, %
Clean drinking water	100
Household water supply	96
Clean groundwater	87
Water for agriculture	87
Aquatic organism protection	85
Water for recreation	78
Clean rivers/streams	76
Water for industry	75
Watershed restoration	66
Wetlands	60



Photo credit: Pacific Worlds
Aquaculture ponds behind Talofoto Bay, Guam



Photo credit: Pacific Worlds
Watering taro fields at Airai Village, Palau

Water Issues Survey Background

The results of the water issues discussed in this fact sheet are from a 37-question survey conducted by the Pacific Islands water quality team with support from the Pacific Northwest water quality program. The survey was used to document public awareness, aptitudes, attitudes, and actions toward water quality in Guam, American Samoa, the Republic of Palau, the Federated States of Micronesia, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, and the Republic of the Marshall Islands. Fifty surveys were completed from each of the six island jurisdictions for a total of 300 completed surveys. The collected data was analyzed using the SAS procedure at the University of Idaho and has a sampling error of +/- 5 percent.

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One hundred percent of survey respondents considered clean drinking water to be a high priority issue. Ninety-six percent of respondents also considered household water supply a high priority issue. Over three quarters of survey respondents considered clean groundwater, water for agriculture, aquatic organism protection, water for recreation, clean rivers, streams and lakes, and water for industry as having a high priority. Even though support for watershed restoration and wetlands was lower on the list, a majority of respondents still supported these issues.

Island of residence had a significant impact on the prioritization of water issues (Table 2). Clean drinking water was rated as the highest priority water issue on all of the island entities surveyed; however, the ranking of issues after clean drinking water was island specific. In CNMI, Guam, and American Samoa clean groundwater, water for agriculture, and household water supply ranked high. However, water for industry, watershed restoration, and wetlands ranked low. Conversely, in Palau, wetlands had a higher priority, while clean groundwater ranked as lowest priority. Water issues were high priority in all six island entities, but based on the unique island rankings, water programming needs should not be considered uniform across the Pacific region.

Table 2. Ranking of the water issues from most important (1) to least important (10) on each Pacific Island based on 2004 water issues survey.

Water Issue	Ranking of water issue by island					
	CNMI	RMI	G	P	FSM	AS
Clean drinking water	1	1	1	1	1	1
Household water supply	4	2	1	2	1	3
Clean groundwater	1	3	3	10	3	2
Water for agriculture	3	4	5	8	8	5
Aquatic organism protection	6	5	6	3	6	6
Water for recreation	7	7	7	5	9	7
Clean rivers, streams, lakes	5	10	3	5	4	4
Water for industry	8	6	9	8	10	8
Watershed restoration	9	8	7	7	7	9
Wetlands	10	9	10	4	5	10

CNMI= Northern Mariana Islands, RMI= Republic of the Marshall Islands, G= Guam, P= Palau, FSM= Federated States of Micronesia, AS= American Samoa.

A number used twice for a particular island is indicative of a ranking tie.



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