

## THE MICRONESIA CHALLENGE

In 2006, five Micronesian governments made major waves. By committing to effectively conserve 30% of near-shore marine and 20% of terrestrial resources across Micronesia by 2020, they revealed a remarkable political will, challenging themselves—and the world—to steward the resources people need to survive.

As a key partner in the Micronesia Challenge, the Conservancy is working across 2.5 million square miles of the Pacific Ocean to make ecosystems resilient to the threats created by a changing world.



The region's majestic islands stand alone, but the Micronesia Challenge has rallied five governments around a common cause: securing the resources that provide livelihoods for hundreds of thousands. © Jez O'Hare

### GLOBAL SIGNIFICANCE

The Micronesia Challenge—the world's first high-profile regional conservation collaboration—reflects the region's increasing awareness of both the impacts of climate change and the necessity of proactively protecting island communities from those consequences.

The Challenge's local leaders are pushing themselves to surpass previously set conservation benchmarks and inspire deeper engagement around the globe.

### RESOURCES PEOPLE NEED

Micronesia's reefs provide its 650,000 inhabitants with food, livelihoods and tourism income valued at nearly \$800 million—and thousands of others benefit from those same resources.

But modern technologies, increasing populations and climate change are placing an ever-increasing strain on a region rich with resources, endangering the well-being of Micronesia's people.

### THREATS

- Climate change means rising sea levels and temperatures, which threaten island communities and reefs alike.
- Unsustainable development and deforestation lead to pollution, sedimentation and loss of wildlife habitat.
- Invasive species damage ecosystems and threaten native species.

### TAKING ACTION

The Micronesia Challenge unites the Conservancy's 60-year history of conservation success with the determination of governments in Palau, the Federated States of Micronesia, the Marshall Islands, Guam and the Northern Mariana Islands. Along with key partners, we're striving to preserve ecosystems that shelter a significant portion of the world's marine biodiversity.

We are:

- Identifying conservation targets and designing and establishing resilient Protected Area Networks to ensure food and freshwater security for communities.
- Creating innovative climate change adaptation strategies to protect Micronesia's already-endangered low-lying atolls, reducing destructive fishing practices and sharing successful tactics around the globe.
- Helping to design and implement a strong monitoring program throughout the five Micronesia Challenge jurisdictions to measure the effectiveness of management efforts and progress toward the Micronesia Challenge goals.
- Ensuring that conservation efforts in Micronesia will be sustainable by developing long-term financing plans, leveraging contributions to generate matching funds and securing high-level commitments from other countries.

### OPPORTUNITIES

Environmental threats are on the rise in Micronesia—but the region's people are rising in turn to meet the challenge and ensure the survival of their homelands. By building and promoting new models for island conservation in the Pacific, the Conservancy and the people of Micronesia can influence and catalyze conservation throughout the world.

# snapshot

## LAUNCHING THE CHALLENGE IN PALAU

*As one of the Micronesia Challenge's principal architects, the government of Palau has been instrumental in addressing the risks that confront Micronesian ecosystems. With support from the Conservancy, Palau and its neighbors are growing a local coalition into a global movement.*



The Nature Conservancy is working to preserve the marine and terrestrial resources that sustain Micronesia's people and make it one of the most beautiful regions on earth. © Ami Vitale

Palau is a scattering of lush islands in the Western Pacific, surrounded by brilliant turquoise water and spectacular coral reefs. Its islands cover just 170 square miles and its population numbers only 20,000, but Palau is a world leader in coral reef and island conservation efforts.

In 2005, Palau committed to preserving an astounding 30 percent of its near-shore marine resources and 20 percent of its terrestrial resources by 2020 and challenged neighboring jurisdictions to match its bold conservation commitment.

The Federated States of Micronesia, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, the U.S. Territory of Guam and the U.S. Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands answered that call, and—with Conservancy assistance—the five jurisdictions launched the Micronesia Challenge in 2006.

### PRESERVING REEFS FOR PEOPLE

“For centuries, the people of Micronesia have lived peacefully and in harmony with nature,” says Emanuel “Manny” Mori, President of the Federated States of Micronesia.

“Not only does the Micronesia Challenge speak to the health of the environment, it focuses on the strength of the cultures that inhabit the region and our economies,” he explains.

The Micronesia Challenge covers 2.5 million square miles of ocean, an area nearly the size of the continental U.S. that includes more than 480 coral species (more than 60% of all known corals), 1,300 species of reef fish, 85 species of birds and 1,400 species of plants.

The Micronesia Challenge will help maintain ecosystem benefits such as food, clean drinking water and income from tourism

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—Trina Leberer,  
Director, Micronesia Program

and fishing. It will also improve the region's resilience to the impacts of climate change.

“It's so amazing to work with governments, local NGOs and communities to help achieve the Challenge, both on the ground and in the water,” explains Trina Leberer, director of the Conservancy's Micronesia Program. “We assist local partners in their efforts to identify new protected areas and approaches to reduce threats, and then we support the sharing of these efforts through

peer-learning networks in the region.”

### RESOURCES KEY TO SUCCESS

The Micronesia Challenge requires reliable long-term funding as well. The Nature Conservancy is working with Conservation International to catalyze sustainable financing for the Challenge and shore up a robust endowment that can sustain the project—and the region—for generations to come.

So far, the islands have leveraged funding to secure a commitment for a matching grant of \$6 million from the multinational funding agency, the Global Environmental Facility and apply for an additional \$11 million from the UN Convention on Biological Diversity's Lifeweb Initiative, including \$6 million for endowment. But more help is needed.

“The vision, leadership, and commitment shown by the people of Micronesia are truly inspirational. The work in Micronesia helped launch the Global Island Partnership and similar commitments in the Caribbean and the Coral Triangle,” says Leberer. “With its combination of political will, community engagement, relatively healthy ecosystems and manageable local threats, Micronesia is a great place to develop and test innovative strategies for adapting to climate change that may benefit other communities all over the world.”

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