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KOROR STATE MARINE TOUR GUIDE CERTIFICATION PROGRAM: Results of Stakeholder Consultations

A report submitted to
Department of Conservation & Law Enforcement
Koror State Government

Community Centered Conservation
2003

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Rock Islands Conservation Area, Palau

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KOROR STATE MARINE TOUR GUIDE CERTIFICATION PROGRAM:
Results of Stakeholder Consultations

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Koror
2003

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MAKI AND OA

for translating the questionnaires and responses into and from Japanese and Taiwanese



Healthy coral in the Rock Islands Conservation Area

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In order to design an appropriate certification course for marine tour guides operating in the Rock Islands area, C3 conducted stakeholder consultations using questionnaires and interviews. In June 2003, questionnaires in appropriate languages were sent to 25 marine tour companies in Koror State and informal interviews were requested with guides from 10 of these companies.

Thirty-six questionnaires were completed by guides from 18 of the tour companies approached, and nine companies were able to attend face-to-face interviews. The primary conclusions of the consultations were: (1) most operators appeared to be supportive of the certification course; (2) guides agreed with the proposed sections of the course, with many stating that a course manual would assist them in answering commonly-asked questions; (3) the course materials should be available in Japanese and Taiwanese; (4) optional CPR and First Aid training should be offered as part of the course; (5) the maximum course length should be 2 weeks with individual sessions lasting no longer than 2 hours during the evening in the low tourist season. Further comments from the questionnaires and suggestions from the interviews will be incorporated into the final course content.

As a result of these consultations, the main sections of the Marine Tour Guide Certification course have been identified and stakeholders' concerns and suggestions taken into consideration.

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Sunset in the Rock Islands Conservation Area

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND

The Koror State Government is currently developing a comprehensive management plan for the Rock Islands-Southern Lagoon Area of Koror State, Palau. The purpose of this management plan will be to provide a framework that will protect and retain the environmental integrity of the Rock Islands-Southern Lagoon Area. One of the key threats to biological diversity within the area is recreational activity associated with tourism.

To reduce negative impacts caused by tourist-related activities, the management plan will identify a number of specific strategies, one of which will be the development and implementation of a tour guide certification program for all marine-based tour guides working in Koror State. Currently, tour guides do not receive any formal local training about Palau's unique and fragile environment or the importance of minimizing visitor impact on the area. Although some tour guides may provide an environmental briefing to their customers, there is a need to ensure that accurate information is consistently imparted by all tour companies.

In June 2003, Koror State contracted Community Centered Conservation (C3), a local non-profit environmental research & education organization to develop the course contents for the certification program. The first stage in this project was to identify all relevant stakeholders in government, the tourism industry and non-government organizations who would have an interest or direct involvement as contributors, participants or implementers of such a course. This report summarizes the results of consultations with these stakeholders.

1.2 JUSTIFICATION

The number of visitors to Palau has significantly increased in recent years from only 4,000 per annum in the 1980s to 50-60,000 per annum over the past 5 years (Palau Visitors Authority pers comm). More than half of these visitors come specifically to dive and most of their diving and other marine-based activities are concentrated in the Rock Islands Southern Lagoon Area. The number of tour operators has concurrently increased to meet this demand. There are now approximately 30 marine tour operators licensed to work in Koror State.

To operate in Koror State waters, a company must possess a current Koror State business license, a Foreign Investment Board license (in the case of foreign ownership) and a Tour Operators license from the Palau Visitors Authority (PVA). Despite these requirements, there is no formal training offered to tour guides; this is left to each individual company. Some companies provide water safety and first aid training to their staff, but few provide environmental and/or cultural information about Palau.

The development of a national and/or state marine tour guide certification program has been discussed a number of times over the past decade by Koror State Government, PVA and the Palau Community College. In 1994 a voluntary tour guide training workshop was coordinated by Mrs. Ann Kitalong of The Environment Inc., a local environmental consultancy firm (Kitalong 1994). The workshop comprised of four main sections: Safety, Environmental Awareness, Cultural Awareness and Customer Service, with fourteen presenters from industry, government and non-governmental organizations. The workshop was attended by 19 guides and was deemed a success. It was recommended that such training be repeated at least once a year. However, the course was not repeated, although the training materials remained as a useful source of information for future courses. Two subsequent studies of Palau's dive industry and Taiwanese tour industry (Palau Conservation Society 1999, 2001) recommended the design and implementation of a certification program for guides, with particular reference to best environmental practices.

Information relating to the development of certification programs for marine tour operators is very limited, not only in the context of Palau, but worldwide. Although such schemes do exist, they are, on the whole, voluntary in nature. Few countries, if any, currently have compulsory national or state-level certification courses for marine tour guides. Countries with voluntary certification schemes include Hawaii (Interpret Hawaii) and Belize (National Tour Guide Training Program; Christ et al (2003)).

2. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The goals of the certification program are to:

- ensure that all marine-based tour guides working in the Rock Islands-Southern Lagoon Area attain a minimum level of knowledge about the marine environment, cultural significance of the area, and ecologically-sustainable tourism practices;
- encourage tour guides to follow best environmental practices;
- raise awareness of the cultural and ecological value of the area among visitors and locals and
- provide the tourism industry with a mechanism for environmental quality assurance.

The completed course materials will form an appendix to the Rock Islands-Southern Lagoon Area Management Plan. It is envisioned that when the curriculum is developed and the program is operational, it will serve as a model for other state programs or be adopted nationwide.

The aim of this study was to conduct stakeholder consultations (*Stage 1*) in order to identify the structural components of the certification program. The results from this investigation are detailed in this report and will form the basis and direction for the following stages in the design of the course materials detailed below:

Stage 2: Literature research in the following areas:

- culture
- environment
- legislation
- marine tour operator responsibilities and
- existing certification programs implemented in other countries.

Stage 3: Collation of information attained from consultations and literature review to develop the curriculum for the tour guide certification program

Stage 4: Development of a student instructional manual and instructor notes for the marine tour guide certification program

3. METHODS

In June 2003, C3 compiled a list of all marine tour operators (Appendix 1) based in Koror State by combining information from Palau Visitors Authority and Koror State Department of Conservation & Law Enforcement with recently-established operations that were listed in the telephone directory. All companies offering marine-based activities were included on the list but boat charter operations were excluded as they provided transportation throughout the Rock Islands area but did not focus on tours *per se*.

Two methods of collecting information were employed: (1) a questionnaire sent out to marine tour guides and (2) interviews with a representative sample of operators.

3.1 QUESTIONNAIRES

A pilot questionnaire was designed in English and translated into Japanese and Taiwanese. The questionnaires were sent out to six randomly-selected companies; two English, two Japanese and two Taiwanese. Each company was asked to have two of their guides fill out the questionnaire, which was then collected a week later. A few areas of misunderstanding or misinterpretation resulted in minor alterations to some questions. Two copies of the final questionnaire (Appendix 2) were sent out to each of the 25 operators on the stakeholder list (Appendix 1). The main sections are summarized below:

- The first section of the questionnaire asked for details about the company and the guide, the activities offered, the guide's experience in the industry both in Palau and elsewhere, their ethnic background and language fluency.
- The second section dealt with the customer – the average group size, ethnic background of customers, levels of experience, topics included in briefing, methods of education and questions asked by the customer.
- The last section asked for comments or suggestions regarding the development and content of the course.

3.2 INTERVIEWS

Ten companies were randomly selected from the stakeholder list with a representative sample from each language group. Interviews were held with at least one member of staff, usually a guide or a manager who also led tours. Interviews were informal and opinions and suggestions were sought on the following topics:

1. **Marine Environment** - level of knowledge needed – fish, corals, coral bleaching events, customers' interests
2. **Palauan Culture / History** - contemporary culture, ancient Palau, World War II, traditional dance
3. **Legislation / Regulation** - familiarity with current legislation and designated zones, information needs
4. **Marine Tour Operators Responsibilities** – CPR / First Aid certification, responsibilities to other tour groups, customers and the environment.
5. **Certification Course Schedule & Materials** - suggestions concerning timing / length of course and handbook / lectures etc., any other suggestions regarding information that should be included in the course, any concerns about tour guide behavior.



Traditional Palauan costume

4. RESULTS

4.1 QUESTIONNAIRES

4.1.1 Marine Tour Operator Profile

Questionnaires were completed by guides from 18 out of the 25 companies approached and the total number of respondents was 36.

Activities

The majority of operators contacted offered diving and/or snorkeling, over one-third offered kayaking, but Taiwanese companies were the only operators to offer other marine-based activities, including Boat/Jet ski, Sea Walk, Parasail and Banana Boats (Figure 1).

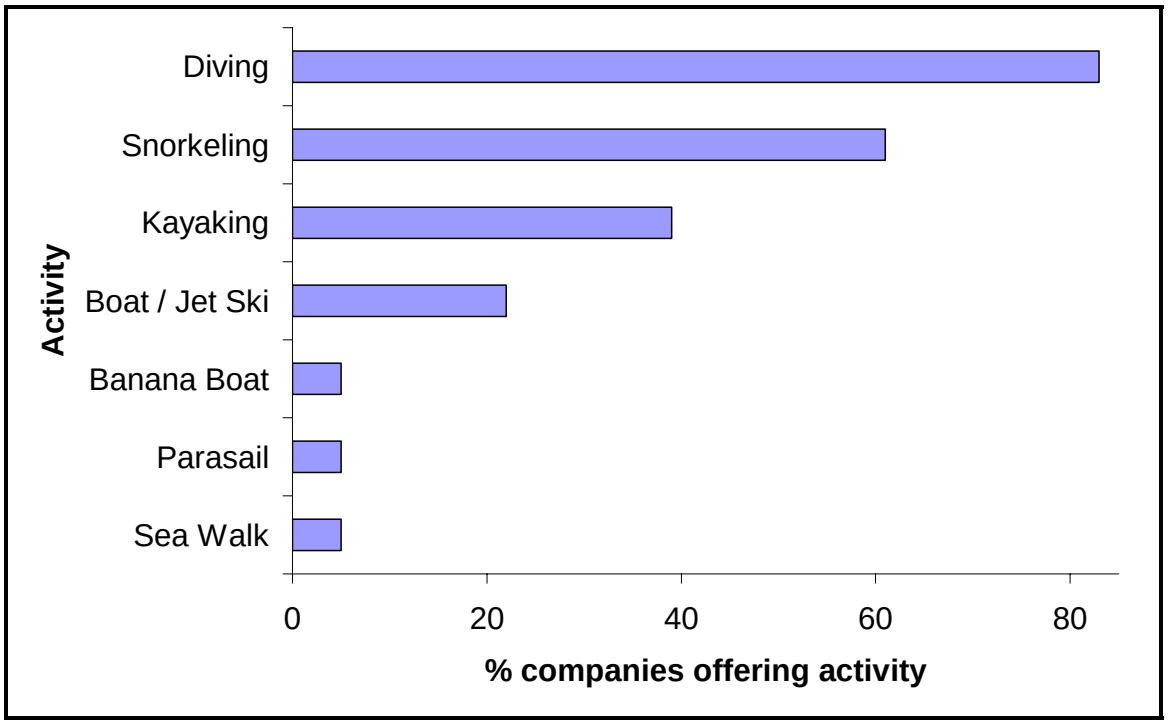


Figure 1. Percentage of companies offering each marine-based activity

Tour Guide Experience

Most guides questioned (70%) had less than 10 years of overall experience in the industry (Figure 2). Approximately half of the guides interviewed had less than 6 years of work experience in Palau and 20% had more than 11 years of experience in Palau.

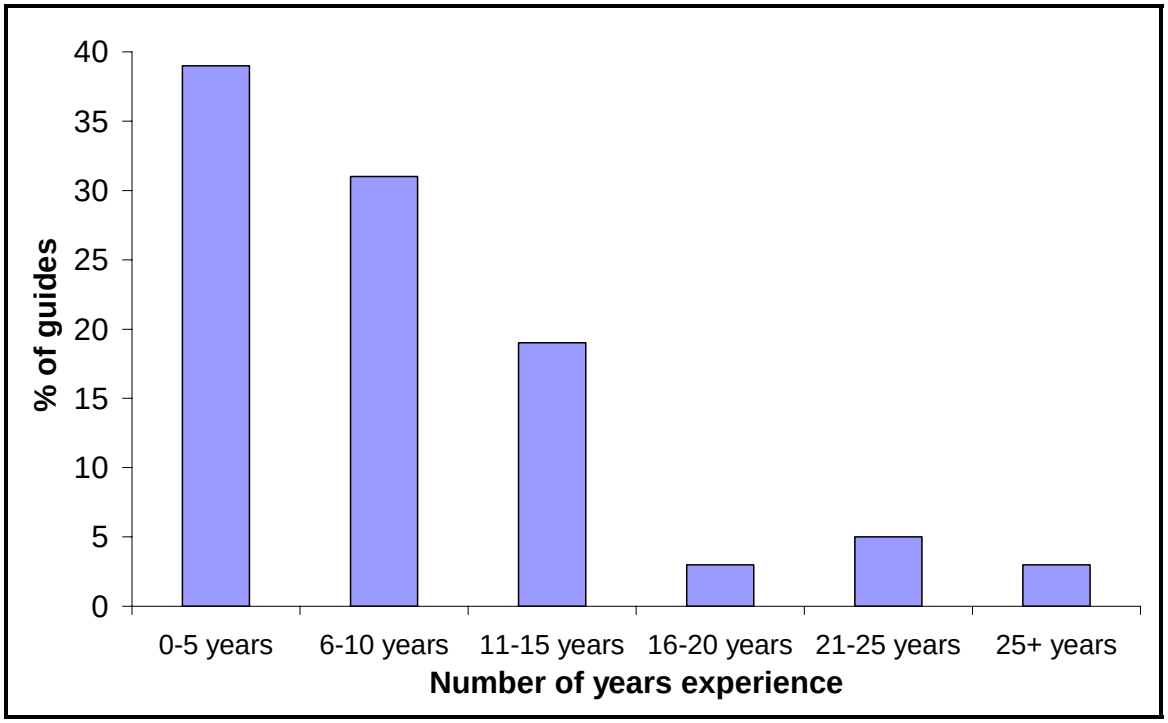


Figure 2. Levels of experience of marine tour guides

Dive Certification Level of Guides

Three quarters of guides questioned held a professional diving qualification (Table 1) and therefore were internationally certified to lead groups of recreational divers.

Table 1. Diving certification levels of marine tour guides

CERTIFICATION LEVEL	% GUIDES
Dive Instructor	47
Divemaster	28
Advanced Diver	14
Open Water Diver	3
Boat Driver	5
None	3

Ethnic Background of Guides

The majority of tour guides were Japanese, followed by Palauans and Taiwanese (Figure 3).

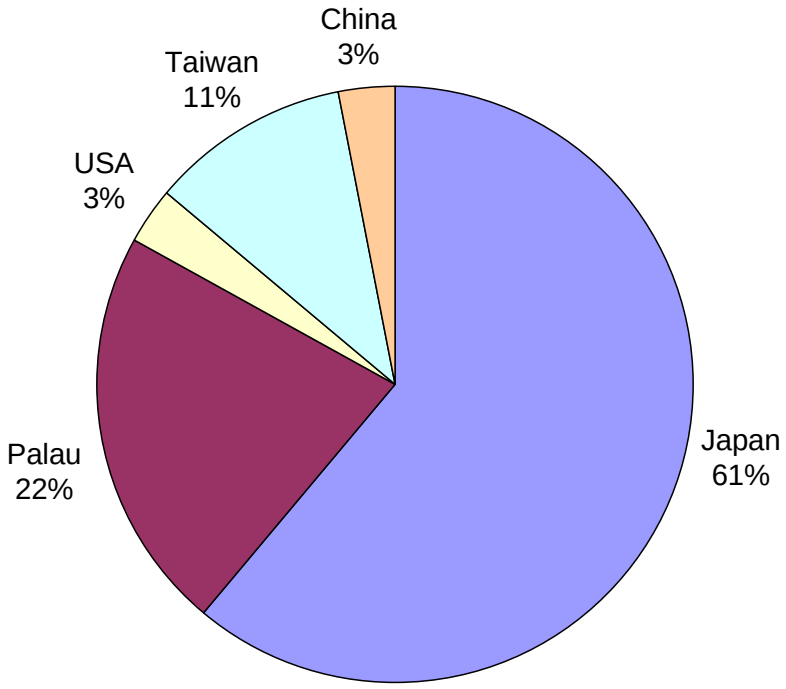


Figure 3. Ethnic backgrounds of marine tour guides

Guides' Language Fluency

Most guides (75%) were able to speak Japanese (Table 2), followed by English (55%) and Palauan (27%). Over half of guides were bi- or tri-lingual.

Table 2. Languages spoken by marine tour guides

LANGUAGES	% GUIDES
Japanese only	45
Trilingual (Palauan, Japanese and English)	19
Bilingual (Taiwanese and English)	14
Bilingual (Japanese and English)	11
Bilingual (Palauan and English)	8
English only	3

Average Tour Group Size

The vast majority (78%) of the tour companies specialized in small tour groups of less than 10 clients (Table 3).

Table 3. Average tour group size

GROUP SIZE	% GUIDES
Small (0-10)	78
Medium (10-25)	11
Large (25+)	11

4.1.2 Customer Profile

Customer Ethnicity

Most marine tourists were Japanese, followed by European and American (Figure 4).

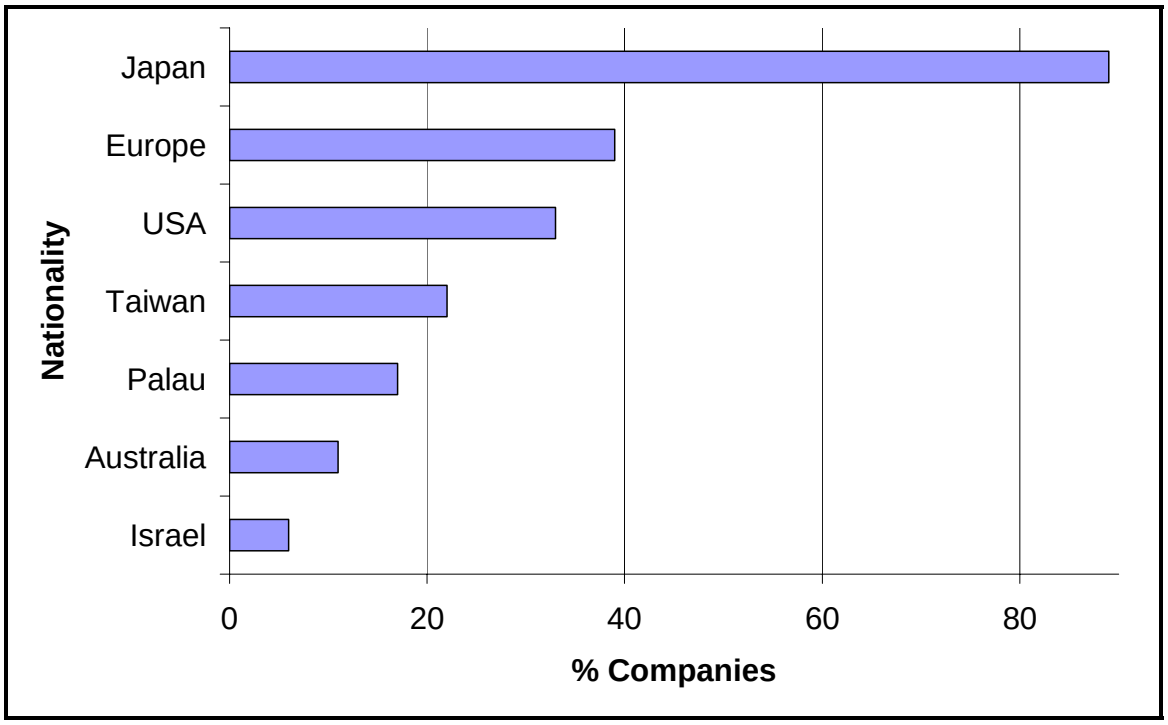


Figure 4. Nationality of marine tourists served by the companies questioned

Customer Experience

- 94% of all the tour operators in Palau serve customers who are 'experienced' in the activity they undertake, meaning they have experienced it at least once before.
- All tour operators receive questions from their customers concerning the marine environment and 78% indicated that customers often or always ask questions on this subject.
- All of tour operators receive questions from their customers concerning the laws and rules that apply to the Rock Islands area and 67% indicated that customers often or always ask questions on this subject.
- Only one tour operator indicated that they did not receive questions from their customers concerning the culture and history of Palau and of the remaining operators, 70% indicated that customers often or always ask questions on this subject.

4.1.3 Education Media

All companies questioned provided oral information to their customers, around half used paper brochures and booklets; only 6% employed video (Table 4).

Table 4. Education media employed by marine tour companies

MEDIUM OF EDUCATION	% COMPANIES
Oral	100
Paper	56
Video	6

4.1.4 Certification Course Materials in English

- Of the Japanese respondents, 56% would prefer the certification course materials to be translated into Japanese.

- 60% of the Taiwanese guides would also like the materials translated into their language.

4.2 INTERVIEWS

Nine out of the ten companies were able to attend face-to-face informal interviews. Some of the most frequent comments were:

- All companies agreed that information was needed on the following topics: marine environment, Palauan culture/history, legislation/regulations and tour operator responsibilities. No additional sections for the course were suggested.

- All companies agreed that the course should be held in the low season, e.g. June

- Some thought that 2-hour sessions for five nights (7-9pm) were acceptable, while others would prefer 1.5-hour sessions over the course of two weeks.

- Many guides thought that combining all regulations applicable to the Rock Islands area in one manual would be useful.



Diving in the Rock Islands Conservation Area

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

- Based on the results from the questionnaires and interviews, most operators were supportive of the certification course, realizing the need for minimum levels of knowledge among tour guides in order to ensure best environmental practices were adhered to within the tourism industry. However, there were some concerns about the course being implemented at the state, rather than at the national level.

- Guides agreed with the proposed sections of the course, with many stating that a course manual which provided information relating to: the environment, Palauan culture and history and Rock Islands' legislation would assist them in answering commonly-asked questions.

- A high proportion of operators are currently catering to non-English-speaking clientele and a significant proportion of guides questioned were not fluent in English. Therefore there is a need for the course materials to be available in Japanese and Taiwanese to ensure that all guides have the opportunity to attain the same level of knowledge.

- Although 75% of the guides questioned were certified as Divemasters or Dive Instructors, and had therefore completed safety training, all guides interviewed agreed that optional CPR and First Aid training should be offered as part of the course. This would provide the opportunity for guides to renew previous certification or to be certified if their company did not already provide this service.

- The majority of guides interviewed requested that the course be held once or twice a year, in the low season, between 7pm and 9pm. The maximum course length should be 2 weeks with individual sessions lasting no longer than 2 hours.

- Further suggestions from the interviews as well as the comments from the questionnaires will be incorporated into the course content.

6. REFERENCES

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Abai – traditional meeting house

7. APPENDICES

7.1 STAKEHOLDER LIST

Questionnaires were sent to the following marine tour operators:

Dive/Tour Operator	Phone	
A-Way Marine Entertainment	2947	Taiwanese
Antelope	1059/2077	Japanese
Aqua magic	1119	Jap/English
Blue Marlin (UBDI)	2214	Jap/English
Carp/Palau Diving Center	2978	Jap/Eng/Palau
Cruise Control	6691	Jap/Eng/Palau
Daydream	3551/2199	Jap/Eng/Palau
Dive Palau	3548	English/Jap
Fish N' Fins	2637	English
IMPAC	3779/5079	Japanese
Lesson Two Palau Sport	1120/1125	Jap/English
Long Rainbow Happy Tours	3240	Taiwan/English
Neco Marine Corp	2009/1755	English/Jap
Ocean Hunter	2637/1070	English
Pacific Divers Oasis	6960/514	Japanese
Palau Aggressor II	6075/6076	
Paradise Divers	5008	Japanese
Planet Blue Kayaks	1062	English
Power Passion Club		Taiwanese
Pro Dive Palau	4130	Japanese
Rock Island Tour Co., Ltd.	1573	Jap/Eng/Palau
Sam's Tours	1062/5305	English/Palau
Southern Marine Divers	2345	Jap/English
SPLASH	2600 ext. 485	Jap/English
Water World Palau	3826/3979	Korean/English

Organizations asked to submit suggestions via email:

Organization	**Phone**
Palau Visitors Authority	1930/2793
Belau Tourism Association	4377
Palau International Coral Reef Centre	6952
Bureau of Marine Resources	5395
Environment Inc.	587-3451
MAREPAC	N/A
Palau Conservation Society	3993/4716
Palau Community College (Tourism) -Vicky Maui	2470/2471
Maritime Safety	2559
Koror State Rangers	2150
Red Cross Society	5780/5781
Environmental Quality and Protection Board	1639
Belau National Museum	2841
OEK Senate Chairman of Committee on Tourism	
Division of Conservation and Entomology	2487
Department of Education	2952
Department of Public Safety	2423
Bureau of Arts and Culture	2489
The Nature Conservancy	2017
Office of Environmental Response and Coordination	6950

7.2 QUESTIONNAIRE (English, Japanese, Taiwanese)

Marine Tour Guide Certification Program Questionnaire

Koror State Government is taking steps to develop a certification program for all marine tour guides as part of the Rock Islands Management Plan. As part of the developmental process a questionnaire has been distributed to various organizations, businesses, etc. that will play a pertinent role in the successful development of the program. Your active participation in the questionnaire process is requested in order to ensure that each party is given the opportunity to allow their questions, concerns, and comments to be heard. Please answer each and every question in an honest manner, as all results will be kept completely confidential. The information obtained through this questionnaire will facilitate the development of the program and the overall management plan. Thank you for your time and cooperation.

Employer name _____

Position/Title _____

Activities Supervised: Please check all that apply

_____ Diving _____ Kayaking

_____ Snorkeling _____Boat/Jet Ski

Other (explain): _____

Years of Experience Overall: _____

Years of Experience in Palau: _____

Level of Dive Certification (if applicable): _____

Ethnic Background: Please check one

_____ Palauan _____ European _____ Korean

_____ American _____ Taiwanese _____ Japanese

Other (explain): _____

Language Fluency: Please check all that apply

_____ Palauan _____ Korean _____ Japanese
_____ English _____ Taiwanese Other (explain): _____

What is the average group size for your activity? Please check one

_____ Small (0-10 people)
_____ Medium (10-25 people)
_____ Large (25+ people)

What is the ethnic background of the **majority** of your customers? Please check:

_____ Palauan _____ European _____ Korean
_____ American _____ Taiwanese _____ Japanese
Other (explain): _____

Please list the ethnic background of the other customers?

_____
_____
_____

Level of In-Water Experience of Customers: Please check the one that applies to most

_____ Experienced
_____ Beginner

Do you provide customers with education in the following: Please check all that apply:

_____ Marine Environment

How often do you get questions about these topics?

_____ Never _____ Often _____ Sometimes

_____ Palauan Culture/History

How often do you get questions about these topics?

_____ Never _____ Often _____ Sometimes

_____ Legislation/Rules/Regulations of the Marine Environment

How often do you get questions about these topics?

_____ Never _____ Often _____ Sometimes

Other (explain): _____

What method of education do you use? Please check all that apply

_____ Talk/Lecture _____ Video

_____ Papers/Pamphlets/Leaflets Other (explain): _____

Would you feel comfortable if the course materials are provided in English?

_____ Yes _____ No

Please use the space provided below to make any additional comments or suggestions regarding the development and content of the course. Please feel free to speak openly as your information will contribute to making a better working environment for you and your customers.

Please feel free to make any comments and/or suggestions regarding changes or additional information that should be included in this questionnaire in the space provided below.

マリンツアーガイド認証プログラムに関するアンケート
ロックアイランドマネージメントプランとして全てのマリンツアーガイドに対しコロール州政府が認証プログラムを行います。プランのひとつとしてさまざまな団体、事務所等にアンケートを配布してあります。これはプログラムの成功のために適切な役割を果たします。集計結果は公表しませんのでこの機会に積極的に意見をお寄せください。アンケートから得られた情報はプログラムの改善と全てのマネージメントプランの発展に寄与します。
ご協力ありがとうございます。

会社名 _____
職 種 _____

どんなアクティビティを行っていますか？（複数回答可）

_____ ダイビング _____ カヤック
_____ スノーケル _____ ボート / ジェットスキー
その他（説明）_____

今までの経験年数：_____
パラオでの経験年数：_____
ダイビング認証のレベル _____

あなたは？（ひとつ選んでください）

_____ パラオ人 _____ 欧州人 _____韓国人
_____ アメリカ人 _____ 台湾人 _____日本人
その他（説明） _____

使用可能言語：複数回答可

_____ パラオ語 _____ 韓国語 _____日本語
_____ 英語 _____ 台湾語
その他（説明） _____

アクティビティのグループ人数は平均どれくらいですか？（ひとつ選んでください）

_____ ０～１０人
_____ １０～２５人
_____ ２５人以上

大部分の顧客は？

_____ パラオ人 _____ 欧州人 _____韓国人
_____ アメリカ人 _____ 台湾人 _____日本人
その他（説明）_____

上記以外の顧客は？ _____

顧客の水に対する経験：**大部分**を占めるものをどちらかひとつ選んでください。

_____ 経験者
_____ 初心者

顧客に対して以下の事柄について話をしていますか：複数回答可：

_____ 海洋環境について
どれくらいの頻度でこの事柄に関する質問を受けますか?
_____受けたことがない_____頻繁に_____ときどき____いつも

_____ パラオの文化 / 歴史について
どれくらいの頻度でこの事柄に関する質問を受けますか?
_____受けたことがない_____ 頻繁に_____ときどき____いつも

_____ 海に関する法律 / ルール / 規制について
どれくらいの頻度でこの事柄に関する質問を受けますか?
_____受けたことがない_____ 頻繁に_____ ときどき____いつも

その他（説明）_____

どんなふうに顧客に対して 12 の事柄を説明していますか? 複数回答可

_____ 話 / 講義 _____ ビデオ
_____ 文書 / パンフレット等 その他（説明）_____

この認証プログラムのコースで英語の視聴覚教材を使っても大丈夫ですか?

_____ はい _____ いいえ

その他、向上に関する提案やこの認証プログラムのコースの内容に関して何かコメントを下の空欄に記入してください。貴団体と顧客のためによりよい環境を築くために思っていることを素直に書いてください。

帛琉水上導遊檢定方案意見調查表

科羅州政府目前正發展檢定制度，針對在洛克群島工作之導遊擬出一份管理計畫，因此問卷已通過各政府機關及商業組織所討論出之有效問卷，所以您在本方案的實施中扮演十分重要的角色。

您在此份問卷中所提供的問題及建議將會被我們採用，所以請據實回答而您的個人資料及建議都會保密。有關此問卷所呈現出的資訊將會對此計畫有很大的幫助。

再次感謝您的配合！

1.姓名 _____

2.工作職稱 _____

3.活動指導項目： （請選項）

□潛水 □觀木舟 □浮潛 □船隻/水上摩托車

□其它 _____

4.工作經驗年數 _____

5.在帛琉工作年數 _____

6.潛水執照等級 _____

7.國籍： （請選項）

□帛琉 □歐洲 □韓國 □美國

□台灣 □日本 □其它 _____

8.擅長語言： （請選項）

□帛琉 □歐洲 □韓國 □美國

□台灣 □日本 □其它 _____

9.每團平均人數：

□ 0-10 人 □ 10-25 人 □ 25 人以上

10.主要客源國籍：

□帛琉 □歐洲 □韓國 □美國

□台灣 □日本 □其它 _____

11.請列出其他客源之國籍：_____

12.旅客之海中經驗：

□ 已習水性 □ 初學者

13.是否有告知旅客生態保育的觀念：□ 是 □ 否

14.您用何種方式告知旅客生態保育的觀念： （請選項）

□ 交談/授課 □ 錄影帶 □ 手冊/傳單 □ 其它

15.您是否接受我們使利用英文的方式來授課

□ 是 □ 否

16.請在空白處填寫您寶貴的意見，以利本計劃的實施。而您的建議將使我們提供一個更好的生態環境給您及您的旅客。