

Action for Palau's future: 2009-2014 - The medium term development strategy

excerpt

5 Environment

5.1 Approach and Issues

Environment

Preserving *environmental values* while also *enabling development* to occur is a major challenge for Palau. Palau has a unique and diverse environment with great potential for tourism development. Preserving environmental values while also enabling development to occur is a major challenge for Palau. The key issues facing the environment and natural resources sector are:

- i. the lack of an overarching policy framework;
- ii. an outdated, inappropriate and cumbersome regulatory framework;
- iii. over-lapping and conflicting mandates and functions;
- iv. insufficient funding leading to difficulties in undertaking evaluation, review, monitoring, compliance, and enforcement activities; and
- v. ongoing tensions between state and national governments as to land and resource ownership and management and EQPB requirements.

Key issues to be addressed are: the need for an *overarching policy framework*, a *cumbersome regulatory framework*; *conflicting mandates*, *insufficient funding and national-state relationships*

The Environmental Management Action Plan identifies the goal for the environment and details key strategies and priority actions to achieve that goal over the next five years. It has been formulated following an extensive consultation process with major stakeholders.

5.2 Goal, Strategies and Actions

The **Goal for Environmental and Natural Resource Management** is: *To protect, conserve and manage the environment and natural resources of Palau, for present and future generations of Palauans, while providing for sustainable social, cultural and economic development.*

1. Legislation Strategy: Update, streamline and improve legislation and regulations Actions

Legislation and regulations will be *streamlined* and improved

- Review and where appropriate amend the EQPA and Regulations.
- Simplify procedures for permit applications and environmental assessments.
- Support states in establishing zoning regulations and building codes.

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2. Environmental Management Framework

Strategy: *Develop and strengthen the environmental management framework. Actions:*

Environment

An *overarching and consistent policy framework* will be put in place

- Complete the national policy and regulatory framework, clarify policies for each of the key sectors, and ensure integration of environmental management across all sectors.
- Implement land use management plans and zoning laws.
- Establish a plan for environmental response linked to the Disaster Management Plan.

3. Environmental Management Structure

Strategy: Clarify, simplify and strengthen the national environmental management structure. Actions:

The environmental management structure will be *simplified* and *strengthened*

- Clearly define roles and responsibilities of the different environmental functions within the Ministry of Natural Resources, Environment and Tourism, to avoid overlap.
- Review and revise the role, objectives, functions, governance, regulatory requirements and procedures of the EQPB to simplify and streamline requirements.
- Ensure appropriate staffing for key government agencies.

4. State-level Resource Management

Strategy: Improve state capacity for environmental management and facilitate better communication between national and state governments. Actions:

State *capacity problems* will be addressed

- Clearly define the role of, and support states in environmental management taking account of the capacity of each state.
- Fund adequate environmental compliance, engineering and land expertise as a shared resource for the states.
- Encourage states to work together with respect to transboundary resources such as with the Babeldaob Watershed Alliance.

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- Establish a regular formal forum for national and state governments for resource management and other policy issues.

Environment

5. Enforcement and compliance

Strategy: Improve enforcement, compliance and cooperation. Actions:

Enforcement and compliance issues will be addressed

- Retain independent process and agency (EQPB) with mandate for monitoring, compliance and enforcement.
- Strengthen enforcement capabilities.
- Improve cooperation between agencies and state government.
- Support Endangered Species programs.

6. Infrastructure and the Environment

Strategy: Improve infrastructure planning, management and maintenance to ensure sound environmental practices and conservation. Actions:

Environmental management policies will be *integrated into the plans and strategies of the infrastructure sector*

- Complete and implement energy policy including a comprehensive energy conservation program for all government facilities.
- Implement solid waste management strategy and identify areas at risk from climate change.
- Establish a comprehensive water conservation program.

7. Capacity and Funding

Strategy: Streamline functions, improve general capacity at all levels, ensure adequate funding and improve monitoring and evaluation. Actions:

Capacity and funding constraints will be addressed by a range of measures in the Environmental Management Action Plan

- Revising legislation, clarifying responsibilities, improving coordination and conservation measures as outlined in other strategies will help ease capacity and funding constraints.

- Support a community awareness program.

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- Allow EQPB to charge for water testing, inspections and other functions and retain the revenue.

- Ensure adequate funding for key agencies.

- Improve evaluation and monitoring of environmental impacts.

- EQPB to engage other agencies in the Environmental Assessment process.

8. Monitoring and Evaluation

Strategy: Improve collation of data and monitoring and evaluation capacity. Actions

- Improve evaluation, prioritization and monitoring techniques for environmental impacts in the evaluation of major investments.

- Ensure sector plans include appropriate environmental targets.

- EQPB to develop and implement procedures that involve other appropriate government agencies in the Environmental Assessment or Environmental Impact Statement review process.

- Establish relevant data bases and coordinate information flows.

5.3 Expected Outcomes

The *expected outcomes* from acceptance and effective implementation of the environmental policy and institutional reforms are essentially:

The expected outcomes are more integrated environmental, infrastructure and natural resource management and environmental laws more conducive to sustainable development

A more integrated approach to environmental management and infrastructure and natural resource development and use.

More appropriate, more streamlined environmental laws, regulations and development requirements.