

Manihiki gets clean water from raui deal

TWO weeks ago Manihiki's Tukao and Tauhunu villages began drinking clean, filtered water, thanks to a deal made with the nonprofit environmental organisation Seacology.

Mayor Kora Kora says Seacology representative Allan Tuara helped the island take advantage of one of the win-win situations that Seacology provides around the world.

The island has signed a deal with Seacology to keep a 72-acre area in the centre of the Manihiki lagoon as a raui (marine reserve) area for the next 30 years.

In exchange for pledging to continue the raui that has already been in place for years, the island was able to receive around \$8000 to purchase two UV water purification units and pump systems.

The systems, from Cook Islands Water Services in Rarotonga, will be attached to two large water tanks in the villages of Tukao and Tauhunu.

"As is common with small isolated communities, water is

of a major concern on Manihiki, where their only source of potable water is rainwater stored in tanks," says a media release from Seacology. "Due to prolonged periods of storage, this water can become contaminated and poses a health risk."

Kora says the island council is rapt about the funds going towards making clean water available to the population.

"School children in Tauhunu will be able to drink clean water everyday and the village will benefit by having clean water pumped to their homes," he says.

Kora says thanks go out to Tuara and former island secretary Arthur Neale as well as MP Apii Pihō for ensuring the project was completed as planned.

Seacology looks for situations where both the local environment is protected and the islanders receive some tangible benefit for their sacrifice. The organisation has projects in 46 countries and on 109 islands worldwide.

Its purpose is to preserve the highly endangered biodiversity of islands through the world.

Manihiki is not the first island to benefit here – Seacology has helped complete projects in four other islands.

In April Mitiaro had eight community water tanks renovated, received sixty 240 litre household waste bins, and had pathways built, in exchange for the set-up of a 2965 acre forest protected area for the next 10 years.

In 2007 Atiu was able to construct a community geriatric housing ward in exchange for the establishment of a 297 acre wildlife sanctuary on Takutea Island and a restricted fishing zone extending five miles from the island's shores. The term for the exchange is for a duration of 20 years.

Seacology's first project here started in 2001 when boardwalk platforms were built at Mangaia's Lake Tiriara in exchange for its protection.

■ Helen Greig



Students of Tauhunu's Ruamanu School are delighted to have clean water to drink everyday – thanks to the new pump and filter system installed at the public water tank at the school. 09111817