

Atiu leaders agree to Takutea sanctuary

Atiu island leaders last week signed an agreement with SeaCology, a non-profit American non-government organisation, to establish a 297-acre wildlife sanctuary on Takutea Island and a restricted fishing zone extending five miles from Takutea's shores for a period of 20 years.

In return for Atiu agreeing to turn Takutea into a wildlife sanctuary, SeaCology will pay for the construction of a community geriatric housing ward on the island to be built next to the hospital.

SeaCology will pay the total cost of building the geriatric ward, which is not to exceed \$23,980 (US\$16,857).

In 2004 when Aneru Tautu was mayor of Atiu, he revived the project, put together a committee and drew a plan that SeaCology offered to finance.

While the project will be community based, it will be co-ordinated by Ada Rongomatane

Ariki and Man Unuia to ensure the requirement is followed according to the funding agreement.

The ward once completed will be the first for an outer island and is primarily for the old people when they get sick.

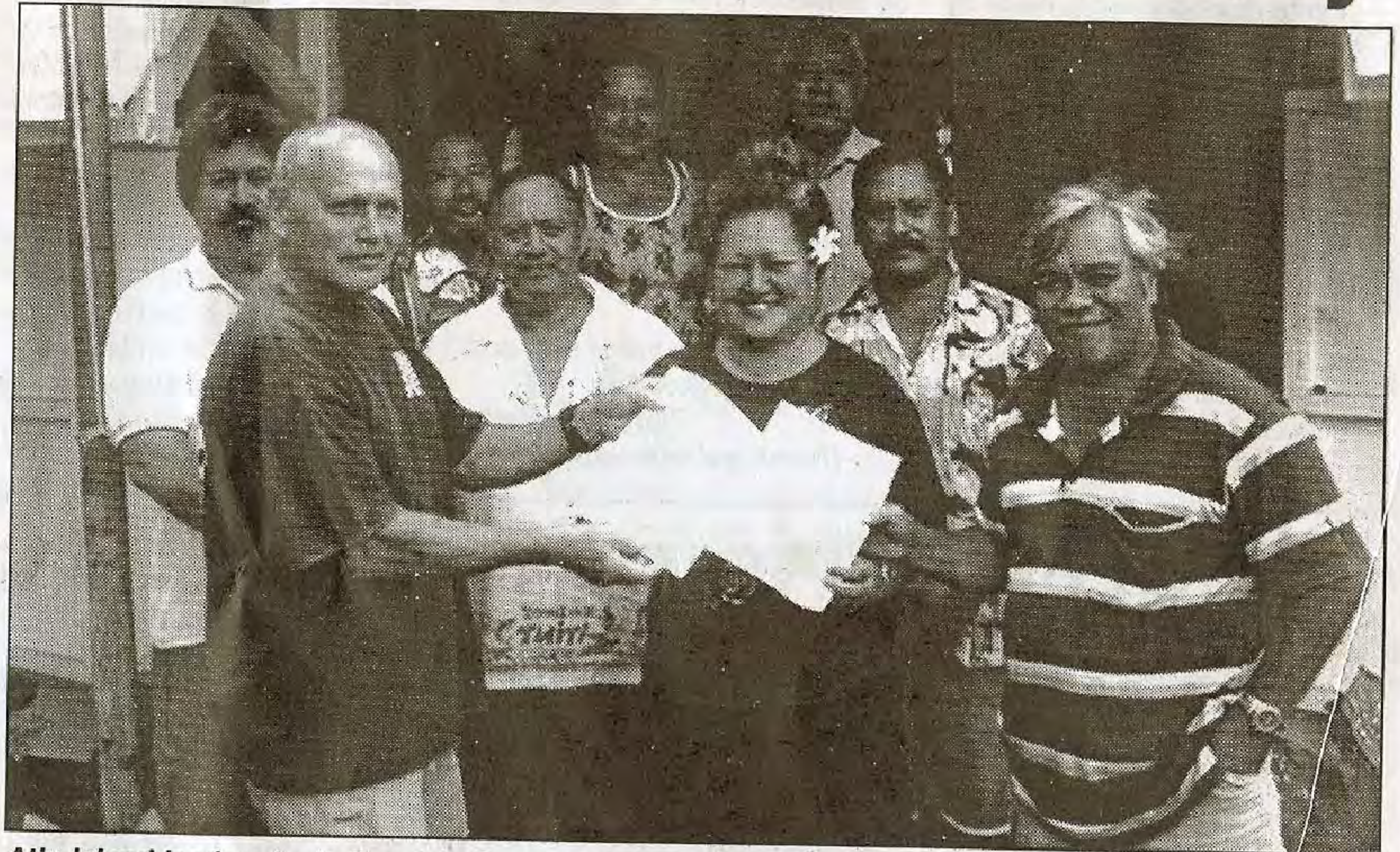
It is expected construction will start in May when the building materials arrive on the island.

The Takutea sanctuary and restricted fishing zone means that for 20 years nothing is permitted that changes the natural state of the terrestrial or marine area.

According to Unuia, this is the second project in the Cook Islands funded by SeaCology, which is represented by Allan Tuara.

The first project funded by SeaCology is on the island of Mangaia where a viewing platform on Te Vai Tiriara was constructed.

Atiu island leaders and people would like to thank Allan Tuara and the management of SeaCology for the grant. — Matariki Wilson



Atiu island leaders including Ada Rongomatane Ariki (centre) and Atiu's island secretary Man Unuia (right) with documents sealing their agreement with SeaCology to establish Takutea Island as a wildlife sanctuary in return for a grant to build a geriatric ward. 07031907