

Seacology at work on Mangaia and Atiu

The Cook Islands is one of many Pacific nations which have benefited from the Seacology Foundation.

Allan Tuara of Mangaia, the Cook Islands Seacology representative, says the organisation does relatively small but highly significant projects in the Pacific, including two in the Cook Islands.

Seacology is a small Berkeley, California based non-profit organisation that exclusively supports projects that help preserve island ecosystems and cultures throughout the world.

Any island, and village, is eligible for funding consideration as long as it can guarantee the environmental conservation 'trade-off' which is the recipient's required contribution. Seacology grants are in the US\$2000 to US\$35,000 range and are proportional to the recipient's environmental guarantee.

For example, Seacology built a school in a Samoan village in return for the chiefs signing an agreement protecting their rainforest for 50 years. In Fiji, Seacology funded the construction of several community centres in exchange for the establishment of marine and rainforest 'no-take' reserves. In Mangaia Seacology built viewing

platforms at Lake Tiriara in return for the village chiefs signing a covenant to protect the wildlife of the lake and surrounding wetland.

This year, Seacology is building a geriatric ward on Atiu in exchange for the Atiu community signing an agreement protecting the environment of Takutea Island for 20 years.

This year Seacology is funding ten projects in the Pacific to a total value of US\$145,000.

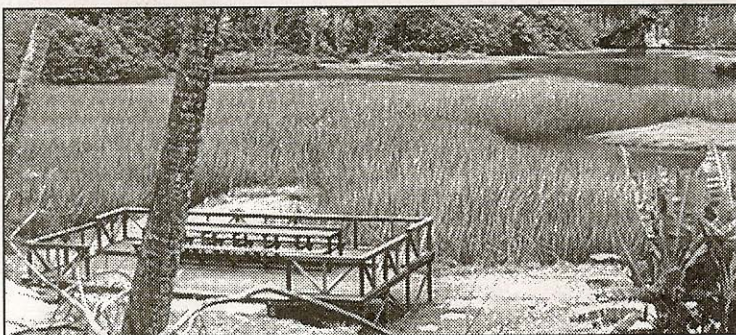
The foundation is also interested in supporting village based cultural and micro-enterprises that can provide needed income for indigenous islanders and are good for the environment.

Today, island ecosystems and cultures are threatened as never before

and due to their small populations and limited economies, most islands are not able to resist pressures from outside development.

Too often islanders around the world are told that they should make financial sacrifices on behalf of the environment and receive nothing in return.

Seacology searches for win-win situations where both the local environment is protected and the islanders receive some tangible benefit for doing so. It is with this intention the Seacology Foundation was founded by world-renowned ethno botanist Dr Paul Alan Cox whose work with islands and islanders has been covered in TIME, National Geographic and Islands magazines. — *Allan Tuara*



A viewing platform at Lake Tiriara in Mangaia, which was built by the Seacology Foundation. 07032311