

Nahtik MPA

Nahtik Marine Sanctuary is nestled between the Enipein Mangrove Reserve (Enipein Marine Park) and a barrier reef at the southern tip of Pohnpei State, Federated States of Micronesia (FSM). Its main features are a small islet and fringing reef that serve as a seabird nesting area and nursery for several reef fish species, including hump head parrotfish and Napoleon wrasse, turtles, and sharks.



Humphead parrotfish

Whitespotted bamboo shark

The four villages of Mwoakot, Soamwoai, Enipein Powe, and Enipein Pah, collectively known as the Woaun Koapin Soamwoai (WKS), have enjoyed the rich natural resources from this area for generations. Their traditional management system was an intricate ridge-to-reef approach that strictly governed all clans' behavior to ensure their natural and cultural heritage.

The WKS mobilized in 1995 to establish a Community Action Plan that would guide the management of Nahtik as a traditionally significant marine area. By 2001, the WKS had designated 0.29 mi² (185 acres) as a marine protected area. The first community-led MPA added to the Marine Sanctuary and Wildlife Refuge Act, thereby establishing eleven “no-take” zones across Pohnpei, FSM. Traditional management systems did not rely on spatial demarcations as indigenous island peoples considered protection comprehensively. However, modern shifts in behavior, limited resources, and legal regimes' adoption have resulted in the need for MPAs and appropriate guidelines for managing the sanctuary's natural biodiversity.

In 2003, the WKS leaders, with support from OneReef partner, the Conservation Society of Pohnpei (CSP), joined the Locally Managed Marine Area (LMMA) Network and developed a new

CPA (Community Partnership Agreement). The 2003 CPA established a team of appointed Community Conservation Officers led by Chairman Emilio Eperiam to help sustain Nahtik's natural resources for community subsistence and other livelihood sources.



Group photo of WKS CCO's with CSP and OneReef. Photo by Wayne Andrew.

The new CPA included a fish monitoring program to help assess their conservation efforts' effectiveness. In 2015, the WKS leaders pursued a more comprehensive management approach that followed their traditional ridge-to-reef

governing system. OneReef, Conservation Society of Pohnpei, and other regional partners collaborated to support a participatory planning process with the WKS communities to develop their first long-term management plan. This five-year management plan (2015-2020) incorporated elements of traditional marine resource management with modern science through partnerships with local resource management agencies to protect Nahtik Marine Sanctuary's natural biodiversity, Watershed Forest Reserve, and Enipein Mangrove Reserve, also known as Enipein Marine Park. Officially, the WKS leaders formalized their partnership with OneReef in October 2020 through a Community Partnership Agreement that leverages their traditional stewardship knowledge and practices with global contributions from conservation investors and innovations from international coral reef scientists.