

From the Marshall Islands Journal Friday, August 19, 2005



Five atolls work with college on pearl project

The College of the Marshall Islands Land Grant program dean Diane Myazoe and pearl oyster specialists Rand Dybdahl and Manoj Nair met with officials from Bikini, Ebon, Likiep, Maloelap and Rongelap earlier this month to discuss the development of pearl farming in these atolls.

A two-month training on hatchery and pearl farming techniques began on Monday this week at the CMI Arrak campus. As a first step, the trainees representing these five atolls will be trained in both hatchery and nursery grow-out of black-lip pearl oyster spat (baby pearl oysters) and juveniles at the CMI Arrak campus.

At the end of the training, these trainees will go back to their respective atolls to set up and oversee a small community based pearl farm, according to Myazoe.

Technical support for this project, which is jointly funded by United States Department of Agriculture Cooperative State Research Education and Extension Service (USDA-CSREES), United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and Rongelap Atoll Local government will be provided by Dybdahl, who is a pearl oyster hatchery and farming extension specialist and Nair, a CMI aquaculture researcher.

The project in the first phase aims to grow-out hatchery-produced pearl oyster spat and juveniles in these atolls and to find out their growth and survival characteristics. At the end of the project period, these surviving pearl oysters will be available for sale for any

interested parties thereby generating some alternative income.

A follow up phase depends on the results of this pilot program as well as funding, and may look into the possibility of conducting some pearl seeding in these surviving oysters to test their quality in pearl production, Myazoe said.