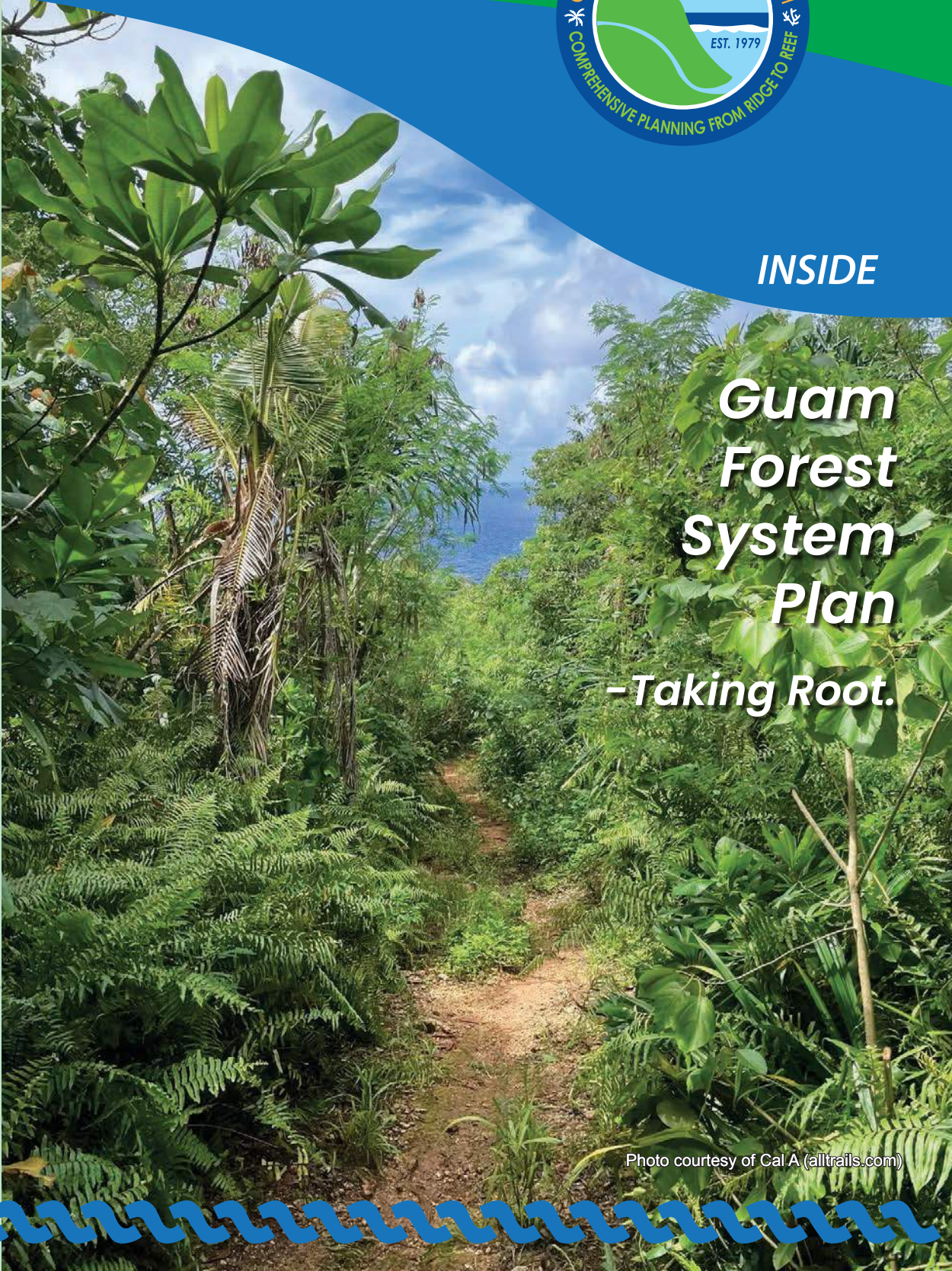


Man, Land, & Sea

A publication by Guam Coastal Management Program

August 30, 2024



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Guam Forest System Plan – Taking Root.

Photo courtesy of Cal A (alltrails.com)



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*Protecting Guam
from Ridge to Reef*





GUAM FOREST SYSTEM PLAN SUMMIT

The Guam Department of Agriculture and the Bureau of Statistics and Plans, Guam Coastal Management Program, in partnership with the University of Guam Center for Island Sustainability & Sea Grant, held the Guam Forest System Plan (GFSP) Summit on Thursday, June 20, 2024, at the Hyatt Regency Guam, bringing together key personnel from GovGuam natural resource agencies, stakeholders, and community members to address the critical issues surrounding Guam’s forest ecosystems. A total of 84 attendees participated in the summit sessions that focused on exploring opportunities for collaboration to meet the goals and objectives identified within the GFSP.

The Summit kicked off with the Guam Department of Agriculture Director, Chelsa Muna, expressing her excitement for the agenda and all the discussions planned. Director Muna remarked, “This brings us one step closer to the realization of this plan by the whole government of Guam, and this plan will touch all of our lives by one form or facet by serving to protect that which we hold most dear to us, our culture and our natural resources, our land, our heritage, and all that we will leave our children comes together with this Guam Forest System Plan.”



During her opening remarks, Governor Lourdes A. Leon Guerrero provided a heartfelt address that underscored the importance of preserving the island’s natural resources. Drawing inspiration from her parents’ teachings to “respect the h̄alom t̄ano,” or the land, Governor Leon Guerrero emphasized the deep connection between Guam’s people and their forests. “Our forests provide us with a wealth of resources to sustain our lives,” she stated. “Our ancestors thrived on the land, growing their food and fishing in our waters. They were resilient and

strong, just as we are today.” Governor Leon Guerrero acknowledged the complexities of balancing progress and development with environmental preservation. “How do we tie these two together and still preserve our lands and natural resources?” she asked. “How do we prosper while conserving? How do we expand and grow while maintaining our ecosystem?” She emphasized the need for collaboration and innovation to address these challenges. “We need your ideas and expertise,” she told the summit attendees. “Together, we can find ways to sustain our forests for future generations.”

A panel session on watershed management emphasized the importance of protecting Guam’s water resources and the role of forests in regulating water flow, preventing erosion, and maintaining water quality. The panel discussions addressed various aspects of water quality standards, management plans, and initiatives aimed at protecting and enhancing water resources in Guam. Key points included the necessity of comprehensive water resource management, specific conservation efforts, the importance of stakeholder collaboration, environmental compliance costs, and the connections between water resource management and forest conservation. The need for detailed watershed maps, capacity building, and creating internship opportunities to bolster conservation efforts was also discussed.

Experts from various organizations discussed recommendations for the sustainability of the forest system, covering topics such as forest and open space management practices, wildfire prevention and suppression, bio security and invasive species control, and the looking at how the Guam Endangered Species Act (ESA) requirements can complement the federal ESA requirements with the Guam Habitat Conservation Plan.

Among the participants of the summit were representatives from the Guam Preservation Trust who provided a presentation on the utility of the GFSP in preserving Guam’s cultural and historical resources, taking a close look at the value of resources in proposed areas as heritage preserves.

To provide participants with an overview of the procedures and protocols for the discovery or presence of historic artifacts, Patrick Lujan, Guam State Historic Preservation



Officer, discussed local and federal statutes, a local overview and permitting process, archaeological work on private land, and federally-funded projects.

Also highlighted were opportunities for collaboration and maximizing available federal resources. Carly Champaco Munoz from the Guam Coastal Management Program discussed several identified opportunities for capacity building in terrestrial conservation and Jay Doronila from the USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service also provided a presentation on how the resources and support available through their programs could greatly support implementation of the GFSP.

Public access to Guam's forests was also a key focus of the summit with a panel discussion led by Joseph Borja, Director of Department of Land Management, and panelist that included Glenn Eay from the Chamorro Land Trust Commission, Fran Castro from UOG SeaGrant, Inaláhan Mayor Anthony Chargualaf, and Megan Vosltead from the Guam Department of Agriculture, Division of Aquatic and Wildlife Resources. The discussion centered on strategies to increase and diversify public access to identified areas while minimizing impacts on sensitive resources and cultural sites. Panelists also discussed ways to create sustainable trail systems and promote the local economy and environmental education.

Discussions at the summit also addressed the economic potential of Guam's forests, exploring ideas for sustainable local forestry products and services, such as traditional herbal medicine, timber production, charcoal, and ecotourism, to name a few.

To present on some of the successful ongoing community forestry projects, recipients of the Fina'maolek sub-grant shared the results of their initiatives, highlighting key milestones and achievements in their respective projects. Barbara Burkhardt, from Kurason I Sengsong and Island Girl Power, provided a presentation on the 11 acre nature park that they have maintained with the community since 2014, for the purpose of creating a safe space for the community and a learning environment for our youth. Chauntae Quichocho, project manager at Guma Yo'Amte, House of Traditional Healing, discussed how their project, Hatdin Amot para Faneyek, increased the community's awareness of traditional healing, through hosting community planting events, amot demonstrations, and participating at various outreach events at schools, fairs and conferences. Cynthia Cabot, Executive Director of Guam Coalition Against Sexual Assault and Family Violence, shared the process of implementing their project of creating a healing garden and wellness path at the Hatdin Hinemlo in Dededo.

The Guam Forest System Plan Summit was a significant milestone in the effort to protect and conserve Guam's forests. The summit provided a platform for collaboration, knowledge sharing, and the development of a comprehensive plan for managing Guam's forest resources. The outcomes of the summit will inform the ongoing development of the Guam Forest System Plan, which will provide a framework for guiding future forest management activities on the island.



By Rob Ady, Fellow, Guam Coastal Management Program



History

On November 22, 2011, Bill No. 382-31 (COR) was introduced by Senator Aline Yamashita, which called for "AN ACT RELATIVE TO ESTABLISHING THE GUAM FOREST SYSTEM." The intent of the bill was to establish the Guam Forest System, which would assist the Guam Department of Agriculture in its mission, by providing a plan to bring the Guam Department of Agriculture and all partners and stakeholders to the table to create an inventory of land that would help in coordinating efforts to leverage these resources and determine the best compatible uses within the Guam Forest System. The bill was then passed by the Guam Legislature on January 20, 2012 and signed into law by Governor Eddie Calvo on February 3, 2012 as the Guam Forest Legacy Act (Public Law No. 31-173). With the Guam Forest Legacy Act signed into law, there was now a formalized commitment of the Government of Guam for the protection and sustainable management of the island's forest for public benefit. Although the Act did not include an appropriation for the new mandate, the Department of Agriculture through its authorities established under the Guam Forest Legacy Act and with strong collaboration with the Bureau of Statistics and Plans through our centralized planning authority, worked to facilitate harmonized planning by ensuring the Guam Forest System Plan is consistent with requirements of the Guam Forest Legacy Act, the Guam Comprehensive Development Plan, and statutory authorities under both agencies' purview to achieve a robust forest system and long-term vibrancies for the maintenance and enhancement of the Guam Forest System.



What is the Guam Forest System Plan?

The Guam Forest System Plan is a guiding document that outlines Guam's goals for protecting and managing precious forest resources and how to achieve those goals to ensure these resources are sustained for future generations.



What are three important elements of the plan we want the public to know?

The most important element is the inventory, as it identifies all the areas of land where implementation of the plan takes place. This element also requires the most effort as it comprises over 100 individual parcels and includes information for each of those parcels such as lot number, size and location for proposed potential use in the system. The inventory will continue to grow as more land research is done to identify areas compatible for inclusion in the Guam Forest System, to include public and private owned properties.

Another very important component of the plan is proposals for collaborations with entities within the government of Guam, or non-governmental organizations for the planning, enhancement and sustainability of the System. Without appropriations to fund the development and implementation of the Guam Forest System Plan, it is crucial for collaboration amongst government and non-government entities to leverage their available resources to effectively address the task at hand.

Also a very important element is the proposals for land use, as it addresses the need to provide a balance between all the compatible uses that may conflict or compete with another, while also having the potential to provide solutions to challenges in managing and sustaining the forest system.



FINA'MAOLEK SUBGRANT PROGRAM

By Rob Ady, Fellow, Guam Coastal Management Program



A new way to fund the enhancement of Guam's urban forests is up and running on the island. Fina'maolek Subgrant Program is offering microgrants ranging from \$500-\$10,000 to projects aimed at revitalizing and improving the island's green spaces. Many different groups of people are eligible to apply from private individuals and places of worship to non-profit organizations and schools. The Program is funded by the U.S. Forestry Service and is accepting proposals for projects in 4 different categories: tree planting, tropical urban forestry professional training, forestry technology tools, and education and outreach projects. 4 grants have already been awarded and two of those projects will be featured in this article: The Kurason i Sengsong Nature Park and a healing garden operated by the Guam Coalition Against Sexual Assault and Family Violence.





Kurason i Sengsong Nature Park

Kurason i Sengsong received the \$6,288 grant to restore 11 acres of jungle that abuts their property in Dededu. Over the years, many invasive plant species have their way into this plot and have grown wild. While these invasive species may be beautiful and even bear fruit, they are not adapted to grow with our native ecosystem and often harm or outcompete our endemic plants. The dok dok is one such endemic plant that Kurason i Sengsong seeks to feature in the new nature park. Compared to the seedless breadfruit, dok dok is seeded but is endemic to Guam and its high wind tolerance make it good at surviving Guam's typhoons.

The grant allowed them to purchase tools such as chainsaws and branch pruners to clear away debris leftover from Typhoon Mawar. Kurason i Sengsong also used the money for training to use digital tree mapping as well as the equipment needed to do the mapping. Treeplotter is a website that uses google maps to plot trees and tree information into an online database. Eventually, they intend to use that training and tools to map trees not only in the community garden and the forest, but also in the surrounding village. Kurason i Sengsong also used the money to purchase saplings of native trees and tree planting supplies.



Aside from the goals outlined in their grant application, community interest was spurred by the planting events with more than 500 volunteer hours logged since October 2023

In the future, Kurason i Sengsong would like to build a main entrance and trail to the park. In the next round of grants they hope to secure funding to build a temporary structure deeper into the park that would collect rainwater

for irrigation. They also need signage for future trails. After the grant funded tree plantings, Kurason i Sengsong will lead volunteers into the forest once a month. Interested individuals and organizations can text Juanita Blaz at 671-688-4752

Inetnon Yo'ámte - Guam Coalition Against Sexual Assault and Family Violence

One day in July, 2023, Cynthia Cabot, director of Guam Coalition Against Sexual Assault and Family Violence (GCASFV), was out for a stroll at the newly built medical arts center in Dededu. She was touring the facility with the owner when the suggestion was raised "this would be a great place for a garden." Cabot tucked that idea in the back of her mind and when the opportunity to apply for a microgrant with the program, she had the perfect place in mind. "With some victims of violence, they can be removed from the situation in order to begin healing. But with victims of sexual violence, they need a space to begin healing within themselves." says Cabot. The Hatdin Hinemlo would provide that healing space. Saplings of native plants are thriving along the paths of the garden along with other beautiful ornamentals afford patrons a place to meditate and heal. Because of their partnership with the Department of Agriculture and the Fina'maolek program, they were able to purchase plants as well as tools to populate the garden. In concert with their network of community partners such as schools i.e. Tiyan High School, George Washington High School, and St. John's School and other organizations like members of the United States Air Force medical team and the Golden Army (staff and volunteers from the office of Senator Roy A.B. Quinata), the garden was planted in short order.

Cabot and the coalition understood that some of the public might not be interested in making the trip or might be unaware of all the garden had to offer. In light of this, GCASFV offered members of the public a chance to be a part of the garden itself. At the Coalition's outreach events attendees were given river rocks to paint and decorate. These river rocks became a part of the walking path in the garden in the hopes that playing their own part in the beautification of the garden would encourage members of the public to come and enjoy the Hatdin Hinemlo.

While working to plant and maintain the garden, one volunteer who had survived cancer was heard remarking "I can't wait to come here and spend time."



CASTING A VISION OF THE GUAM FOREST SYSTEM PLAN

By Rob Ady, Fellow, Guam Coastal Management Program

Creating a unified system of forests from every village consisting of more than 100 parcels of land from departments across the Government of Guam is a grand vision. It will require close collaboration between agencies as well as big dreams. The Guam Coastal Management Program spoke with several of the experts in attendance to hear and share with the public their thoughts, hopes, and dreams for the Guam Forest System Plan



Chelsa Muna

Director, Department of Agriculture

"Thousands of little farms around the island." This is how Muna-Brecht responded when asked about the future Guam would be like if the Forest System Plan came to fruition as she hopes it will. She envisions the Forest System providing myriad plots of land as space where members of the community would be encouraged to grow their own food. "In 40 years, what will the jungle sound like?" asks Rob Ady of Guam Coastal Management. "I'm hoping there are more fruit bats, so you'll hear high-pitched screeching." laughs Muna-Brecht. She imagines a Forest System where the sounds of our native birds can be heard once again because there are fewer invasive predators and the birds have plentiful habitat to grow and thrive.



Christopher A. Rosario

State Entomologist, State Plant Regulatory Official, State Apiary Inspector, Biosecurity Division, Department of Agriculture

Rosario wears many hats in his position in the Department of Agriculture. At the summit, he could be heard reminding the attendees and the public to keep pests in mind when developing the land and importing the products that may require. When we spoke about the future of Guam forests, he talked about appreciating what natural resources we have now without the impact of further invasive species. During his presentation, he highlighted the importance of the public as the eyes and ears of the department when it comes to detecting pests that arrive on the island. Finally, he hopes the Forest System Plan will serve to cultivate the next generation of scientists and entomologists on the island.



Jeffrey S. Quitigua

Program Coordinator, Technical Guidance, Division of Aquatic and Wildlife Resources, Department of Agriculture

It is Quitigua's hope that because of the Forest System, Guam will be able to emulate what he has seen in other countries where the natural beauty and resources of our island will be an integral part of the development of Guåhan. He acknowledges the need for development, but stresses the need to be creative in that process in order to preserve the natural resources that we have.





Ajalyn Omelau

Forester II, Cooperative Fire Protection Program Manager Forestry Soil Resource Division, Department of Agriculture

Ajalyn is currently working on the Cooperative Fire Program for the Department of Agriculture. One aspect of that work is fire prevention education where she visits schools to educate students about fire prevention. She also goes out with fire prevention crews to dig soil and remove vegetation to create fire breaks at their plantation sites. Fire breaks are manmade breaks in the brush and vegetation of an area that help to slow the spread of a wildfire. "Oh, man! It's really hard work!" remarked Ajalyn when asked what it was like working in the field to create firebreaks. She reflects that she has learned a lot in fire prevention and because she lived in the central part of the island did not often think about wildfires and their prevention.

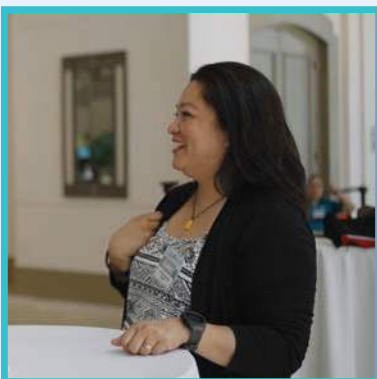
She hopes that because of the Guam Forest System Plan there will be increased communication and collaboration between GovGuam agencies to achieve the goals of the community wildfire protection plan and prepare the community to prevent fires as well as respond to them. She exhorts the public to come out to community meetings to share how they are being impacted by wildfire in their villages.



Megan Volsteadt

Biologist, Department of Agriculture

Megan's dream for the Forest of the Future is "restoring Guam to what it used to be... native birds, native forests." She believes this can be achieved in part by responsible development. Relative to her work at the Department of Agriculture, Megan hopes the Forest System Plan will include a dedicated area for hunting game. She hopes that this will not be the only place the hunters can find their quarry, but that it will be a place where all hunters on Guam know that they can go to hunt safely and legally. Hopefully, this clarity and access, in addition to the work Volsteadt is doing, will bring up the next generation of farmers who provide food for their community thus increasing food security on the island.



Christine Camacho Fejeran

Chief, Division of Forestry and Soil Resources, Department of Agriculture

Christine Camacho Fejeran laid out her dream for one of the parcels in the Forest System, called Tåguan. She imagines that parcel as a forest with abundant native, pristine forest on its interior. However, at the perimeter, plants for åmot will be growing. Because they're growing at the perimeter, Fejeran imagines that the community will take ownership of the cultivation of those plants. Additionally, the near presence of the åmot plants, will promote the learning of the identification and usage of these plants, reviving and spreading our traditional way of healing for future generations.



**Man, Land, and Sea
Newsletter
August 30, 2024**

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The Man, Land and Sea newsletter is funded by a grant from the U.S. Department of Commerce, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) through the Coastal Zone Management Act of 1972, as amended, administered by the Office for Coastal Management and the Guam Coastal Management Program (GCMP) of the Bureau of Statistics and Plans, Government of Guam through Cooperative Agreement Award NA23NOS4190251
<https://bsp.guam.gov/guam-coastal-management-program/>

**Organizing
a Beach
Cleanup?
We can help!**

Contact the Guam Coastal Management Program and get connected with other volunteers and supplies.
Call 671-475-9647
or email
gcmp@bsp.guam.gov
for more information.
*limited supplies available per cleanup event.



REGISTER NOW

**6:00AM - 9:00AM
ISLANDWIDE**

**10:00AM - 4:00PM
YPAO BEACH**

TWO EVENTS / ONE DAY

09 | 21 | 2024 SATURDAY
www.sandfestguam.com

For More Information, Please Contact:

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Sponsored by NOAA Grant #NA21NOS4190154

