

Sandwatch Workshop in Fiji, December 2005

By Gillian Cambers



Background

Live and Learn Environmental Education Inc. have prepared and received funding (FJ\$ 314,000) from Vodaphone ATH Fiji Foundation for a proposal to establish a River Care network in Viti Levu in Fiji 2006-2008. This proposal builds on previous River Care activities, which started in 2001 and have involved more than 50 schools. It spans a 3-year period and will start at the beginning of 2006. The proposal will provide for the establishment of a school and community River Care network in the largest island of the Fijian archipelago, as well as the preparation of educational materials. It will also provide an opportunity to prioritise, identify lessons learnt and evaluate the sustainability of the activity. The Ministry of Education, through the Curriculum Development Unit, is a key partner in this activity, and in fact there is a Memorandum of Understanding between Live and Learn and the Ministry of Education regarding the River Care project.

One of the components of this project is to integrate coastal monitoring into the River Care Project using the Sandwatch process with coastal River Care schools and community groups without direct access to a river. Live and Learn plan to start Sandwatch in five secondary schools and at least one community, yet to be selected from the Suva and Coral Coast areas. During previous River Care activities, some schools had expressed an interest in working on beaches.

A workshop was conducted in December 2005, supported by UNESCO Apia Office and the Coasts and Small Islands initiative, to provide training for the Live and Learn staff in Sandwatch activities and methods.

Sandwatch Training Workshop

A workshop was conducted at the Live and Learn Office in Suva, Fiji from 8-9 December 2005. The beach practical work was conducted at Suva Point, a very popular, yet heavily polluted beach near the capital city, Suva.

Eight persons were trained in Sandwatch monitoring, seven from Live and Learn, and one other NGO also participated. (The Ministry of the Education was invited to the workshop, but due to end-of-year activities were unable to send a participant).

The two-day workshop focused on providing a thorough background to Sandwatch, describing and discussing the techniques, and then practising them on the beach. The programme for the workshop is included in Annex 1 and some photographs are included in Annex 2.

The participants eagerly embraced the Sandwatch methods, finding them quite simple and straightforward to use, and indeed found that some of them very similar to River Care methods. In particular, it was interesting to see that the water quality kits used in River Care were almost identical to those used in Sandwatch - with one small difference in that the Sandwatch kits tested brackish water and the River Care ones were for fresh water – however, both kits were produced by the same company.

It was noted that many of the Sandwatch topics were also taught in geography and social studies classes in the Fiji secondary school system (in forms 5-7), and this may help with introducing Sandwatch to Fiji.

In the past River Care had used a similar approach to Sandwatch in using schools as an entry point for communities. However, they had found that some communities were very interested in rivers and water quality, and so were considering the reverse approach with communities being the entry point for schools. This is certainly an interesting area to explore, also for Sandwatch.

Annex 1 Workshop Programme

Sandwatch Workshop
7 – 8 December 2005
Live and Learn Environmental Education Inc.
Suva, Fiji

Expected Outcomes

- (1) Participants trained in the Sandwatch methodology and equipped to start a Sandwatch programme in Fiji 2006-7
- (2) Activities to apply River Care and Sandwatch approaches to other ecosystems discussed

Programme

Wednesday 7 December 2005: Opening; Setting the Framework of Education for Sustainable Development; Discussion and Practice of Sandwatch Procedures (1)

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| 9am | Workshop Opening
Outline of the workshop programme
What is Sandwatch? Background

Sandwatch Procedures – Session 1 - Concepts
Observation and recording
Beach changes – erosion and accretion
Beach composition
Waves and currents |
| 12.30 | Lunch |
| 13.30 | Sandwatch Procedures - Session 1 – Beach Practice
Analysis of results, Discussion of findings |

Thursday 8 December 2005: Sandwatch and Community Action; Discussion and Practice of Sandwatch Procedures (2); Ways forward

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| 8.30 | Sandwatch procedures – Session 2 – Concepts
Beach users
Beach debris
Water quality
Plants and animals
Sandwatch Procedures – Session 2 – Beach Practice
Analysis of results, Discussion of findings |
| 12.30 | Lunch |
| 13.30 | Community involvement in Sandwatch: Results of the UNESCO Community Sandwatch Competition September 2004 – May 2005
Starting Sandwatch in Fiji - Discussion
Expanding Sandwatch in the Pacific - Discussion
Expanding River Care in Caribbean – Discussion
Closing |

Annex 2 Photographs from the Workshop



Recording beach observations, Suva Point, December 2005



Measuring beach width, Suva Point, December 2005



Measuring longshore currents, Suva Point, December 2005



Collecting sand samples, Suva Point, December 2005



Testing water quality, Suva Point, December 2005



Measuring wave height, Suva Point, December 2005