



**PACIFIC GIS AND  
REMOTE SENSING COUNCIL**



**Pacific Islands GIS and RS User Conference 2017**

**Version 28.02.18**

**Pacific GIS and Remote Sensing Council,  
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# 1 Overview

The Pacific GIS and Remote Sensing Council (PGRSC) was established to oversee the activities of the Pacific Islands Annual GIS & RS User Conference and in response to the need to outsource the conference administration and procurement processes outside of SPC.

The Council's board members, constitution and all institutional arrangements were achieved within a limited time frame as it was paramount for the council to open a bank account that will accommodate all funds directed towards the logistics and activities of the GIS & RS User Conference.

This document briefly describes the role and purpose of the PGRSC. More detailed information such as the Council's constitution can be downloaded from the PGRSC website.

## 2 Purpose

The constitution states five objectives of the Council:

1. To promote the development of GIS and Remote Sensing (RS) data, technologies, methods and services for the pacific region;
2. To enable collaboration and share lessons learnt across regional agencies and commercial parties;
3. To discuss and establish methods in building adaptation for the Pacific environment for solutions working already well outside the region;
4. To manage the distribution, publication and awareness of conference outcomes;
5. To establish robust links with other GIS, RS and scientific bodies regionally and globally.

The Council was initially established to oversee the 2017 GIS&RS User Conference and was later recognised as a body that could promote and help support further developments of GIS & RS tools in the region.

## 3 The Structure of the Council

The Council will hold a minimum of three Trustees and five Board Members besides the GIS & RS Conference Committee.



PS Malakai Finau

### 3.1 The Trustees

The Trustees are the guardians of the Council and are accountable for the organisation. These are persons who are familiar with the objectives of the Council. The three Trustees are:

Permanent Secretary Lands and Mineral Resources **Malakai Finau**. Malakai Finau is also Chair of the STAR conference<sup>1</sup> and Chair of the Fiji Geospatial Information Management Council<sup>1</sup>. Mr. Finau therefore serves as a link to both Pacific decision making

<sup>1</sup> Detailed description in chapter Links to Other Organisations.

bodies. Malakai Finau was also the former Director of the Fiji Mineral Resources Department, an organisation that has over the years, worked closely with the GIS and RS conference and community.



Dr. Russell Howorth

**Dr. Russell Howorth** worked many years at SOPAC<sup>2</sup> (now the Geoscience, Energy, and Maritime Division of SPC) and at the end of his term served as the Director. SOPAC was the leading Pacific organisation regarding GIS and RS. He is still Director of the Circum-Pacific Council<sup>3</sup>. Dr Russell Howorth is also a trustee of STAR.

**Rajendra Singh** comes with extensive experience in Education and Training. He served Ministry of Education at various levels up to Director of Primary Education in Fiji. He also worked for FNU and USP. He served voluntary organisations at leadership levels. He is an author and publisher. His exemplary contribution towards education and the community at large culminated in his appointment as a Commissioner for Oaths and received Member of the Order of Fiji Award.



Rajendra Singh

## 3.2 The Board

The Board of PGRSC makes far-reaching and all financial decisions. To have a Board is a requirement for a Council in Fiji. The current board members are:

- Wolf Forstreuter (Chair), SPC
- Leba Gaunavinaka, Lands Department
- Litia Volau Gaunavou, SPC
- Akosita Lewai, Forestry Department
- Keleni Raqisia, SPC
- Sachindra Singh, SPC
- Amrit Raj, USP (will be replaced)
- Salote N. Viti, Lands Department

## 3.3 The Committee

The PGRSC Committee is the most active arm of the Council and meets every two weeks. Most decisions and activities are made and carried out by the Committee members. The current Committee members are:

- |                       |  |
|-----------------------|--|
| • Amrit Raj, USP      | • Filimoni Yaya, SPC                       |
| • Anare Motokula, SPC | • Hirdeshni Gautam, SPC                    |
| • Carrol Chan, SPC    | • Ilaisa Senikuraciri, Forestry Department |

<sup>2</sup> SOPAC = Secretariat of Pacific Applied Geoscience Commission later integrated in SPC

<sup>3</sup> Detailed description in chapter Links to Other Organisations.

- Ilisanaias (Koroi) Koroigasagasa, Forestry Department
- Kataebati Bataua, SPC
- Keleni Raqisia, SPC
- Lanietta Rokotuiwakaya, SPC
- Leba Gaunavinaka, Lands Department
- Litia Volau Gaunavou, SPC
- Malakai Vakautawale, SPC
- Moria Duribalavu Gaunavou, SPC
- Naomi Jackson, SPC
- Navneet Lal, SPC
- Sachindra Singh, SPC
- Salote N. Viti, Lands Department
- Seini Nabou, Consultant
- Sereima Kalouniviti, SPC
- Wolf Forstreuter, SPC.

All Council Board members are members of the Committee as well, however not all committee members are part of the board.

## 4 History of the Council

The Pacific Islands GIS&RS User Conference 2017 prompted the establishment of the Pacific GIS and Remote Sensing Council as explained above. However, the annual Conference results in the outcomes of the monthly GIS&RS User Groups.

### 4.1 The Fiji GIS&RS User Groups

In 1991 the Management Services Division of the Forestry Department (MSD-Forestry) established together with the Fiji Land Information Support Centre (FLIS) monthly GIS and Remote Sensing User Group Meetings. The first meeting was conducted in Colo-i-Suva, at the MSD-Forestry. These meetings attracted a number of organisations with the idea to establish a GIS within their sectors. Meetings were held the first Tuesday every month at a different location to experience the working environment of various GIS users. The purpose was to (i) avoid duplication of work and to share data instead of re-producing, (ii) to share knowledge especially when methods required adaptation to Pacific environment, (iii) to enhance personal contacts which simplifies data exchange. The format was as informal as possible to encourage inexperienced GIS users to talk. The meetings has a fixed structure, all institutions present



Fiji GIS&RS User Group Meeting, 1993 in Fiji Forestry Department. Jo Wakolo is explaining the need of raster based GIS for forest applications.

introduce themselves, explain what they had carried out during the last four weeks and what they intend to do during the next month. This was followed by short presentations explaining new applications, software or hardware. Very soon the Fiji Government formed a Fiji Land Information Council with members of different Government institutions, which always met one day after the informal GIS&RS User Meeting to get the information discussed in the informal meeting.

## 4.2 The Fiji Annual GIS&RS User Conference

In 1998 USP, under the guidance of James Britton, approached the Fiji Lands Department to jointly conduct a two day National Conference, which was then extended to a 3 day conference in 1999. In 1999 the first participants were from outside of Fiji. The first poster competition was conducted in 2001, and has since been an integral activity of the platform. The first companies moved in, in 2003, with the arrival of image vendors. In the same year, the EU funded a regional project at SOPAC assisting GIS and RS application in Pacific Island Countries. This resulted in the renaming of the Fiji Conference.

## 4.3 The Pacific Islands GIS&RS User Conference

In 2004 the National Conference was renamed as the 'Pacific Islands GIS&RS User Conference' due to the increasing interests of participants that came from Pacific Island countries. In 2005 ISPRS joined the initiative and was part of the first discussion session of the Conference. The former president John Trinder helped to guide the discussion sessions (see picture to the right). The discussion session is an important session of the Conference and has since been held every year. The session provides



John Trinder (ISPRS), Wolf Forstreuter (Fiji GIS&RS User Group) and Les Allison (PICISOC) guiding the discussion on GIS&RS method development for Pacific Island Countries.

an opportunity for companies, scientists and GIS &RS users to meet and share ideas. Many applications, which required an adaptation to Pacific environment, were discussed at the Conference and implemented during the following years. Besides this the Conference is the platform for exchange of experiences of GIS&RS users by different island countries.

## 4.4 Outlook

The formation of the PGRSC was a necessary follow up of User Group and Conference in enabling the 2017 Conference. The next step will be to regionalise the Conference more than it currently is. The council currently established focal points in all Pacific Islands to share the information about the Conference but also to organise presentations and ideas by the countries to building up to the next Conference. Here the three vehicles for information dissemination will become an even more important role.



## 5 The Vehicles for Information Dissemination

The Council has three “vehicles” to disseminate information:

1. Pacific Islands GIS&RS Newsletter
2. Information distributing e-mail list GIS-PacNet
3. The Pacific Islands GIS&RS User Conference including website and Facebook site.

### 5.1 The Pacific Islands GIS&RS User Conference

The Pacific Islands GIS&RS User Conference is an ideal vehicle for transferring information and data to Pacific island states. As mentioned GIS users are isolated in remote island countries with limited possibility to engage with scientists and companies. This is not only the case during the discussion session, the Conference provides avenues to meet during the coffee breaks with a daily social function during the evening, where many Conference participants are present.

### 5.2 The Pacific Islands GIS&RS Newsletter

The first GIS and RS Newsletter was published in 1993 and distributed in Fiji. There was a need for a regular information platform as there was no Fiji medium (i) to report and document the monthly GIS&RS User Meeting, (ii) to distribute new developments in the areas of GIS, RS and upcoming GPS applications, (iii) to report about data available in Fiji.

The Newsletter started as a simple print out of a WordPerfect written A4 document edited by Wolf Forstreuter and Les Allinson. In 1994 SOPAC’s Director supported the Newsletter with professional staff and Lala Bukarau joining the team. James Britton (USP) joined the newsletters working group in 1998. During the time users of other Pacific states were interested in the newsletter where SOPAC printed and posted to Pacific island countries.

Shortly afterwards, a network was established of national focal points, which then produced bigger quantities and which was distributed to subscribers in country. By the end of the nineties the Newsletter was downloadable from the SOPAC website and the postage of newsletters continued as the countries e-mail access was very limited.

The newsletter can still be printed if there is a need, however, this is an exception. The last issue was published two years ago as there was no time which could be allocated to this publication. The PGRSC took ownership and the newsletter will be published again in regular intervals.

The importance is that the newsletter is the only publication, which focuses on spatial data application in Pacific Island Countries.

### 5.3 GIS-PacNet

The e-mail distribution and communication list ‘GIS-PacNet’ was established by Franck Martin with the intention to have a platform to help MapInfo GIS software users to operate their GIS. This was about 1995 or 1996 where e-mail started and SOPAC was the pioneer and Fiji distributor.

The mailing list was seldom utilised to asked questions as this is not the Pacific nature or culture, however, the list very soon distributed news in the areas GIS, RS, database and GPS applications.

The minutes of the monthly GIS&RS User Meetings were distributed whenever issues of regional relevance were discussed.

The list has nearly 700 members and the interesting part is that they are distributed all over the Pacific and today with better Internet than 20 years ago the remotest village can be reached. The list was hosted at SPC, but had to move to PICISOC<sup>4</sup>.

## 6 The Link to other Organisations

The Council has strong links to other organisations with similar objectives. The links are institutionally where Trustees of the Council are at the same time Trustees of related organisations and there are links through the web site and working relationships.



**STAR** = Pacific Science, Technology and Resource Network. Originally an advisory group for SOPAC annual session. Today an own Council. The chairman is Permanent Secretary Malakai Finau. Russell Howorth is one of the Trustees of STAR, Russell Howorth and Malakai Finau are Trustees of the Pacific GIS & Remote Sensing Council.

**FGIMC** = Fiji Geospatial Information Management Council. This Council is a Fiji Government advisory group, which meets every 3 month and advises Government bodies in technical questions in geospatial area. FGIMC also conducts a national GIS and RS conference normally on the Friday before the Pacific Islands GIS&RS User Conference. The chairman is Permanent Secretary Malakai Finau. There was a cabinet decision in 1991 on the formation of a Council.



**ISPRS** = International Society for Photogrammetry and Remote Sensing. ISPRS was first time present at the Conference in 2005. Since that time the Conference always displays posters and material on behalf of ISPRS. ISPRS distributes its information and bulletins through the PGRSC network.



CIRCUM-PACIFIC COUNCIL

**CPC** = The Circum-Pacific Council is an international, non-governmental, tax-exempt association of earth scientists, engineers, and oceanographers who represent government, industry, academia, and other organisations and institutes with interests primarily in the Pacific region. CPC was founded in 1972 as a cooperative organisation between the U.S. Government (U.S. Geological Survey) and industry (petroleum and mining companies) to improve upon scientific communication and exchange of information about geology and natural resources of the Pacific Basin and surrounding land regions. The PGRSC Trustee Russell Howorth is one of the CPC Directors.



**SPC** = Pacific Community (before South Pacific Community). The Pacific Community is the principal scientific and technical organisation in the Pacific region. It is an international development organisation owned and governed by its 26 country and territory members. With more than 600 staff, the organisation's headquarters are in Nouméa, New Caledonia, and it has regional offices in Suva, Fiji, and Pohnpei, Federated States of Micronesia,

<sup>4</sup> PICISOC = Pacific Islands Chapter of the Internet Society

as well as a country office in Honiara, Solomon Islands, and field staff in other Pacific locations. Most Board and Committee members of PGRSC are working at SPC and the job description covers objectives of the Council.

**PICISOC** = The Pacific Islands Chapter of the Internet Society serves the Society's purposes by serving the interests of the global Internet community through its presence in the Pacific Islands. It focuses on local issues and developments, and as an impartial advisor to governments and the public on matters of significant interest to Pacific Island people. PICISOC first came into being in 1994 as IT-PacNET when a group of technical guys working for SOPAC decided to set up a support organisation. Through their association with regional organisations they were able to expand the organisation, and finally join the group up with the Internet Society in 2002. The 600+ regional members of PICISOC come from 22 countries which constitute the Pacific region (they are all members of the Pacific Islands Forum).



**SIBA** = Spatial Industries Business Association is the leading association representing the Spatial Industry. SIBA is committed to working with Government and Academia to build a more innovative, in Australia and the Pacific. SIBA provides a network of businesses, tender alerts, networking and collaboration opportunities, professional development, think tanks and direct business opportunities. SIBA is present during the Conference and uses the platform to hand out the spatial business award. The Council is helping to distribute the message to apply for the award through GIS-PacNet.



**PGSC** = The Pacific Geospatial and Surveyors Council provides a regional network and forum for Pacific Island geospatial information and survey authorities to address regional challenges. The priorities include: Building the capacity of regional surveyors; Improving and standardising geospatial information. The PGSC has a strategy but is not officially founded yet. Naturally there is an overlap and link between GIS&RS and the group of surveyors. The surveyors meetings were partly held during the Pacific Islands GIS&RS Conference.

