

## OCEANSWATCH Heads for Vanuatu, Papua New Guinea and the Philippines



Chris Bone, founder of [OceansWatch](#), leaves New Zealand this month to lay the groundwork for the first [OceansWatch](#) projects. He will combine the delivery of a 45ft yacht to Hong Kong through [www.pacificyachtdeliveries.co.nz](http://www.pacificyachtdeliveries.co.nz) with exploration work for [OceansWatch](#), spending five days in each Vanuatu, PNG and the Philippines courtesy of the yacht owner.

[OceansWatch](#) was founded in order to assist in conserving marine environments and provide humanitarian aid to coastal communities in developing countries.

During an earlier visit to Madang, on the North East coast of PNG, Chris established contact with the local community and



met Robert Puis, a community leader and Bahai Elder, who appointed himself as Chris' unofficial guide and interpreter. It was a fortuitous meeting, as Robert is very well known in the Madang community, as well as on the nearby island of Karkar. During a long weekend on the island Chris observed discarded batteries littering the otherwise pristine reef and was informed about the discharge of raw sewerage straight onto it from the local high school. Robert requested that [OceansWatch](#) assist the community with providing proof to the Government, who built the school, that the sewerage is damaging the reef system.

These fragile marine environments are under increasing pressure from local communities struggling to make a living. Over-exploitation of reef ecosystems is also occurring where tropical fish are caught and removed for the aquarium trade. Some may never again be sustainable systems, or provide a sustainable source of food for their associated coastal communities. Without protection and assistance to find alternative ways of earning an income, local populations will inevitably continue to put increasing demands on their reefs.



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The decline of the copra industry in the Pacific region has left many communities without an income and with very few options open to them to improve their standard of living. [OceansWatch](#) believes in working in partnership with coastal communities to explore new, sustainable ways of earning a living that will help towards the alleviation of poverty.

Vince Kerr <http://homepages.igrin.co.nz/vincek/Index.html>, a consultant marine biologist in Northland, New Zealand is accompanying Chris and will be meeting Jason Raubani, acting Principal Fisheries Officer in Port Vila, to gather local knowledge on indicator species and

to ascertain the extent of survey material already collected by Reef Check [www.reefcheck.org](http://www.reefcheck.org) in Vanuatu. [OceansWatch](#) will be using the standardised Reef Check protocols for monitoring reef health in both Vanuatu and PNG

Project MARC, Medical Assistance to Remote Communities, [www.project-marc.org](http://www.project-marc.org) has been operating in Vanuatu for six years and welcomes [OceansWatch](#) working alongside them on marine conservation and education projects. Chris, Vince and Karine Denys, an experienced skipper and diver, will focus on the island of Malakula, where Chief Willy and his community have already been instrumental in establishing a marine protected area.



In PNG the [OceansWatch](#) team will meet Robert to Kimbe Bay, West New Britain, to observe a "no-take Locally Managed Marine Area (LMMA)" which was established in 1997 adjacent to



the Kilu Community in the Bay, [www.mahonia.org](http://www.mahonia.org). The Kilu LMMA was one of the first community-based marine reserves in PNG and is a focal point for significant scientific research as well as being the cornerstone of an effort to develop a network of LMMAs in the region. Socio-economic monitoring plays an important part in its success and is used to customise conservation strategies to reflect the specific needs and concerns of the local community.

[OceansWatch](#) will support Robert on his return to Karkar Island with enrolling the community in establishing sustainable reef management systems that will directly benefit them.



Dive Connection Whangarei [www.diveconnection.co.nz](http://www.diveconnection.co.nz) and Dive HQ [www.divenow.co.nz](http://www.divenow.co.nz) have very kindly donated some snorkelling kits which will enable the Karkar Islanders to enjoy their reefs as never before. It is hoped that this direct experience will lay the foundations for simple environmental education programmes.



New Guinea waters are 2<sup>nd</sup> only to Indonesia in the number of species on its reefs. In some locations up to 1,500 species live on the reefs, making them one of the most diverse ecosystems on the planet – the Holy Grail for marine biologists.



As [OceansWatch](http://OceansWatch) will own and operate its own vessel in the future, Chris will re-visit Andy Smith's yard in the Philippines where he is building a Wharram Islander 65 - a traditional-style catamaran [www.wharram.com](http://www.wharram.com). They are the perfect load carrying cat from which to run marine conservation and humanitarian projects in the Pacific region.



Andy Smith's yard with Islander 65 under construction



Andy Smith with Islander 65

To achieve its main objective of working in partnership with coastal communities in developing countries to assist them in conserving their marine environments, [OceansWatch](http://OceansWatch) plans to harness the human, financial and physical resources of the world's yachting community. By establishing a global network of sailors who care about marine life and humanitarian issues, [OceansWatch](http://OceansWatch) can gather information on, and provide support with:

- Humanitarian aid to coastal communities
- The development of sustainable businesses to assist in alleviating poverty
- Environmental education about, and conservation of, the marine environment

In turn, membership of [OceansWatch](http://OceansWatch) enables the cruising yacht community to play a more active role in support of marine research, conservation and assistance to coastal communities.

Keep an eye on the site for accounts of places where very few people ever go and amazing images of some very special marine life.

[OceansWatch](http://OceansWatch) will be posting reports of this trip on the website [www.oceanswatch.org](http://www.oceanswatch.org)



Long-water-drop lavatory



The long walk home with water



Local water taxi between Madang & Karkar Island



Village well with brackish water!



Local supermarket

