Integrated Renewable Resource Management for U.S. Insular Areas

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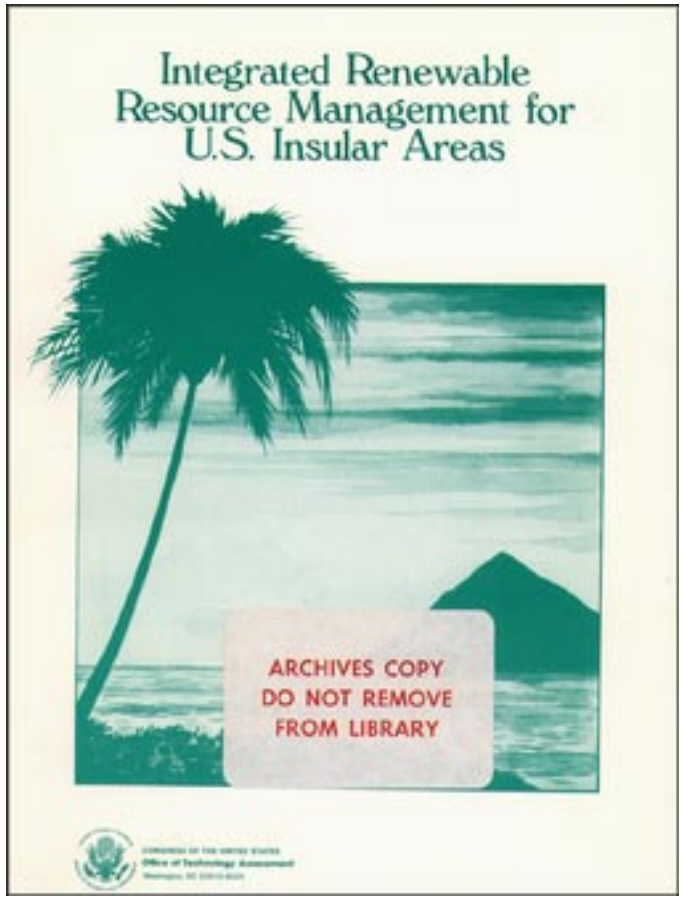

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Foreword

The United States has political, economic, humanitarian, and strategic interests in sustained economic development of U.S.-affiliated Caribbean and Pacific islands. Despite a U.S. commitment to support the economic vitality of these islands, most have become less self-reliant in food and fiber production, and now depend increasingly on Federal funding for jobs, public welfare, and food and other goods and services to the islands.

Interest in the development of increased self-reliance in U.S.-affiliated islands has grown significantly in the last two decades. After **16** years of negotiation, the Congress, the United Nations and three governments emerging from the former Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands —the Republic of the Marshall Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands—approved agreements redefining their relationships with the United States. The remaining agreement, with the Republic of Palau, is expected soon, thus terminating the only remaining trusteeship created by the United Nations after World War II. Concomitant with the interest in development of island self-government has been concern over development of self-reliance. Similarly, the economic well-being of the U.S.-affiliated Caribbean islands has come under increasing scrutiny due to the growing strategic importance of the Caribbean Basin, and the implementation of the Caribbean Basin Initiative,

Several factors contributing to the growing dependence of U.S.-affiliated islands include: scant natural resources and long distances between islands and sources of inputs, products, or markets; rapidly growing populations; tropical resource characteristics with generally high natural productivity but extreme vulnerability to disruption; and common histories of significant resource degradation. Despite the latter, the economic constraints posed by size and isolation of many of these islands dictate that much of the productive sector be based on renewable resources—agriculture, aquiculture, fisheries, and tourism.

Renewable resource development can help foster self-sufficiency, but certain approaches are not compatible with sustained development (e. g., harvesting resources until long-term productivity is lost, resources are depleted, or the environment is degraded). Similarly, policies, programs, and projects that seriously conflict with local cultures and customs are likely to be counterproductive.

The Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, in **1984,** requested the Office of Technology Assessment to conduct an assessment of the constraints to development of insular resource-based enterprises, and the opportunities to improve sustainable renewable resource development and management on the U.S.-affiliated islands. The House Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs endorsed the request. The assessment identifies and discusses in-depth some constraints and opportunities to integrated management of renewable resources on these islands.

OTA greatly appreciates the contributions of its advisory panel and workshop participants assembled for the study, and the authors of the commissioned papers. We are especially grateful for the time and effort donated by the numerous contributors who served as reviewers and as liaisons from the insular governments and other government agencies. In addition, we would like to thank those from within OTA who provided assistance, particularly Dr. Gordon Law of the International Security and Commerce Program. As with all OTA studies the content of the report is the sole responsibility of OTA.

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NOTE: OTA appreciates and is grateful for the valuable assistance and thoughtful critiques provided by the reviewers. The reviewers do not, however, necessarily approve, disapprove, or endorse this report. OTA assumes full responsibility for the report and the accuracy of its contents.

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