



WWF

FACTSHEET

2011



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## WWF Priority Places- Southwest Pacific

# Tikina Wai- Fiji

### Conservation Focus



**FIJI HAS THE THIRD LARGEST MANGROVE AREA IN THE PACIFIC REGION**

The Wai District or Tikina Wai, is located on the south western dry leeward side of the higher volcanic island of Viti Levu, the largest in the Fiji island group. Although an estimated 85 per cent of land in Tikina Wai is sugarcane farms and pine plantations the biological significance of the area lies with the remaining 15 per cent of intact dense mangrove forest strands along the districts coast, with its integrated salt pans, wetlands and scattered remnants of dry forest mainly along the districts' rivers and streams. Mangroves in the area are highly significant to the Wai community not only as a natural resource for subsistence and income but more symbolically as a cultural resource that defines the districts indigenous community. The mangroves are also ecologically significant as they are considered dry zone mangroves, brought about by the unique combination of the islands topography and climatic conditions creating unique features such as salt pans, areas devoid of vegetation or more often covered with sparsely distributed stunted mangroves. Salt pans as an ecological feature within mangroves are again very uncommon within the South Pacific region and it is within these areas that the indigenous craft of traditional salt making takes place. The districts outlying marine landscape is very extensive stretching in areas from 4-6km from coast to reef, with the entire district coastline stretching 45km long. The area contains a diverse array of marine features including sand and mudflats, sea-grass meadows, submerged fringing reefs, channels, reef flats and patch reefs which support a vast array of marine species. The mangroves and wetland areas in the district also provide for breeding and feeding grounds for a significant number of land and sea bird species.



Tai Butani, traditional salt maker

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WWF field staff undertaking mangrove survey

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## Conservation- Safeguarding Nature and Community Interests

Tikina Wai is currently WWF's oldest active site in Fiji, with community engagement since 1999. WWF's original focus in the area was to determine the impact and sustainability of mangrove debarking for the production of traditional dyes, this led to raising awareness on the need to protect their mangroves, the revival of traditional salt production craft, and eroding cultural practice associated with their mangrove areas. Encouraged by WWF's effort, the late Tui Nalolo, Traditional Head of the District, in 2001, formally requested WWF to assist his community develop the districts marine and mangrove protected areas. This resulted in the establishment of 3 community mangrove protected areas and 3 marine protected areas by the end of 2002. Since then WWF has worked closely with the Tikina Wai community to strengthen their capacity to independently manage and monitor their protected areas and enhance the focus on mangrove conservation through community climate change adaptation work and sustainable livelihood development through community driven eco-tourism initiatives.

Reducing further loss of mangrove forests in the area is WWF's strategy to not only protect ecological systems but also build coastal community resiliency. Mangroves protect coral reefs by filtering sediments and other pollutants from the land. It further protects local communities from storm surges, and a whole array of linked ecosystems and species from land to sea, ensuring local food security and ecological resilience. The large area of mangroves in Tikina Wai can be considered a natural low cost adaptive measure for coastal communities from the effects of climate change. It is an important mangrove locale in the Fiji, forming the collective resulting in Fiji having the third largest mangrove area in the Pacific.



Salt flats, Tikina Wai, Fiji

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### Site Profile

Tikina Wai encompasses a land area of 89.6 km<sup>2</sup> with an adjacent marine area of 50 km<sup>2</sup>. There are six villages within the district, four located along the coast; Lomawai, Kubuna, Nakorokula and Tau, and two villages located inland; Bavu and Navutu. Also spread within the district boundaries are a number of cane farming settlements. The total population within the district is over 2000, with 55% being indigenous and the remaining 45%, Fijians of Indian descent.

## WWF Community Assisted Achievements at a Glance

- The establishment of the districts permanent community mangrove and marine protected areas.
- Establishment of a District Marine Protected Areas Committee and recognised district fish wardens
- Community youth trained in marine and mangrove survey methods and monitoring.
- The revival of an almost extinct mangrove associated craft, salt making and promotion through eco-tourism for the community

### For more information

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To stop the degradation of the planet's natural environment and to build a future in which humans live in harmony with nature.

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