

Conserving Papua, Indonesia through Ecotourism

Presented at: A Private Sector Approach –
Conservation Agreements in support of Marine Protection



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Abstract

Misool Eco Resort (MER), located in the remote southern part of Raja Ampat, Indonesia is deeply committed to a policy of environmental and social responsibility. We seek to provide exceptional and enriching diving experiences in a sustainable environment. We are committed to demonstrating to our hosts, our guests, and the local government that tourism can support a local economy on much more favorable terms than mining, logging, overfishing, or shark finning. In doing so, MER entered into a lease agreement with the local community to establish a 200 square km Marine Protected Area (no-take zone) surrounding Misool Eco Resort. Within this area, all fishing, shark finning, harvesting of turtle eggs and shellfish are strictly prohibited. We also require all boats to practice reef-safe anchoring. We regularly patrol the area for illegal fishing and shark finning. Perhaps most importantly, MER is dedicated to safeguarding the local community in which we operate. Our labor force, drawn largely from the closest village, is offered favorable working conditions, health benefits, job training, and English lessons.

Agreement Mechanism

A land lease agreement which includes a specified area of surrounding sea was the formal agreement mechanism used to establish the Misool Eco Resort No Take Zone (MER, NTZ) in the southern Raja Ampat. The agreement was signed on the 28th of November, 2005. Key provisions of the agreement include:

- Law:** Indonesian law and Papuan law
- Duration:** 25 years
- Payments:** 5 year terms with payments due at the start of each term
- Lease Area:** Approx. 200 sq. km surrounding Batbitim, including two small islands
- Leasor:** Heads of Bahale and Yelfom families
- Lessee:** Andy Miners and Misool Eco Resort
- Sign Date:** November 28, 2005

Lease Rights and Limitations

Under the provisions of the Lease, MER secured exclusive rights to Batbitim and Jef Galyu Islands, including hills, forests, coconut trees, water, animals and the surrounding lagoon. In addition, rights were secured to designate approximately 200 sq. km of surrounding seas as a no take zone (NTZ) including animals, coral reefs, turtles, sharks, rays and fish. Under the terms of the lease, anyone other than MER is prohibited from taking any marine products from the NTZ or granting permission to any other party to do the same.



MER staff working the facility

Fees and Services Exchanged

The village of Yellu benefits in a number of ways from their agreement with MER. The most obvious is MER's lease fee, payable every five years. However both Yellu and MER have a clear understanding that this payment is a nominal bonus in comparison to the significant long term benefits of bringing sustainable tourism to their area. Tourism and the establishment of the NTZ offer the community important economic benefits:

- New job opportunities and employee Benefits
- Goods and services
- Language skills
- Thriving marine environment for future generations



MER Cottage and Bay



Underwater life within the MER NTZ

Process & Issues

- There are no official documents to state who is the rightful owner of land/sea in Papua. The local Adat committee had to confirm who the rightful owners of the area were. Knowledge of the area and relationships with local people helped shape the agreement.
- The NTZ agreement expressly forbids any kind of fishing or animal (turtles/eggs) harvesting and it gives authority to MER to enforce these provisions.
- A sound knowledge of the local area was essential to determining the appropriate location for the NTZ.
- Established NGOs provided important guidance and resources when it came to the nuances of establishing and administering an MPA.
- The contract was founded on principles supported by Papuan law (or Hak Adat) and formalized under Indonesian law. The Indonesian Government recognizes Hak Adat as part of special autonomy status of Papua.



MER No-Take Zone

Conclusion

We are under discussions to establish a second NTZ in a beautiful mini-archipelago just over 1 hour from the resort. It is far from the traditional fishing grounds of the communities that own rights to it, and hence only fished occasionally by them. The driving motivation to secure this area is the fact that it currently acts as base for outside fishermen who set up illegal camps and destructively fish in the Misool region. They pay no fees to the villagers and plunder the reefs of fish, turtles and sharks. Establishing an NTZ along with ranger stations and a patrol vessel could create an incredible sanctuary within Raja Ampat and provide a sustained financial return and ranger jobs to the villages who own the area.



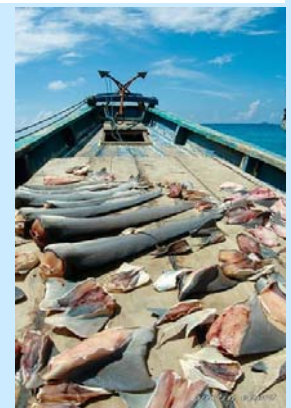
A view of the NTZ from Misool Eco Resort.

The MER NTZ is operating at the local level both ecologically and politically. Though it covers an incredible abundance and diversity of reefs (200 sq. km), it is still relatively small in comparison to the larger MPAs in Raja Ampat. If this model were embraced at the program level, NGOs could seek to group a number or private enterprises together in a given geography to support larger shared NTZs.

An important factor maintaining the sanctity of the NTZ is the full time, long term presence of MER. Our model for a combined resort and NTZ can be replicated in other parts of Raja Ampat as well as abroad.

Finally, by not compromising on the "eco-ness" of our building practices we offer a clear visible message to the local community when they visit that we are really doing what we say we are - protecting the environment. They know we are doing good and there to preserve the environment

Shark Finning



Acknowledgement

Acknowledgement is due to Misool Eco Resort staff and the community of Yellu Village.