



## Chair's 2011 Annual Report

Herminia Fusco

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## Executive Report

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Let me begin by thanking a number of people and organizations for their enthusiastic support and commitment to MINA and its mission of working together to ensure our islands' way of life. Thank you to all of our Adopt-A-Bin sponsors for their continuous support in establishing an island culture of recycling to reduce marine debris from entering Saipan's waters; many thanks to Pacific Trading Company and Jerry Tan and the Tan Siu Lin Foundation for supporting MINA in all of its events

Special thanks to our hard working volunteers such as the Youth Environmental Ambassadors of Saipan Southern High School, who continue to commit their time and effort in all of MINA's education and outreach activities in the hopes of raising the level of awareness to reduce land-based pollution and other impacts that adversely affect our vulnerable marine life and its habitats; and Dr. Peter Houk of Pacific Marine Resource Institute who continues to provide us with valuable insights on the state of our ecosystems in the Mariana Islands. Si Yu'us Ma'ase!

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Since its inception in May 2005, the Mariana Islands Nature Alliance has relied on its ability to network with various organizations and agencies to promote its mission of conserving and restoring the array of habitats that sustain our natural biodiversity and heritage for future generations. From organizations like:

- 📌 The Nature Conservancy- who provided seed money to hire our first Executive Director;
- 📌 To government agencies such as DEQ, CRM, NOAA, Department of Interior, and the US Fish and Wildlife Services for affording us the resources to support important projects such as the Obyan Rehabilitation Project and the Environmental Teacher Camp Program;
- 📌 Businesses like the Tan Holdings for sponsoring numerous recycle bins so that our island can continue to prevent trash from becoming marine debris; and
- 📌 To the individual volunteers that offer their time and effort to help MINA move forward with its mission. Indeed, MINA's success of surviving six years of conservation challenges is attributed to your commitment to save our precious resources for the benefit of the people of the Northern Mariana Islands.

In our first Strategic Action Planning- MINA recognized priority issues affecting the health of our coral reefs. Within the past five years, under the successful Chairmanships of Jesse Borja and Fran Castro, MINA focused its efforts on two priority issues- solid waste management concerns and meeting the Micronesia Challenge of protecting 30% of our near shore marine resources and 20% terrestrial.

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Addressing these issues gave birth to our Adopt-A-Bin program which we continue to utilize today, thanks to the generosity of numerous businesses such as Tan Holdings, Brabu Pharmacy, Rotary Club, DocomoPacific, and IT&E. Their contributions provided critical funds to support our Adopt-A-Bin program. By the end of 2011, our adopted bins collected a total of 60,000 lbs. of trash at 17 popular beach sites while 45% of it is recycled! This does not include trash collected from numerous beach cleanups and the island-wide International Coastal Cleanup event.

In June 2011, our marine debris project ended but we continued the programs that were developed under the marine debris recycling initiatives. Other than collecting thousands of pounds of trash, we encouraged shoppers to eliminate the use of plastic shopping bags. MINA donated over 1,000 reusable bags to volunteers, shoppers, and local residents to discourage the use of plastics in our homes, workplace, and social gatherings. We will continue to promote reusable bags until plastic bags become a thing of the past.

Climate Change is a big threat to our vulnerable islands. With sea level rising and sporadic weather patterns, our volunteers and partners continue to raise awareness through various MINA sponsored events like 350.org- a global effort committed to reducing carbon dioxide from being released into the air by finding alternative low impact measures. Collaborating with private organizations and dedicated individuals to plant numerous trees at Laolao Bay and other areas around Saipan. In 2012, Tan Holdings is proposing to plant 400 flame trees throughout the island as part of their green incentive program to provide a cleaner and healthier environment.

To support MINA's operations and the continuity of our community programs, we had our first signature fundraiser – Eating Out for the Environment in September 2011! This fundraising effort between MINA and various restaurants such as Shenanigans, 360 Revolving Restaurant, AIO at the Grand Hotel, and Shirley's, was to encourage local residents to support the local economy and the environment by eating out at participating restaurants. Today, Java Joe's has joined in this effort by helping MINA raise funds daily by donating a portion of every sale to patrons using reusable coffee mugs.

In March 2011, MINA was awarded \$26,000 for a new partnership project called Tasi Watch. Aimed to be the eyes and ears of Laolao Bay's coastal waters, the Tasi Watch project offers opportunities to Laolao Bay's communities to manage the Bay's near shore marine resources. In October 2011, additional funding of \$65,000 was awarded to MINA to further enhance Tasi Watch efforts in Laolao Bay. Three aspects of the program were developed to assist our volunteers and Rangers:

1. Learn and Give Back to Conservation, an education and awareness tool used to raise awareness by educating bay users on applicable laws that protect our natural resources;
  2. Monitor and Apply Conservation- the "Keepers of the Bay" program that established the Tasi Watch Rangers as Laolao Bay's voice for conservation; and
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3. Promote and Respect Conservation- an environmental rehabilitation program that offers opportunities to violators to respect and give back to the land and sea that we depend on for our livelihood. The Tasi Watch project continues to build partnership efforts and welcomes sister programs such as the Our Laolao Campaign by engaging community stakeholders to share their memories through stories and experiences to encourage people to take pride in and appreciation of Laolao Bay as a place of tradition.

In October 2011, MINA was awarded \$15,800 to enhance our Managaha Marine Conservation Area by educating tour operators, tourist, and local users on applicable laws that protect our reefs. This project is aimed to increase support for marine protected areas and what each of us can do to educate ourselves and others to reduce the threats to coral reef.

### Outlook for 2012 and Beyond....

- ✚ In 2012, MINA will continue to raise critical funds to support its operations and community programs. With our recent signature Green Gala event, we successfully raised over \$10,000 of cash alone from ticket sales, monetary donations, and silent auctions and drink sales generated from in-kind donations worth over \$18,000; Please continue to support our fundraising events by participating in our upcoming fundraising events
- ✚ We will continue to build support for the Micronesia Challenge, the Micronesia Regional Shark Sanctuary; and the One Micronesia Initiative
- ✚ We will establish MINA's Membership Incentive Program to increase members so that by 2013, 80% of MINA members will be actively participating in outreach activities and programs;
- ✚ By 2015, we should begin focusing our efforts in expanding MINA to Tinian, Rota, and Guam; and
- ✚ We will continue to work hard to achieve our goals and objectives that will advance our mission locally and regionally.

Only then we can realize that our conservation efforts and programs will transform MINA's vision that the people of the Northern Mariana Islands, through community engagement and responsible stewardship, will thrive in a healthy, natural environment that supports a vibrant island economy fostered by sustainable cultural values, traditions, and principles. Si Yu'us Ma'ase and Thank you!

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