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## First ever local conservation forum to take stock

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**Update: 2:07PM** For the first time in Fiji, scientists, decision and policy-makers and conservation practitioners will converge in Suva mid-week to take stock of scientific knowledge and map out a future for effective conservation.

"It is not going to be only about the science behind conservation but more a coming together of stakeholders so we can ascertain what were all doing, discuss lessons others can learn from and, of course, identify areas in which we can collaborate," according to Aaron Jenkins, Wetlands International-Oceania senior program officer.

The three-day forum will mean that records of activities or projects of various conservation practitioners, sectoral stakeholders and policy and/or state decision-makers will be discussed and recorded in one place.

International experts in conservation planning will also be part of the forum to boost existing research methods through discussions of recently-introduced data processing systems. Academics will also be on hand to offer tips or discuss lessons for practitioners and policy-makers.

"If we are to be effective in making development sustainable, so that we can make a living as individuals or coastal or inland communities while preserving our natural resources, then we must have a holistic approach," Mr Jenkins said.

The future of this country, if not the whole region, depends on how we manage our natural resources.

Some 70 participants, including representatives from district conservation management committees, are expected by organisers.

The forum will look at ecosystem-based management and conservation planning, habitat mapping, species conservation, community-based adaptive management and socio-economics, marine protected areas, marine ecology, terrestrial ecology and taxonomy.

A range of local, regional and international conservationists who have worked in Fiji will help organisers facilitate the Forum.

The inaugural conservation science forum for Fiji is organised by the Ecosystem Based Management project - which is primarily funded by the David and Lucile Packard Foundation and the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation.

The Forum will be co-hosted by Wetlands International Oceania (WI-O), Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) and World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF); it is supported by the University of the South Pacific and the Fiji Locally-Managed Marine Areas (FLMMA) Network.

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