A new idea is first condemned as

ridiculous

and then dismissed as trivial,

until finally,

it becomes what everybody knows.

—William James, American philosopher and psychologist

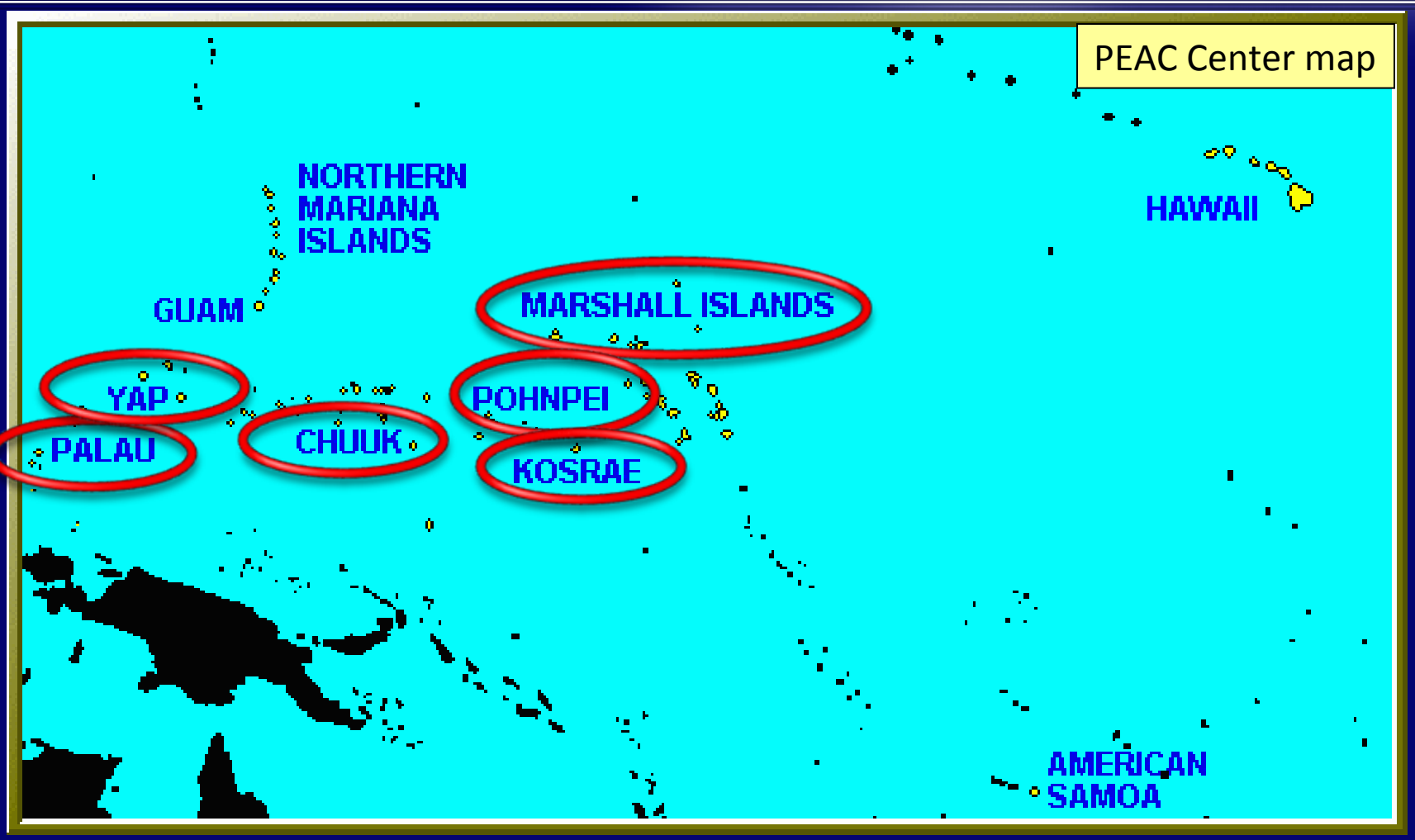
US Freely Associated States (FAS) Laboratory Certification Program

26th Pacific Islands Environment Conference

June 24, 2009

LT Elena Vaouli
US Public Health Service
American Samoa EPA

Freely Associated States



PROBLEM

- FAS Labs were **NOT CERTIFIED** to analyze water samples
  - Lack of confidence in data
  - Antiquated equipment
  - Lack of supplies
  - Inadequate staff training

Water Quality Laboratory Certification

Pursuant to the US Freely Associated States Water Quality Laboratory & Laboratory Technician Certification Program Standards

The Laboratory

Of the Pohnpei State Environmental Protection Agency

is hereby Certified for the Microbiological Analysis of Drinking Water by the IDEXX Colilert-18® Method through April 2010.

SOLUTION

US Freely Associated States (FAS) Laboratory Certification Program

- Voluntary
- Designed for FAS Labs
- Modeled after USEPA Lab Certification Program
  - Hands-on training
  - Technician testing

How do labs get certified?

- **Pass lab audit**
  - On-site
  - Every 2 years

- **Have certified lab technician(s)**
  - Pass written exam
  - Pass demonstration of proficiency

Critical Elements

- **Lab Facilities**
- **Basic Equipment**
- **Adequate supplies**
- **Qualified staff**
- **Quality assurance**
- **(Funding)**

The Audit

- Lab technicians receive training
- COs conduct audit
  - Review records
  - Inspect lab
- Test lab techs
  - Written exam
  - Practical examination of proficiency

How we made it happen

June 2006

- Survey labs, develop program

June 2007

- Present program to FAS Directors

July 2007

- Present program to FAS lab staff

Who else made it happen

SOPAC assists RMI Lab

IDEXX provides starter kits to FAS

DOI funds program starting Oct 2007

Performance Measure 1

GOAL:
2 Techs per lab certified for DW

RMI	☺	☺
Palau	☺	☺
Yap	☺	☺
Pohnpei	☺	☺
Chuuk	☺	☺
Kosrae	☺	☺

Performance Measure 1

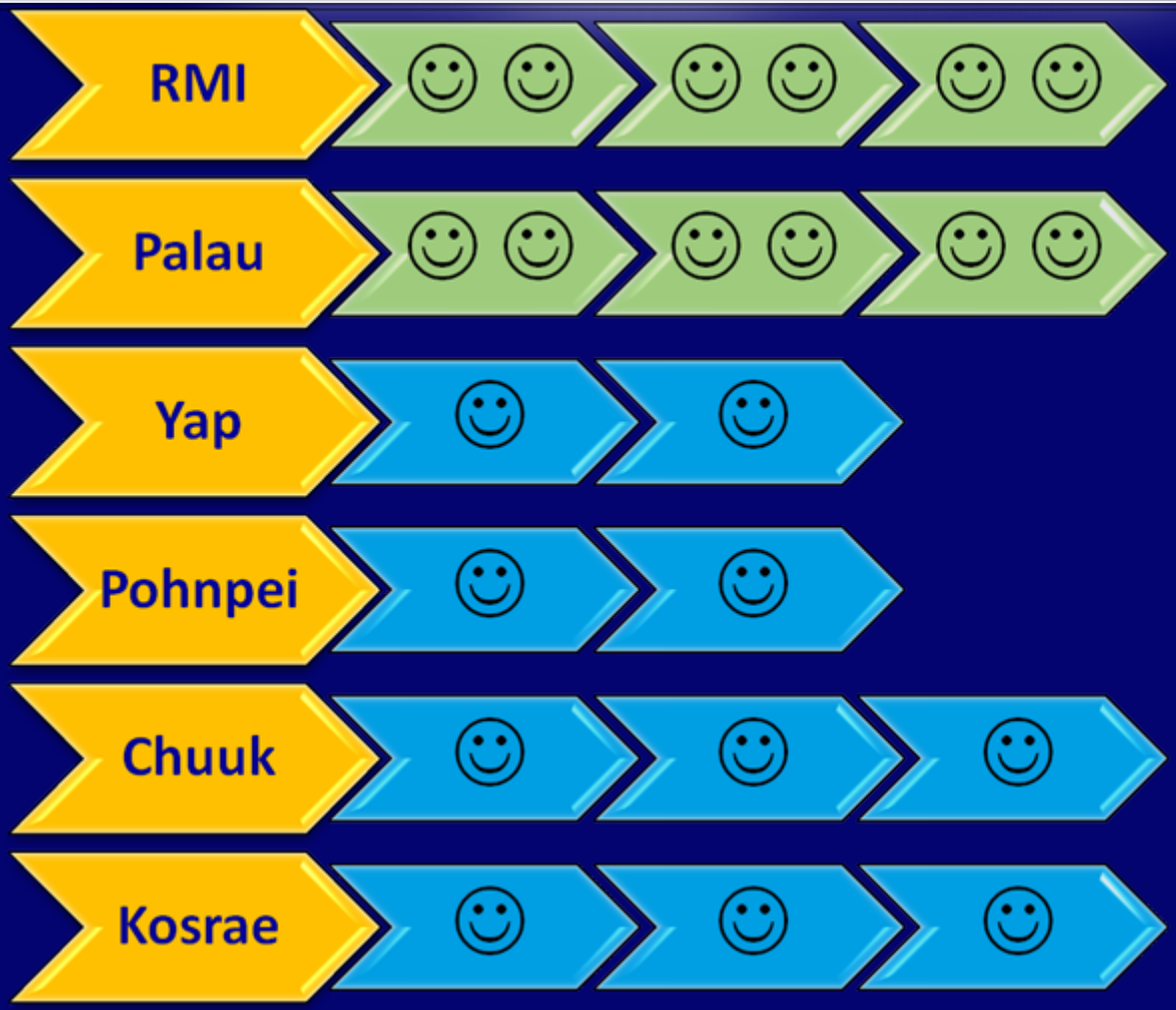
GOAL:
2 Techs per lab
certified for DW

Result:
Goal Exceeded
17 certified analysts
For DW

Performance Measure 1

GOAL:
2 Techs per lab
certified for DW

Result:
Goal Exceeded
6 certified analysts for marine water



Performance Measure 2

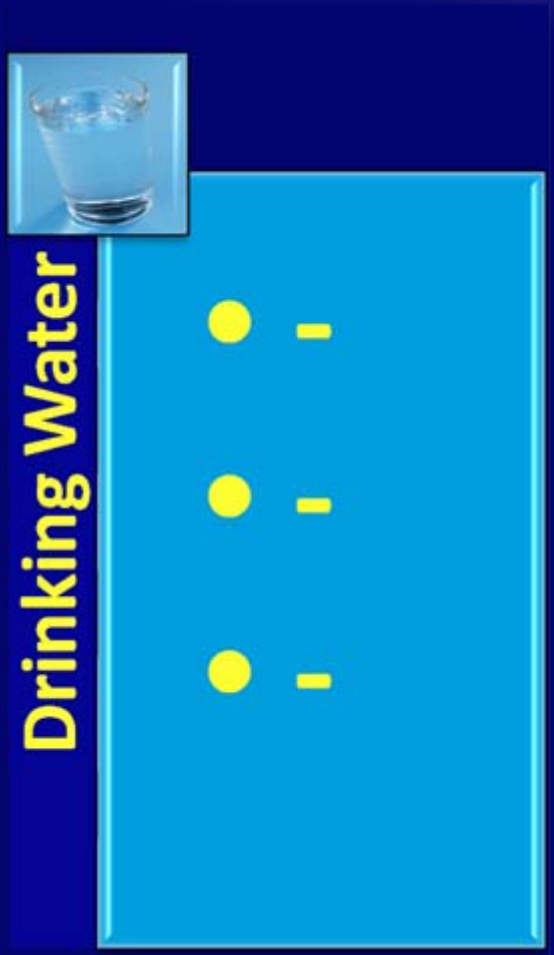
GOAL:
6 Labs equipped to analyze DW samples

Result:
Goal Met

- RMI — DW
- Palau — DW
- Yap — DW
- Pohnpei — DW
- Chuuk — DW
- Kosrae — DW

Performance Measure 3

GOAL:
3 Certified Labs For DW



Performance Measure 3

GOAL:
3 Certified Labs
For DW

Result:

Goal Exceeded

6 Certified Labs for DW

2 Certified Labs for Marine Water

Drinking Water

- RMI
- Palau
- Yap
- Pohnpei
- Chuuk
- Kosrae

Marine Water

- RMI
- Palau

Performance Measure 4

GOAL:
6 Labs with approved QA Plans For DW

Performance Measure 4

GOAL:
6 Labs with approved QA Plans for DW

Result:

Goal Exceeded

6 Labs with approved QA Plans for DW

2 Labs with approved QA Plans for Marine Water

Drinking Water

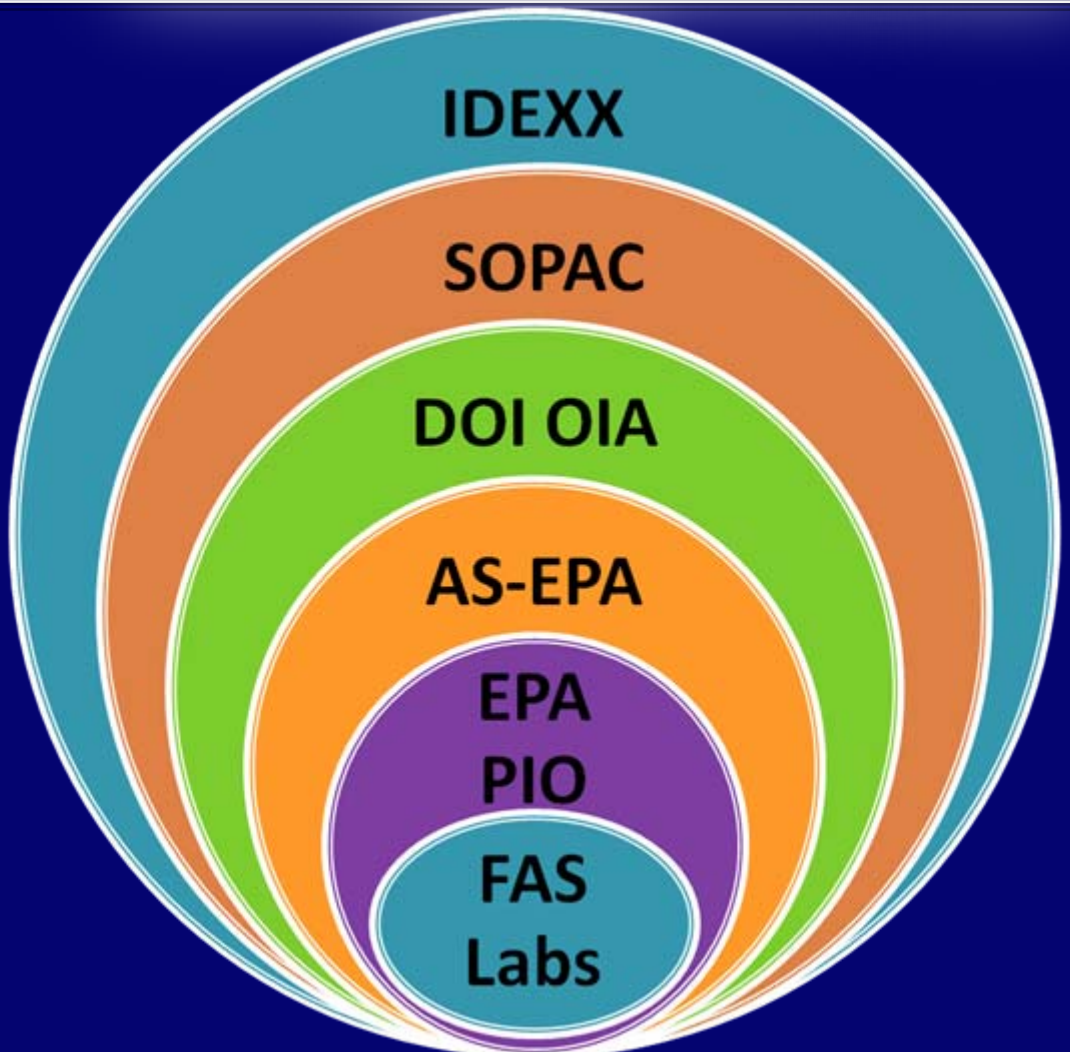
- RMI
- Palau
- Yap
- Pohnpei
- Chuuk
- Kosrae

Marine Water

- RMI
- Palau

More results

- Additional funding and in-kind support



More results

- Palau analyst certified as USEPA Lab Certification Officer

Kimie Ngirchechol
USEPA Certified 2008

Next steps

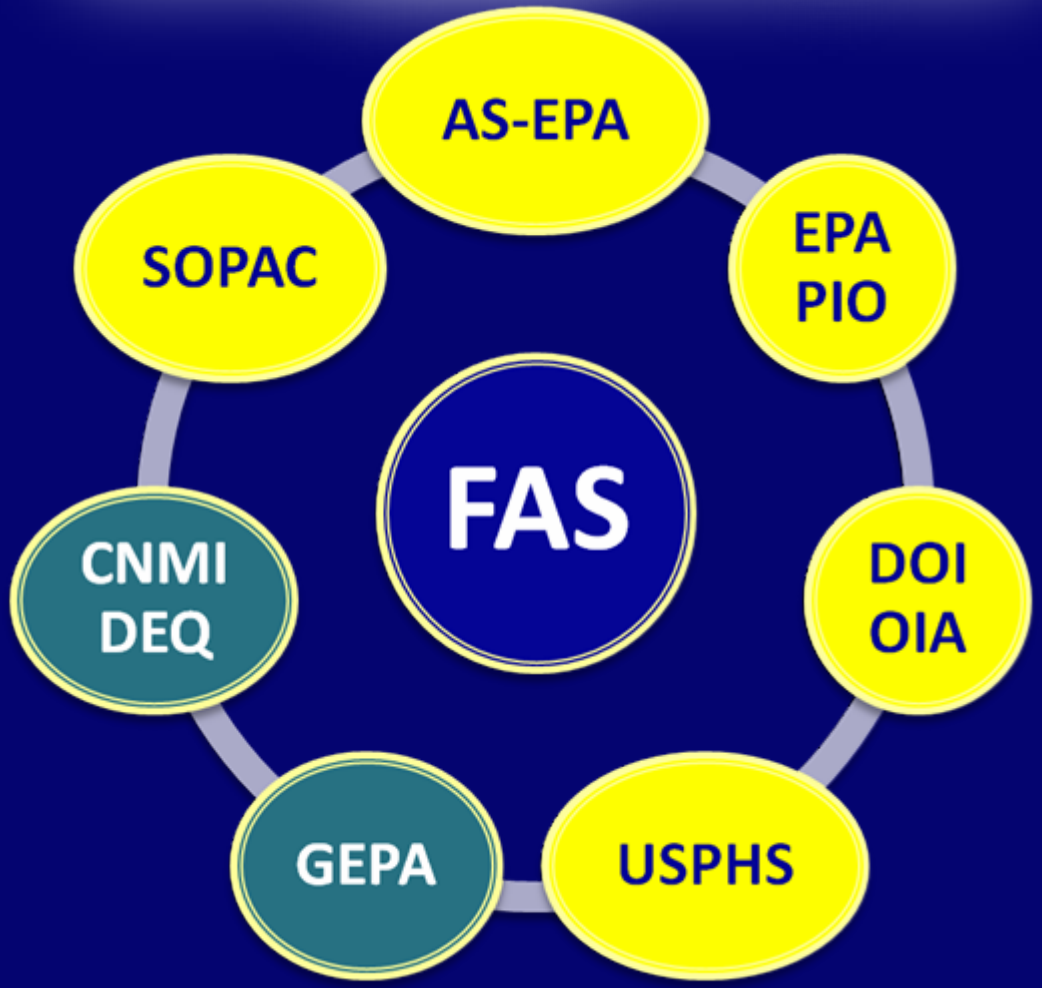
- Build sustainability
- Continue audits and training
- Seek continued funding
- Involve CNMI and Guam lab staff

Lessons Learned

- Persistence

Lessons Learned

- Persistence
- Partnerships



Lessons Learned

- Persistence
- Partnerships

"This program is an excellent example of <u>partnership</u> and of <u>leveraging technical expertise</u> to get these critical drinking water labs certified."

Lessons Learned

- P
- P
- Get support & commitment from the top

"We are proud to have provided the lead in the development and implementation of this important program to help our sister islands, and ASEPA will continue to provide this service to the FAS islands whenever the need may arise."

Lessons Learned

- Get support & commitment from the top

Bayfriend