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## MPA plan for river

Aqela Susu  
Sunday, June 04, 2017



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Ro Teimumu looks out to the Rewa River. The Rewa River will soon be declared a Marine Protected Area (MPA) in an effort to protect its marine environment. Picture: LICE MOVONO

THE Rewa River will soon be declared a Marine Protected Area (MPA) in an effort to protect its marine environment.

The declaration, to be made tomorrow, will coincide with the province's celebration of World Environment Day and World Oceans Day.

Leader of the Sau Turaga clan of Rewa Ro Dona Takalaiyale said the MPA would be for waters from Nailili Village downstream.

This is to serve as a protection for hammerhead sharks, an endangered species within the river.

Marama Bale Na Roko Tui Dreketi Ro Teimumu Kepa said it was very important for the country to look after the environment, especially the marine environment.

But by saying this, she said there was a need to look at the people who look to the river for their livelihood.

"I believe this is something that we should have done long ago because there is no one else that is going to protect our environment except us," Ro Teimumu said.

"We have been talking about preserving the environment and doing this, that and the other and I think we started seriously thinking about when we were told that the hammerhead shark, the nursery was here in Vutia. We've only used to see these small sharks around not knowing too much about it that the fishermen used to use it a lot as bait.

"When Prof Rico of USP came to show us their findings it dawned on us that the river was something extra special in terms of the species of the shark here in Rewa and moreso it is one of the biggest nurseries in the world.

"So then we started seriously thinking about what we could do to preserve it and preserve the other things that are there in the river."

The marine protected area will cover the whole traditional fishing grounds of the Marama Na Roko Tui Dreketi.

Ro Teimumu said this move would affect some villagers living along these areas who depend on the river for their daily livelihood. However, she said, they had been working with FRIEND Fiji, a non-governmental organisation, to look at alternatives of farming.

"They do this on a daily basis, so we have to find a balance in how we preserve the environment while ensuring that our people have taken enough from the river just enough for them to live on and not too much so that we deplete our environment," Ro Teimumu said.

"So it's a balance that we need to find.

"We have to ensure there's enough food on their table for them to eat and that there's balance there for their children.

"It would very much affect them as well," she added.

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