



OFFICE OF COMMUNICATIONS AND PROMOTIONS

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## 1<sup>st</sup> GCC Regional Marine & Terrestrial Conservation Law Enforcement Academy completion set for Oct. 6

History will be made on Friday, October 6, 2017, when the 16 participants of the inaugural Marine Terrestrial Conservation Enforcement Academy hold their completion ceremony at 4:00 p.m. at the Pacific Star Hotel in Tumon. Wesley Simina, Speaker of the FSM Congress, and Esmond Moses, Vice Speaker, will be attending, as well as officials from the Ministry of Justice in Palau, and other dignitaries from regional consulate offices in Micronesia.

Law enforcement officials from police departments, attorneys general offices, and regional Environmental Protection Agency offices from Guam, Pohnpei, Kosrae, Chuuk, Palau, Yap and the Marshall Islands participated in this first regional academy, which began on July 24, 2017.

“The goal of this inaugural MTCE Academy is to enable law enforcement professionals from around the region to study methods of enforcing conservation of precious marine and land resources throughout the **Pacific,**” according to **cadre Lt. Mark Aguon, Officer-in-Charge,** Law Enforcement Section, Guam Department of Agriculture. GCC partnered with the Micronesia Conservation Trust, the Pacific Islands Managed & Protected Areas Community, and Guam Dept. of Agriculture to conduct the academy, which covers protection of wildlife, marine life, and efforts to halt human trafficking in the region.

The concept of a regional MTCE academy began nearly eight years ago, according to Jose Munoz, GCC **Associate Professor of Criminal Justice & Social Sciences.** “Regional officers approached GCC and saying, ‘**No one is doing this – can you guys do this?**’” Munoz says he and Donna Cruz, CJSS Professor, **began developing the curriculum, “because we knew tourism was going to be a huge economic driver in the region, and we had to develop ways to protect our environment, because it is our livelihood.”**

Pete Roberto, current GCC Criminal Justice & Social Sciences Department chair, says the MTCE Academy will have far-**reaching effects.** “**Protecting our environment from a regional perspective** allows law enforcement officials to work collaboratively, sharing resources and information that will afford us a much broader law enforcement presence than **if we just work as individual entities,**” he said.

Funding for this charter academy was obtained from NOAA, DOI-OIA, US Forest Service – PIPTIEM Program, USAID – Project Ready Program, the FSM Congress and the Raymond James Asia Pacific Group through the Micronesian Conservation Trust.

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