The Chief Executives of Micronesia - which includes the U.S. territory of Guam, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, the Republic of Palau, and Yap State, which is part of the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM) - recently incorporated all the FSM states (Kosrae, Pohnpei, Chuuk states) and the Republic of the Marshals to be part of the Chief Executives of Micronesia. The Chiefs meet bi-annually with a rotating leadership and sponsoring of the Chief venue. This year the Chiefs will be meeting in FSM- Pohnpei state to continue the leadership dialogue around the following regional programming themes: Workforce Investment, Invasive Species, Solid Waste Management, Energy, the Micronesian Challenge, Health, Tourism, Transportation, Zoning, and Education.

In each of the programming themes, a workgroup serves as the technical advisory body to the Chiefs and represent industry, government and island/ regional community interests aligned to the core themes. The Pacific Islands Regional Recycling Initiative Committee (PIRRIC) was tasked with the following: development of a comprehensive regional solid waste action plan; conducting a national and regional waste assessment; improvement of environmental monitoring; development of national institutional controls; and identification of funding opportunities. Other key Chief Workgroups/councils include the establishment of the Regional Invasive Species Council (RISC), overseeing all invasive species regional issues, as well as the Regional Tourism Council (RTC), Regional Health Council (RHC), Regional Workforce Development Council (RWDC), Transportation Committee (TC), Zoning Committee (ZC), and Regional Energy Committee (REC). While each of the councils has their specific agenda, each workgroup is also required to report the progress of their sponsored action plans in the upcoming summit.

In keeping with the Rural Connections fall issue focus on renewable energy, offering the Pacific perspective is timely, and adds contrast to the range of energy issues facing our nation. The Chiefs and the REC acknowledge the price of fuel as the top energy concern for all the island utilities. A regional response to this energy challenge includes a purposeful shift to considering different renewable alternative energy technologies. The Chiefs directed the REC to begin an aggressive review of these alternative technologies and to conduct serious research into various technologies’ viability in the region, with a special focus on renewable/alternative energy technologies such as solar, wind, geothermal, ocean current, tidal, and deep ocean water. In Guam, the Public Utilities Commission has already begun initial work in conducting feasibility studies into deep ocean water options for cooling systems for large institutions.

While all the councils have their charter issues to address, expect to see an overall increase in planning and activity from the REC and the RWDC workgroups.

About the Author
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