

# Idea Backed to Make All Micronesia a Park

By Nadine Wharton  
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Sen. Amata Kabua, president of the Senate of the Congress of Micronesia, is supporting a proposal to make all of Micronesia an Oceanic Park System — a vast international peace park.

"And after the rest of the world finishes blowing itself up and polluting itself, we'd like to offer Micronesia as an untouched place for man to visit — just to visit," he said.

What Kabua is advocating, with the support of The Friends of the Earth, is that all of those 2,500 islands in the five-million square miles of ocean wilderness from Hawaii to the Philippines, be left alone.

HE IS ALSO proposing that the 100,000 people who live on those islands, whose total land area is less than the smallest American state, also be left alone and allowed to live as they have for thousands of years.

Next summer, McCalls Publishing Company and the Friends of the Earth will publish a large format book titled "Micronesia — the Pacific Wilderness," with 60 full-page color plates by photographer Robert Wenkam and text by Kenneth Brower.

The book, Wenkam says, is a plea to save the unique island environment and life style of the Islands, which is now under the administration of the United States as a United Nations Strategic Trusteeship.

The park system would be established and administered by the independent Congress of Micronesia.

Wenkam points out that a substantial part of the earth's surface, above and beneath the sea, is little-known, relatively unexplored, in this territory called Micronesia.

The Japanese called the islands "Nanyo" — south seas and Europeans named the land Micronesia — tiny islands.

THE ISLANDERS speak a multitude of languages and comprise a half-dozen ethnic groups and they call themselves, without pretense, "the people."

Intruding colonizers, traders and politicians from Asia, Europe and America, have somehow mostly overlooked the island civilization.

Of the islands, only 90 are inhabited in the three million square miles designated as the Trust Territory of the Pacific. Many are inhabited by only a dozen or so people or by seasonal copra harvesting crews.

Natives, skilled in seamanship passed down through

the generations, still sail the open oceans between isolated islands — navigating thousands of miles without watch or compass.

Wenkam points out that geologically the islands range from the volcanically active Marianas and the extinct volcanic high islands of Palau, Yap, Truk and Ponape, to the low atolls in Yap, Truk and the Marshalls.

THE DEEPEST waters of any ocean on earth lie between Guam and Truk in the Marianas trench, Wenkam points out.

To preserve not only the unique island scenic beauty — to preserve its history and its indigenous traditions — is the purpose of the park proposal.

"Any historical park is meaningless that does not also recognize paramount rights of the Iroij and the Nahmwarki, and preserve culture, language and traditional land use rights," Wenkam wrote in the "Micronesian Reporter."

But how to do this — this proposal of such gigantic, and some would say magnificent — proportions?

Wenkam suggested to the Congress that the system should include all significant sites, scenic, historic and recreational, on land and beneath the sea, in all sections of Micronesia.

"The largest areas could be designated Micronesian Oceanic Parks and require major funding and professional management, established by legislative act of the Congress of Micronesia, which would also create an Oceanic Park Service ranger system.

ALTHOUGH THE system would be similar to U.S. National Parks, Wenkam said, it would in many ways be different.

"On many islands land ownership would remain with the Iroij and Nahmwarki, with leases obtained by the Micronesian Ocean Park Service to provide maintenance, protection, interpretation and public use."

Smaller district or municipal parks would be under the jurisdiction of local officials.

"Marine sanctuaries, wildlife refuges and forest reserves should also be established both within and outside park boundaries where specific ecological circumstances require specialized management of land or sea.

"These specially designated areas should properly be placed under the jurisdiction of a Director of Conservation, perhaps appointed by a Natural Resources or Fish and Wildlife Commission, also established by the Congress of Micronesia."

This is the recommendation of the Friends of the Earth.

# Micronesia's status

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It's too soon to say we are at the beginning of the end in the effort to find a mutually-satisfactory future political status for the Trust Territory.

But Washington hopes and goals in that regard are a bit clearer after the U.S. letter requesting Micronesian negotiators to delay further formal talks from late December until about March.

The American idea is to wait until after the Congress of Micronesia session opening next month, but also to use the time before March for exchanges of notes and some informal meetings between top negotiators.

It makes sense, and it seems to fit everyone's strategy for the moment—not just the U.S. and Micronesian negotiators, who have agreed, but even advocates of independence for the Trust Territory who feel delay and debate are to their advantage.

**THE THIRD ROUND** of status negotiations, held in September in Hana, Maui, indicated general agreement on the Micronesian concept of "free association." That foresees a future where the U.S. will handle foreign affairs and defense but Micronesia will have complete internal self-government.

But the Hana talks also exposed some nagging and touchy questions and a major issue.

Some of the questions relate to such things as customs, citizenship, and currency. They can be settled, but behind them is a basic question of how much sovereignty the Micronesians will have. They want to be a free nation that enters a working arrangement with the U.S.

Presumably some of these questions and details can be explored and almost worked out in exchanges of notes and informal talks between now and March.

and leave the way open to settle what the U.S. and some others see as the big remaining issue—how any free association agreement might be terminated.

The Micronesians want a stipulation that either side—as a free and independent people—can terminate the agreement unilaterally.

The U.S.—stressing what it feels are legitimate Pacific-wide security and other interests—wants any termination to be by mutual consent.

The hope is a compromise can be reached, and the American letter indicates there will be concessions and material benefits if Micronesians are more flexible on this point.

In this regard, it's noted that a Micronesian leader on the status group recently suggested that it might be possible to have no unilateral termination for an initial five-year period and then renegotiate the matter after that.

**THAT, OF COURSE,** is just an American view of how things might go by way of finding an agreement that offers what both sides want.

There are many steps to go, including approval of any agreement by the Micronesian people and the U.S. Congress, a body with some mossbacks in positions to seriously damage any accord.

Since Micronesia is a United Nations trusteeship, at some point the U.N. will have to be consulted or at least informed. If Americans and Micronesians are agreed, that should not be a serious problem. If not, the U.N. will be a source of embarrassment on this issue.

At any rate, the never-too-visible Micronesia status question is likely to go underground for a few more months. Hopefully, when it surfaces in March or so we will truly see the beginning of a new kind of American role based on the idea of cooperation and equality.

THAT COULD HELP clear the air

