

UC SANTA BARBARA

THE Current

February 7, 2005

Jim Harper

UC Santa Barbara Anthropologist Wins Premier Ocean Award From the Pew Foundation's Marine Conservation Program

Anthropologist Shankar Aswani of the University of California, Santa Barbara has been named one of five scholars across the globe and the only American to receive the world's most prestigious award in marine conservation this year.

The Pew Fellowship in Marine Conservation includes \$150,000 to support a three-year project. Aswani, the first anthropologist to be so honored, will use the fellowship to continue and expand his work with communities in the western Pacific's Solomon Islands. Through education and collaboration, he aims to establish and consolidate a network of Marine Protected Areas designed to preserve vital resources and vulnerable species, such as coconut crabs, sea turtles, and sea cows. The Solomon Islands are located east of Papua New Guinea.

"Dr. Aswani's work on Marine Protected Areas in the South Pacific will no doubt make an important contribution to environmental health and food security in the region, adding to the growing conservation legacy of the Pew Fellows," said Ellen Pikitch, Executive Director of the Pew Institute for Ocean Science at the University of Miami's Rosenstiel School of Marine and Atmospheric Science and a Pew Fellow herself. This year's fellowship winners, she added, "are true 'heroes of the sea,' dedicated to

conserving and restoring the largest and most biologically rich place on earth."

An international committee of marine specialists selected the 2005 Pew Fellows in Marine Conservation based on their potential to protect ocean environments. In addition to Aswani, the other 2005 Pew Fellows are: Miriam Fernandez, Chile; Sarah Fowler, United Kingdom; Laurence McCook, Australia; and Jurgenne Primavera, Philippines.

Recipients of Pew Fellowships in Marine Conservation join the world's premier network for ocean science and conservation. Celebrating its 15th anniversary, the program has selected 89 Pew Fellows who have completed projects across the globe. Past winners include Steven Gaines, director of the Marine Science Institute at UC Santa Barbara and acting vice chancellor for research, who was named a Pew Fellow in 2003.

Aswani is an associate professor in the Department of Anthropology and in the Interdepartmental Graduate Program in Marine Science at UCSB. Born in Spain, he speaks six languages, including two languages native to the Solomon Islands, and he is an honorary Senior Research Fellow in the Department of Anthropology at the University of Auckland. Aswani holds a Ph.D. in anthropology from the University of Hawaii at Manoa and a B.A. in marine affairs and anthropology from the University of Miami. He has published extensively on the culture and traditional fishing knowledge of the Pacific Islands, particularly the Solomon Islands.

Aswani's Pew Fellowship will complement other recent major grants supporting his work to establish Marine Protected Areas in the Solomon Islands, including \$400,000 from Conservation International and \$340,000 from the Packard Foundation. He also has received a National Science Foundation grant for a project to train students of Pacific Island descent in marine resource management. The Pew Fellowship, he said, will also enable him to carry out a project to integrate marine and social science research in ways that will facilitate the future development of marine conservation projects in the Pacific Islands.

The Pew Fellows Program in Marine Conservation is part of the Pew Institute for Ocean Science, in partnership with the University of Miami. The fellowships are funded by the Pew Charitable Trusts and administered by the Pew Institute for Ocean Science, which strives to undertake, sponsor, and promote world-class scientific activity aimed at protecting the world's oceans and the species that inhabit

them.

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