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Geographic Research Mission



University of Redlands Custom-Designed Geographic Information System (GIS) Discovers a New 13th Island in the Atoll: Research Launches Brando Enterprises' Continuing Mission to Preserve and Protect the Ecology of Tetiaroa in Tribute to Late Actor Marlon Brando

The Tetiaroa Society, established and funded by **Brando Enterprises** to promote and preserve the ecosystems, biodiversity and culture of Tetiaroa, and the University of Redlands Environmental Studies Department have joined forces to undertake a comprehensive biological and geographic research mission of the famed Polynesian atoll.

In May, the University of Redlands and the Tetiaroa Society embarked on a project designed to inventory the atoll's flora and fauna, complete a detailed shoreline reinforcement study and map the three fresh water ponds that are found inside the motus (small islands) and build a high-resolution geographic grid of the entire area for further environmental assessment.

Led by University of Redlands Environmental Studies professor Timothy Krantz, a class of 12 University students conducted research on the atoll over a 10-day period. Assisting the students in their work was a state-of-the-art geographic information system (GIS) donated by world leading GIS software provider Esri.

Among the numerous findings and developments generated by the research mission were:

- the discovery of a 13th island within the atoll;
- the mapping of ecological changes in the atoll that will help ease and ultimately prevent further erosion and protect the islands' bird inhabitants from predators; and

- identification of as many as three new species of fish residing in the atoll's ponds.

The University of Redlands' effort has become the first officially sanctioned research mission through the Tetiaroa Society, following on the heels of numerous significant research missions carried out prior to the formation of the organization.

In addition to providing new data that can be adapted for environmental impact studies throughout the world, the extensive data resulting from the research mission will also be used throughout the development process of The Brando Resort, helping developers avoid sensitive cultural, archeological and biological resources. The vast GIS database will also be available to visitors to access for an unprecedented natural history of Tetiaroa.

This University of Redlands project will also provide a high-tech system for geographically recording all future scientific research expeditions to the atoll.

"We are delighted to have forged this significant research partnership with the University of Redlands, an association that has already yielded extraordinary results that will help in the preservation of Tetiaroa," said Hinano Bagnis, a respected French Polynesian expert who directs the Tetiaroa Society. "Professor Krantz and his team of students have begun an exhaustive and unprecedented research mission and are helping us build an amazing tool using the GIS technology for every scientific project developed in Tetiaroa."

The Tetiaroa Society, operated under the direction of Bagnis, seeks to contribute to the global understanding and wise management of tropical island socio-ecosystems through education, conservation, and research. Determined jointly by Bagnis and Brando Enterprises, the mission of the Tetiaroa Society is to promote sustainability through an interdisciplinary study of science and technology, the humanities, and the arts; encourage the preservation of Polynesian ecosystems, biodiversity, and culture; developing and testing new technologies and approaches—particularly in relation to renewable energy, food, and water security—that are appropriate for tropical islands in an era of rapid global change; and help the island communities to achieve sustainable development.

"We are pleased to acknowledge the generous support and cooperation provided by the Tetiaroa Society, Brando Enterprises and the Pacific Beachcomber group, builders of The Brando Resort. We are also grateful to the team at Esri for their important contribution to this project. Esri's support, which included utilization of the company's software technology as well as upfront consulting, proved invaluable to our research mission," said Professor Krantz.

Brando Enterprises is an organization established in 2009 to manage the business interests of the trust left through the legacy of the late actor Marlon Brando. This research project furthers its mission to preserve and protect the ecology of the Tetiaroa.

Said the Brando Trustees, "The mission of the Tetiaroa Society reflects the legacy and vision of Marlon Brando. The Brando family and Brando Enterprises salute the Tetiaroa Society in its work to promote Tetiaroa as an atoll perfect for ecology research."

