



## War in the Pacific National Historical Park

**History:** The Pacific theater of World War II covered 1/3 of the Earth's entire surface, but only 1/145 of its total land mass. Thus, battles covered vast distances, required new strategies and equipment, and entangled many of the key Pacific islands. Although Guam is just one island of many involved in the struggles of WWII, War in the Pacific National Historical Park (WAPA) is the only national park devoted to honor all people from all nations who fought in the Pacific War, including those from the U.S., Japan, and the allied nations (Australia, Canada, China, France, Great Britain, New Zealand, the Netherlands, and the Soviet Union). The park was authorized on August 18, 1978 by the U.S. Congress to "commemorate the bravery and sacrifice of those participating in the campaigns of the Pacific Theater of World War II and to conserve and interpret outstanding natural, scenic and historic values and objects on the island of Guam for the benefit of present and future generations". It exists today as a tangible reminder of the immense suffering that occurred and of the many lives lost in WWII. It also serves to promote appreciation of the unique, diverse natural resources of both the land and the sea.



**Cultural Resources:** The seven separate units of WAPA, all facing the Philippine Sea, contain over 100 historical sites, monuments, and structures. A wide-ranging collection of WWII artifacts, mainly features of the 1944 American liberation, are haunting and very real.

The park includes WWII landing beaches at Asan and Agat, as well as coastal defense guns at Piti and hidden Japanese fortifications (e.g.,

caves, pillboxes, foxholes, and trenches), many of which were created by Chamorro slave labor. A Japanese naval communications center is at the Fonte Plateau unit, and the Memorial Wall at the Asan Bay Overlook displays the names of thousands of American and Chamorro casualties.

Culturally based subsistence food gathering still occurs at Asan and Agat beaches. In addition to the abundance of marine



levels of species' diversity in the NPS within its coral reef systems. With more than half of WAPA's approximately 2000 acres underwater, Indo-Pacific coral reefs provide habitat for over 3,500 marine species including: the humphead wrasse (*Cheilinus undulatus*), hawksbill turtle (*Eretmochelys imbricata*), and green sea turtle (*Chelonia mydas*). The park also contains several forest types (i.e. limestone, riverine, ravine, and coastal), inland wetlands, an experimental mahogany forest, tropical savannah ecosystems, and six offshore islands that represent some of the last terrestrial areas in Guam unimpaired by the extremely invasive brown tree snake (*Boiga irregularis*).

### Inventory and Monitoring

**Highlights:** A comprehensive inventory of WAPA's flora was conducted in 2004, as well as

an inventory of reptiles in 2008. The majority of monitoring and inventory, however, is directed towards WAPA's submerged resources. The largest threat to Guam's coral reefs,

sedimentation, has been monitored via underwater stations at the Agat and Asan units since 2003. The results have aided in the identification of spatial and temporal trends in sediment transport within WAPA. Studies of coral recruitment have been conducted



life, visitors can observe sunken military amphibious tractors (amtracs) and other coral-encrusted weaponry underwater.

**Natural Resources:** WAPA has one of the highest

alongside sediment studies since 2004 and have alerted park scientists that recruitment rates are far lower than previously recorded on Guam. Comprehensive monitoring of marine fish and benthic organisms was launched in 2008.

**Current Issues in Management:** With an area of 212 square miles and 170,000 inhabitants, Guam faces numerous challenges associated with overcrowding and limited resources. There are pressing issues of arson, off-road vehicle use, overfishing, watershed degradation, illegal terrestrial and marine dumping, and poaching. Although the situation is already critical for Guam, over the course of the next 5-8 years, the island's population is projected to increase by 30,000 in association with a military buildup. WAPA is committed to maintaining and improving the cultural, historical, and natural resources of Guam through habitat restoration, resource protection and education. Experimental savannah restoration work is underway and large scale restoration is planned for the near future. Park staff members have introduced several exciting new outreach and education opportunities. The WAPA Reef Rangers Program (top photo) is the first stewardship program of its kind on the island. It brings Guam's scientists and managers together with local youth to share an appreciation of the island's beautiful coastal and marine resources.

— H. Moulton, WAPA Ranger