

INVASIVE FISH: Tilapia (*Oreochromis mossambica*)

DESCRIPTION: Tilapia is a hardy fish that can survive in extreme conditions (0.1 mg/l dissolved oxygen, fresh to salt water, 125 mg/l chlorine) and can out-compete most of the native fish of Palau's freshwater and saltwater environments.

THREAT: Tilapia represents a significant threat to aquatic ecosystems in Palau, both freshwater and saltwater. The occurrence of tilapia has drastically altered natural fish communities in other countries. This fish competes with native fauna for spawning grounds, food, and habitat. In Florida, certain areas with dense tilapia populations are nearly devoid of vegetation and native fish.



CURRENT STATUS: Tilapia was first discovered in Palau in a small, landlocked body of water in Meyuns. The fish was subsequently found in several different locations in the Republic. In 2003, there were several unsuccessful attempts to eradicate the Tilapia using various techniques (chlorine, explosives, etc.). In December 2003 the President of Palau declared a Quarantine Emergency, and several agencies under the leadership of the Bureau of Agriculture developed a plan to eradicate the tilapia in four artificial ponds, the only known infested sites. These four ponds were treated with rotenone by a multi-agency team led by staff of the Palau Environmental Quality Protection Board (EQPB). The eradication was apparently successful, and in January 2006, almost two years after the treatment, the Declaration of Quarantine Emergency was lifted and the President declared that there were "no known infestations" of tilapia in Palau.

WHAT YOU CAN DO: If you own tilapia, or if you know of a location where there are tilapia, please inform the Bureau of Agriculture at 544-5804, or the Division of Fish and Wildlife Protection (DFWP) at 488-2487.

