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FEATURED

## Fish dying in Emten Lagoon, no funds for waste assessment

By Anita Roberts

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Residents want an assessment to determine the cause of the fish kills and are warned not to consume the fish

Residents at the Erakor Bridge Community in south Efate have reported finding dead fish in Emten Lagoon.

The dead fish were found over the last several days.

Residents assumed it is a result of a flooded lagoon after the prolonged rainfall and other reasons like pollution through developments occurring at the area, dumping of rubbish, drainage runoffs and sewage discharge.

They want action taken to determine the cause of the fish kill.

"We did not expect to see these many fish dying," said David who grew up at the area and has been keeping an eye on the lagoon.

"We woke up one morning and were surprised to see very poor water quality and dead fish floating in the lagoon. I have never seen the lagoon dirty like this.

"We will suffer if all the fish here die. What will we eat? We will be left with only a dirty lagoon."

At the moment, the cause of the fish kill is unknown.

The Deputy Director of Coastal Fisheries at the Department of Fisheries (DoF), Sompert Gereva, said unless there is a diagnostic test, it is very hard to say the exact cause of the fish dying.

"Basically, fish die because their environment can no longer support them with their survival needs such as shelter, food and oxygen.

"Constant fish kills in an area is a sign of pollution," he said.

"When there are no fish kills, it means that the environment is supportive enabling survival. But when conditions change as a result of development activities, weather patterns, too much water runoffs, sewage discharge and any other forms of waste, it could potentially lead to fish kill."

Asked if an assessment would be done to determine the cause of the fish-kills at Emten Lagoon, Gereva said no funds are available and it requires collaboration.

"The government has not committed any funding for us to work with other government departments such as Environment and other agencies, community leaders such as chiefs, SHEFA Province and Industry to do a good study at the Emten Lagoon.

"Measuring how much waste are being put into the lagoon is the end product. We have to find out the source of the waste as the root problem before we assess the waste in the lagoon."

Residents along the Emten Lagoon are strongly advised not to consume any dead fish found floating in the lagoon as it could cause other health problems.

