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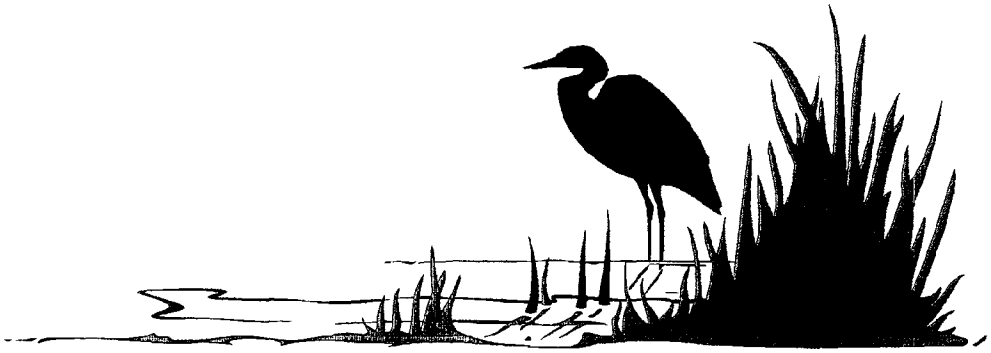

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THE WETLANDS OF GUAM

A Birthright In Jeopardy

Video Script

VideoWritten and funded by

Guam Coastal Management Program

Video Produced Through

KGTF - TV

Guam Educational Telecommunications Corporation

Produced by

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BLACK. Sounds of water. Sounds of rain. Title fades in.

THE WETLANDS OF GUAM
A Birthright in Jeopardy

FADE IN:

Sunrise in the Piti Estuary. CUTS to other wetland areas as the sun rises. The sound of wind only, or gurgling water, or toad croaking. Nothing more. CLOSE-UPS of dew and early morning water on reeds.

VO (FEMALE)

This island Guam, this home which has sustained our fathers and mothers, sons and daughters for thousands of years, is a single system created by nature to function as a whole. The soft shore and verdant mountain tops, the forests, the limestone plateau, and the wetlands, all depend upon each other for their own health. We depend upon the health of each of nature's elements as well, even when we don't understand those elements, or their connection to our lives..

FADE TO BLACK

FADE IN:

Quote over black background. Sound of frogs, birds, wind.

"...since the base of Lot No. 3465 is predominantly a wetland area, it is perhaps in the best interest of the public to lease a portion of land to Mr. Ji..."

- Bill 660, Section 8, 22nd Guam Legislature

CUT TO:

reeds blowing in wind, clouds scudding by, rain begins to fall.

VO (MALE #1)

I manaina hu gi malofan tati, ti man malati-ti, lao ma tunguha muna lala i tano yan i guianjan niha palai lilala. Ma gof tungu na siha famaguon i atottan saina lao ti siha magas i atottan saina. I taotaota pago na hinanao man malelefa ni tiningo manaina ta. Fanaan i menegai tiningota ana fan a aguaguat hit yan ta ke hulat i atottan saina. Yangin ini pa'a'ta gi hinanaota mona, tatati ta punu i tiningo manaina ta.

CROSS FADE TO:

wetland area with buildings. Various CUTS.

VO (MALE #2)

There is no crime in ignorance, only in ignoring truth when it is made available and acting from ignorance. That which we don't understand, we denigrate. That which we denigrate, we fail to protect. That which we fail to protect, we destroy. That which we destroy, we lose forever. That which we lose forever, we deny to our children.

MORPH FROM HEALTHY WETLAND AT MANENGGON TO DEAD LAND.

CUT TO:

Bulldozer pushing fill into wetland. (Southern High School site?)

VO (CHILD - BOY)

Adults tell us that wetlands are incubators for life, and we believe them. But adults don't protect wetlands, because they say that some people should have the right to destroy wetlands simply because they have a piece of paper called a title. Do the animals and plants know what a title is? Is a title a right to destroy the land?

CUT TO:

Slow dolly by homes and wetlands along inland road through Piti and Agat.

VO (CHILD - GIRL)

Wetlands collect rain waters during typhoons or storms, so that not all lands will be flooded. When people fill their wetlands, they put their neighbors land in danger of flooding. In Agat, and Piti, many families now have homes that flood, because we have not protected our wetlands. Why don't we protect our communities?

CUT TO:

Warehouse sitting on filled wetland.

VO (CHILD - BOY)

Wetlands filter the waters which are returned to our aquifer, and replenish our drinking water supply. They remove toxins from our run-off, and our agriculture, and our golf courses, and our subdivisions. When people fill wetlands, they endanger our water supply and our island. Why don't we protect our water and our people?

FADE TO BLACK:

Sounds of river waters as they fall over rocks.

Title

What Are Wetlands?

CROSS FADE:

Starting with head waters of a small river, a series of CUTS as the water builds and empties into a bay.

VO (FEMALE)

It is believed that practically all of the water the Earth has created, is still with us in one form or another. The cycle of water from the oceans to the rivers and the streams, to the plants and animals that nourished by it, is a complex cycle of life, and one that we are only now beginning to comprehend in a rudimentary fashion.

Guam has an especially intimate relationship with water, as we are surrounded by it, and inundated by it throughout our cultural heritage. But it is not only the coastal waters that are important in the delicate balance of nature on Guam, for the inland bodies of water are just as crucial as any other link in the chain of life.

CUT TO:

Agana Springs, Piti Estuary, Manenggon man-made wetlands, mangrove. As many cuts and fades as necessary to cover VO.

VO (MALE)

Wetlands are a unique part of Guam's natural land area. They include swamps, marshes, mangroves, springs and river valleys that are usually covered with water. Some of the smaller areas may dry up during dry periods, while others remain inundated with surface water year round.

Our wetlands function as filters to keep sediment away from our coral reefs, as purifiers for our fresh water supplies, as incubators for juvenile fish, and as natural flood control areas to safeguard our people and their homes.

Wetlands of one acre or more in size, occupy a mere five thousand acres of Guam's total of more than 135,000 acres . Less than 3.7% of our total land. Yet that value of the functions they perform far exceed their size. They are responsible for making our island livable.

FADE TO BLACK:

Sound of birds, rain hitting water.

FADE IN:

Heavy rain, various cuts to water running off hills, streets, etc., into a wetland area. Various cuts to crabs, fish, etc., in a wetland area.

VO (FEMALE)

Wetlands are among the most productive ecosystems in nature. Wetlands protect homes, farmlands, villages and urbanized areas from flooding, by slowing and storing floodwater. They trap and modify pollutants from stormwater and runoff. They are essential areas for feeding, nesting, cover, and breeding for a variety of birds, fish, reptiles, invertebrates, and mammals.

CUT TO:

various shots of waves/tidal action in mangroves.

VO (FEMALE)

Wetlands provide shoreline stabilization and protection from the wind, floods and waves. As water washes in, the wetland vegetation slows down the flow inland. The prop root system in mangroves, for example, reduces tidal currents and traps much floating debris resulting in the extensive deposition of sediments and eventual creation of more land.

CUT TO:

Agana swamp, wet, near Agana River.

VO (FEMALE)

Active wetlands serve to reduce the nutrient load in runoff and protect the ecological balance in estuarine and marine waters by limiting the type, amount, and nature of algae growth. Excess algae growth, or an unnatural distribution can severely harm marine communities, including our coral reefs.

CUT TO:

Agana Springs area.

VO (FEMALE)

Wetlands preserve the integrity of the water lens system. Scientists have linked the wetlands of Guam to our water tables and groundwater recharge areas. Wetlands enhance water quality by retaining pollutants and converting them through a biochemical process to less harmful substances. They transform and retain nutrients, reduce sediments and filter surface runoff.

FADE TO BLACK:

TITLE

Who Benefits From Wetlands?

CROSS FADE:

stock footage of homes under flood, (Agat, Barrigada).

VO (MALE)

It is not always easy to see who benefits from laws which maintain a healthy environment, but it is always easy to see the immediate impacts from our failure to do so. Families face economic ruin, and disruption of lives, simply because we fail as a community to protect those resources which nature has provided the Earth.

CUT TO:

various shots of bulldozers grading, dumping fill, cutting land.

SUPERIMPOSE:

"We do not inherit the land from our fathers. We borrow it from our children."

VO (MALE)

If our actions don't match our words, then our words are lies. If the protection of our communities does not take precedence over the profits of today, then our government is a failure. If we treat the land as if its health was secondary to our desires, then we will fail our ancestors, our selves, and our descendants.

FADE TO BLACK:

TITLE

The Law

CROSS FADE TO:

Go from long shot to close up cuts to wetlands in various stages of violation, including fill, dumping, grading.

VO (FEMALE)

Guam may hold the distinction of having the weakest, least protective wetland laws in the United States. Although Guam defines wetlands as "Areas of Particular Concern, in truth, our resources are not protected by law. Executive Order 90-13, which is only a reiteration of Executive Order 78-21, are the full extent of the legal base upon which Guam's rather weak rules and regulations rest.

Worse, decisions for allowing fill and destruction of wetlands rest with the Territorial Land Use Commission, a group appointed more for their support of winning political teams than for any expertise in community planning, understanding of resource values, or ability to comprehend direct, indirect or cumulative impacts of development. The agencies designed to provide the expertise in these areas are, more often than not, ignored in the decision making process.

CUT TO:

Superior Court building

VO (MALE)

When wetland violations occur, the community must rely on the federal government to take action, because Guam's laws are too weak to bring a violation to court. Because of this, when court action is taken, the fine collected goes to the federal treasury, rather than to violation mitigation on Guam. In one case, the federal government received one point three million dollars for the fill of wetlands on Guam, while Guam has been unable to prosecute and collect fines on its own.

CROSS FADE TO:

long shot of Fena Lake, cut to various vegetation, birds, other life.

VO (FEMALE)

In the five years between 1986 and 1990, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers took action against 27 wetland violations on Guam. The Government of Guam took action against none. The Government of Guam does not currently have the laws necessary to protect the community. As we seek more voice over our own lives through Commonwealth, shouldn't we also demonstrate a greater ability to protect our community? Doesn't increased responsibility come with increased self-governance? These are our lands, not the Federal Governments! It is our responsibility, not theirs!

CROSS FADE TO:

black. Title fades up.

I Sesonyan Siha

CROSS FADE TO:

tracking along running stream, come upon "The Wetlands of Guam" beside stream. move to close up of booklet cover.

VO (CHILD -GIRL)

In 1991, wetland experts in the Government of Guam responded to an Executive Order which required revisions to the existing and inadequate wetlands rules and regulations. They developed new law and new rules designed to protect our land, our homes, our community. These new protections were forwarded to legislature, and they have been introduced in bill form twice, but to date our new protections have not been acted on.

CUT TO:

Various cuts of attractive wetlands at sunrise, in rain, in wind, etc. on voice over double expose pre-contact Chamorro family at wetland, picking plants, filling water jug, etc.

VO (CHILD -BOY)

Less than three point seven percent of our land protects one hundred percent of our people. The wetlands protect our homes, protect our water, protect our health. It is time for your generation to protect our wetlands so that my generation will have flood protection, and clean water. It is what the government is supposed to do. It is what communities are supposed to do. Protehi I Tano Ta. Na safu i mama mai la na hinanao.

CUT TO:

black.

FADE IN:

To Those Who Forget, The Earth Sends Reminders

CUT TO:

Footage of flooding on NOAA tape. Various cuts over the next three minutes.

VO (FEMALE)

Throughout history, several truths about wetlands have been self-evident. First; agricultural communities have, for thousands of years, understood the value of the nutrient rich wetlands for agricultural production, and understood the value of protecting those lands. Second; developers and real estate agents have, for those same thousands of years, seen wetlands as impediments to immediate profit, and therefore viewed them as something to be destroyed for function.

VO (MALE)

Human beings exist because our planet is dynamic, and because it is dynamic in a particular way. Fires occur naturally, and can benefit both flora and fauna. Volcanos renew landscapes, create new land forms, and eventually create new, rich soil. Typhoons are simply responses to complex interactions within our atmosphere, and earthquakes are necessary relief valves for our tectonic plates. Flooding of land renews nutrients and permits the cycle of water and life to operate as nature requires, nurturing our lands, our water and our air.

VO (MALE)

These are scenes of nature's response to mans careless and thoughtless and selfish mismanagement our natural systems. Wetlands! In 1993, the Midwest of the United States suffered terrible flooding which devastated millions of lives. Whole towns were lost. Possessions which took generations to accumulate were gone in hours. Property values were destroyed. Friendships and families forced apart. Crops drowned. What was truly tragic about the floods, was that they didn't have to happen. Nature was not to blame for the massive devastation, man was.

Using a known base of existing wetlands in 1780, we know that 85% of wetlands in Illinois have been filled; 87% in Indiana; 89% in Iowa; 42% in Minnesota; 87% in Missouri, and; 90% in Ohio. If only half of those wetlands had been retained, instead of being filled and developed, they could have stored an amount of water equal to more than twenty day's flow of the Mississippi River at flood stage at St. Louis, 700,000 cubic feet of water per second, or 30 million acre feet of water. But property owners demanded their rights, and politicians and land-use commissions failed in their obligations to do the right thing over the popular thing, and thus wrought destruction upon the land.

VO (FEMALE)

Like the United States, we on Guam too have ignored nature's needs and community needs over the years. The Midwest paid a heavy price for that in 1993. Guam can still learn from their lesson and reverse the pattern of abuse of land and nature we have come to accept. But we will not do that until we stop thinking of artificially defined lots or tracts of land as somehow occupying separate and independent space, and realize that all of Guam is a single system, designed by nature. We are a community, and our actions as individuals impact on the entire community. Wetlands, regardless of ownership, serve a community function and must have the community's support for their protection. If not, we will certainly learn that nature will, as always, prevail in having her way. That way does not have to be harmful to us, but it will be unless we choose otherwise.

Freeze final frame of man, looking up as he his swept down the flooding waters to his death.....

FADE TO BLACK. FADE IN CREDIT FADE TO BLACK. CREDITS. FADE OUT.

FINIS

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