

The Bay

Tucked in a lush valley on Saipan's windward side, Laolao Bay's rich coral reef ecosystem has made it a popular fishing spot for generations and earned it the reputation as Saipan's best all-weather dive site, averaging up to 200 divers per day. Laolao Bay is a cherished recreation site for local families, providing a peaceful backdrop for picnics, BBQs and swimming excursions. As rich on land as it is in the sea, the area also draws hikers, runners, and history enthusiasts to view its artifacts, including pictographs, village remnants and pottery deposits that date back several thousand years.



A bird's eye view of Laolao Bay. Photo courtesy of Greg Moretti.

But Laolao reefs and forests, like many places on Saipan, are under environmental stress from such things as sedimentation, development, and unsustainable beach activities such as poaching and littering. In fact, Laolao was designated as a focal point for efforts to restore marine and terrestrial environments in the CNMI, given its environmental and cultural value and the threats to its health.



Atulai, or big-eye scad, in Laolao Bay. Photo courtesy of Greg Moretti.

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Why Litter?

WHY LITTER?

In surveys of Laolao users, littering and dumping have consistently scored as the biggest concerns. And the community is right. Litter is a big problem in Laolao. As a result, the campaign is focused on making Laolao litter free as the first big step to protecting Laolao for generations to come. Unfortunately, marine debris can remain in the environment for decades or even centuries, causing far-reaching effects on marine creatures and humans, navigation, the economy, and the way in which the Laolao ecosystem functions.



Clean up volunteers carry bags of trash along the Laolao Bay shoreline.

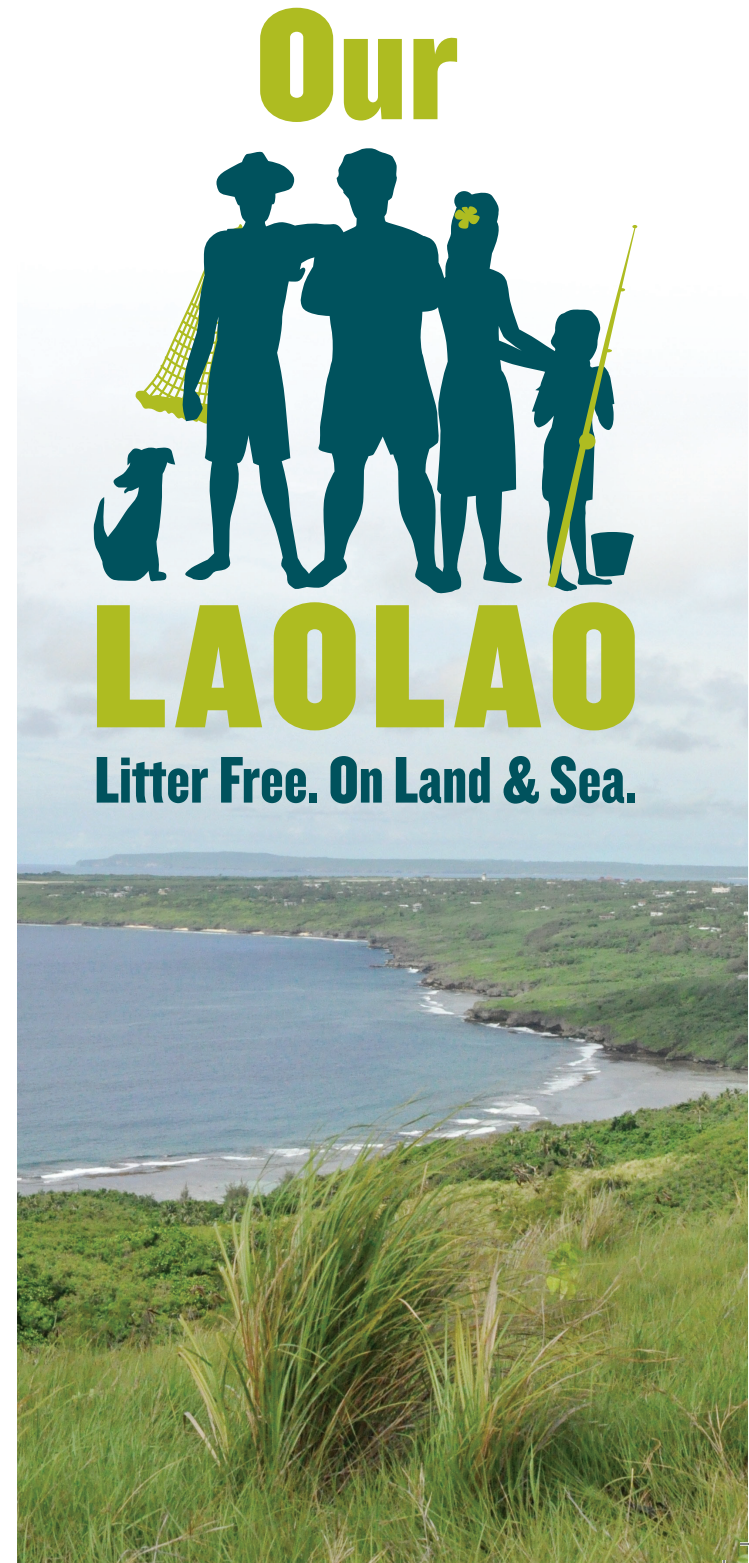
So please pick up what you bring in to Laolao Bay!



Our
LAOLAO
Litter Free. On Land & Sea

For more information or to volunteer,
call Jose Quan at 664-8522.
After work hours, please call 233-7333.

E-mail info@ourlaolao.com
Visit www.ourlaolao.com



The Campaign

The Our Laolao campaign strives to inspire everyone to keep Laolao Bay clean and litter free for future generations. Our strategy is simple: give community members opportunities to share why they believe Laolao Bay is special and deserves special care. Once you know how much your neighbor cares about Laolao Bay, it's hard not to respect it and keep it clean.

So please visit "The Voices" section of our website, OurLaolao.com, to learn more about why people value Laolao. And keep an eye, and ear, out for media stories, events and fun promotions that will help these individuals demonstrate their pride in this special place. But their stories alone are not enough. We want to hear your Laolao stories, too! Go to "Share Your Story" on our website to raise your voice for Laolao. Your story could be the next one featured on our Facebook page and in upcoming news articles.



THE LAUNCH OF OUR LAOLAO: Community members and dignitaries gather for the ceremonial ribbon cutting at Laolao Bay on March 22, 2012.

The campaign also shines a light on the rich cultural and environmental value of the bay and what community members can do to do protect it. We hope users will learn more about how special Laolao is to our island identity. Supporters can then "Sign the Pledge" to show support for a litter free Laolao and participate in campaign activities, such as beach cleanups, story contests, and flash mobs (yes, flash mobs!). Everything helps. Visit the "Get Involved" section of our website to learn more.

The Voices

The stories of our Campaign Champions convey the rich cultural and environmental value of Laolao Bay. Through their words, we understand how important Laolao Bay is to our past and future. Listen closely to what some of them have to share...



Our Campaign Champions lead by example and incorporate a litter free lifestyle, on land and sea. Pictured here (l-r): fisherman Roman Benavente, businesswoman Rose Ada Hocog, teacher Rita Guerrero, and Father Jesse Reyes.

ROMAN BENAVENTE, FISHERMAN

"My dad was a traditional fisherman," says Roman Benavente. "When I was young, I'd always look forward to our trips to Laolao Bay."

Benavente believes that community leaders and residents can work together to keep Laolao Bay clean. "I want everyone who visits Laolao Bay to feel a sense of belonging and ownership so that they will take care of it for generations to come," says Benavente. "I want my grandchildren to enjoy what I enjoyed."

ROSE ADA HOCOG, BUSINESSWOMAN

"My roots are in Laolao Bay," says Rose Ada Hocog. "As a kid, I'd walk barefoot to feel the texture of the sand on my feet. I didn't worry about stepping on a broken piece of glass or trash. This is fast becoming a thing of the past."

"Everyone deserves a chance to experience Laolao Bay like we did," she says. To make this reality, she asks that each person take action. "When you go to the beach, bring a bag and take your trash with you. We can work together to preserve this special bay."

FATHER JESSE REYES, SAN JOSE CHURCH

Father Jesse Reyes grew up in San Vicente, a village that neighbors Laolao Bay. On the weekends, Reyes would camp on the beach and go to picnics and barbeques with family and friends. "Laolao Bay is very special to me," he says. "It is the backdrop of all our family's memorable times."

"The bay has been a source of sustenance for a lot of families, an economic engine for tourists as a top diving destination, and a favorite hangout for everyone to relax and enjoy nature," he says. "Let's not forget that 'Cleanliness is Godliness' and we are all caretakers of our natural treasures."

RITA GUERRERO, TEACHER

Rita Guerrero moved to Laolao Bay in the early 1970s. "It wasn't until later that we learned it was one of the historic areas of our island," she says. During the development of the property, ancient Chamorro artifacts were found, prompting the Guerreros to turn the farm area into a popular restaurant and cultural center called the Chamorro Village.

Today, Guerrero and her family value Laolao Bay as a second home. She wants people to visit Laolao Bay to understand and experience its cultural and natural richness. "My hope is that everyone will treasure what we have here on our island."

We Have The Power

Our Laolao is an experiment in how powerful a community can be if it cherishes the places that shape them and speaks out on their behalf. Our Laolao is the first step in a community-driven effort to save not only Laolao, but to also showcase what makes Saipan special. From Laolao, we hope to reach out to other parts of Saipan and the CNMI to protect our island way of life. But a journey starts with one step. So take this first step with us in Laolao and let's see how far it can take us. Visit www.OurLaolao.com to learn more.