

COOK ISLANDS NATIONAL BIODIVERSITY STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN MAUKE NBSAP REPORT

MAUKE WORKSHOP and CONSULTATIONS



Opetipa Nui, Mauke - Photo by Raita Moetaua

Date: 19th – 23rd September 2024

Location: Mauke Island

Facilitators: Elizabeth Munro, Rima Moeka'a, Raita Moetaua, and Kas Silk

Participants: Island Council and community members

Report written by Karen Silk, NES
October 2024

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Summary

On the 19th of September 2024, the National Environment Service (NES) hosted a successful National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP) workshop in Mauke. The event aimed to gather local insights on biodiversity conservation, understand the challenges faced by the community, and identify practical solutions. This initiative is part of NES's broader efforts to align island-specific priorities with the Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) targets.

As the first Pa Enea workshop, it saw participation from 47 individuals, representing 25% of the island's population. Attendees included representatives from government agencies, local residents, returnees, and senior students from the local school. The student-led discussions were a standout feature, sparking interest and pride among families and the wider community. The workshop addressed various environmental and biodiversity issues affecting Mauke, ensuring a comprehensive discussion.

In addition to the workshop, NES conducted one-on-one consultations with key stakeholders, including the incoming Island Council, the Registered Nurse Benina Henry, the Ministry of Marine Resources representative Tai George, Mauke Infrastructure Manager, Basilio Kaokao, eight teachers from the local school and individuals including Tau'i Taokia and June Hosking. These meetings allowed for a deeper exploration of specific biodiversity and environmental concerns relevant to each group, ensuring their perspectives were integrated into the updated NBSAP.

Participants

Signed register attached as Annex A

Workshop Agenda

Attached as Annex B



Opening Remarks

The workshop opened with a prayer led by Basilio Kaokao, who served as the Master of Ceremonies in his role as Chairman of the Environment Authority, setting a reflective tone for the day. Elizabeth Munro from NES and the newly appointed Mayor, Joanne Rongoape Stephens, welcomed participants. Mayor Stephens expressed her appreciation to the community members for attending and encouraged them to actively engage in the discussions, emphasizing that their insights and contributions would play a crucial role in addressing biodiversity challenges and shaping a sustainable future for Mauke.

NBSAP 2002 Presentation

NBSAP Background

Elizabeth Munro provided an overview of the NBSAP's history and development, emphasizing the 2002 NBSAP's alignment with national, regional, and international frameworks. She highlighted its relevance to the broader goals of biodiversity conservation and protection.

Importance of Biodiversity

The presentation underscored biodiversity's vital role in ecosystem stability, human well-being, and climate regulation, stressing the need for a robust biodiversity plan to ensure food security, clean water, medicinal resources, and environmental resilience.

Rapid Review of the 2002 NBSAP

Consultant Rima Moeka'a presented a rapid review of the 2002 NBSAP, evaluating its effectiveness and identifying gaps, challenges, and opportunities for improvement. While strengths included broad community involvement and comprehensive coverage of biodiversity issues, the review also highlighted the need for updates after 22 years and the establishment of financial mechanisms for implementation.

Success Stories

Several success stories were shared, such as the development of the National Invasive Species Strategy, rat eradication efforts on selected islands, and the coordination with various stakeholders on biodiversity issues.

National Targets

The new guiding national biodiversity targets were introduced, focusing on five key strategic goals:

- Area management and restoration
- Species management
- Threats management (including climate change impacts and pollution)
- Integrating knowledge and learning for sustainability
- Mainstreaming policies and legislation



Group Work on Strategic Goals

Participants were divided into six groups, each discussing all five strategic goals. After lunch, each group presented on one goal to ensure all were covered without repetition. Below are the highlights of each strategic goal discussed

Strategic Goal 1: Area Management

The discussion emphasized the importance of managing protected areas, such as ra'ui (protected sites), to prevent overuse and degradation. Participants called for stronger enforcement to ensure compliance with protection measures and identified key species, including coconut crabs and turtles that require additional safeguarding. The need to protect and restore water wells, lagoons, coastal areas, and historical sites was also stressed. Participants suggested educational programs to increase community awareness of conservation efforts and recommended removing invasive tree species, such as acacia, to improve water quality and availability. The preservation of these areas is seen as essential for the island's future generations.

Strategic Goal 2: Species Management

The threat posed by invasive species, including rats, pigs, and goats, was a major concern due to their negative impact on native wildlife and water resources. Participants recommended a comprehensive, well-planned eradication program to mitigate these threats. In addition to invasive species, the need to protect culturally significant species like puaa, coconut crabs, and medicinal plants was highlighted. Efforts should focus on replanting native trees, establishing nurseries for traditional plants, and implementing specific management plans for vulnerable species. The community's role in respecting and monitoring ra'ui sites was also considered crucial.

Strategic Goal 3: Threats Management

Waste and land management issues were significant topics of concern, with participants citing ineffective land-clearing rules, inadequate waste disposal, and the lack of sewage management facilities. There was a call for better waste management solutions, such as proper landfills, recycling initiatives, and promoting organic alternatives to chemical fertilizers.

Other threats identified included pollution from burning plastics, chemical spills, and agricultural runoff affecting soil and water quality. Participants also expressed concerns about climate change impacts, such as drought and soil erosion, and proposed strategies like tree planting for erosion control and increased awareness on climate resilience.

Strategic Goal 4: Integrating Knowledge and Learning for Sustainability

There was a strong emphasis on preserving and integrating traditional knowledge into modern biodiversity management. This includes the use of traditional practices in sustainable fisheries, farming, and other cultural conservation methods. The need for educational programs targeting both students and the broader community was highlighted, including topics on traditional planting based on arapo (lunar) cycles, sustainable resource use, and the value of traditional medicinal plants. Incorporating gender equality and social inclusion in these educational initiatives was also recommended to ensure that all community members can contribute to and benefit from biodiversity conservation efforts.



Strategic Goal 5: Mainstreaming and Integrating National, Regional, and International Policies/Legislation

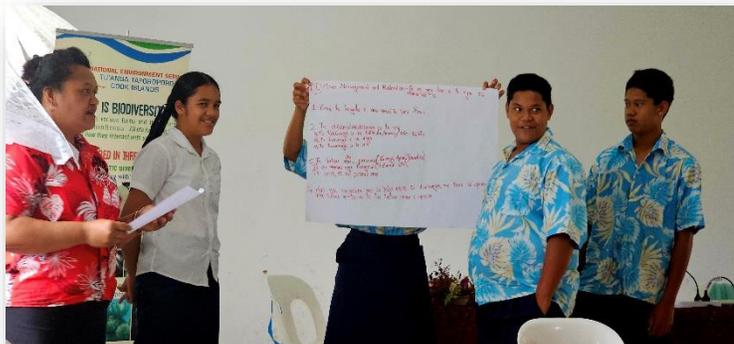
Participants stressed the importance of aligning local policies with national and international standards while also considering island-specific needs. There was a preference for developing and enforcing island-specific by-laws that reflect Mauke's unique circumstances. The Island Council was encouraged to take a more active role in policy development, monitoring, and enforcement, especially concerning ra'ui sites and land use regulations. The need for regular policy reviews, improved communication with the community, and transparent decision-making processes was also emphasized. Strengthening the connection between traditional practices and modern policy frameworks was seen as a key approach to enhancing local biodiversity governance.

Stakeholder Presentations

Following lunch, each group presented their discussions on one of the strategic goals. These presentations summarized key points and outlined clear action steps for addressing biodiversity challenges in Mauke.

Wrap-Up Session and Acknowledgements

The workshop, facilitated by Basilio Kaokao, concluded with a wrap-up session. Basilio highlighted the importance of ongoing community involvement in conservation efforts and urged participants to remain committed to addressing the key issues identified during the workshop. Raita Moetaua, Mauke NES officer for Mauke, played a key role in organizing the program and workshop and coordinating logistics. These efforts ensured the event was well-prepared and efficiently run.



Closing remarks

Elizabeth Munro concluded the workshop by expressing her thanks to the community for their active participation, thoughtful comments, and engaging discussions. She acknowledged the valuable issues raised and emphasized the significance of aligning Mauke's biodiversity goals with broader national and international targets, such as the Global Biodiversity Framework.

Mayor Joanne Stephens also extended her appreciation, expressing gratitude to NES for organizing the workshop and emphasizing the ongoing need to protect the island's unique biodiversity. She encouraged continued collaboration among the community to ensure the preservation of the natural environment for future generations.

Conclusion

The Mauke NBSAP workshop successfully gathered valuable feedback from the community, with a strong focus on practical, actionable next steps. The discussions highlighted key concerns such as invasive species management, waste disposal, water conservation, and the protection of culturally significant areas. Moving forward, NES will incorporate the insights gained from the workshop into the revised NBSAP for the Cook Islands, ensuring that local priorities are reflected in national biodiversity goals. The high level of engagement from the community reflects their deep commitment to preserving their environment for future generation.

Attachments:

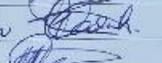
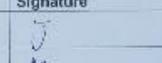
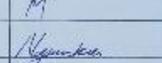
- **Annex A:** Mauke Attendance Register
- **Annex B:** Mauke Island Program

Annex A: Mauke NBSAP consultations Attendance Register



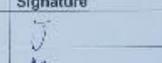
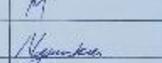
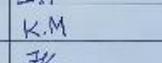
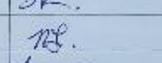
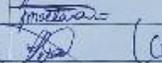
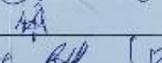
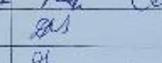
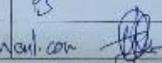


Cook Islands National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP) Workshop
19 September 2024 | Opetipa Nui, Mauke, Cook Islands
Attendance Sheet

Name	Gender	Contact details: Phone or Email *optional	Signature
AINE TEATAI-ARIKI	F	alainepetite@cookislands.gov.ck 7841466.ck	
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Nene Okoloi	F	76799	
Tuaine R Akarua	F	58126	
MARIA S T AITURAU-TEREIA	F	73-794	 (Arii Mause Puroto)
Kupatua Moetava	M		
Alone Henry	F	58496	





Name	Gender	Contact details: Phone or Email *optional	Signature
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Manuarii Teatai	F	89556	
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Kurake Murara	F	51160	
Tuaine Moekaa	F		
NOORU TEAO	F	57005	
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* Tai G Akamaeau	F	76349	<i>[Signature]</i> 19/09/2024

Annex B: Mauke Island Program



National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP)
Program for Mauke
18th September – 23 September

DAY	DATE	START	END	ACTIVITY - STAKEHOLDERS	LOCATION
Thu	19th Sep	09:00	1pm	NBSAP Community meeting	<u>Opetipa Nui</u>
		2pm	2:35pm	Island Council meeting	Mauke Government House
Fri	20th Sep	09:20	10am	Registered Nurse	Mauke Government House
				Project admin – Workshop report and eDM	Mauke Government House
		4:45pm	5:30pm	<u>Tauj Taokia</u>	Private Address - <u>Nuatu</u>
Sat	21st Sep	1:30pm	3pm	June Hosking	Private address - <u>Anaokae</u>
Sun	22nd Sep	11:30am	12pm	<u>BasilioKaokao</u>	Public luncheon
Mon	23rd Sep	8am		School teachers	Mauke College
		9am		MMR	at MMR