

COOK ISLANDS
NATIONAL BIODIVERSITY STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN
AITUTAKI NBSAP REPORT

AITUTAKI COMMUNITY GROUP WORKSHOPS

13th – 16th November 2024



Elizabeth Munro and Allone Davey, NES Officers presenting in Ngapuariki Hall

Facilitators: Elizabeth Munro, Rima Moeka'a, Allone Davey and Kas Silk

Participants: Island Council, Community Members, Araura College Students, and Stakeholders

Report written by Karen Silk, NES
November 2024

Summary

The National Environment Service (NES) facilitated workshops and consultations in Aitutaki, bringing together the Island Council, Non-Government organizations, educational institutions, and environmentally engaged citizens to discuss biodiversity conservation, waste management, and climate resilience. These meetings emphasized the importance of collaboration between traditional knowledge holders and modern scientific approaches to address environmental challenges. Discussions focused on key issues like invasive species, coastal erosion, and bone fishing, while also celebrating local initiatives that reflect the island's potential for conservation and sustainability.

Participants

Signed registers are attached as Annex A

Workshop Agenda

Attached as Annex B

NBSAP 2002 Presentation

NBSAP Background

Rima Moeka'a 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



Aitutaki NBSAP visit Highlights

While adult attendance at the community workshop was modest, with 11 participants, the engagement of 120 Araura College students in a separate session significantly enhanced overall participation. The inclusion of 120 Araura College students added a vibrant dynamic to the workshops, with their 2050 visions offering contrasting perspectives. One group presented an inspiring and optimistic outlook, envisioning a thriving future if proactive steps are taken to care for the environment. In contrast, the other group delivered a more cautionary view, highlighting the potential consequences of inaction and the importance of addressing environmental challenges.

The newly appointed Island Council expressed a genuine eagerness to understand ongoing projects and demonstrated a commitment to incorporating environmentally sustainable practices into their future plans. Aitutaki's NES officers, Alone Davey and Linda Ruamoana, played an instrumental role in organizing the program and facilitating site visits, ensuring diverse perspectives were included.

The mama's from the Vainetini group contributed significantly by raising concerns about the decline in medicinal plants, among other things and the importance of preserving and sharing traditional medicinal knowledge.

During the community workshop, participants were divided into two groups to explore the five strategic goals of the NBSAP in depth. Each group presented their reflections and priorities, contributing to a shared vision for Aitutaki's environmental sustainability. The NES team's visit was further enriched by Alone's remarkable coordination, which allowed for additional site visits to initiatives such as taramea harvesting, kuramo'o habitat appreciation, African tulip biocontrol site, and an organic farm.

Key Insights and Priorities:

- **Biodiversity Conservation:** Addressing invasive species and safeguarding native plants and marine life.
- **Waste Management:** Developing better waste sorting and recycling systems while tackling illegal dumping.

- **Climate Resilience:** Proposing adaptive strategies, including native species replanting and improved water resource management.
- **Youth Engagement:** Empowering students through active participation in conservation efforts to ensure the continuity of environmental stewardship.

Key Discussions and Outcomes

1. Area Management and Restoration

- **Raui Systems:** Four raui zones were identified in Aitutaki, focusing on marine conservation. Participants stressed the need for better enforcement and educational programs to increase respect for these zones, including potential school-based monitoring initiatives.
- **Coastal Erosion:** Coastal changes and sand loss were noted as significant issues, with participants proposing replanting native species like pandanus for erosion control and habitat restoration.
- **Land Clearing:** Concerns were raised about the removal of trees without replacement. Proposals included enforcing regulations requiring the planting of five trees for every one removed and using cleared trees for mulching.
- **Wetlands:** Participants highlighted the impact of saltwater intrusion on wetlands and taro plantations, calling for restoration efforts to support traditional agriculture.



2. Species Management

- **Invasive Species:** The growing populations of mynah birds, rats, and cats were recognized as threats to biodiversity. Community-driven biocontrol measures and bounty programs were suggested.
- **Native Species:** Protecting kuramoo (nectar-feeding birds) and monitoring fish spawning areas like Ootu Basin were prioritized. Participants also emphasized the need for surveys to track endangered and indicator species.
- **Medicinal Plants:** Traditional medicinal plants like poroiti and puraka are declining due to development and herbicide use. Community programs to replant and preserve these plants were proposed.
- **Marine Health:** Participants noted the increasing presence of moray eels and sharks in the lagoon, as well as concerns about taramaea (crown of thorns) infestations. Funding and support for taramaea removal programs were requested.

3. Threats Management

- **Waste Management:** Illegal dumping and improper waste sorting were significant issues. Proposals included establishing recycling centers, improving waste disposal infrastructure, and enhancing penalties for non-compliance.
- **Climate Change:** Rising sea levels, prolonged droughts, and extreme weather events were identified as critical threats. Community members emphasized the importance of adaptive strategies such as rainwater harvesting and coastal planting.
- **Land Development:** The use of heavy machinery for land clearing was flagged for its environmental impact. Participants called for stricter regulations to balance development with conservation.

4. Integrating Knowledge and Learning for Sustainability

- **Education Programs:** Schools and community groups were highlighted as key to promoting environmental stewardship. Students proposed initiatives to document traditional knowledge and integrate it into the curriculum.
- **Traditional Knowledge:** Efforts to document and share knowledge about traditional medicine, weaving, and sustainable agriculture were emphasized. Community members expressed concerns about the loss of this knowledge due to changing lifestyles.
- **Citizen Science:** Involving the community in biodiversity monitoring through citizen science initiatives, such as surveys for kuramo'o and reef health, was suggested.



5. Mainstreaming Policies and Financial Mechanisms

- **Policy Enforcement:** Participants called for strengthened bylaws to regulate waste disposal, protect raui zones, and ensure sustainable tourism and fishing practices.
- **Funding Needs:** Securing financial support for conservation projects, such as taramaea removal, biocontrol measures, and waste management systems, was identified as critical for success.
- **Collaborative Approaches:** The need for collaboration among government agencies, local leaders, and external partners to implement and monitor conservation efforts was emphasized.

Conclusion

The Aitutaki workshops showcased the proactive efforts of a dedicated core group to address pressing environmental challenges. The participation of 120 Araura College students brought dynamic perspectives, with their contrasting visions of Aitutaki in 2050 highlighting both the potential benefits of proactive environmental action and the risks of inaction. Their contributions underscored the critical role of the younger generation in shaping the island's future, helping to balance the modest adult participation.



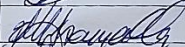

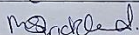
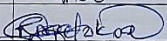
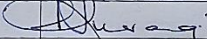
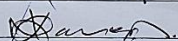
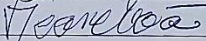
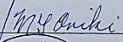
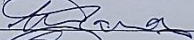
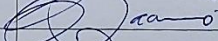
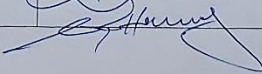
The commitment of the Island Council, Vainetini Mama's, and youth reflects a growing dedication to integrating traditional knowledge with modern conservation strategies. These discussions, complemented by site visits to local initiatives like the kuramo'o habitat, laid a strong foundation for an Island Plan aligned with NBSAP goals and tailored to Aitutaki's unique needs. Continued collaboration with stakeholders, sustained funding, and support for community-driven initiatives will be essential for turning these strategies into impactful actions, ensuring the protection and sustainability of Aitutaki's natural and cultural heritage for generations to come.


Attachments:

- **Annex A:** Signed Registers of Participants
- **Annex B:** Workshop Agenda




Annex A. Signed Registers of Participants


Name	Gender	Contact details: Phone or Email *optional	Signature
TIKIENA Junior	M	76239	
GERO Toki	M	77726	
Mata Isamarua	F	50378	
TERANGI NGAVIRE.	F	52121	
Meturake Bobbie Strickland	F	52891	
RUMERE KUTOKA	M	No contact # at moment 31-700 or 31-987	
TWIN RUARANGI	F	70661 / 31700	
Ngatokoua Kamea	F	52629	
Vaopaki Tearetoa 1/2 M	M	31-388	
Manarangi ikin Aniki	F	31-058	
Alone Daven	F	56711	
CHARLIE TAAMO	M	79888-31593	
NICK HENRY	M	76156	



NATIONAL ENVIRONMENT SERVICE
TUANGA TAPUROPORO
COOK ISLANDS

Aitutaki
Vainetini





THE BIODIVERSITY PLAN
For Life on Earth



Atutaki Community Workshop,
Ngapuariki Hall 5pm.
14 Nov 2024



THE BIODIVERSITY PLAN
For Life on Earth

Cook Islands National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP) Workshop

Attendance Sheet

Name	Gender	Contact details: Phone or Email *optional	Signature
Joel M. Pakoti	M.		<i>Joel M. Pakoti</i>
Amiria Pakoti	F		<i>Amiria Pakoti</i>
Ken Samuel Purua	F	+682 78429/keutpsamuel	<i>Ken Samuel Purua</i>
Mimmetua Purua	F	+682 52827	<i>Mimmetua Purua</i>
CHARLIE TAAMO	M	77888-31593	<i>Charlie Taamo</i>
Ronan Strickland	M	1time2fish@gmail.com 71921	<i>Ronan Strickland</i>
Oni James	M	53719 Diveatutaki@gmail.com	<i>Oni James</i>
Richard Steyn	F	55524	<i>Richard Steyn</i>
Terapii Korau	M	80655	<i>Terapii Korau</i>
Deapii Tane	M	80966	<i>Deapii Tane</i>
Priza Kaela	F	31-562	<i>Priza Kaela</i>

Annex B. Workshop Agenda

<u>DATE</u>	<u>TIME</u>	<u>ORGANIZATION/GROUP/DEPARTMENT</u>	<u>VENUE</u>
Wed 13 th Nov	4:20 pm	Arrive in Aitutaki	
Thu 14 th Nov	10am – 11am	Island Council Meeting	
	1pm – 2pm	Senior College Youth	
	5pm – 6pm	Presentation with the Community	Ngapuariki Hall
Fri 15 th Nov	9am – 10am	Government Agencies	
	11am – 12pm	Vainetini / Vairakau	
	2pm - 3pm	Individual visits	
	4pm – 5pm	Village Sports Outreach	
Sat 16 th Nov	9am	Site visits	
	4:40pm	Depart for Rarotonga	