

COOK ISLANDS NATIONAL BIODIVERSITY STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN NBSAP WORKING GROUP REPORT

NBSAP WORKING GROUP UPDATE

6 December 2024



Facilitators: Elizabeth Munro, Rima Moeka'a, Jessie Nicholson and Kas Silk

Participants: NBSAP Working Group and Kopapa Ao Ora Natura (Biodiversity Committee)

Date: 6 December 2024

Time: 10:00 AM - 12:30 PM

Location: Red Cross Meeting Room, Tupapa, Rarotonga

Report written by Karen Silk, NES
December 2024

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Summary

The NBSAP Working Group convened on 6 December 2024 to advance the Cook Islands' National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan. The workshop aimed to review and refine strategic goals and targets, incorporating feedback from prior consultations and exploring innovative approaches to biodiversity management. This collaborative effort included representatives from key sectors, fostering a shared commitment to addressing biodiversity challenges and opportunities.

Discussions involved the participants proposing changes to the draft NBSAP goals and targets. These were recorded as tracked changes on a document that was projected onto the screen, for all participants to review together before moving to the next target.

Participants reviewed NBSAP Goals A to E, and all of the targets within the goals.

Participants

Annex A. Signed register of participants

Meeting Objectives

1. Present the updated NBSAP process, including proposed themes and strategic goals.
2. Engage stakeholders, including KAON representatives, for feedback and insights on the proposed framework.
3. Refine strategic goals, targets, actions, and indicators.

Key Workshop Highlights:

- **Freshwater Ecosystems as a Priority:** The group emphasized the critical need to conduct more work on freshwater ecosystems, including brackish waters and riparian zones, which are

often overshadowed by marine conservation. Proposals included piloting engineered wetlands and creating management zones for these vital areas.

- **Clarifying Biodiversity Targets:** Terminology was refined, with "specific important biodiversity areas" updated to "significant biodiversity areas" for clarity and inclusiveness. Stakeholders stressed the importance of addressing habitat loss and ensuring consistent application across all islands, including Rarotonga. Recommendations emphasized restoring such areas and improving management practices like rauī.
- **Species Conservation:** There was a call to strengthen efforts in identifying, prioritizing, and protecting endemic, native, and endangered species. This included better management of invasive species, integrating threats such as pollution mitigation into conservation strategies, and halting the decline of endangered species. Discussions were also held on the importance of identifying and documenting all species to enhance knowledge of biodiversity in the Cook Islands.
- **Addressing Pressures on Biodiversity:** Discussions focused on implementing invasive species eradication programs, improving resilience against climate change, and reducing human-induced pressures on ecosystems, such as overharvesting, tourism and land-use.
- **Mainstreaming Biodiversity:** Integrating biodiversity into national and local policies, emphasizing traditional knowledge, and building capacity with innovative technologies were identified as critical actions. Education programs and community-driven initiatives were highlighted as essential to achieving success. Participants suggested documenting best practices and promoting knowledge-sharing across all sectors.
- **Sustainable Benefits:** Although briefly discussed, Goal E highlighted the importance of sustainable financial mechanisms and ensuring equitable benefits from genetic resources and traditional knowledge.

Next Steps:

1. Incorporate feedback from the workshop into the updated NBSAP draft.
2. Continue refining goals, targets, and indicators in preparation for the January 2025 meeting.
3. Engage with additional stakeholders to ensure inclusivity and alignment with the Global Biodiversity Framework.

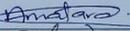
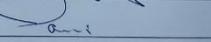
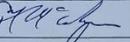
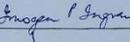
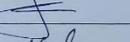
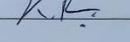
Conclusion

The NBSAP Working Group made significant progress in refining the Cook Islands' biodiversity goals and targets. The collaborative approach, emphasizing clarity, inclusivity, and actionable strategies, sets a strong foundation for the next stages of the NBSAP process. Further updates will follow as the plan evolves, ensuring robust stakeholder engagement and alignment with international biodiversity goals.

Annex

1. Annex A. Signed register of participants

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Cook Islands National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP) Workshop			
NBSAP Working Group Attendance Sheet Fri 6 Dec 2024 @ Red Cross			
Name	Gender	Contact details: Phone or Email *optional	Signature
1 Jane Wickham Pea	F	jane.pea@cookislands.gov.ck	
2 Aetana Marama Marama	F	aetana.marama@cookislands.gov.ck	
3 Moana Tetani	F	moana.tetani@cookislands.gov.ck	
4 Rima Moea'a	F	r2moea@aol.com	
5 Nafata Ta'aloa	M	nafata.ta'aloa@cookislands.gov.ck	
6 Georgia Short	F	georgia.short@cookislands.gov.ck	
7 Charlene Akaruu	F	charlene.akaruu@cookislands.gov.ck	
8 Lydia Sijpe	F	lydia.sijpe@cookislands.gov.ck	
9 Terena Kotekaviki	F	terena.kotekaviki@cookislands.gov.ck	
10 Rachel Selwyn	F	rachel.selwyn11@gmail.com	
11 Brad Kinze	M	brad.kinze@cookislands.travel	
12 Aina Tira	F	aina.tira@cookislands.gov.ck	
13 Pava'i Taromai	M	pava'i.taromai@cookislands.gov.ck	
  			
Name	Gender	Contact details: Phone or Email *optional	Signature
14 Gerald McCormack	M	gerald@nature.gov.ck	
15 Alanna Smith	F	teiputekaraia.societyinc@gmail.com	
16 Imogen Ingram	F	imogenin@cookislands.gov.ck	
17 John Hoster	M	john.hoster@cookislands.gov.ck	
18 Kelvin Passfield	M	Kelvin.passfield@gmail.com	
less			
Liz Munro			
Kas Silk			