









OTHER EFFECTIVE CONSERVATION MEASURES WORKSHOP REPORT

Edgewater Resort, Rarotonga, Cook Islands

24th - 25th January 2023



Photo by Nanette Wontoon, SPREP











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^{*}Presentation slides for this workshop will not be attached to this report, due to file size, however these will be sent separately to all workshop participants and can be accessed by contacting the National Environment Service.











Acronyms

CCCI Climate Change Cook Islands

CINEWS Cook Islands News

CI RSA Cook Islands Returned Servicemen Association

CIT Cook Islands Tourism

GBF Global Biodiversity Framework

INTAFF Internal Affairs

KOTO Korero o te `Orau

KN Koutu Nui

MFEM Ministry of Finance and Economic Management

MOCD Ministry of Cultural Development

MMR Ministry of Marine Resources

MOE Ministry of Education

NBSAP National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan

NES National Environment Service

NES-EP NES Environmental Partnerships Department

NES-ES NES Environmental Stewardship Department

NHT Natural Heritage Trust

OECM Other Effective Area-based Conservation Measures

OPM Office of the Prime Minister

PA Protected Area

Q&A Questions and Answers

SPREP Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme

TCA Takitumu Conservation Area

TIS Te Ipukarea Society

UNEP United Nations Environment Programme

UNEP-WCMC UNEP World Conservation Monitoring Centre

WCS Wildlife Conservation Society

WD-OECM World Database for OECMs

WDPA World Database for Protected Areas











Summary

On Tuesday 24th and Wednesday 25th January 2023, the National Environment Service (NES), in partnership with SPREP and UNEP-WCMC, held a 2-day workshop on Other Effective Areabased Conservation Measures (OECMs). The workshop was held at Edgewater Resort in Rarotonga, Cook Islands.

The OECM workshop was intended for conservation practitioners, policymakers and key stakeholders with an interest in protected or conserved areas and biodiversity conservation.

The purpose of the workshops was to discuss the potential of recognizing and reporting OECMs in the Cook Islands, including both possible benefits and drawbacks, and to develop a preliminary picture of opportunities and recommendations, through a participatory workshop.

This was the first OECM workshop in the Cook Islands and in the Pacific region.

Participants included representatives from SPREP, UNEP-WCMC, staff of the NES partnerships, stewardship and compliance departments and representatives of relevant government ministries, the private sector and non-government organizations.

The workshop was presented in dual-delivery mode to accommodate the Pa Enua who could not be brought to Rarotonga to attend in person due to budget limitations and international participants.

The workshop received a high turnout on both days and lots of engagement from participants of different organizations, demonstrating a lot of interest in the potential of OECMs in the Cook Islands, and was successful in identifying potential sites for OECM assessment and designation.

For more information, please email <u>siana.whatarau@cookislands.gov.ck</u>











Participants

Day 1

	Name	Organization	Email	Gender
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Day 2

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Day 1



The OECM workshop was opened by Halatoa Fua, Director of the National Environment Service, at 8:30am. This was followed by an agenda overview facilitated by Muraai Herman and one by one introductions of all participants in the room. Every participant had an opportunity to state their expectations for the workshop, which included hopes for solutions to existing problems, gaining an understanding of OECM's and environment in general and opportunities to delve into the status and potential of specific sites such as the Takitumu Conservation Area and raui sites.

Benjamin Lucas from UNEP-WCMC provided an overview of area-based conservation to introduce OECMs to the participants and appropriately equip them to understand and contribute to later activities during the workshop. Hayley Weeks from NES-EP provided an overview on how OECMs may be applied in a Cook Islands context. Emphasis was put on the purpose of OECMs as a means to empower conservation work that is already being done, particularly work that is championed by local communities, and the hope to elevate efforts to a recognized status. Case studies of OECMs outside the Pacific and how they might link to the Cook Islands context were discussed during this session and there was feedback that these examples did not share enough similar issues for the participants to feel like the learnings were beneficial. This is a challenge because there are no current OECMs recognized in the Pacific region to provide similar case studies.

During the Q&A session, participants requested the difference between protected areas and OECMs be clarified further. UNEP-WCMC clarified that PAs and OECMs cannot overlap. A PA has the primary objective to conserve biodiversity whereas an OECM can have any objective as long as it produces positive and sustained outcomes on biodiversity or OECMs can have











biodiversity conservation as an objective, but not be recognized as a protected area. A governing authority can choose to designate a site as an OECM, rather than a PA, if there are concerns this will limit other activities, e.g. land tenure. OECMs are complementary to PAs and the term will be used in conjunction, i.e. "Protected Areas and Other Effective Area-based Conservation Measures." Concerns were raised from participants about the use of the term "other" in OECM; that this term can have a negative connotation and is perceived to dismiss the conservation efforts by grouping these measures as "other." UNEP-WCMC clarified that the intention is to recognize positive outcomes from area-based management other than protected areas.

This session was followed by an activity, facilitated by Hayley Weeks, to identify sites that may or may not be potential OECMs in the Cook Islands. The activity required participants seated at the same table to work as a group to brainstorm sites that could be considered for OECM assessment. The results were categorized by the facilitator as either a PA, potential PA, potential OECM or neither PA/OECM. Sites for potential OECM consideration included the Takitumu Conservation Area, Takuvaine Valley catchment, Mokoero reserve, various raui sites, Anatakitaki, Avaavaroa passage and swamp lands, lakes and caves. The full results of this activity are available in Appendix B.



Elizabeth Munro from NES-ES facilitated a discussion on existing conservation work and practices in the Cook Islands to validate some of the ideas raised in earlier discussion and further flesh out existing work that could be considered for OECM work. The benefits of OECM designation were discussed; managed areas that are not already established in legislation are not at a disadvantage and more resources are accessible under OECM status. There is no minimum size limit for OECMs, the biodiversity impacts just need to be positive and sustainable. OECMs are assessed on a case by case basis. During this discussion session, MOCD asked how the OECM assessment criteria fits with MOCD and if they need to hand over historical site data. The MOCD have collected data on 84 historical sites, which they host in their database. Response was that this list could be screened to identify those that also provide biodiversity conservation benefits, in addition to their existing cultural heritage objectives. Those sites could











then go through the OECM screening and assessment process to further identify which may be potential/candidate OECMs.

A virtual pre-recorded presentation by Stacy Jupiter from WCS-Fiji highlighted the benefits, challenges and solutions to OECM recognition, with a focus on the Pacific and Cook Islands context. The benefits include accessing resources, sustaining equitable engagement (recognition of local values & practices incentivizes, recognition of local governance enhances perceived equity) and the tool can be used to add to existing designations. The challenges in practice include understanding how designation of a site will impact local rights, the protection of sensitive and/or intellectual property from unintentional harm, the cost of management and whether or not the indicators of effectiveness and equity reflect local views. Steps to overcome challenges include demonstrating OECMs work to provide biodiversity outcomes and resourcing, work through resource mobilization schemes to develop pipelines for funding and for relevant stakeholders to agree on outcomes. In the live virtual Q&A session, Stacy recommended the Cook Islands create a set of standards that align with the Cook Islands protected area values and create/identify a group that can vet any site processes, she informed that governments report data on OECMs and that a process for non-government to report OECM data is currently being developed and she validated citizen science as a cost effective way to monitor sites while increasing engagement/awareness if and when appropriate.

This was followed by a group activity to discuss benefits and drawbacks and how they apply to example sites in the Cook Islands. This activity required participants to discuss amongst their table what these benefits/drawbacks could be and to present their ideas to the room. The common results of these discussions are tabled below (Table 1). The full results, as presented by each table, are available in Appendix C.



Table 1: Benefits and Challenges of OECMs

_ c	0
Benefits	Challenges
Deficites	Chancinges











- Resourcing and funding for conservation efforts
- Encourages transparency, community awareness
- Recognition of existing conservation efforts
- Perpetuates growth & continuous positive usage
- Eco-tourism opportunities economic gains
- Education and awareness
- Preserving traditional knowledge, cultural values/practices/language
- Preserving marine life/ecosystems
- Strengthen guidelines that fit our context
- Incentivize a focus on conservation under different guises.
- National government/country benefits from OECM designation

- Potential not to get government support
- Difficult to enforce compliance
- Sustainable funding
- Unsure on criteria to become OECM
- Community buy-in
- Rights to the site as landowners how to safeguard local rights
- Monitoring of the site (ongoing)
- Community support
- Unknown pots of funding clarity on what funding & resources are accessible
- No identified direct benefits to local communities for their efforts

Day 1 closed at 3:11pm.

Morning tea was held at 10:15am to 10:25am, lunch was from 12:00pm to 1:00pm and both were catered by the venue.







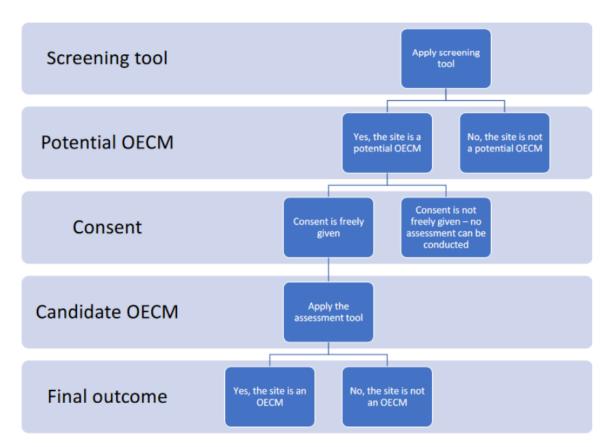




Day 2

Day 2 of the OECM workshop was opened with a brief reminder of key messages from the previous day. After all the introductions and discussions of day 1, the second day's session focused on the actual process of designating an OECM.

UNEP-WCMC provided participants with an overview of how the tool works and the steps needed to conduct a full assessment. The OECM designation process is summarized in the following steps:













1. Screening Tool

The screening tool to identify potential OECMs has 2 criteria, criterion A and criterion B.

Criterion A: The site is not a protected area (PA).

Criterion B: The site is likely to support important biodiversity values.

If a site can satisfy both, then it can progress to be considered a potential OECM. If <u>either</u> criteria is not satisfied, then the site is not a potential OECM.

A potential OECM is described as "a geographically defined space that has been identified as having OECM-like characteristics by applying the screening tool but where the governance authority has yet to consent to it becoming a 'candidate OECM.'"

2. Consent for full assessment

Securing and documenting free, prior, and informed consent, in addition to self-reporting, is an essential step of the process. Once this has been received from the relevant governance authority of the site, it can be considered a candidate OECM.

A candidate OECM is described as "a geographically defined space that has been identified as a 'potential OECM' by the governance authority and the governance authority has consented to it being assessed against the CBD criteria."

3. Full assessment to recognize an OECM

To be recognized as an OECM, ALL of the following points must be satisfied:

- The site is a geographically defined area
- The site is *confirmed* to support important biodiversity values
- Activities which threaten the important biodiversity values of the sites are prevented or mitigated
- Governance and management of the site results in the *in-situ* conservation of important biodiversity values
- Governance and management arrangements are likely to be sustained
- Governance and management arrangements address equity considerations.

If any of these points are not satisfied, the site is not eligible to become an OECM.

A recognized OECM is defined as "a geographically defined area other than a Protected Area, which is governed and managed in ways that achieve positive and sustained long-term outcomes for the in-situ conservation of biodiversity, with associated ecosystem functions and services and where applicable, cultural, spiritual, socio—economic, and other locally relevant values."

Following this session, Vainuupo Jungblut from SPREP presented on reporting OECM data to the World Database on OECMs (WD-OECM). Reporting OECM data is key for monitoring, decision making, recognition and support. WD-OECM receive data from governments, NGOs, private sector, indigenous peoples, and local communities. To report data, you must first receive consent from relevant governance authorities to collect OECM data, then format the data correctly, and send formatted data to SPREP. The data can be verified by two methods, (i) state (government), (ii) expert (non-government). NES as the SPREP and CBD focal point for the











Cook Islands can provide a letter of endorsement to support non-government agencies when submitting their data. The WD-OECM is a spatial database, so data submitted should include mapped boundaries of an area (preferably), however a coordinate of where the site is can be accepted. Most countries have submitted geographical data in polygon form, however there are some examples where single coordinates were used to pinpoint a site location, e.g. Philippines. A table of OECM data that includes name of site, designation of the site, etc. should also be submitted. In the Q&A session, it was encouraged that all data is recorded on WD-OECM database, however, there is an understanding that some data may be sensitive or not accessible so data requirements have some flexibility. A link to the World Database manual was included in the presentation: www.wcmc.io/WDPA_Manual.

Elizabeth Munro of the NES-ES facilitated a discussion to gain an understanding of how next steps for OECM recognition and reporting may work in the Cook Islands. Key points from this discussion are summarized in table 2.

<u>Table 2</u>: Opportunities and constraints for identifying and supporting OECMs in the Cook Islands

Opportunities for identifying OECMs in the Cook Islands

- Conserved areas are well documented
- Boundaries are determined and mapped
- Databases are developed for sites
- Effective planning of sites
- Increases protection of important area
- Promote and recognition of site
- Assist in CIs reporting requirements
- Meet our international obligations

Constraints of OECM identification

- Conserved area not clearly defined
- Purpose of area is unclear
- Monitoring
- Effectiveness of site
- Community buy-in
- Dedication & commitment
- Management plan in place
- Incentive

During this discussion session, some ways to progress OECM work were identified:

- Development of Protected Areas legislation
- Review of National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP)
- Align local and community plans to national and global plans & vice versa
- Develop a list of all PA, OECM & managed sites
- Having criteria in place to assist in determining PA, OECM & other sites
 - o Categorize OECMs into various groups and developing specific criteria
 - Meet with owners of sites to become a potential or candidate OECM site
- Develop a tool to registrar the sites
- A team to verify sites
- Better reporting to national and international obligations

This session was followed by a group activity to use the screening tool to identify potential OECMs in the Cook Islands. The activity required participants to work as a group and present their findings to the room. The groups presented the following sites as potential OECMs: Aroa lagoon raui, Avana/Aroko lagoon raui, Pouara raui, Akapuao raui, TCA, Avaavaroa passage, Rarotonga cloud forests and Manuae. The full results of this activity can be viewed in Appendix D.













During the Q&A session for general topics covered, Gerald McCormack from NHT raised a need to identify the type of biodiversity that is being protected, e.g. endemic or endangered or pest species, via methods like walk through identification. It was suggested that this be done as a fundamental step before protecting biodiversity. Questions of funding availability to do OECM work were also raised by participants. There may be some funding available to assist with the process of OECM designation, awareness, capacity building and designate personnel through various streams, e.g. GEF funding. A key priority to guide this work, first and foremost, is to have appropriate strategies in place to guide the work done and to prioritize work to use limited time effectively.

The last session was the 'next steps' discussion to develop a road map for work to progress, which is summarized in the Next Steps section of this report.

Vainuupo Jungblut from SPREP facilitated an evaluation session for the workshop to capture participant's feedback on how the workshop was conducted, the quality of information provided and recommendations for improvement. To conduct this, Vainuupo asked a series of evaluating questions to the room and the participants stated if these were done well (+) or could have been improved (Δ) . These results are summarized in table 3.

Table 3: Evaluation feedback and keywords

+	Δ
Enlightening presentations, roadmap of next steps has been developed, clarity of concepts,	More information on concrete examples to provide clearer picture of how OECMs have been
step by step processes provided, fascinating	applied.
learnings, useful lessons learnt for similar	Language/jargon as a barrier e.g. technical terms
projects, positive feedback for Elizabeth's	can be broken down.
presentations, OECM similarities to historical	
sites, agenda sent out with outputs in mind,	











excellent catering quality and quantity, positive feedback for Muraai as MC for keeping audience informed with seamless transitions throughout presentations and keeping workshop flowing, some of the activities facilitated more critical thinking on ideas that were not covered by the presentations.

Contextualizing models that are used overseas might prove more fruitful and local based presenters to trigger more fruitful discussion. Venue feedback – position of the podium, presenter location and microphone and projector technological difficulties.

Suggestion to replace the term OECM - suggestion to group with "other protected areas" (OPA).

"Other" is offensive to the work efforts. Virtual/network platform not as involved.

Day 2 closed with a workshop overview and wrap up by Muraai Herman at 2:11pm.

Morning tea was held at 9:55am to 10:15am, lunch was from 12:30pm to 1:30pm and both were catered by the venue.











Workshop Outcomes

Overall, the workshop was successful in accomplishing the 3 objectives and 14 outcomes assigned in the Workshop Agenda (Appendix A).

By the evaluation session, participants had improved understanding of OECMs, and these participants included traditional leaders, conservation practitioners and policymakers in Rarotonga with some Pa Enua (outer island) involvement online. A balanced picture of OECMs was provided and key concerns were noted. Participants were introduced to the OECM assessment tool with an overview of steps provided.

The NES, SPREP and UNEP-WCMC gained an insight into potential OECMs in the Cook Islands, and concerns specific to the country and the Pacific region (Appendices B, C & D). The Takitumu Conservation Area in Rarotonga was identified as a suitable pilot for the OECM designation process in the Cook Islands. TCA is a geographically defined area, not a PA, has a management plan in place, on-going conservation work, and is known habitat for an endemic Cook Islands bird species. Other sites identified as potential OECMs were the Aroa lagoon raui, Avana/Aroko lagoon raui, Pouara raui, Akapuao raui, Avaavaroa passage, Rarotonga cloud forests and Manuae.

Some recommendations for next steps on recognizing and reporting OECMs in the Cook Islands were recorded in the Day 2 session and consolidated in the Next Steps section of this report.











Next Steps

In the workshop outcomes, the Takitumu Conservation Area was identified as an initial site to kick start the OECM assessment and designation process in the Cook Islands. The NES-ES with support from NES-EP will host workshops with the TCA stakeholders to begin the process of assessing the TCA as an OECM.

Moving forward, SPREP has offered to assist with dissemination of media, particularly related to any milestones the Cook Islands achieves in the OECM designation process. The NES will ensure to update SPREP on OECM related work. SPREP suggested seeking funds to produce a documentary may be beneficial to capture the learnings, challenges and solutions throughout the TCA-OECM designation process.

The NES intend to explore opportunities to publish research on OECM work through the NES Science and Technical Advisory Committee. NES-EP has connected with WCS Fiji for technical assistance and expert support with this academic work.

NES will work to develop a draft protected areas legislation, and review and update the NBSAP in 2023. These will help strengthen and guide protected areas, OECMs and biodiversity conservation work in the Cook Islands and support reporting to national and international goals and agreements.

NES will work closely with UNEP-WCMC to further understand the full assessment tool.

The NES aims to hold a follow up workshop to increase awareness and engagement with other relevant local stakeholders, though that is not covered by the current UNEP-WCMC and SPREP funding for this workshop. A smaller scale workshop in Rarotonga may be plausible through NES budget, however, NES may need to seek additional funding support to host workshops for the outer islands and may seek technical support to host workshops.

The Cook Islands will consider developing a specific assessment criteria for OECM designation that is tailored to the Cook Islands context and still aligns with official assessment criteria. The need for this will become clearer as we move through the initial assessment and OECM declaration processes.

Other identified next steps relevant to OECM work:

- A list of all PA, OECM and managed sites could be developed.
- Develop a tool/database to register the sites.
- Identify/create a team to verify sites. The Biodiversity Steering Committee was suggested as a possible existing platform for this purpose.
- Improve/correct national reporting (i.e. MPA status on the WDPA).











Appendices

Appendix A: OECM Workshop Agenda

Day 1 - Tuesda	y 24 th January	
Time	Agenda Item	Aim/Outputs
08:00 - 08:30	Arrival & registration of participants	
08:30 - 08:35	Opening prayer & Welcoming remarks	
08:35 - 08:40	Agenda and overview of workshop	
08:40 - 09:00	Introduction of participants (name, organisation, expectations)	Get to know the participants, understand their wants for the workshop, and provide them with an overview of what to expect and familiarise them with us and their fellow participants, to build trust and make them
09:00 - 09:30	Overview of area-based conservation: - What are OECMs - How are these different to PAs - Brief history of OECMs & what they're for - A breakdown of the OECM definition - 2-3 case studies of OECMs, and discuss with participants how this	Improve understanding of OECMs to the participants, to equip them for understanding and contributing to later activities.
09:30 - 09:40	Q&A/Discussion	
09:40 - 10:00	Activity – identifying potential OECMs in the Cook Islands	Gain a picture of specific sites in the Cook Islands, that do or do not meet the OECM definition, and that can both feed into the discussion
10:00 - 10:15	Morning tea	
10:15 – 10:45	Activity review, feedback & discussion on the previous activity	
10:45 - 11:50	Discussion on existing work and practice on conservation outside of protected areas in the Cook Islands - What conservation outside protected areas has been done in the Cook Islands? - Are any of these initiatives likely to align with the OECM definition? - Why/why not? - Working to identify some	In continuation from the group activity, validates some of the ideas raised and explores some of these further Begin to get participants thinking about existing work, potential categories of OECMs that exist further. Get additional information on possible categories on OECMs, and other details on OECMs in the Cook Islands, for the discussion paper.











11:50 – 12:	Review of morning discussions & overview of afternoon	
12:00 – 13:		

13:00 – 13:40	Benefits, challenges/ drawbacks/ concerns, and solutions, of recognising and reporting OECMs (particularly those specific to the Cook Islands and the Pacific Region, including discussion of common concerns.	Provide a balanced picture of OECMs, and allow participants to share concerns, ensuring all participants have a good understanding of the subject before subsequent discussions.
13:40 – 14:00	Q&A	Gain understanding of concerns in the Cook Islands, for the discussion paper.
14:00 – 14:30	Activity – breakout groups to discuss benefits vs drawbacks and apply to a CKI example sites	
14:30 – 14:50	Group feedback	
14:50 – 15:00	Recap of Day 1, overview of Day 2 and wrap up	Highlight key messages and introduce next day's activities.
15:00 – 16:00	Optional end-of-day discussion session for anyone who would like to stay and ask more questions.	Provide further information to any who would like it, and gain further insights/notes to feed

Day 2 Madaa	aday 25th January	
	sday 25 th January	
Time	Agenda Item	Aim/Outputs
08:00 - 08:30	Arrival & registration of participants	
08:30 - 08:40	Opening prayer	Briefly remind participants of key messages from
	& recap of Day 1	the
		previous day, and highlight any important
08:40 - 09:30	Introduce the OECM assessment tool.	Show participants how the tool works, provide
		them
		an understanding of the steps needed.
09:30 - 10:00	Presentation on reporting OECMs – the	Provide understanding on how and why to report
	WD-	OECMs.
10:00 - 10:30	Morning tea	CECIVIS.
10:30 -11:15	Discussion on opportunities and constraints	Gain an understanding of how next steps for OECM
	for identifying and supporting OECMs in	recognition and reporting may work in the Cook
	the Cook Islands, including relevant	Islands.
		isianus.
	legislative and regulatory frameworks and	
11:15 – 12:00	Group Activity	
12:00 - 12:15	Activity report back	
12:15-12:30	Review of morning discussions &	
12.15-12.50	_	
12-20 12 20	overview of afternoon	
12:30 – 13: 30	Lunch	
13:30 – 14:00	Open discussion, Q&A on general	
	topics covered	







44.00 44.45	De 1:11 De 14 de la constituta de CIVI OFCMA	
14:00 – 14:15	Revisit Day 1 group activity on CKI OECMs	
14:15 – 14:30	Report back on activity – any changes since	
	Day 1 (additions, movements, removals, etc.)	
14:30 – 14:45	Discussion on next steps, developing a roadmap, summary of findings, conclusions, and closing.	Gain voluntary commitments from participants, provide participants with information on what comes next, and provide them with options for continued engagement.
14:45 – 15:00	Overview of Day 2 and wrap up	Highlight key messages and introduce next day's activities.
15:00 - 16:00	Optional end-of-day discussion session for	Provide further information to any who would like
	anyone who would like to stay and ask	it,
	more questions.	and gain further insights/notes to feed into

- Please kindly confirm your participation for catering purposes.
- Pa Enua participants will be provided with a Zoom link to participate in the workshop remotely.

Meitaki ma'ata National Environment Service





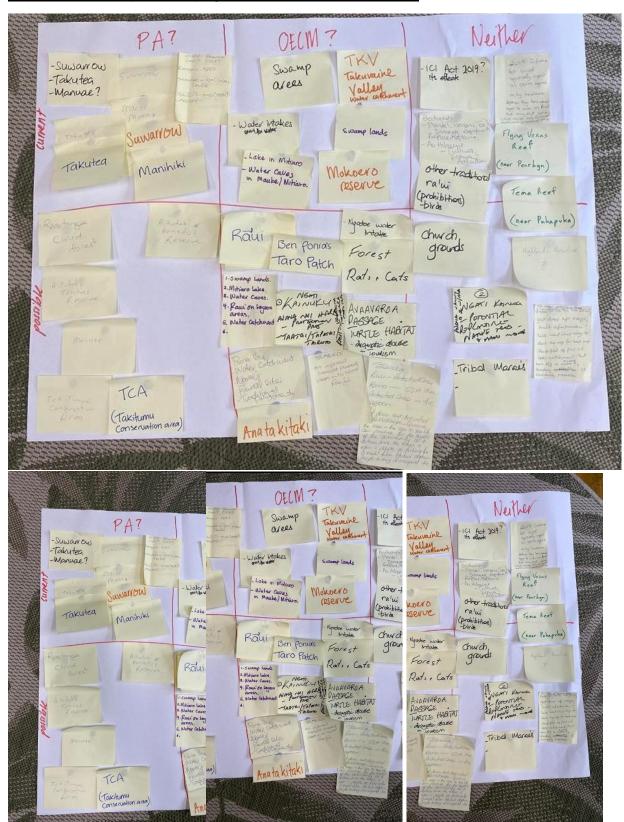








Appendix B: Activity 1 Identifying Potential Cook Island OECMs





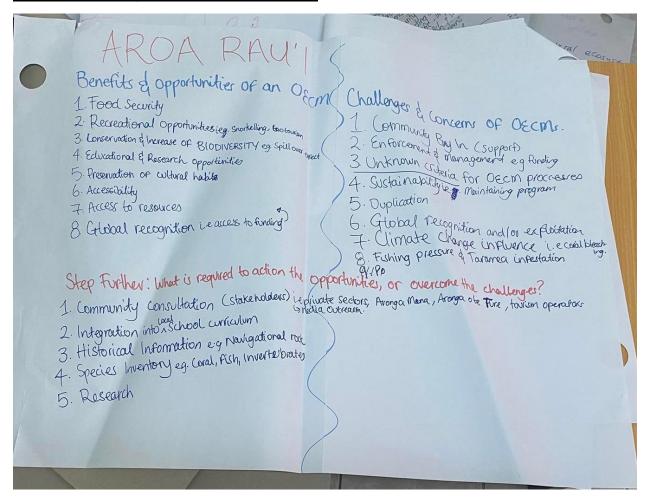








Appendix C: Activity 2 Benefits and Drawbacks



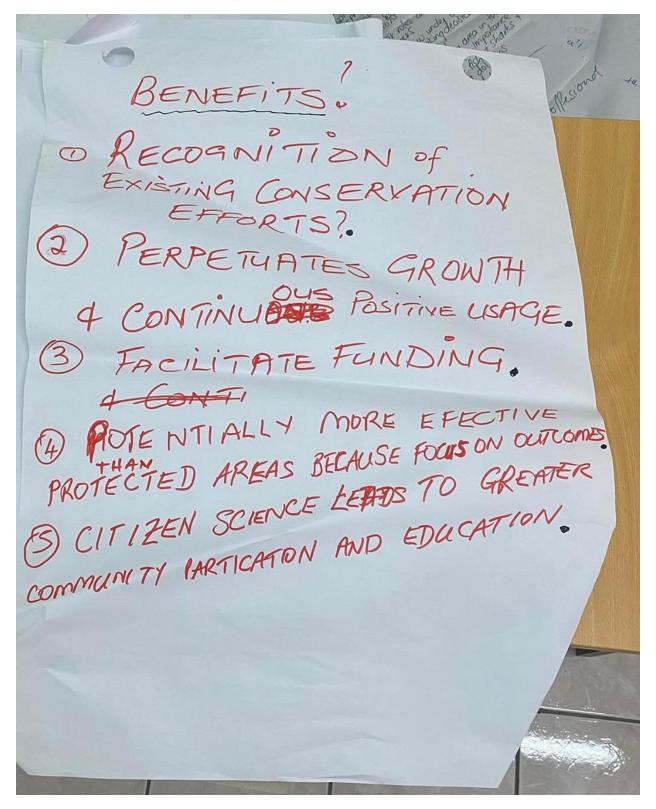












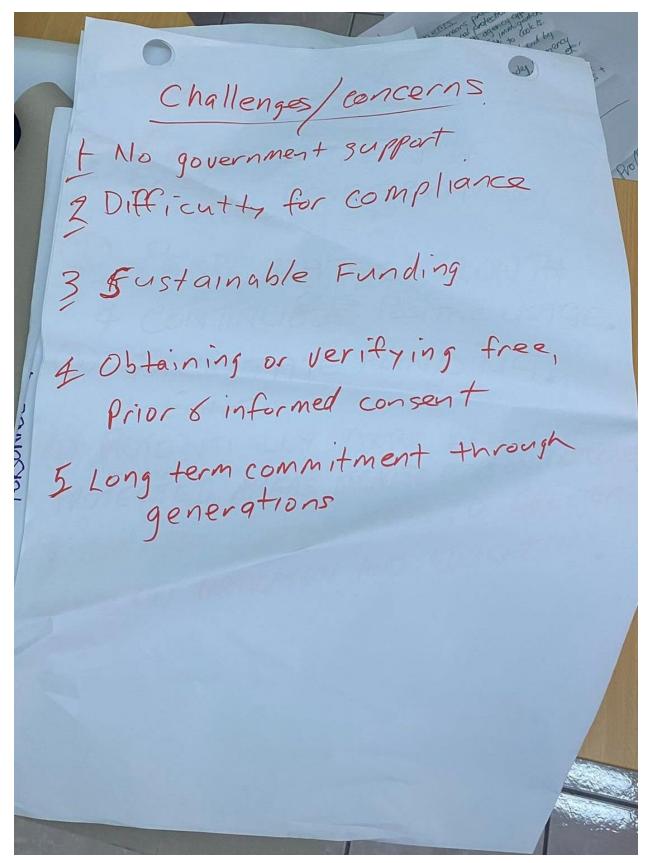












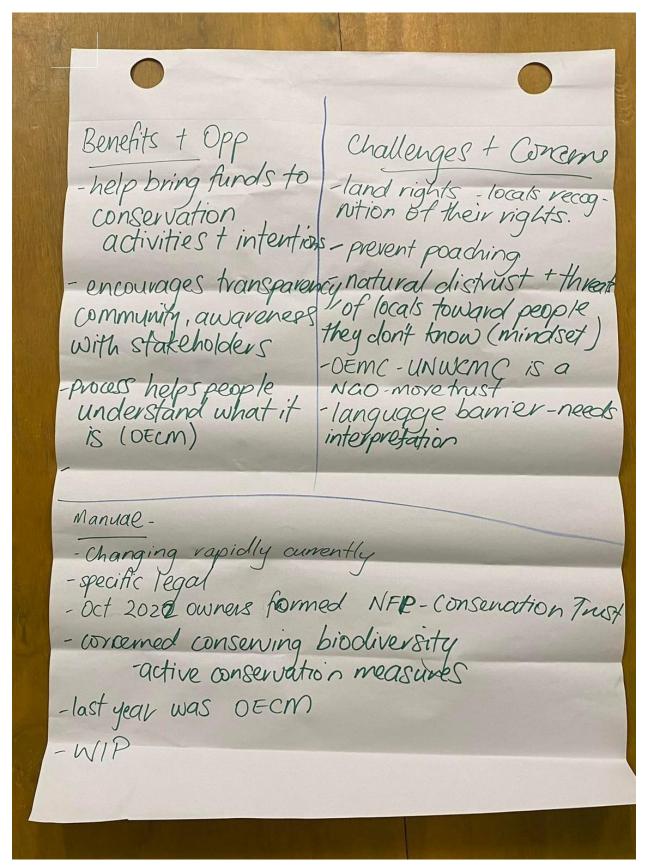






















Challenges + Remarks - Isolation - Communications - Visitors yacht - 6m - subtain - whather + climatechant other roles carnied out by Reports to Raw Base - Reports to Raw Base - Renormalized myspections - Monitoring inspections - 30 motus - 2 hours to go award - Rangers period 6 months - TS rats evadication Suwarrow Nes was produced by NES was professional Suwarrow National Park 1978 Managed by NES was professional Rangers Marae Moana Act 2019 Narine + Land Profession

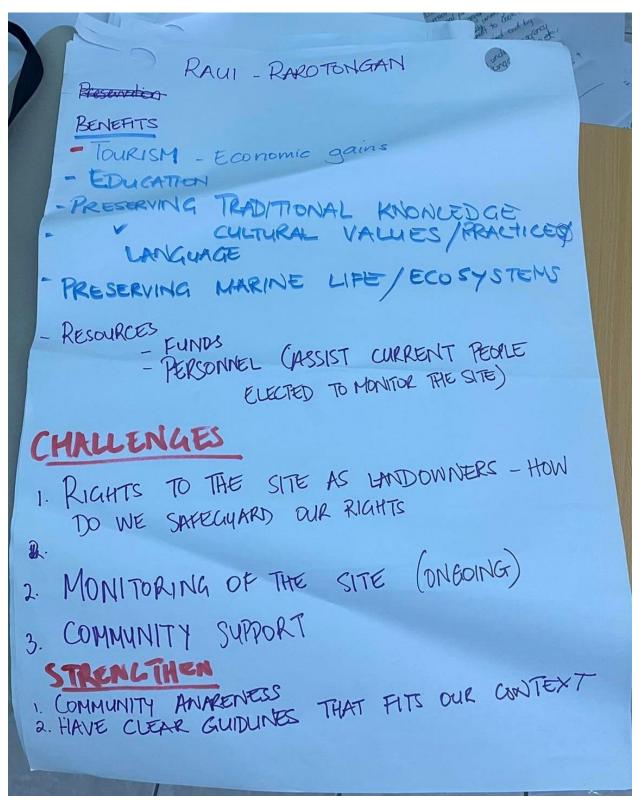












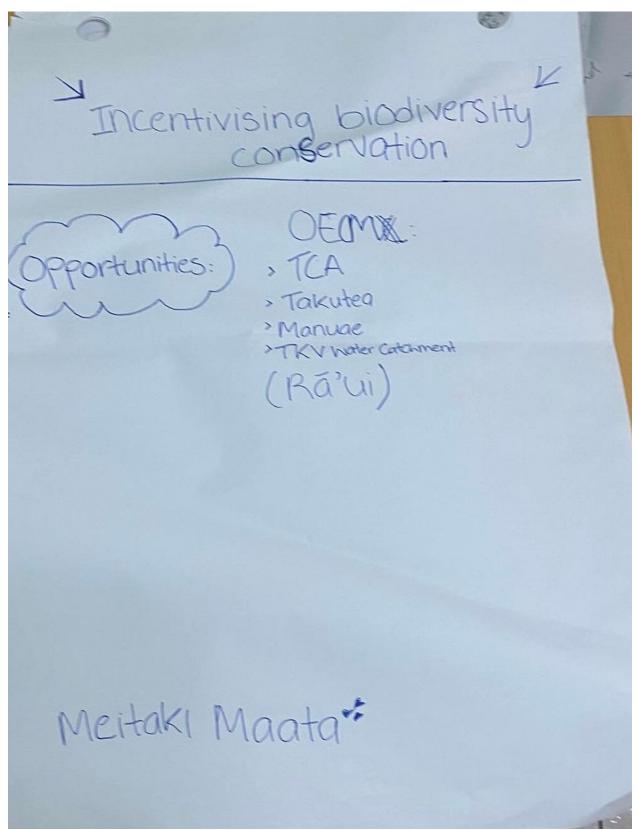






















Appendix D: Activity 3 Screening Activity

