

# BLUE DAYS • JOURNÉES BLEUES CONFERENCE





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*The Pacific environment, sustaining our livelihoods and natural heritage in harmony with our cultures.*



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## CONFERENCE

TAHITI 1–5 JUNE 2015



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# SUMMARY OF PRESENTATIONS



## DAY 1

### MEDIA CONFERENCE

### WELCOMING SPEECHES

Minister for the Environment, French Polynesia government  
Stuart Chape, SPREP, BEM division director

### INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

Pascale Salaun, SPREP, BEM in charge of the project

### KEYNOTE INTRODUCTORY PRESENTATION

#### Michael Lueck – Ecotourism: a definition

Dr Lueck provided some cautionary words in articulating a definition of ecotourism, as a guide for the week's discussions:

*“Species and habitats are valuable and vulnerable. There is no ‘one size fits all’ solution to structuring and developing a blue economy, and there are numerous definitions of what ecotourism is. Definitions of ecotourism vary; they tend to include elements of ecological, cultural, and economic development and guardianship. While SPREP offers some guidance, this conference and subsequent conversations presents opportunities to build a framework for ecotourism in the Pacific.”*

Key features of ecotourism should include low-impact travel and community-based hospitality. Dr Lueck noted that much of what was often considered as ecotourism involved long-distance air travel, which violated the low-impact travel criterion, and in that regard, the Pacific Islands were at a disadvantage because of their distance from the major markets of the Northern Hemisphere and Australasia. In discussion, it was suggested that wildlife-based tourism might be a better term for the issues to be discussed during the week. Research and good governance are critical to building local initiatives and a regional framework to protect living cultures and promote responsible tourism practices.



## COUNTRY SUMMARIES

Each of the PICT representative provided a brief summary of the activities related to wildlife conservation and tourism in their country.

### COOK ISLANDS (Joseph Brider)

The Cook Islands Marine Park (Marae Moana) is an ambitious initiative, involving a planning and zonation exercise over 1.1 million sq km of the Southern Cook Islands, which will later be extended to the Northern Cooks. While there will be some extractive uses in some areas, the majority of the Park will be protected or subject to sustainability requirements.

The GEF/PAS (Global Environment Facility Pacific Alliance for Sustainability) Integrated Island Biodiversity Project has a number of relevant programmes, including:

- Turtle nesting surveys in Rarotonga and Aitutaki;
- Further turtle research and conservation in the Northern Cook Islands (the Honu project under Michael White) and the Southern Cook Islands (Phil Bradshaw);
- Ridge to Reef planning;
- The entire Cook Islands EEZ is a shark sanctuary;
- Although the Cooks are not a signatory to CITES, they operate similar processes, prohibiting the export of Appendix 1 species, although trade in sperm whale teeth (*tabua*) with Fiji is under consideration for cultural purposes.

Challenges include building capacity (and then retaining it) and breaking down the traditional barriers between government agencies on oceans and marine wildlife issues.

### FIJI (Amelia Pei Raratabu)

The FLMMA Fiji Locally Managed Marine Areas network has provided management tools for community-based adaptive management of marine resources, and has provided valuable spin-offs for ecotourism, such as at Silana Village and Moon Reef (spinner dolphins).

Dau-ni-Vonu has established a monitoring network for nesting turtles, and the monitors (30 so far) who have been trained to protect turtles also operate as fish wardens. Educational materials have been developed and distributed to schools.

Challenges include funding constraints that prevent the expansion of the current programme; and the limited opportunities for prosecution in the event of violations of community-agreed restrictions.

### KIRIBATI (Iataake King)

The case of Kanton, the only settlement in the Phoenix Islands, was taken as an example of the difficulties in implementing successful ecotourism opportunities in Kiribati. The current population of Kanton is very small (15), and the facilities are rudimentary, but the attractions are world-class and include spectacular beaches, breeding beaches for green turtles, diving, seabirds and bonefish.

The aim of the tourist strategy is to attract low numbers of high-yield tourists, which is consistent with the Phoenix Islands Protected Area (PIPA) Management Plan.

### AMERICAN SAMOA (Ameko Pato)

Ecotourism has not figured in American Samoa's development strategy until recently, but projects with the University of Hawaii and NOAA have identified a number of promising opportunities, for which there is a great deal of background information.

## **NEW CALEDONIA** (Christelle Montane)

Marine tourism is very important in New Caledonia, with over 400,000 visitors each year, many of them on cruise ships. Attractions include whale-watching (2-3 months), snorkelling and diving (the reefs are generally in good condition, with many iconic species, including turtles).

20 companies are involved in marine excursions, many of them day trips, and sail cruises.

There is an Ambassador of the Lagoon programme.

## **GUAM** (Fred Schumann)

Although Guam is a small island with 160,000 inhabitants, there are 1.3 million visitors p.a., 70% from Japan (Tokyo is 3.5 hours away).

Although the island is geared to mass tourism and ecotourism is not really on the radar, 12% of visitors take a tour to see spinner dolphins. Dolphin watching is offered by 18 companies, only one-third of which attended a recent training for operators. There may well be harassment occurring during at least some of these tours.

The military build-up on Guam may have some effect on marine life. The One Village, One Product project is using the creativity of villagers to promote their village.

## **COMMONWEALTH OF THE NORTHERN MARIANAS ISLANDS** (Erin Derrington)

Tourism comprises approximately 95% of the CNMI's GDP. Currently developing a policy on ecotourism, which is potentially conflicted by proposals for military training exercises. There are 120 permitted marine sports operators – diving is very important. There may be harassment of spinner dolphins in commercial operations.

A localized (lagoon-focused) use survey has been launched to guide policy development. Small MPAs have been established to protect important spawning areas. The turtle monitoring programme involves flipper tagging.

## **SOLOMON ISLANDS** (Geoffrey Marausi)

Ecotourism has great potential in the Solomon Islands. Activities include:

- Bird-watching
- Turtle conservation (several sites)
- Diving
- Cultural displays

Constraints include an infrastructure that is not suited to mass tourism, but the National Tourism Development Strategy has identified ecotourism as having great promise.

## **PALAU** (Bouveau K. Anastacio)

Palau (population 20,000) has traditionally been involved in mass tourism (140,000 visitors p.a.), but is moving now towards an ecotourism niche, identified in the National Tourism Masterplan. There are ecolodges around the country's key conservation sites.

## **TUVALU** (Paufi Afelee)

Infrastructure is limited (Twice weekly flights from Suva in a small plane). There is a Conservation Area in Funafuti lagoon, and other islands have LMMAs. Lessons can be learned from the FLMMMA experience. There is a turtle tagging project underway.

## 🌀 SAMOA (Faamatuainu Lenata'i Suifua)

Inbound foreign tourism generates WS\$345 million, and marine attractions (such as the Su'a Trench) are a very significant part of Samoa's appeal.

Most of the marine activities take place on beaches or coastline owned by villages and matai. Turtles are protected by Fisheries Regulations and swimming with turtles is popular with tourists.

## 🌀 VANUATU (Jerry R. Spooner)

In association with Southern Cross University, Vanuatu is developing a Tourism Accreditation System, including product classification, a green rating system and minimum standards for operators.

## 🌀 FRENCH POLYNESIA (Miri Tatarata)

Blue ecotourism is growing fast in French Polynesia, with its 5 million sq km sanctuary for cetaceans, sharks and turtles. There are 20 whale-watch operators, who are now required to report their activities in detail. Consideration is being given to placing limits on numbers of vessels and time spent with whales. Some operators are proposing swim-with-whales tours.

There are fewer activities for turtles – two care clinics, but no opportunities to observe nesting turtles (the nesting beaches are remote and difficult to access, but many are monitored by volunteers). There is shark swimming on Bora-Bora.

French Polynesia follows the SPREP Marine Species Programme and encourages communities to embrace the protection of marine species.

## 🌀 PRESENTATION OF PROPOSED WORK PROGRAMME

### Pascale Salaun (SPREP) and Nathalie Maisonneuve (Consultant)

Pascale and Nathalie outlined how they intended to organise the meeting to get the best outcome and outputs. There would be a number of presentations about various aspects of ecotourism and Pacific experiences, and on days 3 and 4, participants would be split into four working groups. Nathalie described the following ten 'Orientations' that would guide the activities of the working groups:

1. Assessment of the supply and demand for marine ecotourism in the Pacific Islands region
2. Planning and structure of marine ecotourism
3. The design of 'high-quality' products
4. Research, monitoring and evaluation
5. The conservation tools
6. The economic development and commitment of local communities
7. Traditional knowledge and local traditions
8. Awareness, environmental and cultural education
9. Capacity-building
10. Promotion of marine ecotourism in the Pacific





## KEYNOTE PRESENTATION

### Kauahi Ngapora: **The Whale Watch Kaikoura Story**

Over the past 28 years, Kaikoura has become one of the world's most famous whale-watching destinations, and one of New Zealand's most important and valuable tourist attractions. It has rejuvenated both the town and the local Maori tribe, who owns and operates the business.

From humble beginnings with one small vessel that carried 3,000 passengers annually, Whale Watch Kaikoura now has five purpose-built whale watching crafts that carry over 100,000 passengers each year. The company has built its own harbour for the fleet, and is consistently striving to improve its ecotourism credentials and environmentally conscious brand.

While the location of the head of the deepwater Kaikoura Canyon one mile offshore provides a unique opportunity to view a range of marine species so close to the shore, the other distinguishing feature of Whale Watch Kaikoura has been its ability to deliver a Maori perspective to its tours. The success of the whale watch operation has also resulted in the emergence of several other marine wildlife tours (based on dolphins, fur seals and seabirds) and a community consensus to protect much of the special marine area around Kaikoura, a development that would have been unheard of thirty years ago.

### Ian Campbell: **Benefits to local communities from shark tourism in Fiji**

Sharks are an integral part of the culture of the South Pacific. Shark conservation in Fiji has been 11 years in the making. In this example, one dive operator engaged village members, who retain fishing rights, to establish a "no take" zone and shark protection corridor in conjunction with a participatory business plan. With support from the legislature a national shark protection corridor was designated, a zone that allows sharks to flourish and yields of increased biodiversity and increased allowable yields of fish in neighbouring areas.

There are 376 shark diving operations in 83 locations in 29 countries today. Although non-natural interactions such as shark feeding may lead to some short term behaviour changes and localized, no quantitative evidence demonstrates long-term impacts at this time. Today this area supports observational and more active interactions with 8 species of sharks while providing a lucrative business for the forward-thinking dive operator as well as financial benefits to the local community – a levy of about \$100 FJD goes to the village which is used to support local education. Divers gather data which is used in management decisions. Volunteer wardens work with police to enforce regulations within the protection area, and are able to levy fines for both infractions and for fleeing the scene.

Factors of success includes committed and engaged owner / operators, political will, government backing, and community support. This model has potential to be replicable for other areas and predator populations such as rays.

Global best practices for shark and ray ecotourism encourage:

- Community benefits
- Conservation benefits
- Research benefits

### Anton van Helden: **Whale tales: using storytelling to enrich experience and create connections**

During more than two decades as marine mammal curator at the Museum of New Zealand, Te Papa Tongarewa, Anton worked with numerous coastal communities, many of them Maori, to collect and archive stranded whales along the New Zealand coastline. He learned the significance of many of these animals in the stories of local communities, and the relevance of the saying:

**Tere Tohora, Tere Tangata**  
*Where whales journey, people follow*

Telling stories about special events generates ownership, celebration, transformation, engagement, and fosters a relationship between people and animals. When people tell their stories in their language in their voices, their passion and values come from the heart. When you engage people's hearts you can open their minds. By connecting

on an emotional and visceral level and celebrating life, telling stories can build ownership and engagement across generations and cultures.

For Pacific Island people, the development of ecotourism can be much more than a way to earn money – it can be a transformative experience, and can reap rewards for operators, visitors and communities alike. While historic stories and ecological realities may contain negative elements, by reframing negative aspects of stories in a more positive light, story tellers can make a more personal connection with their audience, one that can inspire heightened understanding and perhaps motivate changes in perspective and behaviours. Telling compelling stories in compelling ways can spark emotional and intellectual engagement. Approaches to do this can include:

- Avoiding non-parallelism – let your stories stand alone;
- Highlighting a main character and their “transformation” story; and
- Avoiding layers of “unpacking” to make stories as straightforward and accessible as possible.

Different media may lend itself to different levels of detail, but in general, stories must be concisely targeted to the target audience in order to form a strong connection. By telling compelling stories communities can share the history of their place and how it is special in a way that is impactful to their visitors and enables them to reap rewards.

## Lionel Tavita: **Les Baleines à Rurutu**

The myths and history of a place are integral parts of culture. In Rurutu, Tuirao is a main mythological character who embodies a male hero’s relationship with the ocean and whose stories include transformative journeys that relate lessons about fishing, care of coral (stepping on them can lead to trouble), and even food preparation.

## Christopher Bartlett and Tasaruru Whitely: **From turtle hunting to conservation ecotourism at Nguna-Pele Vanuatu**

12 years ago, the islands of Nguna and Pele in Vanuatu, composed of 18 villages of about 2,500 people, traditionally hunted turtles and harvested eggs, but gradually the number of nesters declined until nesting ceased altogether, and turtles in the surrounding sea also became more and more scarce. The villages decided that it was time to stop killing turtles, but not to abandon their long relationship with these animals.

Now, the villagers employ their traditional skills to catch green and hawksbill turtles at sea, rodeo-style, and bring them back to land to tag them before releasing them. They have discovered that tourists are intrigued and are willing to pay to participate in this practice. Not only are there now more turtles around, but also their community is learning more about the turtles’ lives and movements from tag recoveries. Village conservation champions are nominated by the village Chiefs, and work to organize beach clean-up campaigns and school outreach, as well as provide ecological advice. A Chiefly ban on turtle harvest ensures continued protection and supports on-going conservation efforts.



## DAY 2

### Jean Kape: **Seabird Watching**

Marine birds are important for Polynesian society in terms of believe and daily life, particularly for fishermen. Some of them are totemic as people believe that ancestors' spirits can become divine. They are also guides as their behaviour can inform on the weather for instance, or on fishes banks. They can be hunted. But they are also part of the literature and poetry. Nowadays they are source of curiosity, research, and touristic attraction with bird-watching which would gain to be well managed to avoid any destruction.

### Frederic Torrente: **Cultural significance of sharks in French Polynesia**

In Polynesia, there is no separation between Nature and Culture. Tangaroa is the divinity of depth; the father of all the marine species and the creator God in some of the archipelagos. The sharks play a key role in the marine environment: they play symbolic, religious, spiritual, material functions, and they are key marine resources.

The sharks are extremely 'Tapu': sacred species. The Shark God is symbolized by *Prionacae glauca* which is the most prolific specie. Jaws of shark 'Parata' are found in all the myths. Sharks have ambiguous effects in the Polynesian culture. They are considered either as protectors or as destructors. In Tuamotu, sharks are present everywhere in the local culture. They practice shark fishing; they are used for the sessions of initiation; shark skin is used to make drums, warriors' uniforms, shark's tooth to make weapons, and shark oil is used for funeral rituals. In the Polynesian culture, sharks are used for warriors' tattoo designs.

All those myths about sharks should be included in ecotourism development.

### Marta Perez: **The role of culture in formulating species interactions**

#### **CASE STUDY ONE: RAPA-NUI (EASTER ISLAND)**

The island receives 150,000 visitors per year, of which 50,000 are seeking an oceans-related experience. There is a move to establish a large MPA and to brand the island as a 'Culture Destination.' Twenty women are developing a Sustainable Management Plan to protect the island's resources and to contribute to the economic development of women on the island.

#### **CASE STUDY TWO: 'EUA, KINGDOM OF TONGA**

'Eua is a small island near the main island of Tongatapu. Although it has very limited resources, the island is marketing its attractions through the 'Eua Ecotourism Association, primarily composed of the operators of guesthouses and whalewatch trips. Through a community effort, they have made improvements to the island's signage, and have opened an information centre and viewing platforms.

The Association stresses the importance of society's role in protecting natural heritage.

### Elise Huffer: **Culture, Traditional Knowledge and Ecotourism**

Traditional knowledge has cultural, biological and agricultural components. The Cook Islands were the first to have a TK Act. Ecotourism can generate issues from a cultural perspective, and gave the example of the Potato Park in Peru (see International Institute for Environment and Development – iied.org).

SPC has adopted a Code of Conduct to address traditional knowledge and similar concerns are contained within SPREP's Framework for Nature Conservation 2014-2020.

Community values and TK need to be involved in ecotourism projects from the beginning, including Regulations and cultural training for guides.

## Iataake King: **Cruise ships and wildlife conservation – striking the right balance**

Kiritimati Island in Kiribati is ideally situated between Hawaii and Papeete to encourage cruise ship visits. These visits were very important in the early 2000s, but by 2008, they had ceased, mainly because of navigational problems associated with a narrow channel that continually silted up. Additionally, there were inadequate facilities in the harbour to attract tourists – there were no toilets and the handicrafts for sale were of poor quality and expensive.

However, the seabird colonies on Cook and Motu Tapu Islets are world-class, and still rat-free. The local inhabitants have realised that if cruise ships can be persuaded to return to Kiritimati, there will need to be a much higher quality of infrastructure and efforts will need to be made to improve the local attractions. The niche to be promoted needs to be for medium-sized and expedition vessels, with high-end passengers.

## Mike Donoghue: **Ecotourism in SPREP's Marine Species Action Plans**

SPREP's Marine Species Programme consists of Action Plans for the conservation of dugongs, turtles and cetaceans. There are plans to include a Shark and Ray plan for the next iteration (2018-2022). Each plan includes a section on ecotourism development, with action points and indicators. The whale and dolphin plan has the largest section on ecotourism.

It was suggested that the action plans were timely in their inclusion of ecotourism, which has developed steadily in the region. Participants were invited to examine the sections in each of the action plan that were concerned with ecotourism and to report on their progress (if any) towards achieving the criteria identified as indicators.

## Aline Schaffar: **Status of whale watching in the Pacific Islands**

The latest available data is for 2008, when the value of WW in Oceania and Antarctica was estimated at US\$ 327 million p.a. Guam experienced almost 50% growth between 1998 and 2008, while the French Territories recorded 38.4% and the Cook Islands 33.7%. Several reports documenting this are available from Aline.

In 2008, 100,000 visitors went WW in the Pacific Islands showing a 45% growth between 2004-2008. WW is typically seasonal and opportunistic (i.e. also involves dive trip operators, etc). The opportunities for further growth depend on the availability of tourists, transport infrastructure and scientific information on species and impacts of WW operations.

## Ian Campbell: **Conservation status of sharks and rays**

Many species of sharks and rays are in a poor conservation status, with conservation measures urgently needed – nearly 25% of these species are threatened with immediate extinction, and data deficiencies have been identified for about 50% of these animals. Pacific Island countries have taken several steps at the national and regional level that have positioned them on the global stage. But there is no magic bullet and:

- By-catch is still a problem
- NPOAs are not binding
- WCPFC decisions are by consensus and conservation measures are therefore hard to adopt
- There are limitations with CITES and CMS
- Simplistic campaigns can confuse the issue
- There is a lack of data

Despite these challenges, initiatives to produce data, develop best management practices, and protect these iconic species are underway throughout the Pacific, including through the Pacific Oceanscape Framework, the Pacific Ocean Alliance Initiative, and national action planning initiatives. WWF is producing a Rapid Assessment Toolkit and working on Best Practice guidelines for shark swimming, which is a valuable ecotourism attraction in many countries, especially Fiji.

## 🌀 Karen Frutchey: **Turtles and people: interactions and possible opportunities for ecotourism**

The best projects in turtle conservation occur where turtles and people interact naturally. Head-starting and keeping turtles in captivity are not good options. Better practices include:

- Turtle walks and campouts
- Assisting with nest inventories
- Snorkelling or swimming with turtles

NOAA has funded some ecotourism-related projects in the region, including:

- Tagging in Saipan
- Research survey in Ulithi (FSM)
- Managing public interactions with turtles that come ashore during the day in Hawai'i (this is a serious compliance issue)

A key message is **Don't feed turtles**

A good way to start ecotourism is to establish a research programme. Possible funding sources include:

- USFWS and NOAA
- Disney Wildlife Foundation
- SWOT

## 🌀 Donna Kwan: **Ecotourism opportunities to support seagrass and dugong conservation**

Donna described the GEF/CMS global programme for dugong and seagrass conservation, that has Vanuatu and the Solomon Islands as its Pacific Islands component. The programme emphasises the importance of engaging local communities in conserving dugong and their habitat. Protecting dugong habitat not only has potential benefits for ecotourism, but also for food security (seagrass meadows are nurseries for many species of fish and prawns) and climate change mitigation, since seagrass can locally ameliorate ocean acidification.

## 🌀 Christelle Montane: **Successful management of whale watching activities in New Caledonia**

Humpback whales gather each winter in the Southern Lagoon of New Caledonia, and whale-watching has become a popular tourist attraction, with several large catamarans involved in this activity. Until quite recently, there were minimal restrictions on the behaviour of vessels around whales. However, analysis of data collected during a three-year monitoring study by Claire Garrigue and Aline Schaffar demonstrated that irresponsible behaviour by vessel operators had clear adverse impacts on whales.

These studies were the basis for the development of regulations to govern the operation of vessels around whales, resulting in better operator behaviour and increased cooperation between operators.



## Ahosiutapu Maamaloa (Blue Lagoon Resort, Vava'u, Tonga): **Swimming with whales in Tonga: business and regulation**

Like New Caledonia, regulations to control the activities of vessel operators have only been introduced for whale-watching in Tonga in recent years. Tonga allows swimming with whales, and seeing whales underwater in the clear waters is a unique experience. Guides and operators must attend a training programme and Tapu's operation promotes safe watching by:

- Having a maximum of 4 passengers for each tour;
- Requiring swimmers not to approach whales closer than 5 metres;
- Not chasing whales;
- Spending no longer than 90 minutes with mothers and calves before breaking off the encounter;
- Removing recalcitrant passengers from the water.

Tapu noted that her grandfather was one of the last whale hunters in Tonga, and reflected on the behavioural change that had taken place inter-generationally in moving from whale hunting to whale watching.

Responding to a question about foreign ownership of many of the Tongan whale watch companies, Tapu said that efforts were being made to encourage greater ownership and control by local people.

## Rochelle Constantine: **Whale watching impacts and recommendations**

A big problem in managing the impacts of whale watching on the animals is effectively enforcing laws that define harassment. Without effective enforcement, guidelines and regulations can be of limited value. Rochelle noted that operators often incorrectly assumed that passengers wanted to spend a longer time with whales than they really did, and summarised the results of several key studies.

- Aline Schaffar demonstrated that in New Caledonia, unregulated whale watch boats had significant impacts, e.g. 84% of humpback whales changed their behaviour when vessel approached within 1000 metres; and they changed direction and speed of swimming, and their dive time – a classic pattern of predator avoidance.
- Rochelle's research on bottlenose dolphins in the Bay of Islands, NZ, showed that one tour boat could alter the behaviour of a pod, and that over a period of 15 years of monitoring, the distribution of the dolphin population changed, and only 50 of the original population of 185 remained in the Bay.
- Marc Oremus and Michael Poole have shown that spinner dolphins in the Pacific Islands tend to live in small communities, forage at night in deep water, and use a small number of bays to rest during the day. They are therefore very vulnerable to disturbance, and need to be allowed to have space and time to rest during the day, without disturbance by boats.

Her conclusion highlights how scientists can help to develop sustainable marine ecotourism by informing and contributing to the development of Best Practice Guidelines based on behavioural studies.

## José Truda Palazzo: **Making MPAS work for Enhancing Ecotourism**

Marine Protected Areas can not only protect biodiversity, but also promote tourism, by providing a local or a national branding. There are a range of opportunities waiting to be tapped, from large MPAs to smaller community-based areas. The national initiatives in the Pacific Islands for whale and shark sanctuaries can be marketed effectively – e.g. dive operators in Palau have been major supporters and advocates for Palau's Marine Sanctuary.

Community-based MPAs, and especially the LMMA network, are a fundamental mechanism in the region, but are largely unknown outside the Pacific Islands, and could be used to promote ecotourism. There are significant challenges in linking small MPAs to larger ones, and fully incorporating the environmental and socio-economic issues in MPA management; but communities need to co-operate, not compete, and to exchange the lessons learned from MPAs as well as engaging the tourism sector in their promotion. MPAs can be invaluable for ecotourism if they exist in reality and are properly promoted.

## Edouard Malakai: **Rescuing turtles in a tourism context**

The mission of the Bora Bora Turtle centre is to sensitize local population and tourists to the conservation of marine turtles. The centre (BBTC) was built in 2000, inside the hotel Le Meridien. The BBTC is self-funded, mainly via donations and the revenue generated by the shop center, the tours organized around the ecological center.

Each year, more than 400 children and 1200 tourists are sensitized. And since 2000, it has been about 500 marine turtles that were released.

## Michael Lueck: **Regulations and codes of conduct – benefits rather than constraints**

There are numerous examples – notably Shark Bay in Western Australia – that show how important it is to have clear rules that minimize adverse impacts of tourism activities on marine wildlife. Operators, however, often see codes of conduct or regulations as creating a barrier to market entry, with complex application procedures, and the possibility that they may have to modify their operations.

Conversely, some marine scientists see operators as insensitive villains, with no respect for the animals they view. However, regulations have a positive side – they can:

- Help to protect vulnerable species
- Promote sustainable ecotourism operations
- Provide a niche for licensed operators and
- Allow higher fares to be charged

Although it is acknowledged that it is often difficult to secure a conviction for breach of the rules, once operators realise the competitive advantage they have by securing a permit to operate and abiding by the rules, the threat of a court case after an undercover compliance operation is often enough to guarantee good behaviour.

## Aline Schaffar: **Cetacean watching management measures**

Aline referred to several reports for the Pacific Islands which had been carried out by consultants from the region; and also noted that CMS, IWC, CITES and the SPREP Marine Species Programme all contained useful and relevant information. Suitable measures include:

**Regulations** – may be based on science or precautionary principles. Often have legal backing (e.g. fines);

Licences – generally issued by governments, often with a suite of conditions, including vessel condition, crew experience, educational content, etc. Frequently there is a licence fee to cover the cost of management – e.g. Tonga, New Caledonia, French Polynesia;

**Codes of Conduct** – often voluntary, but operators can be accredited;

Guidelines – in 2011, SPREP convened a 3-day workshop that developed a regional framework that can be modified to suit local conditions;

**Educational measures** – such as pamphlets and handouts can be valuable.

Management measures need to be:

- Appropriate to the local context
- Simple and clear
- Adaptable
- Participatory in their development
- Use scientific data to assess their effectiveness in minimising adverse impacts on animals
- Communicated to the public.

## DAY 3

### 🌀 Working groups:

- best practices: mitigation of impacts, cultural integration
- regulation: improvement through science results and cultural traditions
- MPA management, including ecotourism



### 🌀 Roderic Mast: **BLUE HABITS: Motivating Ocean-Friendly Behaviours Through Eco-Tourism**

After a lifetime of studying turtles, Rod believes they are:

- Awesome
- Connectors
- In trouble

In brief, we are putting too much into the oceans and taking too much out. SWOT (State of the World's Ocean Turtles) was established to provide a comprehensive collection of relevant information, including:

- A database of scientific data
- To facilitate connections between communities who are caring for their turtles
- A communication channel (through the SWOT newsletter, other articles in magazines, films, images, etc.)
- Hotspot maps for threatened species

A key issue is how to engage the public to convey the messages and information that have been collected. Mr Leatherback (a costume Rod carries with him around the world) gets peoples' attention; and the Great Turtle Race, using satellite tags sponsored by rock band musicians, was also great fun. But neither really achieved very much.

However, applying behaviour change models and working with the Persuasive Change Laboratory at Stanford University, has led to the development in 2015 of the Blue Habits Project (<http://www.oceanicsociety.org/about>). The aim of the project is to send travellers who are involved in marine ecotourism activities such as whale-watching home with tools and networks to make the oceans better for everyone.

### 🌀 Rochelle Constantine: **Participatory science: What can the public bring to scientific research?**

Many of the 'baby-boomers' who now are a key component of the ecotourism and adventure tourism market like to contribute as well as participate in trips. Some organisations, such as Earthwatch, specialise in providing volunteers for particular projects, but 'Citizen Science' has opened a range of new opportunities for public involvement in scientific research, e.g.:

#### NEW ZEALAND WHALE STRANDING NETWORK

Thanks to prompt reporting by members of the public, the Department of Conservation has been able to attend at nearly all the strandings of whales and dolphins along the extensive NZ coastline over the past 25 years, and over 2000 genetic samples have been collected from 36 different species (almost half the total number of known cetacean



species). This represents the second-largest collection in the world. Additionally, the NZ public is renowned for their success in rescuing stranded whales. Samples collected from dead stranded animals can augment valuable information collected at live strandings.

### PACIFIC WHALE STRANDING NETWORK

A web-based system (<http://www.apodstrandings.org/>) has recently been established to record whale strandings in the Pacific Islands – 71 records have so far been filed, but it is certain that there is far more information to be added.

### SMARTPHONE TECHNOLOGY

Apps such as MoBi, which provides information on dolphins and whales of the Pacific Islands; and Coastal Walkabout (<https://itunes.apple.com/au/app/coastal-walkabout/id698524132?mt=8>), which allows the public to report opportunistic sightings, can greatly increase the amount of useful information available to managers and scientists.

Citizen Science = Global Science: 63% of the indicators for the 2020 Aichi Targets can involve Citizen Scientists. Only 37% require the input of professional scientists alone.

## Annie Wheeler, Catherine Siota and Geoffrey Maurasi: **NZ Government-sponsored initiatives for developing new ecotourism and volun-tourism opportunities to support turtle research and conservation in the Pacific Islands**

The New Zealand government, through its development aid programme, is funding a four year Marine Turtle Monitoring and Ecotourism Development project in Fiji, Kiribati and the Solomon Islands, facilitated by the NA Department of Conservation and implemented by SPREP. The project aims to enhance capacity and commitment in Pacific Island countries to conserve and sustainably manage endangered marine turtle populations, as well as achieve increased skills, sustainable economic benefits and improved livelihoods for local communities through turtle-related management and ecotourism activities.

Participating village monitors receive training in searching for and looking after nests, flipper-tagging turtles and the elements of a successful ecotourism operation. Tasariki village in Vanuatu was one of the first communities in the region to welcome eco-volunteers, and while they brought many benefits, there were also challenges to the community. The NZODA/DOC/SPREP programme aims to build on the lessons learned from this experience to deliver lasting conservation gains for turtles and economic benefits to the communities involved.

## José Truda Palazzo: **Public Policy focus on Divers for Sharks and national governments and international treaties, Palau and Yap as a case study**

The Pacific has a comparative advantage for shark and ray tourism because of its healthy reefs, cultural integrity, and commitment of governments, communities and regional agencies to conservation. Palau and other PICs are walking the talk in international fora. Yap has fantastic potential as an exclusive destination, but every island in the region will have its own attractions.

Despite the challenges of climate change and overfishing, marine ecotourism offers a better and more sustainable investment for the future than large hotels and casinos. This potential needs to be brought to the attention of conventions such as CBD and CMS.

## Bouveau K. Anastacio: **Palau marine sanctuary to increase ecotourism and payment: green fee**

Palau's Green Fee (levied on departing passengers) funds their Protected Areas Network, which includes an eco-park and bird-watching sites, as well as the familiar dive spots and Jellyfish Lake. A traditional practice – the Bul – is being invoked to establish the Palau Marine Sanctuary, and close off almost all foreign fishing. The Green Fee will be raised from \$30 to \$100 to compensate for the loss of fisheries revenue.

A recently-completed documentary by National Geographic Society's Pristine Seas project was screened, highlighting Palau's extraordinary land and seascape.

## Aline Schaffar: **From operators to ambassadors: the need for capacity building and training**

Basic training and continuous improvement in taking visitors to view wildlife is an essential part of any successful ecotourism enterprise. Aline developed a training module for whale-watching that combines:

- Approach procedure
- Judging distances
- Educational content
- Background briefing
- Safety

An objective of any ecotourism tour should be to make the passengers into ambassadors for the wildlife. Proper interpretation adds value to any trip and helps passengers to have realistic expectations. Developing an accreditation label for the region could be valuable.

## Louise Twining-Ward (Sustainable Travel International): **Sustainable Tourism Business and Destination Labelling**

One in eleven jobs globally is related to tourism, and when it is well done, tourism can bring significant benefits to local communities. STI aims to bring together destinations and businesses through regional alliances and an Impact Toolkit. The collective impact comes from the commitment of different actors to a shared agenda. This model is especially applicable to ecotourism, (several travel agents are now promoting Green Destinations) and could be easily developed for the Pacific Islands, based on similar models in Central America and the Caribbean.

Establishing standards creates a common understanding and establish a framework to enable communication and generate confidence in the consumer:

- Shared Vision
- Simple Standards
- Capacity Development
- Certification and Labelling

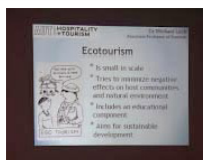
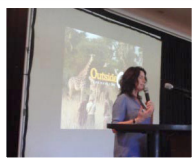
The process should not be overly complex or expensive, but should fit the Destination Sustainability programmes in Norway and Germany. It's a good idea to get potential stakeholders to agree on a Charter to create a shared vision, before trying for an ecolabel with certification criteria. Creating a regional standard may be much harder than a local or national standard.

## Michael Poole: **The development of boat-based dolphin/whale watching tourism in French Polynesia**

Boat-based dolphin and whale watching tourism has grown rapidly in French Polynesia. There are now 43 vessels operating in twelve islands, although most of them are in Tahiti and Mo'orea, where there are four species frequently sighted. Humpback whales (most often mothers and calves) are regularly seen in the lagoons during winter months, and are also reported from the Society and Austral Islands.

French Polynesia established the region's first whale sanctuary, covering 5 million sq km, in May 2002. Michael suggested some amendments to the regulations covering the sanctuary, viz:

- Maximum of 3 boats within 300 metres of a whale or dolphin
- Double the viewing distance for resting spinner dolphins
- Limit the number of whale watch permits and boats for each island
- Mandatory training for captains and guides and spot checks for compliance with regulations



## DAY 4

### Christopher Bartlett (GIZ-MACBIO): **Challenges and Roles of multiple stakeholders in cross-sector approaches to island-based conservation, the case of ecotourism on Pele Island**

The local communities on Pele Island realised that they were steadily eroding their natural resource base, but because each community had tenure over a small part of the islands, a coordinated approach to sustainable development and use of resources required that all the communities collaborated to develop a strategy that would benefit the entire island, rather than each community's individual area of land and reef.

Chris gave as examples the development of an island trail for cruise ship tourists, with a variety of different activities offered by different villages; and a commitment by all the villages to combat an invasion of Crown of Thorns starfish, which involved manual collection and development of a composting technique.

### Chris Cocker: **SPTO Pacific Tourism Strategy 2015–2019**

SPTO is the mandated body for tourism sector development in the region.

In the past, they led projects on Sustainable Tourism Development related to capacity-building for tourism SMEs and Policy Development. In the future, SPTO plans to support national programmes of 17 PICS related to sustainable tourism development, to promote partnership with key stakeholders in STD, as well as to strengthen sustainable planning, development and management practices in the tourism sector and to promote investment.

The Pacific Tourism Strategy (PTS) 2015-2019 has been prepared and validated in October 2014.

Regarding the Pacific Tourism Sector Overview, Fiji is the main destination by far in the region. Improving access and transport infrastructure, strengthening public/private partnership, developing quality products are some of the key regional development issues.

The PTS aims to increase the economic benefits of tourism, to preserve the regional natural and cultural heritage, to ensure a safe environment and unique pacific hospitality to the visitors, and to strengthen partnership between the public and private sectors and the local communities.

### Louise Twining-Ward: **Regional Models for Destination Sustainability**

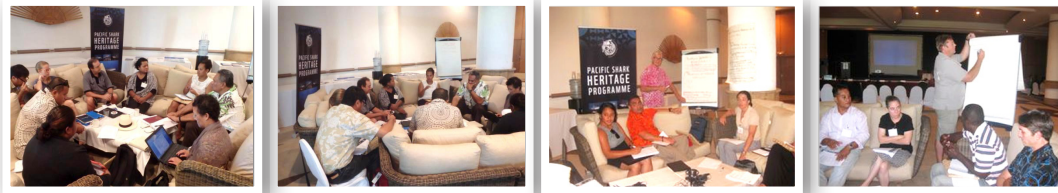
Tourism is one of the largest and fastest growing industry threatening our environment and cultures. The commitment of a group of actors from different sectors is necessary to go toward a better tourism.

STA builds regional alliances with their partners. Some regional approaches have been developed internationally like MARTI – the MesoAmerican Reef Tourism Initiative. MARTI leads the development of collaboration within the tourism industry. The engagement of the principal sectors and their adoption of good practices enabled to slow reef decline. Another model: Sustainable Destination Alliance for the Americas (including Dominica, the Bahamas, Jamaica, Nicaragua,...)

A South Pacific Destination Alliance (SPDA) is in process, based on similar alliances in the Caribbean or Central America. It aims to develop sustainable tourism in the region and to adapt a share vision for sustainable tourism, to increase SMEs, visitor satisfaction, etc...

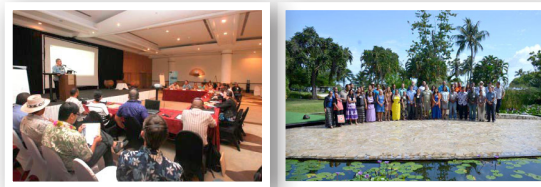
## Working groups

- d. competitive advantage for the Pacific, characteristics and synergies, competition and complementarity
- e. sustainable development through ecotourism: guidelines at the national level
- f. regional framework, national strategy, local business: how to develop a niche?



## Closing sessions

1. endorsement of the Communiqué and
2. approval for establishing a technical committee with experts amongst attendees to complete the multiyear programme framework with working groups notes, by the end of July 2015.



## DAY 5

Dolphin tour offered by the French Polynesia government:

- Discovering the tour;
- Observing the professional practices;
- Learning from whale watching experts.



*Acknowledging Erin Derrington and Michael Donoghue for putting together their notes, as well as Michael Poole, Nathalie Maisonneuve, Michael Donoghue, Aline Schaffar, Jean Kape, Yan Peirsegeale for the photos ©.*

# COMMUNIQUÉ



## JOURNÉES BLEUES (BLUE DAYS) REGIONAL CONFERENCE ON ICONIC MARINE SPECIES ECOTOURISM

HOSTED BY THE GOVERNMENT OF FRENCH POLYNESIA, TAHITI, 4 JUNE 2015

The participants attending the Journées Bleues regional conference hosted by the Government of French Polynesia and SPREP with support from co funders are:

- **Aware** of the importance of the growing economic value of ecotourism in the Pacific Islands Countries and Territories (PICTs) and of its potential to bring economic benefits to communities;
- **Aware** of the importance of preserving iconic species to ensure the development of the marine ecotourism sector and the need to encourage sustainable tourism activities;
- **Aware** of the commitment by our countries to reaching the Aichi Targets and to preserve the species and habitats which support ecotourism;
- **Aware** that many of the marine species included in tourism activities are listed as vulnerable, endangered or critically endangered on the IUCN Red List or other nationally relevant criteria;
- **Noting** that humpback whales and other marine mammals, including dugongs, marine turtles, sea birds, and many species of sharks and rays are given priority for the implementation of management measures by their inclusion in the texts or annexes of the Convention of Migratory Species (CMS), and of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES);
- **Recognising** the value and principles of Marine Protected Areas to safeguard marine species targeted by ecotourism activities;
- **Recognising** that marine tourism may have irreversible effects on iconic vulnerable marine species and their habitat, as well as indigenous cultures, if the sector is not sustainably managed;
- **Recognising** that the long-term conservation of iconic marine species and their habitats and sustainable tourism development that involve watching, diving, swimming with these species requires a consistent and regulated framework that guides such activities at national levels throughout the Pacific Islands region;
- **Recognising** that well-managed ecotourism can benefit both species conservation and sustainable livelihood development at all levels;
- **Considering** the need for the SPREP's member countries and territories to collaborate in the field of tourism, to encourage regional cooperation and South-South economic development;
- **Recognising** the importance of the participation of all PICTs, indigenous communities, as well as Regional Organisations, NGOs and the private sector in collaborative action related to the conservation of marine species and management of their habitats.



The participants therefore:

- **Note** that the Pacific can become an even more globally recognised destination in terms of marine ecotourism due to its biodiversity, commitment to sustainable practices and traditional knowledge;
- **Recognise** that ecotourism is a major opportunity for the development of the economic sector in the region, for the benefit of the local communities and conservation goals;
- **Recognise** the importance of local, cultural and scientific knowledge and practices for the sustainable economic development of this niche market;
- **Recommend** that actions at the national level be implemented in an integrated multi-sectorial approach;
- **Recommend** that actions at a national level be implemented with the support of key stakeholders at a regional level;
- **Endorse** the development of a multi-year programme based on the framework agreed to during this conference, to provide the opportunity for Pacific countries and territories to coordinate efforts and to meet their shared expectations;
- **Recommend** institutional reforms be undertaken in our respective countries, if required, to support community-based well-managed ecotourism initiatives and directly and indirectly benefiting local communities;
- **Propose** that institutional reforms be undertaken in our respective countries and territories, if required, to support the conservation of marine species and their habitats with resources generated by tourism sector;
- **Agree** that the endorsement of the regional strategy proposed by the South Pacific Tourism Organisation (SPTO) would be beneficial for the development of marine ecotourism in each country or territory according to local context;
- **Propose** that each country and territory represented at this conference should consider making a firm commitment to supporting existing, or establishing pilot, marine ecotourism projects combining economic development with marine species conservation and sustainable management of natural resources, according to the framework agreed by participants;
- **Recommend** that countries and territories represented at this conference establish a mechanism for all the stakeholders involved in marine ecotourism to regularly exchange information and experiences;
- **Endorse** the development of an eco-certification label for tourism infrastructures, private operators and travel agencies, along with relevant training programmes, to improve and harmonise the quality and sustainability of ecotourism services and the protection of iconic species;
- **Recommend** that countries and territories consider the establishment of a regional label linked with the destination Pacific islands, without affecting existing efforts in the region;
- **Recommend** that countries and territories review and consider the adoption of regional guidelines related to responsible and sustainable marine species-based tourism and ensure its promotion at national and regional levels;
- **Recommend** that countries integrate community-based ecotourism principles into national development policies and legal frameworks, including raising awareness and capacity building for the local community and tourism industry on preserving marine life, developing this niche for sustainable economic and livelihood development;
- **Request** SPREP to forward this Communiqué and other relevant outputs of this Conference to the 2015 SPREP Meeting, to Tourism and Environment Ministers in member governments, and to all CROP agencies involved in tourism development and marine resources management in the Pacific islands, and to the relevant multilateral environmental agreements (such as the Convention on Biological Diversity and Convention on Migratory Species); and furthermore **invite** countries taking part in this Conference who are members of such treaties and agencies to also bring to their attention the relevant outputs of this Conference;
- **Endorse** SPTO and SPREP as the organisations to lead development of the regional guidelines framework, to collaborate in seeking funding and implementing the multiyear programme.

# FRAMEWORK FOR A MULTIYEAR PROGRAMME

FOLLOWING BLUE DAYS CONFERENCE HELD IN TAHITI IN JUNE 2015

## DEVELOPMENT OF MARINE SPECIES-BASED ECOTOURISM IN THE PACIFIC ISLANDS REGION

### VISION

'By 2020, the Pacific is recognized as a leading destination for marine ecotourism – a conservation tool for the marine environment, local cultures and sustainable socioeconomic development'

### DEFINITION<sup>1</sup>

Coastal and marine ecotourism is a sustainable form of natural resource-based tourism. It includes recreational activities involving travel away from one's place of residence which have as their main goal interaction with the marine environment and/or the coastal zone. It focuses primarily on experiencing and learning about nature, and is ethically managed to be low-impact, non-consumptive, and locally oriented in terms of control of resources, benefits, and scale. It typically occurs in natural areas, and should contribute to the conservation or preservation of such areas<sup>2</sup>.

### 10 THEMES

- 🌀 **THEME 1:** Demand, supply and needs assessment in the Pacific Islands region
- 🌀 **THEME 2:** Planning and structure of marine ecotourism
- 🌀 **THEME 3:** Design of 'high-quality' products
- 🌀 **THEME 4:** Research, monitoring and evaluation
- 🌀 **THEME 5:** Marine ecotourism as a conservation tool
- 🌀 **THEME 6:** Sustainable economic development and commitment of local communities
- 🌀 **THEME 7:** Traditional knowledge and local cultures
- 🌀 **THEME 8:** Environmental awareness and cultural education
- 🌀 **THEME 9:** Capability-building
- 🌀 **THEME 10:** Promotion of sustainable marine ecotourism in the Pacific Islands region

1 Fennell, D. A. (2008). Ecotourism: an introduction (3rd ed.). London New York: Routledge.

Orams, M. (1999). Marine Tourism: Development, impacts and management. London, New York: Routledge.

2 'Ecotourism, as we have defined it at the Blue Days Event, could also be extended to other forms of tourism (sustainable tourism, responsible tourism, agritourism, cultural tourism) and practices (sport fishing, yatching traditional sailing,...) and synergies could be sought as long as they support the programme implementation in the Pacific Islands Region.



## **THEME 1:** Demand, supply and needs assessment in the Pacific Islands region

### **OBJECTIVE 1: UNDERSTAND CURRENT AND LIKELY FUTURE TRENDS AND DEMANDS FOR MARINE ECOTOURISM IN THE PACIFIC ISLANDS REGION**

**ACTION A.** Undertake market and competitor analyses to assess the current and likely future demands for marine ecotourism

### **OBJECTIVE 2: UNDERSTAND CURRENT AND LIKELY FUTURE NEEDS OF COMMUNITIES AND THEIR OBJECTIVES FOR MARINE ECOTOURISM IN THE PACIFIC ISLANDS REGION**

**ACTION A.** Undertake community socio-economic assessments to understand community aspirations and expectations for marine ecotourism

### **OBJECTIVE 3: UNDERSTAND CURRENT AND LIKELY FUTURE VULNERABILITY, RESILIENCE AND CAPACITY OF ECOSYSTEMS AND SPECIES TO SUPPORT MARINE ECOTOURISM IN THE PACIFIC ISLANDS REGION**

**ACTION A.** Develop and strengthen scientific studies and management programmes, including best practice guidelines, for marine ecotourism activities and apply tools for measuring promoting and monitoring ecosystem to ensure resilience at all levels (local, national and regional); e.g. Reef Health Index or similar report card system

**ACTION B.** Determine ecosystems and species carrying capacity through scientific studies and apply the precautionary principle to support resilience systems in the Pacific Islands Region

### **OBJECTIVE 4: DEVELOP AN INVENTORY OF THE CURRENT AND FUTURE POTENTIAL OF MARINE ECOTOURISM PRODUCT SUPPLY OPPORTUNITIES AND GAPS IN THE PACIFIC ISLANDS REGION**

**ACTION A.** Develop an inventory of tourism products available in the Pacific Islands Region

**ACTION B.** Identify gaps and predictions for future

**ACTION C.** Identify iconic and unique products for marine ecotourism

## **THEME 2:** Planning and structure of marine ecotourism

### **OBJECTIVE 1: DEVELOP A COMMON PROGRAMME FOR ECOTOURISM IN THE REGION, LED BY SPTO AND SPREP, WITH REGIONAL ORGANIZATIONS MEMBERSHIP**

**ACTION A.** Convene a working group or other mechanism of bringing together regional agencies and sustainable tourism organizations to define the comparative advantage of each regional actor and develop a common platform and approach to ecotourism development in the region, including a shared strategy

**ACTION B.** Develop a five year programme and secure funds to support its implementation

**ACTION C.** Integrate ecotourism in regional and national development and conservation policies and approaches

### **OBJECTIVE 2: IDENTIFY MECHANISMS TO ENCOURAGE AND SUPPORT COLLABORATION BETWEEN REGIONAL, NATIONAL AND LOCAL STAKEHOLDERS, INCLUDING FACILITATION OF CROSS GOVERNMENT AGENCY DISCUSSIONS IN THE PLANNING OF MARINE ECOTOURISM**

**ACTION A.** Identify all stakeholders at regional, national and local level and establish a collaborative approach

**ACTION B.** Identify and engage local champions who can facilitate the collaborative process

**ACTION C.** Integrate ecotourism into national development and conservation planning, policies and approaches



**OBJECTIVE 3: ASSESS EXISTING INFORMATION, STRATEGY, FRAMEWORKS AND PLANNING TOOLS RELATED TO ECOTOURISM AT GLOBAL, REGIONAL, NATIONAL AND LOCAL LEVELS, DEVELOP NEW TOOLS WHERE NEEDED, AND MAKE ALL INFORMATION AND TOOLS EASILY ACCESSIBLE**

**ACTION A.** Establish an online portal/database for all information, strategies, plans, tools, networks, products and opportunities, including information on trends and developments that relate to ecotourism in the region

**ACTION B.** Commission an assessment of existing ecotourism-related research, policies, strategies, plans, activities, products and destinations (including environmental and cultural), tools including planning frameworks, regulations, codes of conduct, guidelines, training programmes, certification programmes, marketing strategies, best practice, networks and impacts to provide guidance and policy support on the online database and in corresponding publications.

## **THEME 3: Design of 'high-quality' products**

**OBJECTIVE 1: DEVELOP HIGH-QUALITY MARINE ECOTOURISM PRODUCTS WHICH ALLOW TOURISTS AND COMMUNITIES ALIKE TO ENJOY AND LEARN ABOUT BIODIVERSITY, CULTURE, AND CONTRIBUTE TO LOCAL DEVELOPMENT**

**ACTION A.** Develop standards, certifications and practices that reflect sustainable, cultural and environmental place/location-based resource use

**ACTION B.** Explore and scope good practices in order to establish local accreditation programmes developed in partnership with communities and cultural groups; and provide the necessary means to achieve this including through South-South cooperation

**ACTION C.** Develop a regional brand positioning for ecotourism and explore how to promote this through existing channels with SPTO and at trade events.

**OBJECTIVE 2: IDENTIFY, PROMOTE AND ENABLE AUTHENTIC COMMUNITY-OWNED CULTURE AND VALUE-DRIVEN PRODUCTS FOCUSED ON ICONIC SPECIES AND CULTURAL KNOWLEDGE AND PRACTICES**

**ACTION A.** Enable interested communities to lead their own unique product development 'based on demand', that is driven from internal values and that protect intellectual and cultural knowledge and rights

**ACTION B.** Assist communities to present and market products that are attractive and acceptable to international visitors but maintain cultural integrity and value to the communities

**ACTION C.** Allow local stakeholders to explore what is meant by ecotourism and the expectations (positive and negative) of visitors to facilitate development appropriate high quality products and services.

## **THEME 4: Research, monitoring and evaluation**

**OBJECTIVE 1: STRENGTHEN OUR KNOWLEDGE OF THE CURRENT STATUS OF MARINE SPECIES AND THEIR HABITATS, CULTURAL KNOWLEDGE, ECOTOURISM OPPORTUNITIES, MARKETS AND IMPACTS**

**ACTION A.** Collect, analyze, share and use baseline in close collaboration with local communities, national institutions and stakeholders

**ACTION B.** Ensure regular surveys of key species and activities

**OBJECTIVE 2: STRENGTHEN EXISTING PARTICIPATORY PROCESSES FOR STAKEHOLDERS TO SUPPORT RESEARCH, MONITORING AND EVALUATION**

**ACTION A.** Establish local and regional networks with appropriate feedback loops

**ACTION B.** Explore opportunities for sustainable financing

**ACTION C.** Encourage participative science processes

## **THEME 5:** Marine ecotourism as a conservation tool

### **OBJECTIVE 1:** MAKE CULTURE AND CONSERVATION DRIVERS FOR MARINE ECOTOURISM PARTICULARLY FOR EMBLEMATIC MARINE SPECIES

#### **In the short-term**

**ACTION A.** Bring the outcomes of this meeting to the attention of Tourism, Environment, Fisheries and Culture Ministers in the Pacific Islands region by:

- Introducing an ecotourism agenda item at Tourism Ministers Meeting, Papeete October 2015 (SPREP and SPTO collaboration under MoU)
- Proposing an ecotourism-specific paragraph in Communiqué for the Pacific Island Leaders Forum Meeting 2015, in September in PNG
- Including ecotourism as an Agenda item/side event for SPREP Meeting 21-25 September
- Including ecotourism as an Agenda item at the 3rd Pacific Ministers of Culture meeting in May 2016 at the 12th Festival of Pacific Arts
- Providing reports to CBD and CMS

#### **In the long-term, local scale**

**ACTION B.** Using lessons learned from community-based activities such as LMMAs, turtle monitoring schemes, MPAs and other conservation mechanisms:

- Promote the training of community monitors/representatives in basic monitoring techniques, including compliance with existing rules
- Provide training for monitors in guiding and hospitality
- Encourage government agencies and donors to support ecotourism-based conservation through training programmes and scholarships

#### **At the long-term, regional/international scale**

**ACTION C.** Create the right conservation framework for emblematic species that includes:

- Connecting ecotourism, conservation mechanisms such as MPAs and regional initiatives
- Integrative tools and existing efforts such as SPREP Marine Species Plan; PIFS: especially the Pacific Oceanscape Framework; Regional Tourism Strategy; Regional Youth Development Framework; Regional Culture Strategy; Donors (World Bank, EU, Asia Development Bank/ operators/supporters)
- Best Practice guidelines: CROP Agencies, NGOs, Government Tourism, Environment, Fisheries,...

**ACTION D.** Measure and adaptively manage the success of appropriate ecotourism activities to promote emblematic species conservation:

Develop an index for ecotourism including:

- The status and trends of key species
- Financial benefit to communities
- Success of compliance
- Educational programmes
- Tourist feedback
- Resident feedback
- Cost-benefit analysis



## **THEME 6:** Sustainable economic development and commitment of local communities and private sector

**OBJECTIVE 1:** MARINE ECOTOURISM SHALL BE CONSIDERED AS A TOOL FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT WHICH BRINGS OPPORTUNITIES THAT BENEFIT COMMUNITIES AND PRIVATE SECTOR IN A WAY THAT DOES NOT ALLOW ECONOMIC BENEFITS TO TAKE PRECEDENCE OVER CULTURAL, ENVIRONMENTAL, AND DEVELOPMENTAL ASPIRATIONS

**ACTION A.** Examine benefit sharing systems where national, provincial and community level tourism benefits may be fairly and equitably enjoyed

**ACTION B.** Undertake visioning and planning exercises with communities and private sector on how to sustain and maintain the community and industry tourism growth (over the short, medium and long term) that does not diminish the integrity and values of the local area, including considerations on the scale of growth

**ACTION C.** Undertake research on the carrying capacity of the local context for various types of sustainable tourism

**ACTION D.** Develop regional strategic action plans over the long term that include numbers, timeframes and local agency oversight for specific locations

**OBJECTIVE 2:** BALANCE TOP-DOWN AND BOTTOM-UP APPROACHES FOR HIGH-QUALITY PRODUCT ECOTOURISM MANAGEMENT THAT RECOGNIZES THE NEED FOR REGULATION BUT BUILT ON COMMUNITY ASPIRATIONS AND VALUES

**ACTION A.** Examine case studies that balance regulation

**ACTION B.** Target development of high-yielding products that avoid putting excessive pressure on natural and social resources

**OBJECTIVE 3:** COMMUNITIES AND PRIVATE SECTOR ARE ENGAGED IN A CONTINUOUS PROCESS OF PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT FROM IDEA TO CERTIFICATION THAT INCLUDES AUTHENTIC CULTURAL ACTIVITIES

**ACTION A.** Tourism development and high quality products include and incorporate community and private sector views and consultation before approvals or permits are granted by Government

**ACTION B.** Work within governments on certification processes to ensure that cultural decision-making paradigms are well considered

## **THEME 7:** Traditional knowledge and local cultures

**OBJECTIVE 1:** DEVELOP AN INVENTORY OF TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE INCLUDING KNOWLEDGE RELATED TO MARINE SPECIES, DEVELOPED THROUGH COMMUNITY PARTICIPATORY APPROACHES

**ACTION A.** Undertake a scoping exercise at the regional level to identify what information exists, including relating it to work currently being undertaken as part of other conventions such as the UNESCO Convention on Intangible Cultural Heritage and the Convention on Biological Diversity and ensuring information is shared with and informed by stakeholders across different sectors

**ACTION B.** Work with coastal communities on local traditional knowledge mapping to enhance their ability to share information between generations and with visitors as appropriate; and to develop eco-cultural tourism products that reflect their values and aspirations

**OBJECTIVE 2:** ENSURE THAT IN ACTIVITIES DEVELOPED AROUND TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE CULTURAL INTEGRITY, APPROPRIATENESS AND LOCAL GUARDIANSHIP OF TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE ARE MAINTAINED

**ACTION A.** Develop or adapt and implement codes of conduct or other tools based on existing country commitments (Nagoya Protocol, CBD, Traditional Knowledge Acts) and the Framework for Nature Conservation and Protected areas 2014-2020 to ensure respect for and continued guardianship of traditional knowledge.

## **THEME 8:** Environmental awareness and cultural education

### **OBJECTIVE 1:** INTEGRATION OF ENVIRONMENTAL AND CULTURAL EDUCATION IN ONGOING PROGRAMMES FOR ALL STAKEHOLDERS

**ACTION A.** Develop processes and initiatives within local communities and private sector and agencies for reciprocal growth and understanding of environmental and cultural values

**ACTION B.** Identify, promote and adapt good practices for environmental, cultural and ecotourism education for the Pacific

### **OBJECTIVE 2:** STRENGTHEN MECHANISMS FOR INFORMATION-SHARING AND NETWORKING

**ACTION A.** Develop regional networks to share and implement best practices and resources

**ACTION B.** Identify tools to empower communities and private sector in the development and sustainability of ecotourism

## **THEME 9:** Capacity-building

### **OBJECTIVE 1:** ENSURE THAT CAPABILITIES OF THE STAKEHOLDERS INVOLVED IN THE TOURISM AND ENVIRONMENTAL SECTOR ARE ENHANCED THROUGH TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE AND THAT TRAINING AND THE INDUSTRY IS ENHANCED THROUGH COMMUNITY KNOWLEDGE AND CULTURAL APPRECIATION IN A RECIPROCAL RELATIONSHIP

**ACTION A.** Partner with the Pacific Vaka initiatives to promote the understanding of ecotourism

**ACTION B.** Engage communities and private sector in marine conservation while promoting traditional knowledge and cultural practices of ocean navigation and revival of cultural expressions

**ACTION C.** Sensitize communities and tourism industry as a whole to ecotourism where relevant

**ACTION D.** Plan and implement regular training of guides and other professionals

**ACTION E.** Integrate and connect documents such as the Framework for Nature Conservation and Protected Areas across relevant sectors with key stakeholders to ensure their implementation and coordination of regional and national efforts

**ACTION F.** Establish local level community-based /private sector partnerships and mentoring schemes e.g. hosting by indigenous communities/tourism industry engaged in ecotourism; internships and seconding between countries and/or communities

## **THEME 10:** Promotion of sustainable marine ecotourism in the Pacific Islands region

### **OBJECTIVE 1:** ENSURE THAT THE SPTO MARKETING STRATEGY IS INFORMED BY THE SUPPLY, DEMAND AND NEEDS ASSESSMENTS FOR MARINE ECOTOURISM

**ACTION A.** Strengthen links between key sectors (CROP Agencies, Government Tourism, Environment, Fisheries, etc...) to promote a common vision for marine ecotourism in the region

### **OBJECTIVE 2:** UTILIZE REGIONAL AND NATIONAL INITIATIVES FOR THE PROTECTION OF THE MARINE ENVIRONMENT AND PRESERVATION OF CULTURE AND TRADITIONS TO PROMOTE THE PACIFIC ISLANDS REGION AS A UNIQUE SUSTAINABLE DESTINATION

**ACTION A.** Develop a shared marketing strategy at national and regional levels for marine ecotourism and conservation initiatives

**ACTION B.** SPREP and SPTO to collaborate including with other CROP agencies and country representatives, to develop a detailed strategy promoting marine ecotourism in the region

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