

MINUTES 8th MEETING
IMPLEMENTATION COMMITTEE
OF THE
MAHÉ PLATEAU TRAP AND LINE FISHERY CO-MANAGEMENT PLAN

SFA CEO Meeting Room, Espace Building
Friday 11 December 2020
09:00 A.M.

Introduction

The 8th meeting of the Implementation Committee for the Co-Management Plan (ICCP) of the Mahé Plateau demersal trap and line fishery was held at the SFA's meeting room at Espace Building, Isle du Port, on the 11th December 2020.

Opening to the meeting

Mr. Jude Talma, Principal Secretary (PS), Ministry of Fisheries and Chairperson of the Committee opened the meeting, welcomed its participants, and asked for introductions from attendees. Apologies had been received from the La Digue Fishers representative. The FBOA alternate noted with dissatisfaction that his apologies had not been recorded at the last meeting. The Chairperson apologised and emphasised to *the Secretariat* that *all apologies should be recorded in the meeting minutes*.

Adoption of the Agenda

The meeting was chaired by Mr Jude Talma, PS, for Fisheries Departments. The Agenda (Appendix 1) was approved noting that items could be raised under other matters. The list of participants is presented in Appendix 2.

Developments since the last meeting

Since the last meeting held 12 August 2020, a revised draft of the Mahé Plateau trap and line fishery Regulations 2020 was circulated to meeting participants and their subsequent comments considered. The Co-management Plan and the draft regulations were subsequently presented to Mr Jean-Francois Ferrari, the new Minister of Fisheries, who expressed an interest in attending an ICCP meeting. The regulations will be presented to Cabinet on 16 December 2020 for approval before proceeding to the Attorney General's Office.

Advertisements for the Liaison Officer in support of the Co-management Plan were posted on the Nation a second time. Three expressions of interest (EIOs) were received, and one candidate was found suitable for the position. The candidate, however, did not take up the offer preferring instead an alternative position at SFA. Advertisements have been widely posted a third time with a deadline for applications of 10 December 2020.

Five EIOs were received in July 2020 for the Communication Strategy. The selection panel invited one successful EIO to provide a detailed proposal of its offer. The detailed proposal of that candidate was undergoing evaluation. To encourage transparency, members of the ICCP formed part of the selection process of both the Liaison Officer and the Communication Strategy provider. The participation of ICCP members in these selection processes had been mixed and disappointing.

The MCS Section and SWIOFish3 had been discussing the implementation of the Monitoring Control and Surveillance Protocol for the Co-management Plan in preparation for a co-ordinated launch of the Plan. Procurement of vessel monitoring equipment was progressing. Recruitment of further MCS personnel had taken place. A local option of re-fitting an existing vessel that SFA previously loaned to the Coastguard was under consideration instead of acquiring a new RIB patrol boat to accompany l'Amitié.

This 8th ICCP meeting incorporated mixed physical and remote conferencing facilities. It also included Covid-19 sanitary measures as required for all government Agency meetings. The meeting did not consider a meeting

allowance that had been proposed at the 6th ICCP. It had the largest ever attendance of ICCP members (11 representatives, 1 alternate and one apology) and two stakeholder observers. There was no need to consider replacements of non-attending members. *There was still need for representation by Hireboat stakeholders and a replacement member for the Sportfishers Association. ICCP members were reminded that they needed to have a representative as well as an alternate to attend when the representative was unable to. They were requested to send the nominations of their alternates to the Secretariat if they had not already done so.*

Update of the Ministry of Fisheries and Agriculture (sic)

The previous Ministry of Fisheries and Agriculture was now the Ministry of Fisheries and the Blue Economy. In his capacity as PS for Fisheries Department, the Chairperson informed the meeting that the Minister of Fisheries (also the Designated Minister) had intended to attend this meeting but had been taken up with responsibilities towards an ongoing visit to Praslin by the President of the Republic of Seychelles. The Chairperson informed that the Minister intended to attend the next meeting of the ICCP and would provide his vision for the fisheries industry and the Ministry. The Minister wished to see all fisher associations attend that meeting and invitations should reflect this request.

The ICCP expressed its appreciation that the Minister of Fisheries wished to attend its next meeting and welcomed his interest in the furtherance of the Mahé Plateau Trap and Line Fishery Co-management Plan.

Subsequently, there was a proposal for an extraordinary ICCP meeting soon after the Cabinet decision on the Co-management Plan regulations. This would allow ICCP members to express their solidarity with the Fisheries Regulations and communicate the urgency of implementing the Co-management Plan. *The proposal was agreeable and the Chairperson undertook to seek an appropriate time, before Christmas, when this may be possible.*

Update of the Seychelles Fishing Authority

The SFA representative, Mr Vincent Lucas, Chief Fisheries Officer, informed the meeting that the CEO, SFA, had also been taken up with the visit of the President to Praslin. *The CEO, SFA, would provide an update on SFA at the next meeting.*

Meanwhile, Mr Lucas informed the meeting that SFA's Strategic Plan 2018-2020 was being reviewed, in consultation with stakeholders, for implementation next year. In meetings with some fisher associations attended by the CEO, some fishers had expressed the concern that the bag-limits for recreational and sports fishers were too high and that these should be reduced.

The ICCP reaffirmed that, as regulations were a result of much consultation and eventual agreement, it was important to proceed with the existing bag-limits to avoid further delay. Differences between the views of commercial fishers and recreational/sports fishers on bag-limits were naturally to be expected. The fisheries regulations had been structured with bag-limits as a schedule which can subsequently be changed easily. Bag-limits would be up for revision after the first year of implementation of the Co-management Plan and its regulations, when better knowledge on the status of the fish stocks would be available, in consideration of enforcement issues and taking consideration of the views of all stakeholders.

Consideration of launch of the Co-management Plan

The consultant, Mr Aubrey Harris, recalled the ICCP meetings and actions since February 2020 when the Mahé Plateau Trap and Line Fishery Co-management Plan was gazetted. Delays and disturbances occurred because of the Covid19 pandemic. National elections also took place in October 2020. The March 2020 ICCP meeting had to be postponed to July 2020. The July 2020 meeting (6th ICCP) planned to launch of the Co-management Plan in late September. In August 2020, the 7th ICCP meeting recognised this would not be possible as the Fisheries Regulations could not be gazetted in time. It proposed end of November 2020 anticipating the Fisheries Regulations, Liaison Officer, and Communication Strategy to be in place. The gazetted Fisheries Regulations, recruitment of a Liaison Officer and Communication Strategy are still pending.

The consultant presented the meeting a workplan to implement the Co-management Plan in 2021 (see Appendix 3). A focal point of the workplan was a date to launch of the Co-management Plan. The Co-management Plan had to be launched when a Fisheries Liaison Officer was already communicating and liaising with Fisher Associations, when stakeholders and the public had been sensitised by the communication strategy to Co-management Plan and its regulatory actions, when the Mahé Trap and Line Fishery Regulations was about to be gazetted and the SFA MCS unit was ready to enforce the regulations. The date proposed for the launch was 1 March 2021 and timelines for the actions leading up to this date was shared. Some early timelines were:

- Liaison Officer recruited by **11 January 2021**.
- Communication company selected and operational by **11 January 2021**.
- Communication strategy available for ICCP consideration by **8 February 2021**
- Start of intense national communication on **15 February 2021**.
- The launch of the Co-management Plan would be in conjunction with ongoing actions under the 2019 Comprehensive Plan such as implementing new schemes for the fuel subsidy, fisheries licencing and registration of fishing vessels.

The workplan for 2021 envisages six meetings of the ICCP – two meetings before the launch and four after (see Appendix 3).

Meetings before the launch of the Co-management Plan would provide general oversight of the progress towards the launch and include presentation of the Liaison Officer and the Communication Strategy to the ICCP so that it can provide advice and direction.

Four meetings envisaged after the launch of the Co-management Plan would allow the ICCP to review the launch of the Plan, assess the effectiveness of the Communication Strategy and the extent of enforcement of fisheries regulations, raise general fisheries matters related to the Plan, consider the statistics of the catch and fishing operations for 2020 and early 2021, consider the status of fish stocks and proposals for adjustments to existing regulations, or proposals for new ones. The last meeting will also be an occasion to review the extent to which the Co-management Plan has been successful, or otherwise, and adjust implementation processes for 2022.

The workplan also proposes that SFA has an open day in December 2021 where, among other matters, the members of the ICCP can meet with the stakeholders and public, explain their work and contributions, and discuss any revisions to the regulations and the ICCP's proposed work for 2022.

The workplan presumes that the working arrangements regarding the covid19 situation, will be better in 2021, particularly in the latter half. Depending on the situation, the ICCP may need to review the timelines. Continuing as mixed physical/virtual meetings would likely become a new normal and provide flexibility in the participation of ICCP members to the meetings.

Following the presentation of the 2021 workplan, the following discussions arose:

- The possibility of undertaking an independent stock assessment was raised. This is an option that fisher associations/industry of some countries (e.g., Australia, New Zealand) sometimes undertake, with their own finance, if they are not satisfied with the stock assessment results produced by the Government Management Authority. At this stage of the Co-management Plan, it appeared that an independent stock assessment exercise would be premature. A stock assessment exercise by the regulatory authority (SFA) was already planned for 2021. The ICCP had already proposed (7th Meeting) that fisher associations and interested stakeholders are involved throughout the assessment process within a ICCP subcommittee to increase the credibility of the stock assessment results.
- Nevertheless, fisher associations/industry/NGOs are free to undertake their own self-funded independent stock assessments though these also must be scientifically rigorous and follow best practice if they are to contribute to the proper management of sustainable fish stocks.
- It was proposed that there should be more than two weeks of communication and sensitisation of the Co-management Plan regulations before the start of its enforcement.

- The importance of enforcement in Praslin and La Digue was raised. Praslin Fishers Association offered to assist SFA in community based MCS.
- Suggestions included sending letters to companies employing GOP holders informing of the recreational regulations, well in advance of the launch.
- The need to raise the awareness of fish consumers of the fisheries regulations such as minimum sizes was considered important. Lobster poaching could also be addressed in a similar manner.
- SFA reminded the meeting of the extensive consultation that underpinned the establishment of the Co-management Plan and which would continue during the implementation of the Plan. SFA was committed to co-management and would increasingly pass responsibility to stakeholders in a phased approach within the Co-management Plan. However, stakeholders also had to live up to their commitments and earn these responsibilities.

The ICCP was in general in agreement on the proposed workplan for the implementation of the Co-management Plan including its launch on the 1st March 2021. It noted that for the launch to take place on that date actions related to the Liaison Officer, the Communication Strategy, gazetting of the Fisheries Regulations, and enforcement preparedness had to adhere to the proposed timelines.

Other matters

Many ICCP members raised the relationship of the Mahé Plateau Co-management Plan and the beche-de-mer fishery. The issues raised included:

- Interactions exist between the beche-de-mer fishery and the handline fishery. There was anecdotal recreational and sports diving evidence that beche-de-mer co-habit bourzwa nursery grounds on the Mahé-Plateau. It was alleged that bourzwa recruitment is reduced when beche-de-mer are removed from these areas.
- Some beche-de-mer vessels were also licenced to bottom fish with handlines in their off-season. This was considered unfair and should be prohibited.
- The manner of allocation of licences for beche-de-mer fishing should be reviewed (such as through rotation, auction, or lottery) to allow for more equitable participation.
- The management of the beche-de-mer fishery needs to be transparent, with meeting minutes widely circulated among all stakeholders and placed on the SFA website, as is the case for the Mahé Plateau Co-management Plan.
- The possibility of the beche-de-mer fishery being managed as part of the Mahé Plateau Co-management Plan, perhaps as a subcommittee should be considered. This could also be the case for shark-fishing, beach seines and the Praslin and La Digue Co-management Plan.
- SFA had proposed a fishery-independent beche-de-mer survey to take place in 2021. The results of that survey would inform revised quotas and other management measures for that fishery.
- The beche-de-mer fishery is the most highly regulated Seychelles fishery especially now that it is implementing CITES requirements.
- Because of its fishing method (diving), the beche-de-mer fishery has quite different operational, regulatory and management requirements to that of line and trap fishing. It is the only Seychelles fishery that is closed-entry – the number of licences cannot be increased.
- It was drawn to the attention of the meeting that there were no representatives of the beche-de-mer fishery to inform or defend some of the issues raised. The views aired and issues raised must be seen in that somewhat limiting context.
- *The Chairperson agreed that the matters raised above should be taken up with the new Minister by the Ministry of Fisheries and the SFA.*

Ms Ashley Dias, Director of Conservation, Ministry of Agriculture, Climate Change and Environment (MACCE) briefed the meeting on the Marine Spatial Plan process. Zone 2 has been gazetted as areas of natural beauty and Zone 3 as Multiple Use Areas (70% of the EEZ). Management Plans are in preparation compatible with the management areas -. Zone 2 with assistance of SWIOFish3 and Zone 3 with assistance of the Seychelles Fishing Authority. SFA and the Nature Conservancy's (TNC) tuna team will be involved in a training workshop on the management of lost/abandoned Fish Aggregating Devices in 2021.

There was a concern that some MPAs are not adequately demarcated. In particular, the MPA around Curieuse Island had caused confusion and difficulty for fishers. This had been part of the reason for a recent arrest of a

fishing boat. The protocol for such an arrest may not have been properly followed. Facts surrounding this case were subject of a detailed investigation which was in process. Such protected areas should be properly demarcated by buoys and if these are changed, the new coordinates should be effectively communicated to fishers and the public. *The Chairperson undertook to raise this matter with the SMSA who are responsible for laying out the buoys.*

Demarcation of MPAs and zones in deep-water areas of the EEZ was being included electronically on charts.

It was raised that in rough weather fishers sometimes had to moor in no-take areas near Bird and Denis Island. This was construed as poaching by the management of these islands. More sensitization, education and consultation between the parties involved was required.

The representative of the Roche Caiman Fishers Association who is also its *chairperson undertook to keep members of his association informed of the deliberations of the ICCP. This was commended and recommended to all members of the ICCP.*

Discussion arose on the use of small-meshed traps, metal non-degradable traps and ghost fishing. It was generally considered that it was no longer feasible to insist on only bamboo traps but that metal non-degradable traps should have a biodegradable panel, or a bio-degradable bamboo entrance. Such a regulation could be included among management proposals for consideration at the end of the first year of implementation of the Co-management Plan.

The meeting was informed that a pilot project to trial possible management measures for makonde and bourzwa in Bel Ombre and Baie Lazare had not been approved.

Discussion arose in relation to the fate of seized illegal foreign fishing vessels. It was important that these vessels did not make their way back to their owners or get appropriated locally as this would continue to increase fishing effort and contribute to existing overcapacity. A suggestion was made to clean these vessels and sink them in selected areas to form artificial reefs. The SFA legal adviser informed that there are legal issues involved that still must be addressed.

Praslin Fishers Association informed that it was planning to set up an artificial reef from old cars. It also offered¹ to provide the co-ordinates of the Fond Lilot kordonyen spawning site.

8. Date and Place of the next meeting

The next regular meeting of the Implementation Committee will take place in January 2021. It was expected that the Minister will attend. All fisher associations will be invited to attend.

This 8th ICCP meeting also raised the possibility of an extraordinary meeting with the new Minister of Fisheries soon after the Cabinet approves the Fisheries Regulations. This was to show the support of the ICCP for the Regulations and seek the Minister's support to have these regulations promptly pass through the AG's Office so that it will be possible to launch the Co-management Plan in March 2021.

¹ This has long been promised by this Fisher Association but was yet to be provided.

Appendix 1

Agenda

1. Opening to the Meeting

Remarks by the Ministry of Fisheries and Agriculture (MFAg)/Seychelles Fishing Authority (SFA)

2. Adoption of the agenda

To be moved by the Chairperson

3. Developments since the last meeting

The ICCP will be briefed on and discuss the developments since the 7th ICCP meeting (12 August 2020) including: progress and status of draft Fisheries (Mahé Plateau Trap and Line Fishery) regulations 2020; selection and recruitment of a Fisheries Liaison Officer; selection of a service provider and progress of the Communication Strategy; preparations of the MCS section; actions of the Secretariat including proposed changes to the ICCP membership.

4. Update of the Ministry of Fisheries and Agriculture

The Ministry of Fisheries and Agriculture (sic) has a new Minister as of 3 November 2020. The ICCP will be informed of changes that are planned to the Ministry and of its new orientation.

5. Update of the Seychelles Fishing Authority

The SFA has a new Chief Executive Officer as of 1 September 2020. The ICCP will be appraised of ongoing/proposed changes to the SFA and of its new orientation.

6. Consideration of launch of the Co-management Plan

The ICCP will consider a workplan and agree on a date for the coordinated launch of the Mahé Plateau Trap and line fishery Co-management Plan.

7. Other matters

Other matters including an update on the work to develop management plans for the areas identified through the Marine Spatial Plan (MSP).

8. Date and place of the next meeting

Appendix 2

List of Participants

Members, other Stakeholders and Secretariat

Members	
Rodney Nicole	Bel Ombre Fishers Association
Philippe Michaud	Department of Blue Economy
Keith Andre / Beatty Hoarau	Fishers and Boat Owners Association
Jean Claude Hoareau	Fish Tech
Wilna Accouche	Green Island Foundation
Ashley Dias	Ministry of Agriculture, Climate Change and Environment
Jude Talma	Ministry of Fisheries
Darell Green	Praslin Fishers Association
Faizal Suleman	Recreational Fisher Representative
Therence Labrosse	Roche Caiman Fishers Association
Vincent Lucas	Seychelles Fishing Authority
Other Stakeholders	
Helena Sims	Marine Spatial Plan Initiative
Rodney Quatre	Seychelles Ports Authority
Secretariat	
Aubrey Harris	Consultant (SFA)
Joanne Lucas	Fisheries Officer (SFA)
Yannick Roucou	Legal Adviser (SFA)
Rodney Govinden	Manager for Research (SFA)
Roddy Alisop	MCS Deputy Manager (SFA)
Elisa Socrate	Principal Fisheries Officer (SFA)

ANNEX 1 Workplan for 2021

