

MINUTES 10th MEETING
IMPLEMENTATION COMMITTEE
OF THE
MAHÉ PLATEAU TRAP AND LINE FISHERY CO-MANAGEMENT PLAN

Seychelles International Conference Centre (ICCS) Conference Room 1, Victoria, Mahé

Friday 27 August 2021

10:00 A.M.

Introduction

The 10th meeting of the Implementation Committee for the Co-Management Plan (ICCP) of the Mahé Plateau demersal trap and line fishery was held at the Seychelles International Conference Centre (ICCS), Victoria, on the 27th of August 2021.

Opening to the meeting

Mr. Roy Clarisse, Principal Secretary (PS), Department of Fisheries, Ministry of Fisheries and Blue Economy (MFBE) opened the meeting and presented an apology to the Committee for the delay in holding the 10th ICCP meeting, due to difficulties in receiving approval from the Public Health Authority (PHA) for hosting of the ICCP, in view of the COVID-19 situation. He welcomed the participants and asked for introductions from attendees.

Adoption of the Agenda

The meeting proceeded with the chairperson, Mr Roy Clarisse, PS, Department of Fisheries, MFBE. The agenda (Appendix 1) was approved. This 10th ICCP meeting incorporated mixed physical and remote conferencing facilities. All physical participants were required to adhere to the prevalent Covid-19 sanitary measures and distancing guideline as approved by the PHA. Special arrangements had been made for take-away lunches only and no coffee breaks, as a result. The meeting had an attendance of ICCP 11 members and two observers (other fisher associations). It was also the occasion for new representatives of the Hire Craft Association and the Seychelles Sport fishers Club to participate¹. As Seychelles has three national languages (Kreol, English and French), participants were at liberty to use whichever language they preferred.

The list of participants is presented in Appendix 2.

Developments since the last meeting

Ms Elisa Socrates, SFA Principal Fisheries Officer, informed the meeting of the developments since the last meeting based on working paper ICCP10-WP-2. Since the last meeting of 30 April, the SFA Secretariat tried several times to have an ICCP meeting, but this was not possible in view of the Covid-19 situation. It was fortunate to be able to organise this 10th meeting with the guidance and

¹ Previously the Hire Craft stakeholders were represented by Mr Sindu Parekh during the 4th and 5th ICCP meetings, and the Sports Fishers were represented by Mr Greg Heyer at the 1st and 2nd ICCP meetings.

permission of the Public Health Authority (PHA). The draft Fisheries (Mahé Plateau trap and line fishery) Regulations 2020 went through final vetting, comment and approval by MFBE and further revision by the AG's Office. It awaited the MFBE Minister's signature and subsequent gazetting soon after the current meeting. The regulations will be gazetted without a commencement date. A commencement notice will later be gazetted for the launch of the Co-management Plan nominally 1st October 2021. A promising candidate had been identified for the position of Liaison Officer to enhance the relationship with fisher associations and other stakeholders during the implementation of the Co-management Plan. Preparatory and administrative processes were in progress with the intention of starting liaison activities coordinated with the launch of the Co-management Plan. The Communication Strategy had been significantly developed and supported by the design of communication tools and products. Views expressed by the participants of the last ICCP meeting had been taken up in a revision of the Logo. Information on the Strategy and its communication tools, products and their scheduling will be presented later under agenda item 4. The MCS Section had shared specifications for the patrol vessel with SWIOFISH3. Once these are agreed upon, the procurement of a new vessel will commence. The MCS division had been recruiting additional staff to cope with, inter alia, forthcoming obligations with regards to the Co-management plan. Procedures were in place for the plans enforcement when it comes into effect. A procurement dossier to acquire the AIS data/ Sat SAR data is under preparation. In view of the highly technical nature of the requirements to procure new satellite data set, the MCS division is currently engaging with a consultancy company to assist with the compilation of the technical dossier. The project component also includes training of the Monitoring Officers of the MCS Division on the use and analysis of these data.

The Secretariat had been contacting possible stakeholders to represent the Hire Boat Association and the Sports Fishers Association at ICCP meetings. Nominations of the Representatives of these associations had been received and they were welcomed to this 10th ICCP meeting. ICCP members were reminded that printouts of electronically circulated documents would only be made available for those who had advised the Secretariat of their need in advance of the meeting,

In the discussions that followed the presentation of developments since the last meeting, the Chairperson ascertained the situation regarding the recruitment of the Liaison Officer. The Seychelles Sports Fishers Club (SSFC) clarified that they were only representing their paid members and not necessarily all sports fishers. It was aware of at least one sports fishers' group on Praslin. *The Chair requested the Secretariat to follow this up and, if necessary, seek to link Praslin and La Digue sports fishers to the SSFC as one representation on the ICCP.*² He also clarified that this would not apply to sports fishing activities on the outlying islands as they were not included within the Mahé Plateau trap and line fishery Co-management Plan.

Update of the Communication Strategy

Ms Wilna Accouche, also Green Island Foundation Representative, presented an update of the Communication Strategy on behalf of Com & Click (see Appendix 3). This included:

- The logo and how it had incorporated ICCP comments since the last meeting.
- Developments of the Communication tools
- Target groups: public, artisanal fishers, restaurants, seafood outlets, children etc.
- Targeted messages, products and activities to artisanal fishers

² Since representation on the ICCP is through a Representative and an Alternate, it may be possible, for example, for the Alternate to be a sports fisher from Praslin or La Digue. Representatives and Alternates on the ICCP, through formal or other informal exchanges, should seek to represent the views of their entire stakeholder group.

- Communication messages and products targeted to restaurants, takeaways and other seafood distributors
- Posters and games for school children
- A video-clip of a song composed by Joe Sammy, especially for the Co-management Plan.
- A timeline of products and activities up to the launch of the Co-management Plan, and after.

In the discussion that followed it was clarified that the logo had already been revised based of the comments of the last ICCP meeting and had been circulated and approved by ICCP members through correspondence following the last meeting. It was, thus, no longer subject to change. Discussions of products centred around the languages used particularly in relation to restaurants and seafood outlets, and for products targeting school children. ICCP members proposed that these should be in all the national languages: Kreol, English and French. The possibility of sending some of the communication messages to smart phones was raised. Also, that there should be articles and interviews in support of the launch. It was confirmed that flyers and fisher products would also to be provided to the Seychelles Maritime Academy. The SFA website text had been prepared and would be circulated to the meeting participants for final consideration. On the timeline of activities, it was recommended that the timeline for TV advertisements, YouTube and social media messaging be advanced to start a week before the launch of the plan. A possible approach would be by hyping the launch of the Co-management Plan with some “Watch this space” messaging. On the video-clip, the ICCP generally agreed with the comments that SFA had provided on the clip including:

- Overall, orientate a bit more towards fisheries than conservation;
- That there were too many colourful reef-fish as compared to commercial food fish;
- The part on fishers playing dominos was too long;
- There were too many tourist-orientated scenes of beaches;
- Insufficient clips on artisanal fishing activities;
- Perhaps there could be a clip of a bourzwa against a ruler to show the minimum size.

The SSFC kindly offered access to some of its underwater video clips of fish, with some conditionalities. The presenter, Ms Accouche, considered that it would be possible for Com & Click to accommodate some of these comments though there were limits depending on the costs of the changes in relation to the contractual agreement. *The Chairperson emphasised that such advice and recommendations were the role of the ICCP and urged that Com & Click and SFA collaborate to put these into action as much as possible.*

Proposed Enforcement of the Mahé Plateau Regulations and the Processes Involved

The SFA MCS Manager, Mr Johnny Louys, provided an update on the proposed enforcement of the Mahé Plateau Regulations and process involved building on working document ICCP10-WD-4.

The SFA had already begun routine port and landing site inspection. Once the regulation enters into force, authorised officers will be checking the fork lengths of the regulated species and inspecting vessel landings for bag and trap limits. An inspection of some 20% of artisanal vessels was planned that would be carried out both randomly and based on risk assessments. Surveillance missions will be increased on land and at sea (coastal and offshore) to enforce the regulations. For the coastal waters, an asset had been procured to ensure adequate coverage for compliance including the scheduled spawning sites. Further capacity through acquisition of a larger patrol vessel will allow surveillance of offshore areas of the Mahé plateau, in collaboration with other national agencies. On entry of regulations, a permit will be required for the use of traps for both recreational and commercial fishers. Introduction of trap tags are under consideration following testing of the best system. Carrying of VMS for most fishing vessels, (except the smaller vessels such as Mini Mahés) is

already a condition of licenses. For the Mini Mahés, SFA is initiating the full-scale deployment of Small Vessels Tracking Units (SVTU). Once satisfactory coverage is reached, the requirement of SVTUs will become mandatory for that fleet segment, making carrying of a VMS mandatory for the entire commercial fleet. Trial of SVTUs on Sport Fishing Vessels is also being considered, for subsequent potential full-scale deployment. An MCS unit had been created to ensure compliance with all post-harvest and trade regulations. This includes the prohibition of sale of fish by non-commercial fishers. Their work is further supported by a specialized unit that validates catches as legal. Their inspections are undertaken in fish and food outlets, restaurants, processing plants and other premises identified as high risk. They are already active and undertaking several inspections already on a regular basis. SFA is improving Marine Domain Awareness through the deployment of AIS and Sat Imagery to detect possible illegal events on the Mahé Plateau. Several trainings are in the works to further build the technical capacity of the MCS staffs to oversee compliance with the Co-management plan. It was to be noted that enforcement and inspections will be extended to non-commercial fish and landing sites

During the discussion that followed the need for having VMS on sportsfishing vessels, other than as a safety measure, was questioned and clarification was sought on what was considered as sports fishing. The Chair noted that the latter was set out in the Fisheries (Mahé Plateau trap and line fishery) Regulations, 2021³. The SSFC drew attention that there were sometimes misconceptions in the minds of some fishers that sportsfishing was destructive. This was not so. SSFC had been involved in conservation measures long before the upcoming legislation: that since 2009 it has had a billfish tag and release programme; that 3 years ago it partnered with and provided data to SFA in a demersal (bottom) fish catch and release programme; that of 7 fishing competitions per year only 2 target bottom fish and that on these occasions the landed fish goes to a sponsor and the funds received goes to charity. The dedication and enthusiasm of its members was highlighted. It was generally supportive of increased conservation measures such as those in the Co-management Plan, and even more.

Discussions raised suggestions to assist in compliance, such as the setting up of a hotline. *SFA has three hotlines and one could be used as standby just for the Co-management Plan. Eden Island was recognised as a grey area and there was discussion and clarification of the jurisdiction of authorised officers (fisheries) in relation to jetties and private dwellings. SFA would be addressing some of the legal loopholes in a subsequent revision of the fisheries act.* A proposal was made, based on an overseas experience, for SFA to have a vessel immediately outside Eden Island to check the compliance to the fisheries regulations of vessels leaving and returning to Eden Island. *The Chair drew attention to some limitations of SFA's mandate in this regard but undertook to raise the possibility of this proposal with the Seychelles Maritime Safety Authority (SMSA).* It may also have to be brought to the attention of the hire craft regulator.

One of the questions and exchanges related to difficulties that a particular fisher had had with operating his VMS and receiving the technical support of SFA before departure and on return from fishing. *The Chair requested that such individual cases or complaints be resolved through a person's*

³ **“sport fishing”** means any fishing activity carried out primarily to cater for tourism and usually targeting big game species that involves the hiring, chartering or leasing of a vessel and its annexes not exceeding 40 meters in length overall but which does not result in trading, buying or selling of fish....; **“recreational fishing”** means any fishing activity carried out primarily for purposes of leisure or hobby which does not involve any commercial disposition of the fish caught including trading, buying or selling....; **“commercial fishing vessel”** means a vessel, other than a sport fishing vessel, recreational fishing vessel or other type of vessel subject to these regulations, that holds a valid and applicable licence and is used for fishing for purposes of obtaining commercial gain from the catch and “commercial fisher or fishery” shall have a similar meaning.

direct contact with SFA/SMSA.

On whether SFA had enough manpower to enforce the regulations, the MCS Manager noted SFA had recruited additional MCS staff, that there would be reallocation from ongoing regular inspections, and emphasised the importance of the risk analysis and risk management approach that SFA was taking. This recognises that it is not cost-effective to attempt to cover all possible infringements in all possible locations. A risk-based approach is the smart approach used widely as best management practice in MCS where enforcement is targeted at areas of highest likelihood of infringement to increase overall compliance. Good, secure intelligence is important for this. *The Chairperson noted that as a co-management process, it was important to have the understanding and co-operation of fishers in assisting with reporting on non-compliance.*

On whether there would be costs for fishing permits, the MCS Manager's response was yes, and these are being determined.

Consideration of the launch of the Co-management Plan

Ms Elisa Socrates, SFA Principal Fisheries Officer, presented working document ICCP10-WD-5 on the date of the launch of the Co-management Plan. She recalled the gazetting of the Co-management Plan in February 2020, the postponement of meetings that took place because of the Covid-19 situation. Expected launch dates of the Co-management Plan in late 2020 and early 2021 could not take place, either because not all elements of the launch were in place or because of the covid-19 situation. She recalled that the ICCP at its last meeting had agreed on a launch date of 1st October 2021. She enumerated the key elements of the launch as: recruitment of a fisheries liaison officer; readiness of a communication strategy; gazetting of the Mahé Plateau trap and line fishery regulations; and readiness of the SFA MCS section to enforce the regulations. Those considerations in mind, she noted that preparations for the launch were in place. A small team had been set up by the SFA to organise the activities of the first day of the launch. Final details of the launch day would not be available for presentation to the ICCP on this occasion. However, as venue for the launch, Eden Bleu had been chosen for high visibility and because of the available space given the covid-19 distancing requirements.

The CEO of SFA drew attention that the occasion would be one of maximum involvement of fisher associations and relevant stakeholders.

The Chair sought confirmation of the date. *The ICCP meeting confirmed the date of the launch as 1st October 2021 and was agreeable with the venue proposed.*

ICCP members were informed that if they had suggestions for the launch to contact Ms Elisa Socrates, SFA Principal Fisheries Officer.

Other matters

A matter that had been raised previously on traps was dealt under this agenda item. It was clarified there were no regulations specifically on the mesh size of traps in the upcoming Fisheries (Mahé Plateau trap and line fishery) Regulations 2021. SFA was working on other fisheries regulations that would address this.

The FBOA representative stated that the Mahé Plateau Co-management Plan was long overdue and expressed appreciation of the work of the ICCP, its members and stakeholders. He also raised the

need for an assessment of the socio-economic impacts of the Plan and its regulations upon fishers and raised the possibility of compensation for negative impacts on their livelihoods. He drew attention that a compensation system would assist the fishers comply with the regulations. *The Chair affirmed that within the Fisheries Act, there was need for a management plan to assess its socio-economic impact upon fishers and encouraged the ICCP to start on this process.*

On a question as to whether there was possibility to change the minimum fish sizes or include other fish species⁴ within the current Fisheries (Mahé Plateau trap and line regulations), the Chair informed that this was not possible at this stage because the regulations had been extensively discussed and previously agreed on and were about to be gazetted the following week. The process of passing fisheries regulations takes much time and must be cleared by the AG's Office. He, nevertheless, drew attention that a Co-management Plan was an operational and dynamic process. The ICCP would continue its work following the launch of the Plan. The possibility of the ICCP making changes in the fish species, the minimum sizes, the bag limits including of other regulations would arise after the implementation of the first year of the Co-management Plan⁵ when the effect of the implementation of the current regulations could be assessed in relation to the sustainability of the fish stocks.

8. Date and Place of the next meeting

The ICCP agreed that the next meeting should take place before the launch of 1st October at a date and location decided on by the SFA Secretariat.

⁴ The SSFC had raised the possibility of sailfish, karang ledan, and rekin to be also included.

⁵ It is to be noted that the Fisheries (Mahé Plateau trap and line) Regulations, 2021, has been structured with accompanying schedules specifically to allow such changes to take place, relatively speedily.

Appendix 1

Agenda

1. Opening to the Meeting

Remarks by the Ministry of Fisheries and Blue Economy (MFBE)/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 the developments since the 9th ICCP meeting (30 April 2021) including progress and status of draft Fisheries (Mahé Plateau Trap and Line Fishery) regulations 2021; selection and recruitment of a Fisheries Liaison Officer; progress of the Communication Strategy; preparations of the MCS section; and any other relevant developments from the Secretariat.

4. Update on the Communication Strategy and start of publicity

The Communication Strategy has advanced significantly and is ready to be launched. The meeting will be informed on elements of the Communication Strategy and will be asked to provide its approval for the start of publicity, education and sensitisation in advance of the proposed launch date of the Co-Management Plan.

5. Proposed enforcement of the Mahé Plateau regulations and the process involved

As requested at the last ICCP, the SFA MCS section will inform the meeting of its preparations for the coming into force of the Fisheries (Mahé Plateau Trap and Line Fishery) Regulations 2021. This will include the processes and actions that it proposes to take so as to, firstly, encourage, and subsequently, ensure that all relevant parties abide by the regulations.

6. Date of launch the Co-management Plan

The ICCP agreed at the last meeting that the date for the integrated launch of the Co-management Plan will be the 1st October 2021. The ICCP will confirm this date and discuss the arrangements for the first day of the launch of the Co-management Plan.

7. Other matters

8. Date and place of the next meeting

Appendix 2

List of Participants

Members, other Stakeholders and Secretariat

| Members | |
|---------------------------|---|
| | |
| Philippe Michaud | Department of Blue Economy, MFBE |
| Roy Clarisse | Department of Fisheries, MFBE |
| Keith Andre | Fishers and Boat Owners Association |
| Wilna Accouche | Green Island Foundation |
| Michael Mason | Hire Craft Association |
| Ray Payet | La Digue Fishers Association |
| Ashley Dias (online) | Ministry of Agriculture, Climate Change and Environment |
| Faizal Suleman | Recreational Fisher |
| Therence Labrosse | Roche Caiman Fishers Association |
| Nichol Elizabeth | Seychelles Fishing Authority |
| Damien Berlouis | Seychelles Sports Fishers Club |
| Other Stakeholders | |
| Albert Napier | Apostolat de la Mer |
| Theophanne Estro | Anse aux Pins Fishers Association |
| Secretariat | |
| Aubrey Harris (online) | Consultant (SFA) |
| Jan Robinson (online) | Co-ordinator, SWIOFish3 Project |
| Joanne Lucas | Fisheries Officer (SFA) |
| Johnny Louys | MCS Manager (SFA) |
| Elisa Socrate | Principal Fisheries Officer (SFA) |

Appendix 3

Communication Strategy

[See the attached PDF file of the presentation]