

Māti 2019

March 2019



TE IPUKAREA SOCIETY

*Caring for our Environment
Taporoporo i to tatou Ao Rangi*

Kia Orana,

***Katou katoatoa, Teia te Nuti Pepa No te Marama
o Mati 2019***

***Welcome to the March 2019 edition of our
newsletter.***

Annual Membership Drive

It is that time of year again where we would like to ask for your acknowledgement and support for the work that we do to protect and conserve our environment for our future generations.

Individual memberships start at \$5 for a student, \$20 for an individual and \$50 for a family. Corporate memberships start at \$200 for a Bronze membership, \$500 Silver, \$1000 Gold and \$5000 Platinum membership.

Membership funding is an important source of revenue for Te Ipukearea Society which enables us to continue to run our local and nation-wide

campaigns and broad range of environmental projects. If you would like to consider joining Te Ipukearea as a member, or would like to renew your membership, email us at info@tiscookislands.org or find out more by clicking on the link below. <http://tiscookislands.org>

Help us protect a little paradise and save our environment together!

Green Climate Fund/ Roundtable

The Green Climate Fund (GCF) held a workshop in Rarotonga from 11-13 March which Kate and Kelvin attended. The workshop focused on upskilling organisations and government agencies on how to develop high-quality climate change projects on infrastructure, grant award mechanisms for local communities and the Simplified Approval Process.



Te Ipukearea Society stand at the GCF Round Table

The Cook Islands is one of only a few countries in the Pacific to have a direct access entity. The Cook Islands Ministry of Finance and Economic Management (MFEM) has been successfully accredited to GCF, and together with their Green Climate Fund country programme, will enable the

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country to directly bring projects forward to GCF and access GCF financing.

The Cook Islands GCF Country Programme has requested NZD 203 million from GCF. This includes projects covering a wide range of areas such as energy efficiency, renewable energy, building resilient infrastructure, coastal management and water resources, as well as boosting the involvement of the private sector.

The GCF delegation also attended the high-level donor round table on climate change 14-15 March, a first of its kind organised by the country. Te Ipukarea Society was well represented by staff and patron Ian Karika who assisted at our information stand.

Liam Kokaua's journey with Te Ipukarea Society



Liam at the Takitumu Conservation Area

Four years ago, I arrived straight from completing a postgraduate degree in Geography and Environmental Management, to working for Te Ipukarea Society, an environmental Non-Government Organisation (NGO). After completing my studies, I had no intentions of getting into the environmental conservation field, in fact I didn't really know what I to do. I had been applying for retail jobs in Auckland, in order to pass the time until an interesting job back in Rarotonga popped up. I was forward the advertisement for a project assistant at Te Ipukarea Society and thought why not? Here is my chance to achieve my goal of moving back home to the islands.

While I had some theoretical knowledge, moving to the islands and working in environmental conservation was to prove just how much I still needed to learn about our island ecosystems and the challenges our people face in keeping those ecosystems healthy and thriving. This is the stuff you don't learn at university.

Within the first week of diving straight into some of our projects, I was talking to local students about how cycling to school would not only be good for our physical health, but also reduce our emissions and therefore our nation's contribution to global climate change. Making these seemingly unrelated connections clear, and using holistic approaches (about how everything we do is connected and affects other things) was to be a major aspect of my work for the organisation.

Another early project was working on the Tanga'eo (Mangaian Kingfisher) where we travelled to Mangaia to study the bird, its habitats, and to talk with the Mangaian community about how to best protect the bird. An outcome of this was a Tanga'eo Management Plan Video. This project, which focussed on an endemic (this was to become one of my favourite words – basically it means a species found only in one specific area, island or country) bird of Mangaia, sparked a passion of mine to understand and protect our Cook Island endemic

species. These include birds such as the Kakerori and I'oi (Rarotonga endemics), Kopeka (Atiu endemic), Kerearoko and Kukupa (Cook Island endemics), and also plants, insects and even fish.

Fast forward 4 years and I have been able to travel to a number of countries to represent the NGO, the Nation, or simply build my own capacity on topics such as: Science and Sustainability, Large Marine Protected Area Management, UNESCO Youth, attending the World Conservation Congress, Whale Research, Protected Areas, and Ridge to Reef Sustainability. I enjoyed visiting our Pa Enea even more, to understand the different ecosystems present on our outer islands, and for me to explore more about what it means to be from the Pa Enea, rather than simply a Rarotongan. Our work in the outer islands included surveying 'ara pepe (an endemic pandanus plant) on Ma'uke, and surveying the Kura bird (Rimatara Lorikeet) on 'Atiu. Being a member of the Marae Moana Technical Advisory Group was a privilege as I was able to participate in and learn from a high-level technical board of our Marae Moana.

One of the key interests I have grown since being with Te Ipukarea Society has been learning about our traditional knowledge of our ecosystems. This knowledge includes the signs which plants and animals can show us (e.g. impending cyclone, whale season, fish below the surface), uses of plants (as food, craft materials, cooking packaging, medicine), and generally understanding the intimate way our tupuna thrived off the land and ocean. I believe our maori people have gradually become disconnected from our environment and this cultural knowledge. Culture is now seen primarily as dancing and singing. I now know that planting of traditional crops, subsistence fishing, surviving in the bush, and understanding how to read our environment should be considered just as much a part of our culture. Practices such as planting taro should not be considered a 'backward' thing to do, or only for the uneducated, as every person who practices planting (or fishing, traditional medicine, etc.) is conducting

scientific observation and contributing to the upkeep of the huge body of traditional knowledge which we need to be able to exist harmoniously in our islands.



Liam presenting at the IUCN World Conservation Conference

From these experiences, I now want to work more closely in bridging the gap between mainstream conservation and our indigenous cultures. Currently, many conservation area managers around the world still believe people, including indigenous people, should be kept separate from nature. Also, many conservation projects which focus on certain species do not bother to take into account traditional knowledge of the species in question or of the habitat it lives in, which indigenous peoples may know intimately.

I also feel that understanding and respecting indigenous guardianship values are crucial to successful conservation. In Aotearoa, Kaitiakitanga is a great example of such a cultural value. If Mana Tiaki is our equivalent, I believe it needs more work to clearly articulate what it means in terms of how we should perceive and interact with our natural environment. For these reasons I am currently studying a Masters in Indigenous Studies at the University of Auckland. Once my studies are complete, I hope to return home with my family to continue work in this field and contribute to the strengthening of our Ipukarea.

I am glad to know that Te Ipukarea Society and other passionate conservationists will continue to fight for the protection of our beautiful islands and ecosystems while I am away, and I am very much looking forward to rejoining the effort when I return.

Draft Seabed mining draft bill

Te Ipukarea Society and other local non-government organisation, Kōrero O Te Ōrau together sought an independent legal opinion on the draft Seabed Minerals Bill 2019. This article highlights some of the points raised in the legal opinion. There will also be future articles based on this legal opinion.

The first, and most theoretical, point outlined by CJ Iorns Magallanes in her review of the Seabed Minerals Bill 2019 is this: *as humans, we have created laws and processes that allow us to make money from our resources, but is this our moral right, considering the state of the natural world?*

Magallanes is an impressively qualified reader in law and university professor. She is a certified commissioner for the New Zealand Ministry for the Environment, has experience advising iwi in disputes over mining, and possesses awards acknowledging her excellence in research and matters of international environmental law.

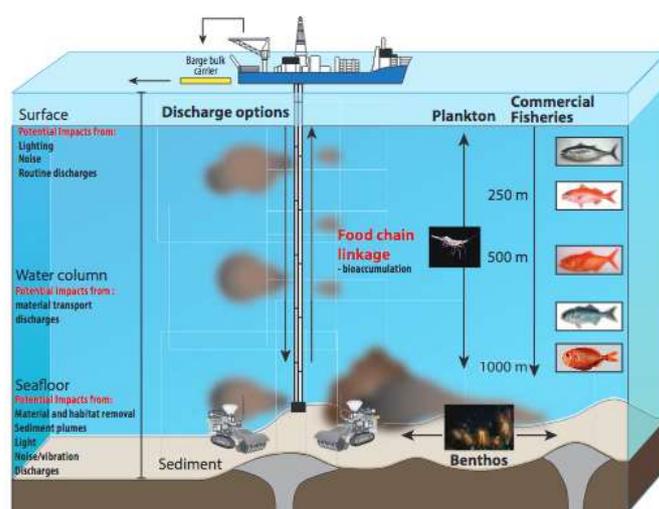


Her legal opinion notes, in its introductory pages, that there is renewed interest in the Cook Islands' resources "in the context of a so-called 'goldrush' for valuable seabed minerals". This refers to the fact that previously, the Seabed Minerals Authority was not successful in finding buyers for the Cook Islands'

nodules; now, as electric cars and batteries and other "green" technologies are becoming popular, there is interest which could, as we heard from presenters during public meetings, attract a lot of money.

But Magallanes also points out that there is "significant environmental degradation associated with seabed mining", as with most land-based mining, too.

This is a point which has been heavily debated on both sides.



Magallanes takes this position: "While there are a range of seabed mining methods proposed, depending on the mineral and the area it is to be taken from, all the methods effectively involve destroying the seabed which is being mined as well as affecting areas outside that which is being mined."

She explains that the dumping of waste on the seafloor produces plumes that can interfere with light and thus photosynthesis—the conversion of light to energy—that happens in and through algae, which is food for other species. This seemingly small impact could, she points out, disturb entire food chains. "While this is a relatively new area of activity, the few studies that have been done have shown both 'immediate adverse impacts on ecosystem health, species abundance, and biodiversity', as well as 'little to no recovery of mined

locations, even years after the experimental operations concluded,” she writes.

Magallanes quotes research that suggests damage to the seafloor is permanent and “worse than on land where replanting and remediation can be required”. In other words, it’s a lot harder, or virtually impossible, to restore an area on the seabed, which is unknown territory for humans even in this technological age.

“It therefore needs to be kept in mind that, when a deep sea area is mined, it needs to be treated as being permanently sacrificed in return for the income to be received from the minerals recovered,” Magallanes writes in her legal opinion.

She adds that this is an endeavour which requires even more careful handling now than it would have decades ago, before scientists were as aware of the impacts of human activity on the environment as they are today.

“There is also an increasing number of people who are concerned that we may not be in a physical position to destroy any more of the world’s biodiversity for fear of destroying the basis of life upon which we depend,” she writes. *“Even if we may have been able to make such sacrifices in the past, the world’s biodiversity has declined precipitously, losing more than 50% of vertebrates since the 1970s, for example, and it continues to face increasing numbers of extinctions”.*

“Biodiversity is now threatened from many sources, from climate change to pollution to clearance for human habitation and agriculture, yet we don’t know scientifically where the tipping points are, not just for species but particularly for ecosystems. It is thus arguable that sacrificing any large areas that could house biodiversity, especially unstudied ecosystems, is particularly unwise in the face of threats to the stability of the earth’s natural systems.”

She notes that it is “*extremely unfortunate*” for small island states that the developed world was largely responsible for these problems, but *“that is still the position that the world faces and no one can ignore it”*.

Beyond these moral and ethical matters, there are many other legal and structural issues highlighted by Magallanes’ legal opinion. We will keep you updated with more articles on this important issue.

Mana Tiaki Bottles



Charlee and Mary selling Mana Tiaki bottles at Te Marae Ora awareness day in Avarua

Mary and Charlee represented Te Ipukarea Society at the Te Marae Ora - Ministry of Health open day on March 6 in Avarua. They took the opportunity to sell lots of our Mana Tiaki insulated, stainless steel bottles, encouraging people to drink water and use reusable bottles at the same time!

The sale of the Mana Tiaki bottles has been a great success, with over 90% of the stock now sold. Come in to the Te Ipukarea Society office (next door to Bamboo Jacks, town side) to get your bottle today!

Meitaki ma’ata for reading our newsletter and for your continued support.

Kia manuia,

The TIS Team