

# Chapter 5

## Summary of Key Findings and Recommendations

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Because of its size, the Pacific Ocean has long been considered by many to be a limitless resource. Such is not the case, however. The collapse of many world fisheries and the degradation of coastal areas in the Pacific are reminders that without careful management, the economic potential of this vast resource may no longer be sustained in the future.

### Managing Coastal Areas

Coastal areas in the Pacific are increasingly threatened and in need of urgent attention. Yet the remoteness of many sites and the multiplicity of threats make it difficult for government or community management to succeed on their own. A co-management partnership between coastal communities, governments and NGOs offers the best prospect of effectively managing coastal areas and protecting the resources upon which so many communities depend.

To succeed, co-management should meet three conditions: first, the role of communities and their external partners (governments, NGOs) needs to be clearly defined so as to take advantage of their comparative strengths. Second, coastal communities need effective communication channels with their external partners to ensure a quick response to requests for assistance. Third, intersectoral coordination among government agencies responsible for the coast must be strengthened to avoid conflicting activities (such as issuing sand mining licenses in vulnerable coastal areas).

Several initiatives are emerging to address these challenges, from the Samoa village fisheries program to the island councils in Micronesia. These co-management programs can be maintained at relatively low costs, but will need continued government support to be sustainable.

Pacific Island governments and high level decisionmakers can play critical roles in supporting these efforts by:

- Recognizing coastal management as a social and economic priority.
- Earmarking a portion of fishing and mining license revenues in support of co-management.
- Strengthening local committees and/or island councils where both communities and government agencies involved in coastal activities can be represented.
- Requiring inter-agency coordination at the national level for actions affecting the coast.
- Providing legal support to community management rules through by-law systems.
- Containing threats that are beyond the control of coastal communities (such as pollution).
- Reducing overharvesting of marine resources through license and export controls.
- Linking extension workers to networks of regional expertise for technical support.
- Supporting awareness and environmental education programs, particularly aimed at local leaders.

### Optimizing Benefits from Tuna Fisheries

In the offshore areas, the issues affecting the management of the vast tuna resources are both economic and geo-political. As the region approaches the ratification of a new regional convention for tuna management, divisions among the coastal states have become more

pronounced. This could have grave consequences for the Pacific Island countries' ability to maintain independent monitoring in their EEZs, curb their share of management costs, optimize their allocation of the total allowable catch, and negotiate optimal access fees with distant water fishing nations. The importance of developing a common position on these issues cannot be over-emphasized. In particular, Pacific Island countries should:

- Retain and expand upon the existing monitoring systems, rather than develop new systems under the future commission.
- Avoid voluntary contributions to the commission's management fund. Contributions should be specified as a regular part of the commission's budget.
- Insist on a pooled allocation of total allowable catch to the coastal states—preferably prior to the ratification of the convention.
- Negotiate access fees multilaterally with distant water fishing fleets.
- Consider limiting the purse seine fishing effort as a way to raise the profitability of the fleet, and expand the potential for extracting higher license revenues in the future.

### **Seabed Mining: Preparing for the Future**

With investors' interest growing, seabed mining could become a reality in the Pacific in the next few decades. Under the Law of the Sea, Pacific Island countries that qualify for the claims have until November 2004 to extend national claims to the limits of the continental margin – potentially claiming rights over new seabed mineral deposits. Close regional collaboration through SOPAC could help these coastal states to meet the requirements to support their claims.

Pacific Island governments also need to urgently develop offshore mineral policies prior to the issuance of any licenses. The Madang Guidelines and the national marine mineral policies of Papua New Guinea and Fiji, assisted by SOPAC, provide a good basis for

the formulation of these policies. Three areas, however, require further strengthening.

First, national offshore mineral policies should provide for the adoption of strict environmental safeguards. These might include:

- Requiring that environmental impacts be assessed in actual field conditions prior to issuing exploitation licenses.
- Establishing a regional system for independent monitoring of environmental impacts.
- Requiring that investors post environmental bonds and rehabilitation deposits to cover potential damages.
- Banning seabed mining in areas of high ecological value.

Second, national policies should provide a forum for public participation in policy and licensing decision. This could include:

- Public hearings for all license applications.
- An impartial dispute resolution mechanism (such as a mining tribunal).
- Identification of conflicting or traditional claims over the mining areas.

Finally, offshore mineral policies should provide a conducive climate for foreign investment, in recognition of the risks and uncertainties faced by the industry. This might include a simplified and transparent fiscal regime, streamlined reporting requirements, and incentives for long-term investment.

Though ocean management has long been viewed as a biological discipline in the Pacific, there is a growing realization that institutional and socio-economic realities play critical roles in ocean use. Managing the ocean is, first and foremost, about managing people. By listening to the concerns and suggestions of their communities, the countries of the Pacific stand a better chance to use wisely the opportunities offered by the ocean and ensure a continuation of these benefits for years to come.