

Drafting a coastal fisheries management plan or framework for Pitcairn¹

As part of the EU-funded Integre mission in May 2016 Pitkerners with an interest in coastal fishing were interviewed over a period of 4 days. On the 26th May a meeting was held to explore aspects of coastal fisheries management plans in the context of Pitcairn Islands. The following is a record of the presentations and discussion held.

Experiences on coastal management plans from around the Pacific²

- There are approximately 1,000 of the 11,000 Pacific Island communities which are known to be practicing some sort of organized coastal fisheries management.
- The communities that are implementing coastal fisheries management (explicitly) may not have written plans though many do. These can be as simple as a one-page set of objectives or rules or run to many complex pages.
- It is not always necessary to have a plan, and there is no guarantee that having one will ensure successful management but there are certain times a plan may be useful e.g. when new fishers are coming to an area, when new fishing types or gears may be used or as a requirement for new investment, credit or aid.

A management plan may be a verbal community agreement or it may be written but experience suggests that:

- The simpler the better
- If it is developed by the fishers themselves they are more likely to follow any rules or guidelines
- It is mainly about the people and what they do and will do.
- It should be a adaptable, open to improvements based on lessons learned, “a living document”.

Parts of a management plan

A management plan need not be lengthy or complicated but often has the following basic parts:

| | | |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------|--|
| 1. Introduction | What is the situation? | May include background, context, details of the environment and fishery and the main habitats, species and fisheries and their status |
| 2. Principles | How do we want to work? | Sets out the main or high level guidance as to the way things should be achieved, the overall approaches and so forth |
| 3. Objectives | What are we trying to do? | An important part that identifies the things that we wish to accomplish with the plan |
| 4. Guidelines/actions/rules | How to accomplish the objectives? | Identify the priority issues of concern and how to address these. This could include guidelines, actions to be carried out, activities to be continued or avoided and even rules. |
| 5. Operational details | Making it work | This includes aspects of how we can track if the plan is working, what happens to people who do not follow guidelines or break rules, and how fisheries decisions are taken and by whom. |

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² Experiences based on the LMMA Network (www.lmmanetwork.org) and the SPC FAME Program (www.spc.int)

Outline coastal fisheries management plan³

1. Introduction and situation

This management plan covers the inshore waters (up to 12nm) around Pitcairn Island, Oeno, Doucie, Henderson and 40 mile reef(?).

The inhabitants of Pitcairn Island have always maintained a close relationship with the sea in which their marine resources are used for subsistence, barter and commercial trade as and when the opportunity arises.

The coastal marine resources of Pitcairn are generally reported to be healthy owing to the relatively low fishing pressure.

The resources of key interest to fishers and the wider community on Pitcairn include:

| Resource (latin name) | Fishing method | Status | Trends and concerns ⁴ |
|---------------------------|---------------------------------------|---|--|
| Nanwee | Caught with hook and sometimes spear? | Very abundant | Abundant and possibly increasing |
| Tuna | Trolling | Year round though more in winter | Occasional fishery and little data on trends |
| Wahoo | Trolling | Seasonal variations | Little data on trends, more abundant in off-season for cruise ships |
| Red snapper | Hook | Abundant / seasonal | No evidence of negative trend |
| Cod | Hook | Occasionally caught | Little data – no trend |
| Coral trout | Hook | Occasionally caught | Little data – no trend |
| Lobster | Pots | Marginally viable fishery (costs vs value of catch) | Greatly reduced catches since 1980s though possibly steady |
| Crayfish | Hand picking | Patchy / healthy | May have been affected by landslides or runoff, fishing areas have shifted |
| Miti | Spear/hook | Not frequently caught | No clear change |
| Whales | Not caught / for tourism | Continue coming | No particular concern |
| Coral reef | Potential tourism / snorkelling | Healthy (?) | May be affected by runoff |
| Others to be added | | | |

2. Principles

The following are the principles by which we will manage our coastal resources:

- We manage our resources for the long term benefit of Pitkerners
- We all need to be involved
- Fishing (in different ways) is part of our heritage and needs to be preserved
- Traditional fishing includes selling our catch (i.e. commercially)
- The sea and land are connected and therefore we need to be aware of land based impacts (sediment, fertilizer, pesticide, plastics etc.)
- We are for small-scale fishing⁵ and will not allow industrial fishing or sale of licences to foreigners

³ The following is the result of an exercise conducted with Pitkerners to explore the what potential management plans or frameworks might look like.

⁴ Some potential early warning indicators of fishery health: Number caught in certain time, Average size, Travel distance, Published information and experiences from elsewhere

⁵ May find it useful to refer to the FAO guidelines on small-scale fisheries or the SPC Strategy for Coastal Fisheries (both 2015)

3. Objectives

Our overall objective is:

- Maintain a healthy marine area and different fish stocks for sustaining Pitkerners' livelihoods and aspirations

We may have sub-objectives to achieve this such as:

- Identify and manage land-based impacts on the sea
- [Ensure existing fishing practices and uses stay sustainable
- Ensure any new pressures or practices do not unsustainably deplete the resources⁶]

4. Management guidelines and actions

This section outlines the things that you need to do, things to keep the same and things to avoid in order to achieve your objective and sub-objectives. Some tips on management guidelines and rules:

- Avoid rules that may be hard to enforce
- Avoid assigning actions or responsibilities to people who are not committed
- Ensure all affected understand and agree

The following are some of the management actions discussed. A system of traffic lights can be used to monitor and decide when action is needed.

Traffic light monitoring

Green: All is OK under current conditions

Orange: Something may be up, keep close watch, increase monitoring

Red: Alert. Take immediate action

| Issue/concern | Guideline, action or rule | Traffic light trigger |
|---|---|--|
| Maintain lobster fishery | Return lobsters with eggs (from harbour) Keep large mesh size on pots Catch only large lobsters (3"?) | Number caught per pot set per night |
| Off-islanders fishing (e.g. Claymore, passing vessels) | Need to ask permission Permission may be granted for consumption in Pitcairn waters | Compliance |
| New commercial venture or pressure | Proposal is assessed- if approved: Sustainable management guidelines and monitoring plan | Monitor according to plan (at fishers expense) |
| Destructive fishing, gillnets, etc | Not allowed | Compliance |
| Sediment run-off, pesticides and fertilizer | Liaise with NRD, ensure control of erosion etc | |
| Etc. | | |

5 Operational aspects

Adaptive management

The plan is adaptive (known as adaptive management) and will be regularly reviewed and updated according to how well it is working and whether the actions are achieve the objectives. This keeps the plan "live" – a living document.

⁶ Not presented at the meeting – 2 additional examples for your consideration

Graduated sanctions

If there are rules there will need to be sanction or punishments. The community should discuss what the most appropriate ones are and they should be graduated – this means that there would be a series of steeper punishments for re-offenders.

Research priorities

During discussion of the plan a number of areas where more information would be useful were identified. There should be a list of priority research topics explaining why the information is needed and new partners and researchers coming to Pitcairn should be encouraged to focus on these.

If regular surveys or scientific stock assessments are needed these might be done by incoming researchers as part of their “re-payment” to the community. Volunteer and ecotourism organizations that promote diving or conservation work might be able to regularly monitor defined transects. One such group is Blueventures.

Management group

Drafting and regularly reviewing the plan and potentially dealing with infractions or new information requires a way of ensuring that decisions are made by those interested in fishing and fisheries. It is unlikely that this role could fall to a single public servant (e.g. fisheries officer or division manager) and the Island Council does not always or necessarily include the right balance of interests.

It is normal in these situations of collaborative management or co-management to identify or form an appropriate group that is representative of the fishing interests. The formation of such a group needs to be discussed on Pitcairn by those affected and interested. It would be the deciding body within the fisheries management of Pitcairn. One possibility for discussion is that the group include all those that fish, or those that fish more than just occasionally and possibly to ensure other interests are considered it could include a representative from Council, from the MPA or Environment sector and the GPI. Or some similar mix.

Rights over fisheries

If ordinance is being considered care must be taken to ensure that things that should be adaptable or flexible are not cast in stone. Such ordinance may describe processes and institutions e.g. the fisheries management group. It would be a good idea to only draft the ordinance after the management plan has been tried out for several years.

One issue that the ordinance may need to address is clarification and establishment of the rights of Pitkerners to sustainably manage their inshore areas (e.g. 12nm) following the best practice international guidelines from the FAO on Small-Scale Fisheries and on Governance and Tenure.

Other matters

A researcher protocol for Pitcairn would be a good idea. This could lay out the obligation to return information to the community in an appropriate format before it is published, could outline guidelines or rules and even levy an appropriate fee. A couple of examples have been left with the community from LMMA.

Facilitation training would be a good idea for this and other planning processes on Pitcairn. A discussion and small training on this was held and appropriate documents left.