

OPINION TUMU MANAKO

Tuna stock claims need some context

ON THE front page of the CINews on May 15 there was an article by Alfred Cook, manager of World Wide Fund for Nature's Western and Central Pacific.

He stated that the state of tuna stock in the Pacific is "actually quite good". He then went on to say that the resources are robust and we have a good chance of getting management right so that we do not end up like other places where stock has collapsed.

He praised FFA for its work in our region. The PM in his article

also said that all four tuna species are being managed properly. This is not what the Pacific Community (SPC) says, which is that big eye is in trouble and yellow fin is getting into trouble. SPC has the science, not the Forum Fisheries Agency, not Mr Cook and not the PM.

Brown referred to Cook's article on television and radio to support this government's decision to sell our fish to foreigners. I would like to put into context the article by Mr Cook.

The FFA is a regional body and relies on funding by foreign

countries. In 2016 it received more than \$10 million from foreign donors.

The EU is one of these donors and it would be ridiculous to think this sort of money is given by someone on the other side of the world without the EU getting something in return.

This is why the negotiations to allow the Spanish purse seine boats into Cook Islands waters were conducted by the EU.

Any statements by the FFA therefore, have to be looked at carefully.

It is important to understand

the FFA has not carried out any surveys of the skipjack stocks in our waters, either before or after the Spanish boats started purse seining.

The FFA cannot tell us, therefore, if our skipjack resource is being plundered for short term gain, or is being properly managed. The SPC is the scientific body for fishing in the South Pacific and they have been very clear in their warnings about the dangers of purse seining.

Successive governments over the last 50 years have resisted plundering this resource be-

cause of concern at the damage it might do and the effect it might have on our people.

This CIP government has decided to take the money and not to worry about the future.

The phasing out of purse seine fishing should not be a surprise to anyone.

I don't think anyone believes the volumes being taken at the moment by the Spanish boats, will continue.

Once the resource is destroyed, purse seining will stop, irrespective of government policy, so it is inevitable.



Tina Browne,
Leader of the
Democratic Party

Water authority to be set up

A CROWN-owned water and waste water authority is to be established in the Cook Islands as a part of the Mei Te Vai Ki Te Vai (MTVKTV) project now underway in Rarotonga.

The establishment of this authority is being led by the Cook Islands Investment Corporation (CIIC).

The core aim of the MTVKTV project is to improve the water quality in the lagoons and rivers of Rarotonga and Aitutaki.

The reticulation project is managed under the same project management unit (PMU) as Te Mato Vai.

Around 420 homes had their non-compliant waste systems upgraded to current standards in 2014. The upgrades were subsidised by Infrastructure Cook Islands (ICI).

"Our natural environment is at risk, at least in part because of the current lack of adequate public sanitation infrastructure.

Without new public wastewater infrastructure and also more effective management of on-site treatment systems, the current issues at Muri are likely to worsen, and develop in other areas," MTVKTV said in a statement.

According to Water, Waste and Sanitation Unit (WATSAN) director Jaime Short, Cook Islands residents produce 1.8 million litres of wastewater daily. Assuming there are 3000 tourists on the island at any one time, that number increases to 2.4 million litres daily.

The government has a long term goal to eventually reticulate the rest of Rarotonga's waste systems, excluding areas only where onsite treatment is sufficient.

The MTVKTV reticulation

project has multiple work streams running at the same time.

The environmental monitoring and investigation programme sets out to identify the underlying causes of the environmental issues being seen at Muri and on Aitutaki.

The investigative stage is currently being finalised, but monitoring will continue.

MTVKTV is now collating the results of their investigations and these will be published in coming months.

Short says around 95 per cent of buildings in Rarotonga are serviced by onsite wastewater treatment systems.

However, there is one community system at Tereora College. The Tereora system currently services the school and Tepuka Village. Waste flows into the stream that runs alongside the school and eventually ends up in the lagoon in Nikao, near the Social Centre.

"A high level of treatment occurs as part of this system" says Short.

Dredging and planting are just a couple examples of the "early measures" the MTVKTV project is implementing to help improve water quality and reduce seaweed growth.

"Muri is our first priority because there is pressure from population density and tourism...the lagoon environment is sensitive" the statement said.

The work was originally planned to take place in the tourist "low season" at the beginning of this year.

However, this was delayed due to the National Environment Service (NES) considering submissions on the proposed dredging of sand. The NES has

since approved dredging to remove sediment from the mouth of Vai Te Renga Stream, near the Pacific Resort.

"We are now finalising a revised plan for these works. We don't want to wait until next January to clear sediment from this area, but the original approach to the dredging work would be too disruptive to resort business and tourist activities."

MTVKTV hopes the dredging will improve water circulation in the lagoon and enable the replenishment of sand near Nukupure Park.

MTVKTV is also charged with designing infrastructure for improved wastewater management in the long-term.

They will soon provide the government with the technical information needed to make an informed decision regarding the best infrastructure options for Muri.

"The preferred option may also then be used elsewhere around Rarotonga" the statement said.

The technical information report will also be complemented by the results of a separately-procured cultural impact assessment.

MTVKTV has also drafted a master plan, outlining the framework needed for a sanitation system to be used in the future.

It is hoped this master plan will be used to help develop a full plan for both Rarotonga and Aitutaki. The purpose of the plan is to guide future investment in sanitation infrastructure.

"It will reflect the Government's national requirements and goals, identify key actions, their priorities and linkages, and a timeline. It will identify future project requirements and be based on information on population densities, the state of the environment in the lagoons and rivers, future land development and public health indicators"

the statement said.

The project management unit's next steps will include the progression of alternative dredging methodology, which will enable dredging at the mouth of Vai Te Renga Stream, as a part of their early mitigation measures.

They will also publish the results of their environmental investigations, seek expressions of interest for the provision of land to support the viability

of a land-based wastewater disposal option, and submit a report outlining the infrastructure upgrade options for Muri, which the government will use to consider establishing a new water and wastewater authority.

"A project of this scale and impact on the community is expected to encounter a few challenges along the way.

This project is no exception, but the challenges encountered so far, for example the dredging

delay, have been manageable" the statement added.

"We are committed to working with the community to understand issues, identify and evaluate alternatives and implement a solution.

"We welcome any questions and comments the community may have, and are available to provide information sessions to any community groups interested in the project."

■ Liam Ratana

Puna back home from PALM

PRIME minister Henry Puna was expected to arrive back in the country yesterday from the Pacific Islands Leaders Meeting in Fukushima, Japan.

Puna led the Cook Islands delegation, supported foreign secretary Tapaeru Herrmann, to the meeting held over the

weekend. The PALM meeting happens once every three years and sees leaders from throughout the Pacific gather to discuss issues within the region.

The topic of China's growing influence in the Pacific and climate change was one of the main discussion points in the

meeting.

All costs for the delegation's attendance at the Pacific Islands Leaders Meeting were covered by the government of Japan.

Meanwhile, the other ministers are all expected to remain in Rarotonga this week.

■ Rashneel Kumar

WEEKLY TRAVEL DIARY FOR CABINET MINISTERS

MINISTER	PORTFOLIOS	TRAVEL
Henry Puna	Prime Minister, Attorney General, Energy, OPM, Outer Islands, Office of the Public Service Commission, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Immigration, Transport, Tourism, Education, Marine Resources	Henry Puna - Monday, May 21 to Monday, May 28 - Rarotonga
Teariki Heather	Deputy PM, Infrastructure and Planning, Cultural Development, House of Ariki, Police	Teariki Heather - Monday, May 21 to Monday, May 28 - Rarotonga
Mark Brown	Finance and Economic Management, Seabed Minerals and Natural Resources Internal Affairs, CI Investment Corporation FIU, Telecommunications, Financial Supervisory Commission, Superannuation, PERCA, Financial Services Development Authority Head of State, CI Pearl Authority	Mark Brown - Monday, May 21 to Monday, May 28 - Rarotonga
Nandi Glassie	Ministry of Health, Justice, Parliamentary Service,	Nandi Glassie - Monday, May 21 to Monday, May 28 - Rarotonga
Kiriau Turepu	Ministry of Agriculture, Environment, BTIB	Kiriau Turepu - Monday, May 21 to Monday, May 28 - Rarotonga
Albert Nicholas	Ministry of Internal Affairs, Youth and Sport, Ombudsman, Punanga Nui	Albert Nicholas - Monday, May 21 to Monday, May 28 - Rarotonga

Today's Daily Bread

There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain.

Read: Revelation 21:1-7

Text for the day: Revelation 21:4



Cook Islands NEWS
AS SOLID AS THE ISLANDS WE STAND FOR

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