



PHOENIX ISLANDS PROTECTED AREA

# PHOENIX ISLANDS PROTECTED AREA – STAKEHOLDER OPINIONS

Phoenix Islands Protected Area  
Ministry of Environment, Lands and Agricultural Development  
Government of Kiribati  
Bikenibeu, Tarawa, Republic of Kiribati

December 2007



# **PHOENIX ISLANDS PROTECTED AREA – STAKEHOLDER OPINIONS**

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## Executive Summary

In March 2006, the Government of Kiribati (GOK) declared the Phoenix Islands Protected Area (PIPA), making it the third largest marine protected area (MPA) in the world today. As part of the management planning process, opinions of stakeholders were solicited. Responses and insights from stakeholders form the basis for priority or critical issues that need to be addressed in the management plan. This report documents results of the PIPA stakeholder opinion survey that were completed in late 2006.

The standard approach to development of marine protected area is to include early discussions with local reef owners. These can include villagers, village elders, or island councils. However, since the Phoenix Islands do not have permanent residents or villages, this approach does not fit

The universe of stakeholders was defined as GOK. Initially, residents of the Phoenix Islands were considered stakeholders. However, all 50 or so residents live on Abariringa and are either government employees or their families. They were all there for a fixed period of years. They are not traditional owners, or even permanent residents of the Phoenix Islands. Since the GOK has established the Phoenix Islands Conservation Steering Committee (PIC SC) to oversee development of PIPA, the PIC SC was defined here as the universe of stakeholders. The PIC SC is composed of representatives from relevant GOK ministries and other agencies within the ROK. A short one page questionnaire was developed and submitted to PIC SC members in August 2006. Follow-up meetings were conducted as necessary.

Responses to the stakeholder opinion survey are documented here. Suggestions and concerns were provided by respondents on a wide range of issues relating to PIPA. These included such issues as: sustainable tourism development; enforcement difficulties, trust fund amount, establishment, and operation; adequate compensation for lost access fees and opportunity costs of not developing a local fishing industry; consideration of smaller PIPA area; collaboration in research; resource management challenges and opportunities; and questions regarding who really benefits from the establishment of PIPA?

These responses will provide a basis for management priorities and critical issues that will need to be addressed in the management plan.

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### List of Acronyms

<b>Acronym</b>	<b>full name</b>
CI	Conservation International
DWFN	Distant water fishing nation
ECD	Environment and Conservation Division, MELAD
EEZ	Exclusive Economic Zone
FSPK	Foundation for the Peoples of the South Pacific in Kiribati
GCF	Global Conservation Fund
GOK	Government of Kiribati
KNTO	Kiribati National Tourism Office
MCIC	Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Co-operatives
MELAD	Ministry of Environment, Lands, and Agricultural Development
MFAI	Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Immigration
MFED	Ministry of Finance and Economic Development
MFMRD	Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resources Development
MLPID	Ministry of Line and Phoenix Islands Development, Kiribati
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding between Conservation International, New England Aquarium, and GOK.
MPA	marine protected area
NEAq	New England Aquarium
NGO	Non-governmental organization
PIPA	Phoenix Islands Protected Area
PIC SC	Phoenix Islands Conservation Steering Committee overseeing PIPA
RNHP	Australian Government's Regional Natural Heritage Programme
ROK	Republic of Kiribati
USP	University of the South Pacific

### Acknowledgments

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This effort would not have been successful without the cooperation and inputs from the Phoenix Islands Conservation Steering Committee (PIC SC) members.

The authors take responsibility for any mistakes and omissions to this document.

## **I. INTRODUCTION**

In March 2006, the Government of Kiribati (GOK) declared the Phoenix Islands Protected Area (PIPA), making it the third largest marine protected area (MPA) in the world today. The GOK, New England Aquarium (NEAq), and Conservation International (CI) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for the development of a management and financial plan to support the creation of the PIPA. The Global Conservation Fund (GCF) at CI is financing the implementation phase and has committed to begin the capitalization of the endowment to support the PIPA.

As part of the management planning process, opinions of stakeholders were solicited. Responses and insights from stakeholders form the basis for priority or critical issues that need to be addressed in the management plan. This stakeholder survey is in addition to the consultations undertaken with GOK stakeholders in the valuation, management planning work and operation of the PIC SC.

This report documents results of the PIPA stakeholder opinion survey that were completed in late 2006.

## **II. METHODOLOGY**

### The Universe of Stakeholders

According to GOK officials, there are about 50 people currently living in the Phoenix Islands. All of them reside on Abariringa (Kanton). All of these 50 people are either employed by GOK to take care of the Phoenix Islands, or are relatives of these government employees. These people are on Abariringa for fixed periods of time (years), and then are reassigned elsewhere. There are no permanent residents of the Phoenix Islands.

The standard approach to development of marine protected area is to include early discussions with local reef owners. These can include villagers, village elders, or island councils. However, since the Phoenix Islands do not have permanent residents or villages, this approach does not fit.

The Phoenix Islands are owned by GOK. Therefore the primary stakeholder is the GOK. The government is composed of a variety of ministries and departments. Each has its own mandate and priority. In 2005, the GOK established the Phoenix Islands Conservation Steering Committee (PIC SC) to oversee development of PIPA. This steering committee is composed of representatives from the following agencies:

- 1) Ministry of Environment, Lands and Agricultural Development (MELAD);
- 2) Environment and Conservation Department (ECD), MELAD;
- 3) Attorney General's Office;
- 4) Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resources Development (MFMRD);
- 5) Fisheries Division (MFMRD);
- 6) Kiribati National Tourism Office (KNTO);
- 7) USP Atoll Research Centre;
- 8) Ministry of Line and Phoenix Islands Development (MLPID);
- 9) Kiribati Police Service;

- 10) Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Immigration (MFAI);
- 11) Ministry of Finance and Economic Development (MFED);
- 12) Customs and Excise Division, MFED;
- 13) Foundation for the Peoples of the South Pacific in Kiribati (FSPK); and
- 14) Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Co-operatives (MCIC).

Through the PIC SC, the Cabinet received recommendations that form the foundations for GOK decisions regarding PIPA.

Since the PIC SC has direct responsibility for reviewing and making recommendations to GOK regarding PIPA, it was selected as the universe of stakeholders (proxy for GOK) for this opinion survey.

#### Questionnaire Development

A one-page questionnaire was developed to solicit opinions from the owner of the Phoenix Islands, the GOK. This was reviewed internally by PIPA staff.

There was no pre-test of the questionnaire. The final questionnaire is the Attachment.

#### Fielding the Questionnaire

The questionnaire was distributed in August 2006 to PIC SC members. Follow-up discussions were held with PIC SC members including ministries, departments, and agencies. Follow-up efforts were ended in December 2006.

### **III. RESULTS**

Results from the short one-page opinion questionnaire to the PIC SC are provided below (Tables 1 to 7). Each table documents the responses to each of the questions on the questionnaire (e.g. Table 1 documents responses to question 1 on the questionnaire in Attachment 1, Table 2 documents responses to question 2, etc.).

<b>Table 1. Suggestions for protecting the Phoenix Islands in the interim in addition to: (1) banning of commercial fishing, e.g. Shark fishing; (2) follow up action on the invasive species surveys. e.g. rat eradications: and (3) development of website on PIPA with links to the Kiribati Tourism website as key communication initiative (Q1).</b>	
<b>Agency</b>	<b>Response</b>
National Tourism Office	<p>I have no major objection to bullet 1 and 2 above however, I incline to see that the proposed website mentioned in bullet 3 should serve not only as an awareness tool for the general public (local/overseas) but shall also be a marketing site where tourism and conservation issues and products are promoted to specific target markets such environmentalists, soft-adventure tourists and cruise lines. The website can also be used as tool or guideline to any potential visitors to the area on how to act responsibly during their visit.</p> <p>In the website, it is good to see a satellite map of the area ocean floor highlighting potential areas of interest such as sea mountains, new fish species etc. In doing so, it will add value to the website and certainly attracts more interests from around the world.</p>
USP Centre for Atoll Research	Possible deployment of park rangers on a three month rotational basis and coordinated via the Christmas Island office.

<b>Table 2. What are the key or critical issues facing the Phoenix Islands and the Phoenix Islands Protected Area (Q2).</b>	
<b>Agency</b>	<b>Response</b>
National Tourism Office	Given the isolation of the Phoenix Islands, monitoring and policing of the protected/ conserved area from any potential poachers and illegal commercial fishing is a major concern. The current arrangement with our neighboring countries on joint surveillance of the area is not very effective given that it is not done on a regular basis. Another issue is the management of the area from Tarawa which is quite far.
MFED	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) How the trust will work?</li> <li>2) How much money will be in the trust?</li> <li>3) Who will manage the trust?</li> </ol>
Attorney General's Office	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) How will the trust fund work?</li> <li>2) Who will manage it?</li> </ol>
MFAI	How to compensate for the loss of fishing revenue?
Commissioner of Police	The patrol boat costs AUD 40,000 in fuel and AUD 10,000 in supplies for each trip to the Phoenix Islands.
MFMRD	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) How will funds for endowment be obtained?</li> <li>2) Should not give away sovereignty. This needs to be factored in.</li> <li>3) What is the benefit to people giving funds?</li> <li>4) Need to find out more about these people who will give money to the endowment.</li> <li>5) Concern over the 60 nm closure.</li> <li>6) Harvest of manganese nodules should still be allowed.</li> <li>7) What is the amount of trust fund?</li> </ol>
Fisheries Division	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Compensation for loss of access fees from DWFNs. Usually have 5% increase in access fees each year, can that be considered.</li> <li>2) Compensation for loss of use of fisheries resources should Kiribati wish to develop local fisheries within the area (what is the value of fish used by purse seiners and longliners that would have otherwise been exploited by future development in Kiribati?)</li> <li>3) Loss of attractiveness of Kiribati Phoenix EEZ.</li> </ol>
USP Centre for Atoll Research	Cooperation and collaboration with sectors of government and NGOs and local communities.

<b>Table 3. Do you have any specific suggestions on how the above key or critical issues can be addressed? (Q3)</b>	
<b>Agency</b>	<b>Response</b>
National Tourism Office	Perhaps a base set up on Canton island manned by Police, Fisheries and PIPA boarder warden with appropriate equipment for policing may be a expensive initiative but a very effective strategy to counter the problem. Like I always said, I always want to see Canton use as an operational base for the overall operation. Combining the base with tourism development will certainly warrant transport initiative be it by schedule, or charter flights. The website together with our own effort in promoting the area to cruise lines with interest in soft adventure or eco-tourism will certainly improve the economic value of the project or PIPA in this respect.
MFMRD	1) Why not first close 20 nm? 2) Maybe start small first 12 nm, then 30 nm, then 60 nm.
Fisheries Division	Compensate for more than just loss of access fees, but also for revenue that would otherwise have been generated should local fisheries develop in the future.
USP Centre for Atoll Research	Various activities and plans be put together and appropriate plans drawn up.

<b>Table 4. What are your agencies needs and priorities concerning protection of the Phoenix Islands and the establishment of the PIPA? (Q4)</b>	
<b>Agency</b>	<b>Response</b>
National Tourism Office	To see PIPA operation compliments tourism development such as soft tourism activities, e.g. catch and release fly-fishing or cruise activities with specific interest in the flora and fauna or marine life/ecology of the Phoenix Islands or educational tourism (researcher/students of Universities/Research institutes) etc.
Commissioner of Police	Need to develop a protocol to control and manage the islands.
Fisheries Division	To be involved in monitoring and research activities occurring within the Phoenix in the future.
USP Centre for Atoll Research	PIPA should have a research group composed of regional, national, and international expertise in various fields.

<b>Table 5. Do you have suggestions regarding establishment of PIPA? (Q5)</b>	
<b>Agency</b>	<b>Response</b>
National Tourism Office	The environment and economic ideas behind PIPA are interesting and let give it a try. At this point in time social factor is not an issue given that the islands are not inhabited. While PIPA is seen as guardian of the vast marine and land resources in the Phoenix Islands and knowing the loss of government revenue from fishing licenses, PIPA management should also encourage environmentally sustainable economic activities such eco tourism to be among the list of activities that can be allowed in the area.
Commissioner of Police	Abariringa (Kanton) should be the management centre for the Phoenix Islands.
USP Centre for Atoll Research	All inshore fisheries should be managed by PIPA while offshore ones by Government.

<b>Table 6. Do you have any specific suggestions regarding establishment of the PIPA Management organization? (Q6)</b>	
<b>Agency</b>	<b>Response</b>
National Tourism Office	<p>Perhaps a representative from Kiribati National Tourism Office could be considered among the list of Board Directors proposed for PIPA. KNTTO will certainly represent the interest of not only tourism office but also other commercial entities that have interest in the project or, who wish to see the project operate sustainably viable.</p> <p>Relatively, PIPA office should employ expertise in conservation with speciality in Marine Protected and Conservation parks, Marine Biology etc to compliment its exiting staff. The PIPA office can be a one-stop shop for all advisory services on marine and wildlife conservation, as I believed Environment and Conservation Division did not have specialized experts in this area.</p>
Fisheries Division	Sovereignty of PIPA stands with the Government of Kiribati.
USP Centre for Atoll Research	To involve USP's Centre for Atoll Research and the Faculty of Islands and Oceans, Suva, Fiji.

<b>Table 7. Do you have any other suggestions, concerns or advice regarding the Phoenix Islands or PIPA? (Q7)</b>	
<b>Agency</b>	<b>Response</b>
National Tourism Office	<p>Phoenix Islands should be promoted as a site or area of excellence for marine research and PIPA should work hard to promote the area to research institutes, universities and key organizations that have interest in small atolls and their marine environment. Tourism can then piggy back on this and hence promote educational tourism beside mainstream tourism.</p> <p>Like I said earlier, Canton can be used as a base for the operation and accommodation center for Researchers given its good working runway and harbor. Once the operation is working well, then some form of tourism that will compliment the objective of PIPA will certainly eventuate. With all stakeholders working hand in hand and with an integrated approach and objectives, PIPA will be successful in its mission.</p>
MFMRD	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Fishing arrangements start on different months.</li> <li>2) The Phoenix Islands area fishery just developed in the early 1990s, using 10 years of fisheries data may be more accurate. Twenty years of data may be weak as the fishery just began in the 1990s.</li> <li>3) Separate landings by gear type since fish prices vary between gear type.</li> </ol>
Fisheries Division	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) How is funding allocated, is Kiribati benefiting more from it or is it benefiting just a few and mostly foreigners.</li> <li>2) Developing capacity of locals so they are well equipped for future management. Monitoring and research should be prioritised.</li> <li>3) Why not just 12 nm (need more convincing).</li> <li>4) Clarify which approach will be taken for protection: (i) zoning/multi-use or, (ii) no fishing at all?</li> </ol>
USP Centre for Atoll Research	Proper management plans should be drawn up as soon as time permits.

#### **IV. DISCUSSION**

Responses were provided by PIC SC members. Each member of the PIC SC had their own perspectives on priorities and approaches that are needed for PIPA development and management.

Suggestions and concerns were provided by respondents on a wide range of issues relating to PIPA. These included such issues as: sustainable tourism development; enforcement

difficulties, trust fund amount, establishment, and operation; adequate compensation for lost access fees and opportunity costs of not developing a local fishing industry; consideration of smaller PIPA area; collaboration in research; resource management challenges and opportunities; and questions regarding who really benefits from the establishment of PIPA?

These responses will provide a basis for management priorities and critical issues that will need to be addressed in the management plan.

**ATTACHMENT**  
**Survey of key agencies regarding establishment of the**  
**Phoenix Islands Protected Areas (PIPA) - Questionnaire**

Agency: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Key Individuals: \_\_\_\_\_

1. The Phoenix Islands Steering Committee met on 25/07/06 and suggested the following interim measures:
  - Banning of commercial fishing, e.g. Shark fishing
  - Follow up action on the invasive species surveys. e.g. rat eradications: and
  - Development of website on PIPA with links to the Kiribati Tourism website as key communication initiative

Since the management plan and its implementations are 18 to 24 months away, do you have any suggestions for protecting the Phoenix Islands in the interim?

2. From you and your agency's perspective, what are the key or critical issues facing the Phoenix Islands and the Phoenix Islands Protected Area?
3. Do you have any specific suggestions on how the above key or critical issues can be addressed?
4. What are your agencies needs and priorities concerning protection of the Phoenix Islands and the establishment of the PIPA?
5. Do you have suggestions regarding establishment of PIPA?
6. Do you have any specific suggestions regarding establishment of the PIPA Management organization?
7. Do you have any other suggestions, concerns or advice regarding the Phoenix Islands or PIPA?