



Seabed Minerals Authority
Runanga Takere Moana
COOK ISLANDS

NEWSLETTER

JUNE 2022 | Issue 2

Kia Orana!

Welcome to the Cook Islands Seabed Minerals Authority's quarterly online newsletter sharing relevant Seabed Minerals (**SBM**) updates and information.

Who are we?

The Cook Islands Seabed Minerals Authority (**Authority**) is the key regulator of seabed minerals activities under Cook Islands jurisdiction. The Authority administers the Seabed Minerals Act 2019 (**Act**) on behalf of the Cook Islands Government.

In this issue:

- Welcome from the Prime Minister
- Blessing the first exploration vessel in the Cook Islands
- Training and Capacity Development Updates
 - Sea Survival Inspectorate Training
 - RSC Placement
 - ISA-China Joint Training & Research Centre Training Workshop
- Recent Events
 - World Oceans Day 2022
 - Careers Expo 2022
- Vacancies

Welcome from the Prime Minister



Marae Moana.

After many years of preparation and careful planning in the development of our SBM sector, we are now starting to see the fruits of our labour, with significant milestones achieved in the first half of 2022.

The first was the completion of a 16 month long robust and transparent exploration licensing process on 23 February. This ultimately led to the granting of 3 exploration licences to companies who understand and accept our Cook Islands values and aspirations for our

Over the next five years, nearly \$200 million will be spent on exploration research work plans by these companies in their licensed areas. This is significant for a country like the Cook Islands who has wanted to see marine scientific research in our waters for decades, but never had the means to do so ourselves.

Let me reiterate that the Cook Islands has made it clear we are only allowing exploration activities, and the onus remains on these licence holders to demonstrate to us that they can carry out commercial activities without causing serious harm to the marine environment.

We are also actively exploring other avenues to enable marine scientific research in the rest of our waters, particularly through the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development.

These steps we are taking today will help build our marine scientific knowledge, capacity and capability towards a prosperous future for our people and country.

The second key milestone was the arrival of the first research vessel, the MV Seasurveyor, operated by CIC into the Cook Islands earlier this month. The subsequent blessing of this vessel before it heads out on its first research expedition was a most auspicious occasion – and marks a truly historic moment for the Cook Islands and our people.

Why so important? Because from here on out our knowledge and understanding of our own deep-ocean and seabed can only grow, and that growing store of knowledge is and will forever be a taonga to be treasured.

I look forward to this vessel and other vessels travelling over our ocean, growing the knowledge that we as a people and as a country need to make informed science-based decisions moving forward.

I also look forward to our Cook Islanders being part of this journey, being a part of the teams that will be on these vessels over the next few years, as they set about learning all we need to know as we prepare ourselves for the future world.

I am very confident that time will prove that what we did here, what we started a number of years ago and what has now begun with this first vessel – will be the right thing, and that we have done the right thing for our people and for our future.

Let's continue the good work, and keep the faith.

A handwritten signature in white ink on a dark blue background. The signature is stylized and appears to read 'Mark Brown'.

Prime Minister Mark Brown

Minister for Seabed Minerals

Blessing the first exploration vessel in the Cook Islands



On 24 June, a blessing was held for the MV Seasurveyor brought in by licence holder CIC, before it embarks on its expedition. This will be the first ever expedition under the Cook Islands exploration licence regime.

Traditional leaders were present alongside government dignitaries and invited guests to usher in the vessel with Anautoa Rangatira Tuaine Unuia giving the Seasurveyor a traditional 'kiriti maro tai' cleansing of the salt. Artist Mike Tavioni also designed and commissioned two special rock pieces to commemorate the occasion, 'Toka Taonga' and 'Toka Manava'.

The 39-metre research vessel will undertake a variety of environmental, geological, and oceanographic studies in the Cook Islands deep abyssal zone. All of the studies and equipment used on the Seasurveyor are standard marine scientific research activities that will aid in better understanding the Cook Islands' deep ocean environment.

“This is an exciting time for us here at CIC Ocean Research, and an exciting time for the Cook Islands as well,” said Shona Lynch, CIC’s Country Manager.

CIC will be providing regular updates on its exploration work from its office to Cook Islanders and other stakeholders, including giving presentations on deep ocean environmental research.



Training and Capacity Development Updates

Sea Survival Inspectorate Training



With licensed exploration activities starting, the Authority recently sent staff members to New Zealand for training to enable them to serve as Inspectors onboard exploration vessels. Technical Director, John Parianos; Senior Technical Officer, Rima Brown; and Licensing and Compliance Officer, Te-Ara Henderson travelled to Westport to participate in a Standards of Training, Certification and Watch keeping (STCW) course.

The STCW course sets out minimum international training standards for those who will work onboard a vessel. It includes an introduction to terms and policies as well as instruction on how to handle emergencies. All three Authority staff members successfully completed their STCW course.

The role of Inspectors is to ensure that licence holders are acting in compliance with Cook Islands laws and requirements. Two Authority Inspectors will be placed on board the first expedition, which is scheduled to depart on 2 July 2022.

Further STCW training of Cook Islanders is planned to take place in Rarotonga in the coming months.



ISA-China Joint Training & Research Centre Training Workshop



The International Seabed Authority (**ISA**) together with the China Joint Training and Research Centre convened its first training workshop on mineral resources, environmental management and data. Senior Licensing and Compliance Officer Latishia Maui and Intern Inano Harmon participated in the workshop.

The training was held virtually from 24 to 27 May 2022, and was aimed to enhance the capacity of government officials from developing States, members of ISA, in particular least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing states such as the Cook Islands.

The training included the survey and assessment of mineral resources; characteristics of deep sea ecosystems and environmental management; and the global repository of data from exploration activities.

Overall the training was well received by Latishia and Inano who both enjoyed the learnings.

RSC Placement

Senior Technical Officer, Rima Browne travelled to Dunedin in May for a two week attachment with RSC Mining & Mineral Exploration to begin a mineral resources estimate for the Cook Islands polymetallic nodules to a JORC reporting standard. This will be the first to be completed for the entire Cook Islands and importantly will enable us to measure our nodules resource.

RSC is one of only two firms in the region to have completed mineral resource estimates for nodules in national and international waters.

It was a fantastic opportunity for Rima to observe the method of developing the estimate and the type of information required to publish one. Rima worked with RSC staff to refine the data in a way that would allow us to calculate the estimate. A first-cut blockmodel that estimates the behaviour of nodule growth and composition in the Cook Islands EEZ was subsequently created by the team.

The project is ongoing and Rima will continue working with RSC remotely. This training will help the Authority build its internal capacity for reviewing reporting estimates to be provided by licence holders in the future.



Recent events

World Oceans Day 2022



On 8 June, the Authority hosted and celebrated World Oceans Day at Taua Terevete in collaboration with other ocean agencies, non-governmental organisations, the private sector, and local food vendors.

Students from schools around the island, along with island residents and tourists, showed up to this year's event. Students were treated to presentations by industry professionals, games, giveaways, and more as they learned more about each companies and the roles they all play. In addition to educating people on the importance of the ocean to our daily lives and the need to take care of it while still making use of its natural resources, World Oceans Day aims to inspire them to take action to preserve the ocean for future generations.

Live music was provided by Papa Ru & the Boyz, as well as delicious fare from local vendors.

For more, read the [joint release](#). Click here for our [photo gallery](#).

Careers Expo 2022



On 16 June, 25 organisations presented to high school and college students in grades 12-13 at this year's Careers Expo. The annual Careers Expo allows students to learn more about the numerous vocations and careers available in the Cook Islands, as well as educational courses to explore.

The Authority and exploration licence holders CIC, Moana Minerals, and CIIC Seabed Resources used this occasion to discuss the expected growth of the SBM industry and the future training and employment opportunities that will arise as a result.

Over 300 kids from Rarotonga and the Pa Enua came to the Expo, which was accessible to the public. Click here to view our [photo gallery](#).

Vacancies in the SBM sector



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Inspector

If you are interested in this role, please send your CV and cover letter to Eileen Macquarie at eileen.macquarie@cookislands.gov.ck.

Job description available upon request.



For current and upcoming vacancies with licence holders, please contact:

CIC: Shona Lynch, shona.victoriamary@gmail.com

CIIC Seabed Resources: Eusenio Fatialofa, eusenio.fatialofa@cookislands.gov.ck

Moana Minerals: Gary van Eck, gvaneck@omlus.com

Queries on this Newsletter may be directed to Dede Mingi: dede.mingi@cookislands.gov.ck

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