



Dugong Conservation in Solomon Islands



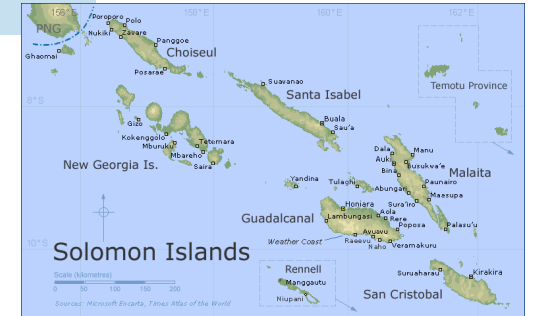
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Previous Studies: Dugongs and Seagrass



Dugongs Sightings and Occurrence in 6 Provinces- (2009, D.Bass):

- North East Choiseul
 - Honiara Bay
 - Malaita (Lau Lagoon)
 - Marovo Lagoon
 - Isabel Province (Samasodu)
 - Western Province (Gizo, Tetepare)
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- Not a common diet– opportunistically hunted.
 - Some places - dugongs are revered as tribal totems, and have cultural stories attached to them. As such, they are not eaten.

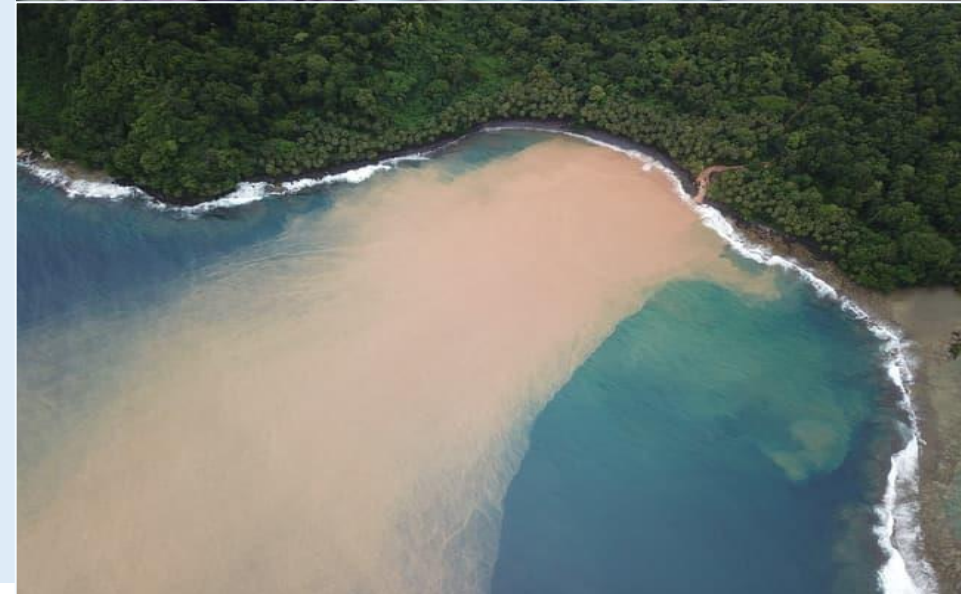


Seagrass:

- 1970 – Womersley & Bailey – identified 7 species
- **2004 – SI REA TNC/SIG (McKenzie et al., 2006) – confirmed 10 species of seagrass (80% known species in region)**
 - Largest meadow found in Lau Lagoon, Malaita Province (>1,000 Ha)

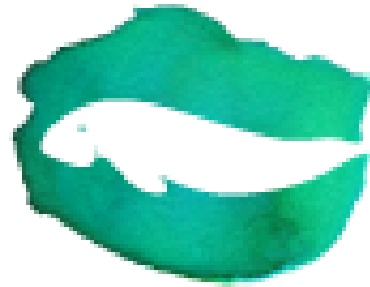
Challenges identified was:

- ❑ Coastal Development – Logging, Port/wharves, Roads, Bridges.. Destruction of protective mangrove barriers, sediment runoff,
- ❑ Marine Pollution – loss of sea grasses which dugongs depend on.
- ❑ Shipping lanes (and OBMs) may cause accidental kills
- ❑ Limited awareness and education about value and importance of dugongs (and seagrasses)
- ❑ Traditional hunting major threat to dugongs
- ❑ Baseline data is fragmented or absent at the national level
- ❑ There was no law and policy on protecting Dugongs



Addressing the Gaps:

- As a Range State, SIG signed the Dugong MOU in 2010



*Memorandum of Understanding on the Conservation and Management of Dugongs (*Dugong dugon*) and their Habitats throughout their Range*

- Endorsed and Implemented the GEF Dugong & Seagrass Conservation Project (2015-2018)



DSCP Project:

- **4 Components**

- Strengthening provincial and national capacity for project implementation in the Solomon Islands
- National level awareness raising campaign to champion seagrass (& including other fisheries habitats) conservation.
- Mapping critical seagrass fisheries habitats in Lau Lagoon, Solomon Islands
- Towards better management and protection of dugongs and seagrass habitats in the Solomon Islands

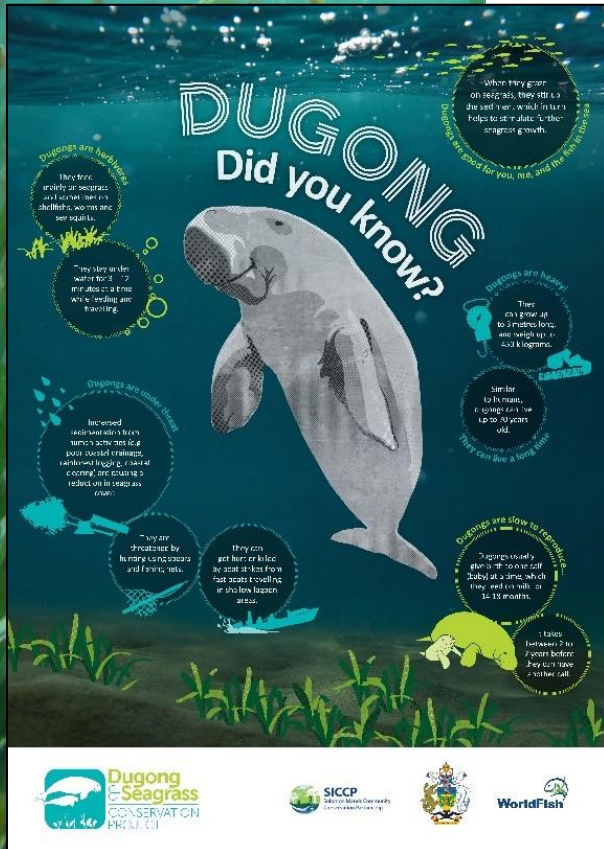


SICCIP
Solomon Islands Community
Conservation & Partnership



DSCP Project: Results

- ❑ Improved information and data on seagrass and dugong through CMS Questionnaires, mapping, and awareness raising.
- ❑ Improved coordination: Successful 9 National Facilitating Committee (NFC) meetings including other NFC and partner related meetings. Stronger relationship between key stakeholders



DSCP Project: Results



- Integrating art, songs, stories and dances and culture was effective in communicating dugong, and seagrass conservation. Including involving youths and women.



DSCP Project: results

- ❑ **Policy: National Dugong Conservation Strategy developed.** NFC plays a key role in implementation. Dugong Conservation Strategy developed with actions for future work.
- ❑ **Law: New Fisheries Regulations protecting dugongs (2018).** Bringing an International Red-listed species Dugong into National Laws was an achievement.



Conservation strategy for dugongs and seagrass habitats in Solomon Islands
November 2018





Conservation Strategy for Dugongs and Seagrass Habitats 2018

- **MFMR and MECDM** as Lead Agencies – implementation and facilitation of actions

Vision and goal

Vision

The inshore fisheries regulation is enforced, and government, stakeholders and communities are working together to protect dugongs and safeguard healthy seagrass habitats.

Goals

The goals of the Conservation Strategy for Dugongs and Seagrass Habitats in Solomon Islands are to outline the following set of priority actions:

1. Build knowledge and reduce information gaps on dugongs and seagrass.
2. Raise public awareness on dugongs and seagrass in order to ensure protection in the wild and highlight their ecological and cultural significance.

- Themes:

- 1- **Legislation and Enforcement**
- 2- **Education and Awareness**
- 3 - **Research and Monitoring**
- 4- **Knowledge and Skills**
- 5- **Partnerships, Coordination and Networking**



Theme 1. Legislation and enforcement

Summary: Dugongs are protected under the Fisheries Management (Prohibited Activities) Regulations 2018. It is now prohibited to fish for, retain, be in possession of, buy and sell dugongs. It is punishable through a SBD 40,000 fine, or four months imprisonment, or both.

Objective: To ensure that people in the Solomon Islands are aware of the new Fisheries Management (Prohibited Activities) Regulations 2018.

Alignment: SPREP Regional Action Plan for Dugongs 2018–2022, Theme 4: Objective 1 (4.4).

Actions

Priority

Develop a communications strategy for the Fisheries Management (Prohibited Activities) Regulations 2018.

High

Increase awareness of law enforcement personnel—including the RSIPF, customs, immigration, SIELA, churches, compliance officers of the MECDM and MFMR and provincial fisheries officers (PFOs)—on the regulations and clarify responsibilities, particularly for PFOs, in enforcement.

High

Establish the Inshore Fisheries Compliance Unit within the MFMR.

High

Establish a mechanism for reporting illegal activities and a clear protocol for the compliance personnel.

High

Theme 2. Education and awareness

Summary: Raise awareness and share information about the importance of dugongs and their habitats, with an emphasis on raising the cultural and ecological profile of the mammal.

Objective: To inform and promote public awareness and education through targeted and specific awareness programs with a focus on the cultural significance and the importance of seagrass habitats.

Alignment: SPREP Regional Action Plan for Dugongs 2018–2022, Theme 5: Objective 1.

Actions

Priority

Develop a dugong and seagrass information toolkit for practitioners.

High

Develop an awareness raising strategy for dugongs and seagrass for communities that includes

- incorporating cultural values of the mammal
- developing awareness material and disseminating plans to communities, schools, clinics, institutions and provincial networks
- look-and-learn exchange visits
- media programs

High

Implement the awareness raising strategy, liaising with established provincial networks.

High

Theme 3. Research and monitoring

Summary: Information on dugong and seagrass ecology is available, but dugong population and distribution (as well as seagrass) remain unknown. Nationally, seagrass management is of low priority, so little attention is directed to its research.

Objective: To improve our local understanding of dugong populations and seagrass habitats through research and monitoring.

Alignment: SPREP Regional Action Plan for Dugongs 2018-2022, Theme 2: Objective 2 (3.5).

Actions

Priority

Establish a monitoring program of seagrass and mangrove ecosystem health, linked to existing regional/global monitoring programs (e.g. Seagrass-Watch, www.seagrasswatch.org) for monitoring health status, climate change/sea level rise impact and the effects of sedimentation.

Build a seagrass monitoring program with the Solomon Islands National University (SINU) and engage students and staff.

Continue to implement CMS data collection to determine dugong population distribution baseline.

Conduct remote-sensing mapping of seagrass habitats.

Determine critical "hotspots" for dugong and seagrass management.

Liaise through NGO and academic networks, inviting students to participate in researching

- the importance, ecology and dynamics of coastal fisheries (e.g. rabbit fish), which seagrass/mangrove ecosystems support
- dugong-seagrass distribution
- the effect of land-based developments and sedimentation on seagrass habitats
- the movement and familial patterns by conducting dugong tagging and DNA tagging.

Develop or align to the existing national database for the storage of information and data collected in the research program.

Theme 4: Knowledge and skills

Summary: Local capacities were built during the DSCP. This theme focuses on capitalizing upon existing national expertise and continuing technical capacity building.

Objectives: To build local capacity for strengthening dugong and seagrass management/conservation.

Alignment: SPREP Regional Action Plan for Dugongs 2018–2022, Theme 3: Objective 1 (3.1).

Actions	Priority
Establish a national Seagrass Watch Resource Group, building its capacity to train others.	High
Establish monitoring sites around the country where trained community members can collect seagrass monitoring data and link efforts to the global Seagrass Watch team.	Medium

Theme 5: Partnerships, networking and coordination

Summary: Partnerships and networking are critical to efforts for conserving dugongs and seagrass habitats.

Objective: To link to regional and international networks to ensure collaboration and learning with the global community.

Alignment:

SPREP Regional Action Plan for Dugongs 2018–2022, Theme 3: Objective 2 (3.5).

SPREP Regional Action Plan for Dugongs 2018–2022, Theme 3: Objectives 1 and 2; Theme 4: Objective 1

Actions	Priority
Engage the Ministry of Culture and Tourism and the Solomon Visitors Bureau.	Medium
Seek endorsement for the NFC membership to form a technical advisory body for the CTI-CFF threatened species working group.	High
Encourage participation from technical experts in the country at global conferences and networks, including community members.	Medium
Strengthen partnership with SPREP on the SPREP Dugong Action Plan.	High
Following the lead of the MECDM and MFMR, identify funding opportunities for the implementation of the strategy actions, encouraging community groups to apply.	High



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