



## Kia Orana!

Welcome to the Cook Islands Seabed Minerals Authority's quarterly online newsletter, sharing relevant Seabed Minerals (**SBM**) updates and information. In this issue we focus on the progress and development of the SBM sector over the last 10 years as well as what's to come in the near future.

## Who are we?

The Cook Islands Seabed Minerals 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.

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# Kia Orana from SBMA



It has been an exciting start to the year at the Seabed Minerals Authority (**SBMA**).

We recently celebrated SBMA's 10 year anniversary. The event was well attended and provided the opportunity for those present to reflect on SBMA's progress and achievements over the past 10 years, to acknowledge the people that have contributed to its successes, and to look ahead to what the next few years has to offer.

In February we welcomed to our shores Moana Mineral's research and scientific Vessel, Te Anuanua Moana which will be based here in the Cook Islands. With a carrying capacity of 1,485 tonnes and measuring 61 meters in length it is the largest and one of the most well-equipped vessels to arrive in the Cook Islands under an exploration licence. It is rare for an exploration vessel such as the Anuanua Moana to be based in the South Pacific, let alone in the Cook Islands.

2023 promises to be the busiest year of exploration in Cook Islands waters to date. We look forward to the wealth of information we will gain from exploration research activities about our ocean and seabed environment and how that knowledge will be used to inform the sustainable development of our seabed minerals resources for the benefit of current and future generations of Cook Islanders.

Kia Manuia!

# Celebrating 10 years of SBMA

On Thursday 16 March, SBMA celebrated its 10-Year anniversary. The event was opened by SBMA Commissioner Alex Herman, who the vision of a sustainable minerals future for Cook Islanders. 10-Year Booklet was unveiled, which highlighted the efforts, progress, accomplishments, acknowledgements, and growth of those involved in the seabed minerals journey over the past decade.



*Sir Tom Marsters, Alex Herman, PM Mark Brown, Paul Lynch*

Speeches were delivered by the current and former Seabed Minerals Ministers and Commissioners: Prime Minister Mark Brown, Kings Representative Sir Tom Marsters, Alex Herman and Paul Lynch.

PM Brown shared, "While we celebrate the 10-year anniversary, it reminds me of the sure but methodical steps we have taken to get us this far. We did not suddenly leap to where we are today, with our exploration companies already one year into their exploration programmes. We carefully assessed our situation, we passed protective legislation, we sought advice, but we acted with steadfast determination."

Before the evening ended, Knowledge Management Officer Tanga Morris provided an update on the sector's development. She discussed future initiatives and goals for 2023 and the next five years. Morris shared: "The next five years will be dynamic and ambitious. The Seabed Minerals Authority has been developing a five-year strategy that will be released for public comment in a few weeks' time. This strategy aims to ensure that the Cook Islands seabed minerals sector is well supported by research, science, and fully informed people empowered with knowledge and awareness on how best to manage seabed resources responsibly, to provide sustainable economic opportunities for the Cook Islands".

## Photo Gallery

## SBMA 10 Year Booklet

# Policy and Regulatory Oversight

## 2023 Expeditions begin

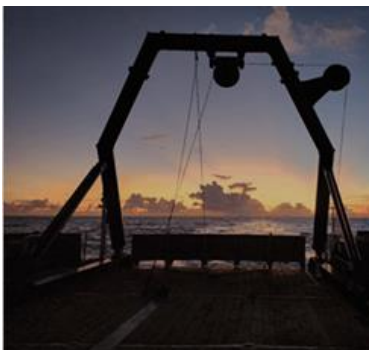
As part of its monitoring, compliance and enforcement programme, SBMA has established an Inspectorate. It is the role of inspectors to monitor seabed minerals activities and to ensure they are in compliance with the Seabed Minerals Act 2019 and associated legal instruments.

Moana Minerals recently kicked off their exploration programme with a seabed mapping exercise of their entire ~22,000 km<sup>2</sup> licence area.



Senior Knowledge Management Officer Rima Browne was on board the Anuanua Moana research vessel as an inspector, monitoring exploration activities. "It has been at least 20 years since the last detailed mapping of our seabed, but nothing quite to this scale," said Browne.

The expedition was led by an expert team of surveyors bringing a wealth of knowledge to the project. Activities during this expedition leg included mapping of seabed topography (form and shape of the seabed), sub-bottom profiling (reveals structure of the uppermost sediment layers and what they could be), biomass of midwater organisms (down to 1,000 m deep), and observations of marine mammals.



# Knowledge Management

## New seabed map of Cook Islands published in international journal



A new seabed map created by SBMA staff has recently been accepted for international publication in the Journal of Maps.

This new seabed geomorphology map will help provide a better understanding of the marine environment habitats and mineral potential, which is a valuable resource for the Cook Islands as it is 99.99% ocean and seabed.

Knowledge Management Director, John Parianos and Senior Knowledge Management Officer, Rima Browne who were involved in its development are both excited and proud to have the map and paper accepted after months of meticulous interpretation and creation of the final product.

Release on the map to come and publication can be viewed [here](#).

# Stakeholder Engagements

SBMA continues to inform our Cook Islands communities and raise awareness on what is happening in the SBM sector. More recently, SBMA have been focused on delivering school presentations to engage with and educate our younger generations on seabed minerals.

To date this year SBMA have carried out the following presentations:

- Aitutaki community and school consultations
- Papaaroa College years 6 – 10, St Joseph years 5 and 6, Nukutere College years 9 – 11, Takitumu School year 6

As the year continues SBMA will progress its efforts to engage with communities in Rarotonga, the Pa Enuu and diaspora.



# Stakeholder Engagements

## Sea Survival Training in Aitutaki



A sea survival training course was conducted in Aitutaki in March 2023. Organised by SBMA, the course provided the people of Aitutaki the opportunity to receive formal training on how to survive at sea in the event of an emergency. The 21 attendees undertook two fundamental courses: Personal Survival Techniques and Personal Safety and Social Responsibility.

Attendees found the course very informative and those that passed will receive an internationally recognised certificate that is the minimum requirement to work on ocean going vessels, including those conducting exploration activities in Cook Island waters.

# Stakeholder Engagements



In February, Policy and Regulatory Oversight Officer Te-Ara Henderson, participated in a 3 day International Conference on “Achieving Ocean Equity” in Wollongong, Australia.

The conference aimed to help protect the ocean and its resources by using them sustainably. It focused on making sure that everyone shares in the benefits of the ocean, that everyone has a say in how it's managed, and that new and better ways are used to take care of it.

In attendance were experts, Government representatives and stakeholders from different fields to share knowledge and discuss best practices for achieving a more sustainable and equitable ocean economy.

"It was a unique opportunity to learn and interact with other countries on an important issue. It was also a great opportunity to share how the Cook Islands has responsibly managed and developed our SBM sector with these core values in mind" said Henderson.

# SBMA Intern Profile: Tamyra Bullen



Tamyra started working at the Authority as a full-time intern in December 2022. She took a gap year from school to learn more about the technical field and gain experience before starting university studies.

Tamyra works in the technical and communications divisions and does online research to assist and support others in the office. She is currently working on several different projects such as sampling systems, survey equipment, and remotely operated vehicles.

Tamyra has also attended several SBM workshops and seminars, including the DEEPEND project in Aitutaki, where she learned about microbiology, deep-sea biodiversity, and sampling equipment.

“I found it fascinating that most pharmaceutical drugs come from plants, bacteria, and fungi.” said Tamyra.

She also learned how to use different sampling techniques to gather valuable information about the diversity of marine microorganisms and identify changes in ocean ecosystems.

Although the technical language can be difficult to understand, Tamyra appreciates working with her co-workers and learning from them. She has enjoyed her internship so far because it provides her with tasks related to her interests and emphasises teamwork.

Tamyra plans to study engineering in New Zealand from July 2023..



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