



Seabed Minerals Authority
Runanga Takere Moana
COOK ISLANDS

2 FEBRUARY 2024

Kia Orana from the Authority



Kia Orana tatou katoatoa i teia mataiti ou.

As we begin our voyage into 2024, we look back on a fruitful 2023. A year filled with collaboration, accomplishments, and exciting developments.

Early last year, we marked the Authority's 10th anniversary and reflected on our incredible journey thus far. For over 10 years, our vision has been consistent: to build a world leading, best practice seabed minerals sector for a prosperous future for our Cook Islands people and country. Each year we continue to take positive steps forwards towards that goal.

2023 saw more exploration and scientific research expeditions, including a first ever Cook Islands led research expedition. The new data and information collected from these expeditions is leading to new science and knowledge about our Marae Moana. We are thrilled that we have continued with consultations and presentations throughout the Cook Islands and internationally, where we have shared about our SBM journey as well as the new knowledge we are learning in the SBM sector. We're also thrilled to host the next Underwater Mineral Conference in 2024, a significant milestone for the Cook Islands and first for the Pacific.

Regionally and internationally, we have seen renewed recognition of the importance of the application of the precautionary approach; science-based decision making and respect for sovereign rights. We look forward to ongoing constructive regional and international dialogue.

We will continue to build on our efforts, and we look forward to another year of collaboration, growth, and shared success for the Cook Islands in 2024.

Read more below some of our 2023 highlights and what we have in store for 2024.

Kia Manuia

Policy and Regulatory Oversight

In 2023 we made significant progress towards ensuring compliance with the SBM Act and relevant regulations, all while improving our monitoring and compliance and enforcement efforts.

The establishment of our Inspectorate was a critical step, with inspectors actively overseeing exploration activities, including seabed mapping and sampling. In addition, a risk-based approach to placing inspectors was adopted and implemented.

We have continued our ongoing collaboration with the National Environment Service, with joint inspectors deployed to ensure accountability and compliance in exploration activities. Furthermore, the adoption of the Environment (Seabed Minerals Activities) Regulations 2023 represented a significant step towards the robust management of environmental issues related to SBM activities.

In 2024, our primary goal will be to continue to develop our SBM regulatory framework through our Acts, regulations, standards and guidelines, as well as ongoing monitoring, compliance and enforcement of SBM activities.

Finally, we congratulate Latishia Mataora and Te-Ara Henderson on their well-deserved promotions to Director for Policy and Regulatory Oversight and Senior Policy and Legal Officer respectively.

Knowledge Management

2023 saw substantial progress in our knowledge base and datasets.

We started the year with the issuance of a new Mineral Resource estimate. This included a new map led by Rima Browne, who won the ISA Secretary-General Award for Research Excellence for her efforts.

We also started our scientific research (**rpSEP**) programme. This allows our licence holders to collect additional environmental data outside their licence areas. Along with

other legacy and environmental data we have uploaded this to our new **Seabed Minerals Data Repository**.

Another contribution in this area was our own first ever Government led expedition called ARTEX2023 which observed and sampled the seabed between Rarotonga and Aitutaki.

We commenced our Strategic Environment Assessment (SEA) process. This included an update of our Marine Spatial Assessment of the deep seabed. This will help the forthcoming Marae Moana marine spatial plan as well as a Regional Environmental Plan (REMP) for seabed minerals. We also advanced a related Effects Assessment for SBM activities.

We are expecting 2024 to be more of the same. An important part will be stakeholder consultations on the marine environment and how it could be managed in the REMP. We are also starting collaborations with some of our country neighbours in the areas of seabed mapping and water column studies.

The quality of our team and their ongoing development is also going well. This year

- Tanga Morris is joining the state of the art **SMARTEX expedition** - working and learning from world experts studying the marine environment of the Clarion Clipperton Zone.
- Rima Browne was invited to the **International Visitors Leadership Program** the U.S. Department of State's premier professional exchange program.

Partnerships and Cooperation

The Authority remains committed towards engaging with our Cook Islands communities to ensure our people are aware of SBM activities taking place and relevant issues, and can provide us with their input. In 2023, our efforts to engage with our Cook Island communities as well as internationally were positive and provided key learnings for the Authority heading into 2024.

Along with our Advisory Committee, we look forward to continued engagement with our Cook Islands communities and other stakeholders to build meaningful partnerships that reinforce our shared commitment to the Cook Islands' well-being and responsible SBM development. This collaborative approach extends regionally and internationally.

We are encouraged by our current and emerging partnerships with governments, academic and research institutions, civil society and intergovernmental organisations, and will continue to build on this in 2024.

See below some of our 2023 engagements with our Pa Enea, Rarotonga and beyond!

Pa Enuu



Rarotonga





Regional & International





Corporate Support

Encouraging our fellow Cook Islands people to embrace job opportunities within our country is a top focus for the Government.

We take great pride in extending a warm welcome to our new team members, Edward Herman and Beverly Stacey. They join us as the Partnerships and Co-operation Director and Corporate Support Director respectively. Their expertise will undoubtedly contribute to our journey towards a more prosperous and sustainable future.



Edward's genuine interest in seabed minerals drew him back to public service after eight successful years in the private sector is an exciting new chapter. Recently, Ed served as CEO and Director at APEX Agencies, where he honed his already exceptional management and communication skills while navigating the complex world of business.

Edward sees his role as one of building and maintaining productive relationships throughout the sector. In order to contribute to a better future for the Cook Islands and beyond, he made the decision to join the SBMA team.

Joining us from Australia, Bev is married to a Cook Islander, who both have decided to return home to the Cook Islands with their daughter.

Beverly has most recently held the role of Country & Regional Human Resources Manager for ABB, a global engineering organisation. She has held several Senior HR and management roles within global engineering, renewable energy and utilities sectors.

Bev is passionate about responsible leadership, diversity, and inclusion within the workplace. She is a strong advocate of STEM education and fostering the development of the future Cook Islands workforce, through collaboration between Business, Education and Government sectors.



SBMA Internships



Tuira Henderson-Enoka

Jean Wragg

Inano Harmon

We are excited to have three young Cook Islanders come through our internship program over the holiday season who have been a valuable addition to our dynamic team.

Inano, Tuira, and Jean have been very enthusiastic and keen to learn within our Knowledge Management, Policy and Regulatory Oversight, and Partnerships and Cooperation divisions. All have contributed significantly to our ongoing projects including work on the metals market, analysis of water column data, stakeholder and process mapping to name a few.

We have enjoyed working with them and we are grateful for their valuable contributions to the office.

[SBMA Internship](#)

2023 Highlights

January to March

- [Ocean Biodiscovery: a day with the experts](#)

- [Research permit for small environmental programmes issued by National Research Council](#)
- [Aitutaki supports seabed minerals exploration](#)
- [Research vessel Anuanua Moana welcomed to the Cook Islands](#)
- [SBMA celebrates 10 year anniversary](#)
- [PM Brown presents on Cook Islands seabed minerals in Washington DC](#)
- [Cook Islands participates in ISA March session](#)

April to June

- [SBMA's new map illustrates never before seen ocean floor features](#)
- [SBMA onboard Anuanua Moana research vessel for Moana Mineral's first expedition](#)
- [Seabed Mineral Resource Estimate completed for the Cook Islands](#)
- [Cook Islands seabed habitat management zones developed](#)

July to September

- [SBMA and NES Inspectors ensure Compliance onboard MV Anuanua Moana](#)
- [Rima Browne receives international award for Deep-Sea Research Excellence](#)
- [Cook Islands participates in ISA July session](#)
- [SBMA participate in United Nations World Ocean Assessment](#)

October to December

- [Cook Islands participates in International Critical Minerals Summit](#)
- [SBMA presents at Underwater Minerals Conference 2023](#)
- [Cook Islands led Deep Sea Research Expedition gets underway](#)
- [Pacific Leaders Agree to Greater Regional Dialogue and Cooperation on Deep Sea Minerals](#)
- [Artex 2023 concludes: New discoveries and a model of collaboration](#)
- [Cook Islands Seabed Minerals Data Repository launched](#)



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