



BRIEFING NOTE

April, 2021

UPDATE ON PILLARS OF WORK

Ecological Science and Marine Spatial Planning

In February 2020, a team of Maldivian and international scientists surveyed 127 survey sites across many Maldivian atolls distributed between inhabited and uninhabited areas of the Maldives. The 3-week underwater expedition provided a systematic snapshot of coral reef health, with a focus on spatial gradients and gradients of human resource use. The priority is to continue data processing and analysis and to produce a draft outline for the coral reef assessment report with input and feedback from the Maldives Marine Research Institute. The first draft of the survey findings will be available by Spring 2021. From March – April 2021 the Noo Raajje program conducted a second scientific expedition to complete an archipelago-wide assessment of the state of Maldivian reefs.

Five meetings have been held with subcommittee established for the MSP completing the introductory phases. The subcommittee includes members from the steering committee, government agencies and NGOs.

Waitt Institute contracted a local Maldivian team to develop a Compendium of Marine Spatial Planning Targets relevant to the Maldives and to produce a Spatial and Temporal Characterization of Coastal Development and Infrastructure. The consultants will be working closely with Waitt Institute Science Director Mr. Andy Estep and Noo Raajje Site Manager Ms. Fathimath Nistharan. The Compendium is expected to be ready for review by the end of May 2021 and the Characterization later by the end of September 2021.

Fisheries

In July 2020, Noo Raajje team worked with Environmental Markets Laboratory (emLab) at University of California, Santa Barbara to review the Fisheries Management Plans that were developed under the new Fisheries Act of the Maldives.

The Waitt Institute hired a Sustainable Fisheries Director in January 2021 to assist in the sustainable fisheries aspect of the program. Dr. Pablo Granados-Dieseldorff who has over 20 years of experience in sustainable fisheries, working on stakeholder-centered projects around the world. Pablo previously worked with Rare as the Fish Forever Marine Science and Implementation Director and most recently served as the Fisheries and Aquaculture Coordinator with Fair Trade USA, building and expanding their Seafood Program.

emLab is also currently working on Fisheries Characterization, which is a synthesis on the most up to date information on the country's fisheries sector. The purpose of this is to improve understanding of fisheries sector, identify key fisheries objectives, and highlight potential



opportunities to improve sustainable fisheries engagement. The fisheries characterization report is expected to be ready for review by the end of May 2021.

Communications

In December 2020, Noo Raajje program launched to the public via a virtual and broadcasted event featuring President Solih, representatives from the Ministry of Fisheries, Marine Resources, and Agriculture, the Ministry of Environment, Ministry of Economic Development, Maldives Marine Research Institute (MMRI) and stakeholders. You can view the public launch here: <https://fb.watch/4gXdLHP44C/>

The project website was also launched prior to the event: <https://www.nooraaaje.org/>
Twitter, Facebook and Instagram: @NooRaajje. Dhivehi version of the Noo Raajje Logo was completed in April 2020. Work is underway to create Dhivehi website for the program to allow dissemination of information to a wider Maldivian audience.

Discussions were held with Ministry of Economic Development and Noo Raajje program secretariat to discuss the potential of Noo Raajje participation in the DubaiExpo2021 where government of Maldives is participating in different forums beginning October 2021 till February 2022. Maldives will be celebrating its grand Golden Jubilee of Tourism Development in the Expo, holding a Maldives Investment Forum and organising different events.

Noo Raajje has been given the opportunity to furnish promotional materials in the Maldivian Pavilion regarding the goals of the program and the Maldives Blue Economy narrative. Additional activities such as organising a seminar or panel discussion involving invited experts that the program will be explored but are yet to be decided.

Legal

Waitt Institute contracted two local Maldivian lawyers along with a U.S.-based ocean law expert, to support the development of an in-depth legal assessment of the Maldives' existing legal framework as it relates to ocean management at the national, atoll and island levels. This assessment will provide a solid understanding of the legal foundation for developing an enforceable, comprehensive, and sustainably-financed marine spatial plan and blue economy strategy. Work began in August 2020, with a final legal assessment report being presented to Government stakeholders in June 2021.

Blue Economy

To assist in the blue economy efforts of the Government, the Waitt Institute introduced collaborators at the University of California Los Angeles, Institute of Environmental Sustainability in July 2020, and later that year the Waitt Institute Blue Economy Director Dr. Angus Friday, to assist in the blue economy efforts of the Government. The team is working with the consulting firm City Facilitators to draft narratives and approaches to the Blue Economy. A public survey



as well as interviews with government agencies, private sector and CSOs were conducted in February 2021 to get a better understanding on public views on economic diversification.

Two workshops were conducted in 5th & 6th April 2021 by City Facilitators with stakeholder groups and government agencies to discuss and identify the most suitable Maldives Blue Economy development strategies and scenarios based on their assessment. Another workshop is planned at the program governance level to narrow down on the scenarios and identify the single most effective narrative.

Capacity Building

In order to advance Maldivian ocean science through education, a free online Blue Prosperity Maldives Training Program will be launched in June 2021. The program will be administered by University of California San Diego Extension and includes five courses on the topics of coral survey science, marine spatial planning, blue economy, as well as sustainable fisheries. The program will be promoted through advertisements, social media, and email outreach throughout May and June.