

Report

Island biosecurity training for Nu'utele and Nu'ulua Islands (Aleipata Island Groups), Apia, Samoa.



8 – 11 March 2010.

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Summary

The island biosecurity training for Nu'utele and Nu'ulua Islands was held at Apia, Samoa, in March 2010. The purpose of the training was 1) to develop general understanding of invasive species and biosecurity on Nu'utele and Nu'ulua islands by the participants; 2) to develop knowledge and skills necessary to undertake basic surveillance and incursion responses; 3) to collect local knowledge for contribution to the island biosecurity plan, and 4) to develop an initial visitors' biosecurity checklist to the islands. This 4-day training course was attended by up to 22 participants from Samoa's Ministry for Natural Resources and Environment (MNRE), the Aleipata Marine Protected Area (MPA) committee members, and the Samoan Ports Authority (SPA). The training covered the three steps of biosecurity (quarantine/prevention, surveillance, incursion response), and introduced basic concepts and theory to the participants. These topics were reinforced with several practical exercises, which included a fieldtrip to Satitua wharf to examine biosecurity issues at the departure site. The participatory approach of this training was to encourage personal opinions and experiences to be shared and discussed by the group. All participants expressed an increased level of understanding on invasive species, its current issues, and importance of biosecurity to the islands. The participants agreed with the need for public awareness on the importance of biosecurity for the islands. Several recommendations for future actions have been identified, and will be discussed in the following months.

Introduction

Nu'utele and Nu'ulua Islands (Aleipata Island Group) are identified as key sites for ecological conservation in Samoa. A long-term restoration project included the eradication of rats in 2009, under Samoa's National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan, and the Aleipata Marine Protected Area (MPA) Management Plan (2002-2006). This project has joint collaboration between the local communities from the Aleipata District (MPA members), Samoa's Ministry for Natural Resources and Environment (MNRE), Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP), New Zealand Department of Conservation (DOC), Conservation International – Pacific Islands Programme (CI-PIP), the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF), and Pacific Invasives Initiative (PII).

All stakeholders identified the need for biosecurity awareness and skills, and PII was requested to develop and deliver an island biosecurity training course for key community members and MNRE staff. The first training was held in September/October 2009 at Auckland, New Zealand and was attended by five Samoan participants. However the training was prematurely stopped due to the tsunami that struck Samoa on the 30 September 2009. MNRE, community members and SPREP requested the training be completed in Apia, Samoa.

This report presents an overview of the result of the island biosecurity training repeated in Apia, Samoa, between 8 and 11 March 2010.

Purposes

1. To develop understanding of biosecurity, its purpose and the practicality of maintaining effective biosecurity programmes, to minimise the risk of invasive species re-invading Nu'utele and Nu'ulua islands.
2. To develop knowledge and skills necessary to undertake basic surveillance and incursion responses.
3. To collect information from local knowledge that will contribute to the biosecurity plan for the islands. This will be finalised jointly with MNRE and SPREP.
4. To develop an initial checklist for visitors to the islands. This will be finalised jointly with MNRE and SPREP.

Training days

The training course started on the 8th March 2010, with opening speeches and Samoan biosecurity presentations from MNRE, and Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries (MAF) Quarantine and MPA representative. Participants comprised of 10 Aleipata District community leaders, 8 MNRE staff, and one representative from the Samoan Ports Authority (SPA). Due to increased interest in the training, three new community members attended at the later stage of the training. Additionally two representatives from CI-PIP/ CEPF attended the morning of the third day of the training. Translation between English and Samoan was made by MNRE staff.

The training course was lead by Marleen Baling and Bill Nagle. Similar to the previous biosecurity training, a participatory approach was used to establish an understanding of basic biosecurity concepts and gain local information on both Nu'utele and Nu'ulua Islands. The training covered the three basic steps of biosecurity: quarantine/ prevention, surveillance and incursion response. These

steps carried the important messages of: not bringing any unwanted biota to the islands, being vigilant in looking for anything unusual (invasive species) on the island, and to report any unusual sightings immediately. Opinions and personal concerns from each participant were encouraged and discussed, and issues resolved where possible.

The concept of the training was reinforced by several exercises, which looked at basic monitoring methods (ant lures and tracking tunnels), quarantine procedures (participants checked equipment for unwanted biota), poster on comparison between “good” and “bad” island biosecurity, and a visit to Satitua wharf to discuss biosecurity at the boat launch site. Discussions on practicality and other concerns were made at the end of each exercise.

Outcomes

1. Understanding biosecurity

2. Participants admitted a previous lack of understanding of invasive species, their impact and the function of biosecurity. This training has increased their knowledge and desire to put action to invasive species prevention not only for the Aleipata Islands, but also the main island (Upolu).
3. Participants repeatedly expressed concern about unauthorised landings (e.g. fishermen and foreign visitors) on Nu’utele and how that will increase the biosecurity risk for the island. All participants agreed on the need for public awareness and participation.
4. Participants understood and agreed to the need for rapid reporting in the event of an invasive species incursion on the islands.
5. The SPA representative expressed interest in island biosecurity and encouraged more contact between MNRE, MPA and SPA to be updated about the Aleipata Island issues.
6. There were recommendations from the participants to hold such biosecurity training periodically in Samoa, to teach and create awareness in others.

2. Development of skills and knowledge

1. Participants were made aware of risk areas (places to look for signs of incursions) on the island and the means of identifying signs of invasive species incursions.
2. The lure and rat tracking exercise provided skills in setting and collecting samples, and interpreting the information.

3. Local knowledge and information collation

1. Information about the islands (risk areas, common landing route), risk species, its source and invasion pathway were collected from participants and will be drafted into the islands’ biosecurity plan.

4. Development of visitor checklist

1. Information of the type of visitors and equipment usually taken to the island were compiled and a draft of a visitor checklist has been made.

Additional

1. The need protocol for incursion response for the Aleipata Islands was identified, and to be resolved. For example, who is responsible in each step of the response plan – MNRE, MAF Quarantine, Samoa National Invasive Technical Team (SNITT), or MPA? Is the national emergency response plan for invasive species applicable to local issues (i.e. rat incursion on Nu’utele and Nu’ulua)? Who is responsible for writing up the response plan – MNRE, MPA or SNITT? How does this all fit into the MPA management plan?

Next course of action

The following list of actions were raised, discussed and recommended from the biosecurity training. A simplified table is drafted and attached at the end of this report, and a dateline needs to be set by each party.

1. PII to draft the biosecurity species risk invasion pathway and prevention measures for Nu’utele and Nu’ulua Islands. This will be sent to MNRE and SPREP to finalise plan.
2. PII to draft the visitor checklist for Nu’utele and Nu’ulua Islands. This will be sent to MNRE, MPA and SPREP to finalise document.
3. Establishment of an incursion response plan for Nu’utele and Nu’ulua Islands. This includes clarification of the roles and responsibilities of each agency (MNRE, MPA, SNITT or MAF Quarantine?) in an event of an incursion. Management measures for high risk species (e.g. rats) needs to be produced. Suggestion for MNRE, MPA and SPREP to discuss this part of the biosecurity plan, with support from PII.
4. MNRE and MPA will start basic quarantine checks of all gear prior to departing to the islands (using the visitor checklist). This will be routine in future island visits.
MNRE and MPA to discuss their roles as ‘quarantine officers’. Who will be responsible?
5. MNRE and MPA to discuss the establishment of an MPA/quarantine office at Satitooa.
6. Further discussion between MNRE, MPA, SPREP and PII on community awareness for the Aleipata Islands.
Questions raised in the training: Who are the community targets (fishermen, tourists, school children)? How are we promoting biosecurity on Aleipata Islands (poster, presentation, community day)? Who will be promoting this (MNRE, MPA)? How long or how often will this programme be held?
7. MNRE to send the translated biosecurity training evaluation forms (Samoan to English) to PII.

Acknowledgements

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List of people in the island biosecurity training, Apia, Samoa 8-11 March 2010.

Full training

1	Nuutele Sagapolutele	Ulutogia
2	Seuala Patone	Lalomanu
3	Amiaitutolu Ionatana	Vailoa
4	Maria Oloisepu	Malaela & Mutiatele
5	Tiumalu Amakisi	Saleaumumu
6	Tavana Iefata	Lotopue
7	Taua Vae	Samusu
8	Tafaoatua Pepa	Utufaalalafa
9	Tolu Iakopo	Tiavew
10	Ierome Mulumulu	Samoa Ports Authority (Aleipata Wharf)
11	Pulea Ifopo	MNRE/ MPA
12	Moeumu Uili	MNRE
13	Elizabeth Kerstin	MNRE
14	Malama Momoemasu	MNRE
15	Titi Simi	MNRE

Part-training

1	Tuiluaai Loakimo	Amaile
2	Faleafaga Toni Tipamaa	MNRE
3	Lesaisaea Evaimalo	MNRE
4	Juney Ward	MNRE
5	Letoa Tula	Ulutogia
6	Seufale Lauvao	Saleaumua
7	Fueloa Tavita	Utufaalalafa

Guests/ observers

1	Iaumuna Akerei Leau	MAF Quarantine
2	James Atherton	CI-PIP/ CEPF
3	Leilani Duffy	CI-PIP/CEPF

Facilitators

1	Marleen Baling	PII
2	Bill Nagle	PII

Planned actions to be taken by various agencies, following the island biosecurity training (8-11 March 2010), Samoa.

1.	<u>Biosecurity management measures</u> a) Draft biosecurity management measures identified from training – risk species, invasion pathway, preventative measures. b) Add – incursion response measures. c) Review and refine.	PII MNRE/ MPA MNRE/MPA/SPREP/PII	02 April 2010 30 April 2010 31 May 2010	Ongoing
2.	<u>Visitor biosecurity checklist</u> a) Draft visitor checklist. b) Add- introduction. c) Review.	PII MNRE/MPA MNRE/MPA/SPREP/PII	02 April 2010 19 April 2010 30 April 2010	Ongoing
3.	<u>Quarantine</u> a) Discuss potential establishment of quarantine/ MPA office at Satitua. b) Decide on who is responsible as ‘quarantine officers’ for the islands.	MNRE/MPA MNRE/MPA		
4.	<u>Community awareness</u> a) Hold a community day for Aleipata District. b) Collate ideas from MNRE/MPA/CI-PIP, for raising awareness in the wider community – draft c) Review ideas, options, and logistics. d) Finalise a community awareness programme d) Implementation.	MNRE/MPA PII MNRE/MPA/SPREP/PII MNRE/MPA MNRE/MPA	30 April 2010	
5.	<u>Send biosecurity training evaluation forms to PII.</u>	MNRE	9 April 2010	