



[24 October 2024]

## **MEDIA PRESS RELEASE**

### **Marine Spatial Plan**

#### **Inshore Traditional Jurisdiction successfully piloted.**

The Oceans office under the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation is pleased to announce the recent evaluation of a traditionally managed marine protected area in Laone, North Pentecost.

In June 2024 the Hon. Prime Minister launched Vanuatu's Marine Spatial Plan (MSP) document for Vanuatu. The MSP document is currently a working document and provides two important ocean jurisdictions, which are namely the offshore and inshore MSP jurisdictions. One important component of the inshore MSP is the traditional jurisdiction which begins from mean high water mark to the reef +100 meters.

During the Nationwide Marine Spatial Plan consultation in 2020, the chiefs of Laone Community agreed to designate their inshore MSP to be managed under a traditional governance system. A traditional ceremony was performed by high chiefs of Laone village, including former Prime Minister Vanua-Roroa Ham Lini, on the 20th of February 2020, hence the closure of the Laone-Lamana Traditionally Marine Protected Area.

Prior to the establishment of the Laone-Lamalana traditional marine protected area, a rapid biodiversity assessment was undertaken with the support of Vanuatu Fisheries Department along with Oceans Intern (ECOPs). The result of the biodiversity baseline assessments clearly indicates that the designated marine area has been seriously over exploited by both human activities and climate change.

In 2022 the Oceans team undertook its first review on the traditional governance system managing the protected area and also reviewed the biodiversity baseline assessment. The results of the biodiversity baseline assessment showed that the marine resources, namely fish and the coral reef ecosystem has recovered owing to the robust traditional governance system in place.

In October 2024, the Oceans team again re-assessed the traditional governance and the marine biodiversity of Laone-Lamalana Traditional Marine Protected Area.

The Laone village council who is the authority managing the Laone-Lamalana Marine Protected Area continues to remain very powerful. As a result of a strong governance system in place, the marine biodiversity baseline assessment shows tremendous improvement to marine biodiversity within the designated protected area including fish and coral reefs.

A full report on the outcome of various assessments, including climate change impact on the coastal area, marine biodiversity, tourism hotspots, challenges, opportunities and way forward will be published.

The preliminary results are shown on the graphs below:

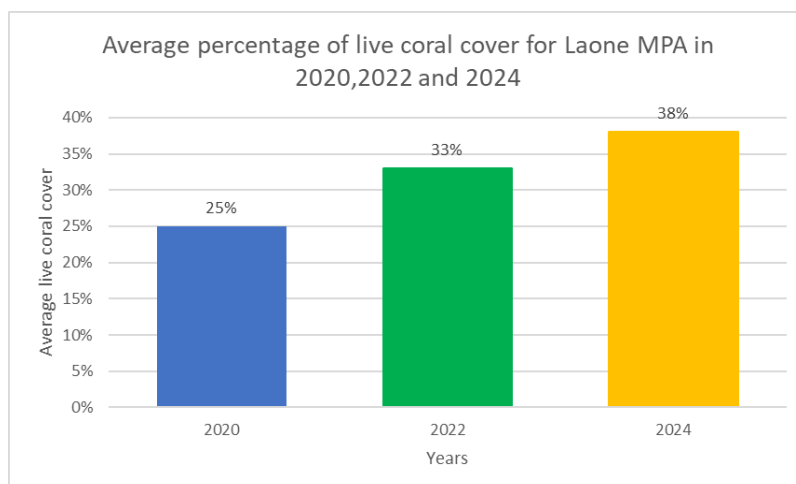


Figure 1. Comparison of average coral cover between 2020, 2022 and 2024.

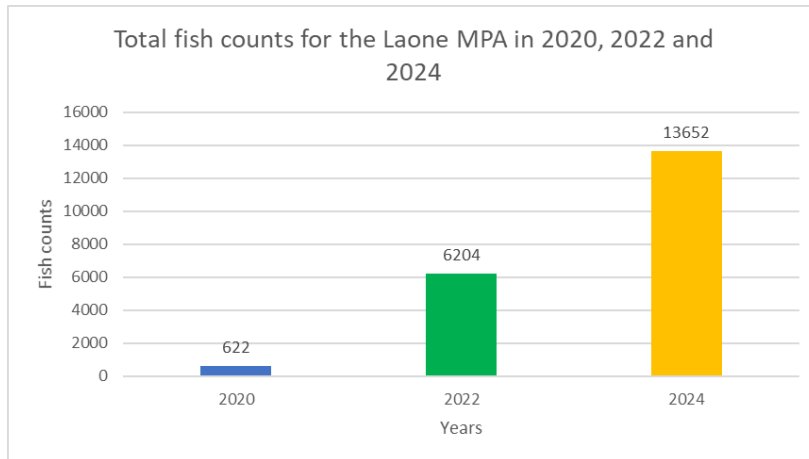


Figure 2: Comparison of fish count between 2020, 2022 and 2024.

After a lengthy discussion on the outcome of the recent assessment, the Laone village council and community made the following recommendations;

1. The Laone-Lamalana Marine Protected will remain a permanent No Take zone.
2. The Laone-Lamalana Marine Protected Area will be declared a traditional Marine Park in December 2024.
3. A cultural festival will be hosted in December 2024 to commemorate the launching of the Traditional Marine Park.
4. A village court system will be established in December 2024.
5. A bylaw of the village council will formally be registered and The Village Council Management plan will be launched in December 2024.
6. The cultural Marine Park will become a tourism destination.
7. Ocean Science to assist in decision makings and support capacity building to members of the coastal communities.
8. In the face of climate change affecting, the Laone-Lamalana community is adamant on being resilient to these challenges.
9. Support for alternative livelihood and being empowered in their decision to established a cultural marine park.

The Laone-Lamalana Traditional Marine Protected Area is one of the four pilot sites which have assisted the Ocean office to identify existing and practical traditional governance system that does support marine protected area. Declaring the marine protected area to a cultural marine park does and will not change the No take Zone status.



Below are some pictures taken during the recent baseline assessment conducted within the Laone-Lamalana Traditional Marine protected Area.





















