



BIOPELAGOS: Biodiversity of Oceanic Pelagic Ecosystems for a Better Conservation and Management of Outstanding Natural Areas

Targeted territories: New Caledonia; Wallis and Futuna

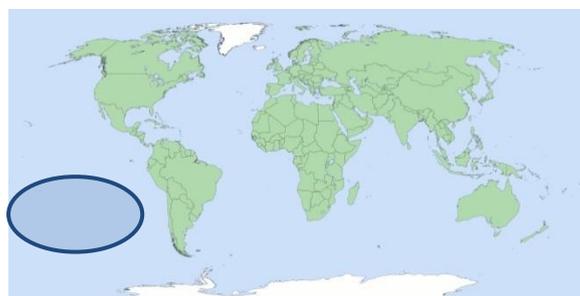
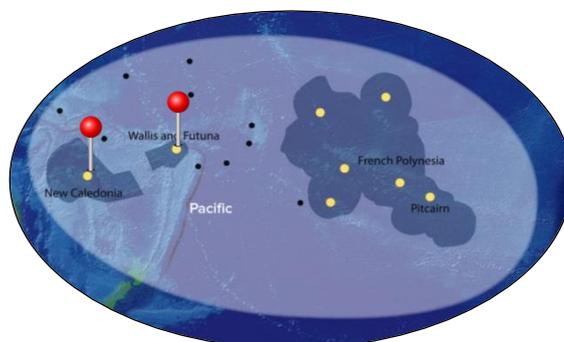
Total project budget: 810,112 Euros

BEST 2.0 grant awarded: 400,000 Euros

Duration: July 2016 – June 2019 (36 months)

Lead organisation: Pacific Community (SPC)

Partner organisation: Institut de recherche pour le Développement (IRD)



Background:

The Pacific countries and territories are characterised by small land surfaces and vast ocean areas. The ocean represents a major source of income (e.g. from fishing access fees) and employment, a source of protein, and an important cultural heritage. It also provides global services such as the sequestration of carbon dioxide. Considering the diverse uses and high reliance of the Pacific populations on the ocean, its sustainable conservation and management is critical for the subsistence and development of the Pacific countries and territories and the value of healthy ocean ecosystems cannot be overstated.

In order to make decisions that balance economic development with conservation, managers and decision-makers require the best available information on the uses of the ocean, the state of their ecosystems, and the impact of environment perturbations on these ecosystems. In most of the countries and territories of the Pacific, decision-makers face a significant lack of information that prevents, impairs or delays their decisions. This is particularly true in relation to offshore oceanic areas which are less easily accessible for research than coastal areas.



Description of the Project:

BIOPELAGOS will support the Pacific French territories of New Caledonia and Wallis and Futuna to make informed decisions for the sustainable management and the conservation of their oceanic biodiversity and ecosystems.

Scientific cruises will gather new information about the oceanic ecosystems in the territories and seabird surveys will be undertaken. The territories will be provided with this newly acquired knowledge to support them to identify geographic areas to target for biodiversity conservation and strengthen the spatial planning/zoning of their oceanic waters and to inform and support better management and conservation measures at the regional level particularly for tuna stock management.

Measures of the status and health of the ocean ecosystem will be used to assess how it is being impacted by climate change and ecosystem modelling work will explore the likely future modifications to the pelagic ecosystem in response to climate change and inform strategies to increase resilience.

Intended results:

- Increased scientific knowledge of the marine ecosystems of the territories.
- Increased capacity within the territories to understand and use data on the biodiversity of the oceanic ecosystem to make evidence-based decisions on the conservation and management of biological resources of the oceanic ecosystem.
- Suitable policy guidance and recommendations on the biodiversity of the oceanic ecosystem in relation to conservation and sustainable management measures for existing or developing marine protected areas are developed and available to support decision-making within the territories.

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