



Hei Moana, the Ocean Sentinels

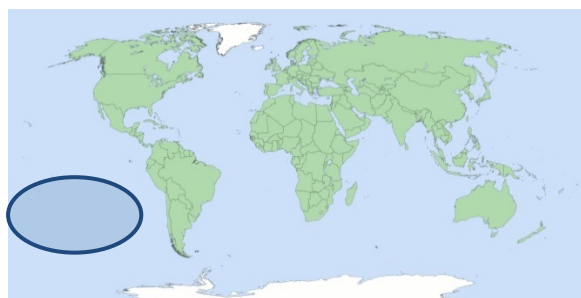
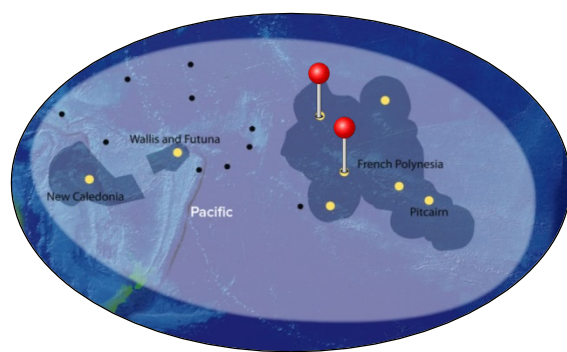
Targeted territory: French Polynesia

Total project budget: 49,972 Euros

BEST 2.0 grant awarded: 49,972 Euros

Duration: February 2017 – January 2018 (12 months)

Lead organisation: Te Mana O Te Moana



Background:

The Polynesian marine environment is home to several emblematic marine species such as marine turtles and cetaceans. These species, mostly in danger of extinction, are fully protected in French Polynesia. However, many anthropogenic activities pose a real threat to them as well as to coral reefs. Moreover, French Polynesia is very vulnerable to climate change. It is therefore essential to maximize the involvement of local populations in the need to conserve resources on a sustainable basis, but also to increase research programs to overcome basic information gaps on biodiversity and to demonstrate its importance.

Description of the Project:

Hei Moana is a project bringing together various participatory science initiatives related to the marine environment. It aims at education, awareness-raising, and involvement of the general public and schools in the observation and protection of endangered marine species and ecosystems in French

Polynesia focusing on 3 emblematic groups: marine turtles, marine mammals and coral reefs. The idea is to provide every interested Polynesian citizen with the skills and tools necessary to actively participate in the observation and collection of data on the marine environment. Through the training of teaching staff children will in turn be involved and sensitized to the process.



To help in the process, a booklet on the 3 groups, a charter of good conduct, and methodological tools will be adapted to the different target groups and made available in digital format. Training sessions and animations will be set up for residents, members of the National Education, children, the French Navy, communal staff and those of partner companies, and residents of all Polynesian archipelagos.

The project includes training on the recognition of marine turtle species, photo-identification of individuals at sea, as well as spawning females, and the collection of crucial information on egg-laying sites in all Polynesian archipelagos.

For marine mammals, the project will combine ecotourism and the collection of observational data, and will help to make boaters aware of the rules of approach. In addition, the project will raise public awareness of the protection of coral reefs and their threats (bleaching, terrestrial inputs, pollution, beach erosion, etc.), and

create a participatory monitoring network on coral reefs and sea level rise.

Intended results:

- Development of a "Hei Moana" Kit, the sentinels of the ocean, a collection of educational and informative tools enabling all of the target groups to study and understand the theme.
- Training content is developed and delivered in a turnkey manner to people authorized to disseminate the training. Tools and supplies for the methodology and field actions are purchased.
- The training and "Hei Moana" kits are disseminated to the different target audiences.



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