Dear Members, Partners & Friends,

Kia orana, Tangi ke, Ata wai wolo and welcome to the April newsletter for Te Ipukarea Society! The past month has been very busy for us, so come check out some of what we’ve been up to!

Marine Science Camp a Real Success

The UNESCO-funded “Learning By Doing” Marine Science Camp was held at the TIS office from 14th-17th April. The camp was attended by nine youth: seven students from Tereora College, one student from Araura College in Aitutaki, and one recent school graduate from Atiu. The four day camp featured a number of activities which focussed on potentially getting these youth interested in careers in marine science. A number of presentations were made by some of the Cook Island’s most distinguished scientists. Gerald McCormack kicked off the programme with an overview presentation on marine biodiversity. Teina Rongo taught the students how to identify corals and invertebrates, how to do transect and quadrat studies in the lagoon (assisted by Jacqui Evans) and how to collect and analyse lagoon material for presence of ciguatera.

Other presentations included Jaime Short from WATSAN who discussed the impacts of sewage and septic tanks on the marine environment, and Kelvin Passfield from TIS who presented on career paths students can follow in marine science. During the camp students were given the opportunity to utilise brand new snorkelling equipment as well as microscopes to study marine material. Living up to the “Learning by Doing” name, the camp aimed to be 50 percent theory and 50 percent practical activities, so the students were able to spend time in the lagoons, both in front of the TIS office and in Matavera doing a trochus count. On the final day Teina took the students and TIS staff out on his watersports adventure boat, Eturere, to visit the FAD’s and go for a snorkel on the fore-reef outside Trader Jacks. There was also some
high-speed action much to the enjoyment of those on board. It seemed this was the highlight of the students’ time at the camp!

TIS would like to thank UNESCO for funding the project, and all those who did presentations or assisted in the running of the camp. This was the first marine science camp which TIS has run, and due to its success, we hope to run a similar camp next year if funding is available.

TIS Launches Anti-Purse- Seining Petition to the Cook Islands Parliament

TIS has decided to team up with many members of the public who want a complete ban on purse-seining in the Cook Islands. TIS originally wanted to ban FAD (fish aggregating device) use by purse seine vessels only, as they are the primary cause for the current high levels of bigeye and yellowfin tuna bycatch. Purse-seining vessels who do not use FAD’s and target skipjack only were seen as less threatening to the sustainability of these fish populations, and therefore were not a target for TIS.

However following the Ministry of Marine Resource’s public consultation on purse-seining on the 16th March, the views of the public which were expressed that night, and the obvious resistance from MMR to ban FAD’s, TIS decided to join others that want a complete ban on purse-seining. The most effective way in which we could do this was to commission a formal petition from the people of the Cook Islands to the Cook Islands government asking that: 1. the Cook Islands Government sells no more days for purse seine fishing as of the public consultation on 16 March 2015, and 2. That the Cook Islands Government phase out purse seine fishing in the Cook Islands Exclusive Economic Zone when the current licenses expire, and at latest by March 2016.

Petitions have now been present at the TIS office in Tupapa and a number of shops around Rarotonga for four weeks. All outer islands have also either already received their petitions or are expecting them to arrive by boat shortly. TIS hopes to have all signed petitions collected and submitted by late May, in time for the next cabinet meeting in mid-June!

Top: students conduct a trochus count in Matavera Lagoon.
Bottom: Students take a dive around a FAD.

TIS project officers Alanna Smith and Liam Kokaua proudly displaying copies of the Anti-Purse-Seining petition.
Ani’s Prints Prove Popular for Protesters!

With knowledge that a protest march against purse seining was to take place on Rarotonga on the 24th April, local artist Ani O’Neill decided to provide her creative talents and printing skills free-of-charge to provide unique and thought provoking T-shirt prints for those interested in participating in the march. Ani set up her printing station at the TIS office on a number of days leading up to the march, and due to the large influx of those wanting their shirts printed, she also spent long hours at home doing prints! Despite the hard work, the final result was very effective as seen on the day of the march, the majority of people were adorned with slogans which included “UNLESS” – an allusion to Dr. Suess’ story of the Lorax, which tells an important conservational message. Other slogans included “NO FISH NO FUTURE”, “BAN PURSE SEINE FISHING”, and the provocative “TINNED FISH DON’T BREATHE”.

Liam and Ani with some completed T-shirts ready for pick up.

Well-known New Zealand musician Tiki Taane displays one of Ani’s prints.

TIS would like to thank Ani for her assistance in preparations for the march and donating much of her time and late nights to ensure the protesters had their shirts printed for the march. Meitaki!

Protest March Gains International Attention

The protest march on 24th April was a proud moment for many people of the Cook Islands. Approximately 500 people turned up to show a united front for the ban on purse seining in the Cook Islands. People from all walks of life attended, from the ages of 9 weeks to 90 years old. The protesters walked from Avarua Wharf, through downtown Avarua and finished up at the Punanga Nui Markets. At the Punanga Nui a large TV screen was playing environmental messages and a number of people spoke words of encouragement to the gathering of protesters, such as June Hosking, Doreen Boggs, George Maggie, Captain Moko, Junior Ioaba, Dr Teina Rongo, and Stella Neale amongst others.
TIS would like to thank all those who attended the protest, or assisted the organisers in any way. The protesters should be congratulated on their chanting, which was in both English and Maori. The signage was also exceptional, with “Less Puna, More Tuna” and “WTF – Where’s The Fish?” being crowd favourites. The local fishermen who brought their boats to be a part of the protest were also champions on the day.

Special thanks goes to:

Ani O’Neill
Hori Signs
Rongohiva Ltd.
Bill Doherty
Ted Nia
Marlin Queen (Diane and Junior Ioaba)
Captain Moko and the Mooring Cafe
Akura Fishing Charters
Delano Fishing
Tauraki Raea
Willie Tuiravakai
Paolo Cattania
John Beasley
Nikao Beach Video
CI Police
Ministry of Health
Cook Islands Rugby League Association
Triathlon Association
Matman
CITC Karangaranga
Matariki FM
CITV
Rehab
Vaka TV and Radio
Kia Orana FM 87.5
CI Radio

And the entire Organization Team!

TIS Staff Visit Offshore FAD’s

On the 26th of March, Kelvin, Alanna and Liam took a trip on Akura Fishing Charter’s boat to visit some of the Fish Aggregating Devices (FAD’s) off Rarotonga. The reason for the trip was for Kelvin to
show newbies Alanna and Liam what a FAD looks like, and for TIS to get some underwater footage of fish swimming around a FAD for Greenpeace. The FAD’s we visited were the shallow one outside Trader Jacks and off Tupapa.

The day we visited the FAD’s there was not a lot of fish, and Alanna and Liam got sea sick after some time so the trip was called off early. Here are some photos collected from the team. Meitaki ma’ata to Eva from Akura for taking us out to visit the FAD’s, and to Akura management.

In Other News...

A bicycle safety workshop was held at Ride Rarotonga on 25th March to help keep our cyclists safe on the roads! Many thanks to Jakub for sharing his knowledge!

And finally, the office has received an internet upgrade! The TIS office now has an Internet Hotspot available for any special guests, consultants or workshop participants which may be using TIS facilities!

That’s All For This Month

As you can see it’s been a productive month for us here at TIS. Now that the protest is over we need to keep the momentum going and continue to promote our cause. Don’t forget to sign the petition if you haven’t already, and stay tuned for next month’s newsletter!

Ka Kite Akaou!