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Press kit

Approval of the Decree on the Management Plan 2018-2022



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It is during a collegiality meeting that President Philippe Germain and the member of its government approved the decree on the Management plan of the Natural Park of the Coral Sea.

A decree to approve the Management Plan 2017-2021

The fifth management committee was a significant step [in the implementation of the management of the Natural Park of the Coral Sea](#), created by a governmental decree on 23 April 2014.

This five-year management plan, which integrates proposal gathered during the public consultation was approved, a decree was then drafted by the Department for Maritime Affairs.

After consultations with the Commission on Maritime Resources and the Consultative Committee on the environment, a draft was presented to government members for final approval.

The broad consultation phase focused on the drafting of the Natural Park's management plan has now come to an end after two years of work.



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The Management Plan and the Consultation with the General Public

The operation “New Caledonian Have their Say,” organized in February 2017 was an opportunity for the New Caledonian population as a whole (From the North, the South and the Loyalty Islands) to contribute to a participative process.

The general public was able to express its opinions freely through a survey on the draft management plan presented to the management committee on 20 December 2016.

To gain a better understand of the Natural Park and its management objectives, anyone could attend one of the **nineteen public meetings** organized in **seventeen municipalities** around the country.

In total : **250 people** attended and **247 surveys** were returned to the Natural Park, **150 online** and **97 in person**. **More than half of the surveys** contained observations or proposals, including specific actions that will enrich debates.

The analysis of the surveys gave the following results :

- ❖ **58.9 % of respondents** are favorable to the management plan, while **8.5 %** are not.
- ❖ New Caledonians who participated in the operation identified 4 sub-objectives of the management plan as major :
 - Sub-objective 1 : Preserve isolated reef
 - Sub-objective 2 : Limit direct human impact on a significant part of ecosystems
 - Sub-objective 6 : Protect key habitats, indispensable to the life cycle of these species
 - Sub-objective 32 : Put in place an efficient monitoring system.



Koulnoué tribe, Hienghène ©DAM SPE



Sociocultural center, La Foa ©DAM SPE

2018 - 2019 : Time for Action

This operational phase aims to :

- Protect 100 % of the Park's pristine reefs by creating reserves
- Regulate professional tourism within the Park, most notably cruise tourism
- Sustainably valorize the Park through the 2nd action plan of the Entrecasteaux reserve, listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

1. The Preservation of pristine reefs : Chesterfield-Bellona and Pétrie-Astrolabe



Coral reef ©Laurent Vigliola, IRD

The scientific community considers the reefs of these two large pristine reef areas of the Park to **be some of the last reefs non-impacted by human activity and among the wealthiest on the planet**. The park houses a third of these reefs. The biomass of reef fish was measured in tons per hectare during several missions aimed at counting the species. After analysis, experts concluded that these isolated oceanic region houses family of species and habitats of an exceptional wealth.

The preservation of biodiversity and reef-lagoon wealth is explained by a singular geographical situation, characterized by its significant distance from populated coastal areas.

Numerous species of fish were observed in the area (Ambio Campaign in 2014, environment monitoring mission in 2017), some of which are considered iconic, such as sharks and Napoleon fish.



Longue island caye, Chesterfield ©Pierre Bachy, SCO.

First action scheduled in early 2018 : protecting Chesterfield-Bellona.

The favorite location for green turtle and sea bird-nesting after d'Entrecasteaux, Chesterfield-Bellona is situated in between New Caledonia and Australia. Living coral is present throughout the island, characterized by its slopes, underwater rocks, and deep lagoon-reefs.

A long preparation

The writing of the Action plan for Chesterfield-Bellona has been in preparation for several years through scientific and terrestrial environment monitoring missions (nesting of green turtles and seabirds) organized by the Fisheries and Marine Environment Division of the Department for Maritime Affairs.

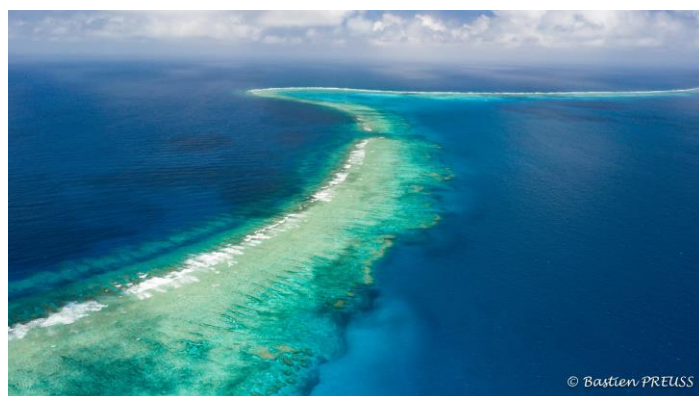
The Soon To Be Biggest Protected Area in New Caledonia

Currently covering about 23 000 km², the upcoming listing of this area will enable the protection of a space far beyond New Caledonia's main and loyalty islands combined : about 18 500 km² and the New Caledonian lagoon : about 20 000 km² !

2nd Action scheduled before the end of 2018 : Protecting Pétrie et Astrolabe

All of the Park's far-away reefs and their lagoons will be listed as reserves.

Petrie and Astrolabe are atolls stretching from the North-East of the main island to the North of the Loyalty Islands. In this maritime environment, marine topography alternates between platforms, high underwater rocks with corridors and caves, lagoon, coral reefs and mounts.



© Bastien PREUSS

Astrolabe reef

Percentage of Protected Area

Entrecasteaux + Chesterfield-Bellona + Pétrie et Astrolabe = 100 % of protected reef-lagoon areas by the end of 2018.

It should be noted that Pétrie and Astrolabe have established a new biomass world record for fish-reef according to the IRD pristine study.



2. The Regulation around Tourism Frequentation in the Park

No regulation frames cruise or any kind of tourism-related activity in the Natural Park of the Coral Sea, outside of the natural reserve in the d'Entrecasteaux Atolls. The members of the Park's Management Committee wish to address this legal gap by putting in place measures to strengthen the Park's protection and regulate human and tourism frequentation.

To address this problem several options are available : a complete ban, a partial ban or authorizing access under certain conditions.

©Visiteurs en transit dans le parc naturel de la mer de Corail, Fortunes de mer



The Example of the French Southern and Antarctic Territories

Drawing from the biodiversity management and protection measures currently enforced in the Southern and Antarctic Territories could be a possibility, notably in terms of :

- regulation on tourism frequentation in isolated uninhabited areas
- and agreements signed with the shipping company

This overseas collectivity composed of several protected, uninhabited areas (lands, archipelagos and islands) is a national natural reserve, created in 2006. It is where the biggest natural reserve in Antarctica is located (Kerguelen and the Crozet Archipelago) as well as the Eparses Islands, where the Natural Park of "Les Glorieuses" was created in 2012. It is the fourth French Natural Park and the second in the Indian Ocean.

The participative work schedule involving members of the management committee has already been developed by the Natural Park so as to have an operational plan by the end of 2018.