



Summary: Oceania Ranger Roundtable

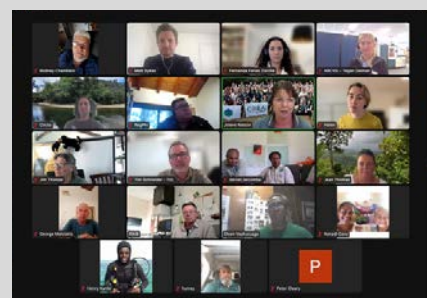
A 'yarning circle' about the challenges being faced in the Pacific

Description

With the support of the International Ranger Federation and The Thin Green Line Foundation, approximately 30 Rangers, Protected Area Workers & Conservationists came together for the first ever Ranger Roundtable held in the Oceania region. Facilitated by Regeneration Projects and designed as an online 'Yarning Circle' to encourage inclusive dialogue, the conversation highlighted the challenges being faced in the Pacific as well as possible grassroots solutions, including how Oceania Rangers can collaborate more effectively. Countries represented included: Aotearoa New Zealand, Australia, Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Samoa and the Solomon Islands.

Background

The Ranger Roundtable is a forum that was established in response to COVID-19 which led to a series of milestone papers: 1. Positioning Rangers in global policy, and 2. Investing in Nature-based Solutions through Rangers. Advocacy peaked at the COP15 UN Biodiversity Convention with a side event run in collaboration with the World Bank and Global Environment Facility, focusing on the vital role of rangers in achieving biodiversity and development outcomes. Localising this momentum, the inaugural Oceania Ranger Roundtable gave our region's frontline Planetary Health workers the opportunity to reflect on the Kunming Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework and specifically share their perspectives about Target 3 and 'effective management'.



October 4th 2023

Recordings

1. Presentations - [HERE](#)
2. Workshop closing - [HERE](#)

Key Themes

We asked participants to highlight key themes, this is what they shared:

- Traditional knowledge
- Succession planning
- Insufficient resourcing
- Pressures (including on wellbeing)
- Inequality (particularly gender)
- Need baseline data for decision-making



Guest Presentations

Oceania Ranger Roundtable

Henry Kaniki

President *Solomon Islands Ranger Association (SIRA)*



- **3 Pillars of conservation** (Rangers connect them all):
 - Traditional knowledge
 - Green economics
 - Research
- Currently working on a course / program for Rangers, a Training Manual and working with communities and stakeholders
- **Challenges:**
 - Funding for main operations
 - Opportunities for rural rangers to access information and empowerment events
 - Maintaining memberships and effective advocacy to rangers across the country

See powerpoint slides - [here](#)

Riki Bennett

Park Ranger,
Auckland Council, NZ



- Maramataka involves the sacred links between land, sea and sky
- Mix of coastal and interior forests
- When a plant has a meaning and a purpose for the community, you are strengthening the connection between nature and society, which will in turn increase the desire to protect it.
- **Threats to the rangers & natural habitat:**
 - Rubbish dumping
 - Pest animals and predators
 - Damage to roads and walking tracks
- **Steps to protect and increase native flora and fauna:**
 - Reintroduced four breeds of native birds by the rangers
 - Work with community groups and educate the next generation on Indigenous knowledge of the natural environment, encouraging young people to become guardians of the animals and plants. Example: children's planting program.

Ranadi Cavu

Head Ranger, *Sigatoka Sand Dunes National Park, Fiji*



- **Organisation structure:** Works under the National Trust of Fiji, operating partially as government body and NGO
- Care for a range of conservation sites and animals, including: Sigatoka Sand Dunes; Fiji Crested Iguana, Nakanacagi Micro Bats Sovi Basin, and Fiji Native Frogs.
- Practice of conservation: a holistic approach that engages community, where traditional and cultural knowledge plays a vital role in protecting the local environment.
- The rangers are locals who have cultural connection to land, learning technical skills (eg. first aid, data management) on the job.
- **Challenges:**
 - The rapidly changing climate and ecological fragility of the region
 - A need for more support and resources, particularly for legal counsel & policies.
 - Need to further communicate the importance of what the rangers do and their protection of the unique natural wonders of Fiji.
- **Suggestions & Possible solutions:**
 - Work with other stakeholders that share the conservation vision.
 - Strengthen old partnerships and create new ones with Government, NGOs, and community groups.

See powerpoint slides - [here](#)

Olsen Vaafusuaga

Head Ranger, *Lalotalie River Retreat & President Samoa Ranger Association*



- Just started the Rangers Association and building the foundation: looking at the strategy that they shared in Rotorua
- **Goal:** to connect the villages, particularly the back villages where the natural treasures are
- **Challenges:** seasonal work, going overseas and disrupting the conservation work
- **Mitigation:** Rangers role with tour guiding and the likelihood of sustainability
- It's all about protecting the Pacific Islands and having a voice at the big stage, we are under threat from climate change
- What's happening in the islands is important for everyone



THIN GREEN LINE
Rangers protecting nature

Workshop Insights

Oceania Ranger Roundtable

How do we get to the root causes of the challenges facing Oceania's Rangers? And how can we overcome the barriers to achieving effective management of 30% of the Planet's lands and waterways by 2030? With the scene set through the different perspectives showcased in the Part 1 Guest Presentations, now it was time for the participants to get involved and share their ideas. The following summary notes are vital in ensuring that we can build shared understanding across the Ranger community, focus existing resources on important issues and advocate for increased support to achieve global and regional conservation goals. Note: A decision was made to keep Rangers' and Co-facilitators inputs as close to original as possible to retain authenticity and strength of message, so that when decision-makers read this document they can really hear Rangers' voices.

Groups:

Four breakout groups were created so that participants could listen and share their voices.

Co-facilitators included:

Group 1: Jolene Nelson, Director & Oceania Representative, International Ranger Federation, Australia

Group 2: Jean Thomas, Chief Operating Officer, Tenkile Conservation Alliance, Papua New Guinea

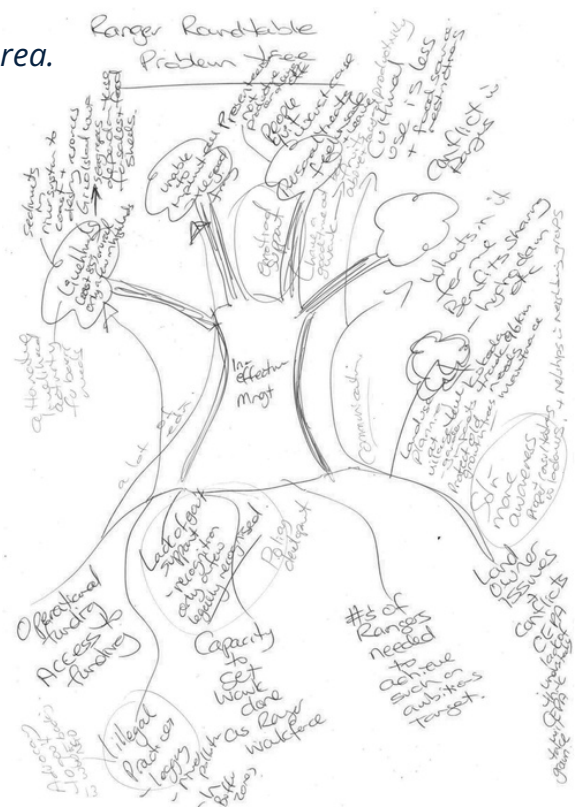
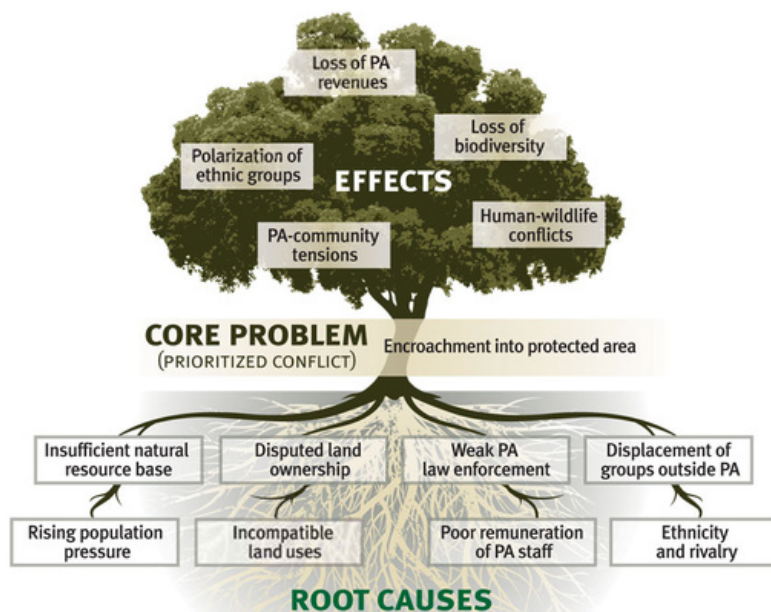
Group 3: Tim Schneider, General Manager, The Thin Green Line Foundation, Australia

Group 4: Matt Sykes, Founder, Regeneration Projects, Australia

Framework:

The 'Problem Tree Analysis' was proposed by the organisers to support the conversation, to understand challenges and opportunities holistically.

Participants were invited to think about trees local to their area.



Source: [Wageningen University & Research](#)

Example: Jean Thomas' group

Workshop Insights

Oceania Ranger Roundtable

PART 1: The Main Problems & Solutions // Heart of the Tree

What is 'effective management' of protected areas mean from a Ranger's perspective? Why is it important to achieving the Global Biodiversity Goals?

Group 1 [Jo]:

- Listening to communities
- **Jobs for Nature**
- Lots of **pressure** coming from all directions
- We bridge the **gaps between communities and government**
- Threats and challenges to us all: ecological threats and resource challenges (Skills, equipment, manuals)
- Important to **feel valued**
- Need to be more active in sharing our stories (blowing our horns)
- Promote: social media, to government, to organisations, etc
- **Succession planning** and some intentional planning on how we plan and recruit for our future ranks
- Local indicators: look different for every country

Group 2 [Jean]:

- Alternative livelihood programs for food security and housing solutions for communities.
- A well thought out **benefit sharing** scheme for communities that live in or alongside a Protected Area or are impacted by the restrictions that come with implementing good Protected Area Management.
- **Awareness, advocacy and education programs** for people living in Protected Areas and for Governments who are supposed to govern them and should be supporting them.
- Governments need to create and implement their own policy, laws and regulations regarding environmental protection. Some countries have adequate laws and policy while other countries do not have the proper laws and recognition in place.
- Recognition from the Government that a **Ranger workforce is essential** and should be supported in annual budgets by Government in the same way it does for other services such as Police, Fire, hospitals, schools etc.
- The Ranger workforce needs various levels of support including basic training, emotional, financial and technical to avoid low productivity, burn out and resignation.
- There is a real need to provide more awareness and have proper consultations with landowners and surrounding areas to build relationships with all people to avoid conflicts and non-compliance when it comes to land protection and proper utilisation of natural resources.
- **Conflict resolution training**, communication and awareness raising capacity building for Rangers to help them work with landowners who do not understand the process of establishing a protected area and the legalities surrounding that.
- Land-use planning and natural resource management training for landowners and communities to ensure better use of the landscape.
- Money! A lot **more investment is needed** to support the people (Rangers) who are protecting landscapes.
- Working with NGO's to provide the above support has proven to work in many cases throughout the Pacific.
- Communication is key. There is a real need for all stakeholders to work more closely with each other, sharing ideas and lessons and building a knowledge base from a collective experience rather than working in silos.
- Effective Leadership training for Management and team leaders to build more productive, effective and happy Ranger teams and workforce resulting in Rangers who give "above and beyond" the expectations of what they are employed to do.

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Oceania Ranger Roundtable

PART 1: The Main Problems & Solutions // Heart of the Tree (cont'd)

Group 3 [Tim]:

- Having good strategy and direction agreed and supported through all levels of the organisation;
- **Recognising Indigenous knowledge** and engaging with Elders;
- Proper consultation with Indigenous leaders;
- Effective **joint management** processes in place;
- The right tools, knowledge and equipment to do the job safely;
- Effective recruitment and **succession planning** to support and retain staff;
- Collective vision shared throughout management and right through organisation;
- Maintaining morale throughout organisation;
- Good leadership and **two-way listening** in place;
- Empowering local communities who are the owners of the land.

Group 4 [Matt]:

- **Consistency – funding**, education and support (especially in developing countries like PNG)
- Not relying on volunteers, need to have a baseline of services guaranteed
- **Traditional knowledge**
- Effective communications
- Respect, patience of hearing each other
- Then openness innovative ideas
- Ops plans, management plans, priorities
- Need community on side
- Also **working with eco-tourism, partnerships**
- Mountain to sea, reef
- Systems of team leadership, succession planning
- Changing of mindsets – Polynesian way of life
- Get community on board, traditional knowledge



Challenges in Fiji (Photo credit: Ranadi Cavu)

TOP 3 KEY THEMES:

- Succession planning
- Promoting Rangers
- Local Communities



Stakeholders
Workshop,
Solomon Islands
(Photo credit: Henry Kaniki)

Workshop Insights

Oceania Ranger Roundtable

Part 2: The Visible Impacts & Effects // Tree Branches & Leaves

What are the positive impacts of 'effective management'?

Group 1 [Jo]:

- Education institutions **recognising rangers as a profession**.
- If succession planning was well supported then the tree would be healthy.
- **Building resilience** (work/life balance)
- **Local indicators** - realistic, build on local needs
- Empowering people in different ways (skill sharing)
- Share resources and knowledge to help our 'ranger associations'.
- Boost of employment for jobs in nature
- New education opportunities for future rangers (universities)
- **Succession planning** → morale would be higher, effective workforce, longevity

TOP 3 KEY THEMES:

- **Capacity building**
- **High morale**
- **Longevity**

Group 2 [Jean]:

- Not able to put into practice what Rangers know, love and have learned from capacity building activities.
- **Not enough boots on the ground** to do the work necessary to protect large scale landscapes, advocacy work, communications, land use planning, management of natural resources, training and awareness raising with landowners, stakeholders, community and Government. All of these things are not able to be done without **proper financial support, emotional support and capacity building**.
- **Illegal logging** leads to massive environmental impacts that affect livelihoods in the Pacific such as contamination of river systems and coastal areas impacting on food sources local people depend upon.
- Worst case scenario is that people leave their jobs (in Australia) at least. This is due to increase demands, lack of training, lack of time, lack of manpower and lack of emotional support leading to burn out, fatigue and resentment particularly of management teams. People no longer feel safe and stop showing up and become more and more unproductive and less resilient.
- Conflict with Rangers and landowners and amongst Rangers and Management. This leads to less productivity and outcomes being achieved.
- Natural resource restrictions and prohibitions in certain areas leads to impacts on **maintaining cultural heritage** and resource use for landowners and natural resource users. On-going issues can escalate to conflict.

Group 3 [Tim]:

- **Healthy environment!**
- Well supported and functioning teams that are working safely;
- Interconnectedness between ranger groups;
- Transfer of **traditional knowledge respected** and taken into consideration;
- Have the right level of resources to do what's needed;
- **Community feeling empowered** and listened to;
- Strong collaboration throughout the industry and good partnerships established;
- Succession of the **younger generations** to carry on best practice;

Group 4 [Matt]:

- **Clear communication between Rangers** all over
- We wouldn't be experiencing feelings of being mentally drained, limited resources
- Common activity, breaks down cultural and language barriers and traditions (eg: using phones, and apps, like monitoring apps – **healthy competitions, sharing stories from different villages**)
- Monitoring and baseline data, key species (show success or not, relies on capacity building, which is easier in NSW), different kinds of data – oral, written
- Going to that next stage of upskilling – stories of land and past, keep building, pest control

Workshop Insights

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Part 3: The Deeper Causes & Solutions // The Tree Roots

What are the 'root' causes of ineffective management? And what are solutions for overcoming them?

Group 1 [Jo]:

- High community expectations
- **Main thing: resources funding** (no funding sometimes)
- **Managing workloads**
- Stakeholders
- Navigating **bureaucracy**
- time wasting, wish we were doing other things
- Political pressure
- Deaths/accidents/mental health impacts

TOP 3 KEY THEMES:

- **Resources**
- **Bureaucracy**
- **Gender Equality**

Group 2 [Jean]:

- **Access to funding** – despite all the training, if there is no funding to support the engagement of Rangers (employ them to do the work) the training becomes pointless.
- **Illegal Practices** – Logging
- Lack of support – Government and Landowners.
- **Capacity of Rangers** – unable to get work done and adds pressure on others to do that work for them
- **Not enough Rangers** – need more Rangers to achieve such an ambitious 30:30 target
- No recognition of Rangers as a proper workforce

Group 3 [Tim]:

- Well established **processes for communicating** with traditional and customary land owners that ensures their input into decision making;
- Strong **community engagement** throughout park management practices;
- Administrative processes are in place to support the back end of operations;
- **Rangers being globally valued** as the essential frontline workers that they are;
- Training and equipment needs met in an ongoing and self-sustaining way;
- Adequate funding to enable more rangers on the ground and therefore having more realistic expectations for their outputs.

Group 4 [Matt]:

- **Gender equality** – ½ men, ½ women
- Inequality – world is changing, so many skills, women's skills aren't valued or encouraged enough, men have an enabling role to play
- Inequality – 7 ladies in charge on their own team, married girls and unmarried girls groups, separate committee, young women have a rising voice
- Communication – efficiently, on time
- **Capacity building and training**
- Capacity building – trying to be a model village, transitioning into 21st century with tech (via Pawa and TGLF funding)
- Potential for resource sharing, ranger exchanges
- **Good leadership** – loop back to equality
- Tour guides, nature cultural guardian – new role and language
- Links to Samoa Conservation Society, only 150-200 Dodo left, all efforts on rangers to support, needing to breed – needs a dedicated trip, funding and expertise
- Funding and pay important
- Also... **we need Rangers to be paid well**, to have adequate conditions of employment and for the profession to be respected as having great worth that needs supporting
- Safety, boots, clothing

Participant Feedback

Oceania Ranger Roundtable

Highlights:

What were your key take aways?

"More Rangers, More Opportunity for Ranger Training Programs, More Capacity Building with Other Rangers in Oceania"

"We need to hear from the small island countries as this is where the real issue is coming from."

What could enable more effective collaboration?

"By organizing exchange trips among communities, countries and region."

"It would be worthwhile to continue having these types of events and regional gatherings in the future."

How satisfied were you with the Oceania Ranger Roundtable?

5/5

How relevant and helpful do you think it was for your job?

4/5

What is your interest in future Oceania Ranger Roundtables?

94%

Reflections:

Ranadi Cavu, Head Ranger, Sigatoka Sand Dunes National Park, Fiji

"While we very much appreciate men in our different areas of work, we also would like to ensure that an equal number of men and women old and young are employed as rangers to protect our areas of conservation.

In terms of employment the National Trust of Fiji sets an example as an equal opportunity employer. Our Director and our support services manager are both women. For the workplace to be inclusive you have to set the environment, it makes the Ranger work more attractive :)

Both men and women love the outdoors so we should promote that, outdoor work is not glamorous, it is fun and cool and anyone can do it. We think that Nature work is everyone's responsibility, men are not the only ones responsible for protecting nature, women too are needed. Women have intimate knowledge of nature. We always say MOTHER NATURE or MOTHER EARTH.

Male Rangers at the Sigatoka Sand Dunes National park have described some female rangers as BRAVE, EFFICIENT, CONFIDENT, PERSEVERANCE. Female rangers are the heart of conservation. They are the much needed emotional drive that reminds everyone of her importance in conserving nature. Including more women in conservation balances our conservation work."

Recommendations

- 1. Seek financial assistance to continue this program, to cover coordination fees and travel costs for suitable WRC delegates.**
- 2. Run an Oceania RRT program in the lead up to the Congress.** (eg: Jan/Mar/May/Jul/Sep)
- 3. Assign a working group to consolidate key findings and develop a Strategic Plan.**
- 4. Nominate Oceania representatives to present findings and advocate for recommendations at next year's 10th IRF World Ranger Congress.**





Oceania Ranger Roundtable

For more information, contact oceania@internationalrangers.org



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