



9th Meeting of the Fisheries Commission BES St. Eustatius, May 21st , 2019

Open summary of the Meeting

The Fisheries Commission BES (FCBES) is an advisory body established to enhance the joint management and policy-making of fisheries in the Caribbean Netherlands. In this body Bonaire, St. Eustatius, Saba and the national government can discuss and advise the minister. The Commission consists of four members, being the three representatives of the island governments plus an independent Chair, and is assisted by an official Secretary. The members representing the three island governments are appointed by their respective government, Bonaire, St. Eustatius and Saba. The Chair is appointed by the Minister after consultation with the Commission members. The Ministry fulfills the role of the Secretariat. The FCBES convenes at least once per year. This summary is intended for open distribution, therefore it does not contain privacy-sensitive aspects of the meeting.

Introduction

On St. Eustatius, May 21st 2019, the 9th Meeting of the Fisheries Commission BES (FCBES) was held. Present were the Chair Mr. Nico Visser, Mr. Diego Marques for Bonaire, Mr. Anthony Reid for St. Eustatius, and Mr. Menno van der Velde for Saba. Also present was the Secretariat in the person of Mr. Yoeri de Vries from the Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality (LNV) at the National Office for the Caribbean Netherlands (RCN), supported by Mr. Paul Hoetjes from LNV at RCN and Ms. Gelare Nader from LNV. Furthermore, present were the observers Ms. Clarissa Buma, Director of Stenapa; Mr. Erik Boman, future Director of Stenapa; Ms. Ayumi Kuramae Izioka, science officer at the Saba Bank Management Unit (SBMU); Mr. Kimani Kitson-Walters, data monitoring officer at CNSI; Mr. Gershon Lopes, Head LVV for the OLE, and Mr. Rob Nowicki from Mote Marine Lab in Florida. For two specific agenda-items Ms. Stacey MacDonald, consultant at Mac&Field Consultancy, and Ms. Paddy Walker, head of the NEV, were present through Skype.

The Commission noted the leaving of Ms. Nader as the fisheries policy advisor for the Caribbean Netherlands, as she will be the new Agricultural Council in Seoul for South Korea and Taiwan. The Members thanked Ms. Nader for her great effort and enthusiasm in developing the fisheries sector in the Caribbean Netherlands and strengthening the relationship between the Ministry and the fishermen.

Island 'state of the fisheries' reports

The Members informed the attendants of developments in the fisheries sector on their respective island since the 8th Meeting of the Fisheries Commission BES.

St. Eustatius

- The OLE is currently in the process of updating the anchor zones.
- The OLE is planning to provide the fishermen with new freezers.
- The OLE has organized a workshop with the goal to increase communication and the relationship between the fishermen and the government.
- One fisherman went to a workshop on shark and marine mammal conservation in Belize.
- The fishermen are in the process of setting up a fishermen cooperative.
- The app 'Statia Blue' has been developed and is in use. Through this app fishermen can log their catches and in doing so the app connects buyers and sellers. Furthermore it provides fisheries data for the DMO which can further develop the sector.
- With the Irma hurricane restoration fund, materials are being purchased to construct 'model' traps. These traps include biodegradable hatches, escape slots, and tags. St. Eustatius requests LNV to start a centralized tagging system. LNV will contact the NVWA (the Netherlands food and consumer product safety authority) for possible expertise on this.

Saba

- The OLS has started a project to help the fishermen to set up a fishermen cooperative.
- In April/May several Saban fishermen that went to St. Maarten to sell lobster were apprehended by St. Maarten. The reason was that St. Maarten had resumed enforcement of their Lobster Ordinance, which states that the buyers/purchasers of lobster on St. Maarten need a permit. The St. Maarten government has established a 6 month period, until November 30th 2019, for all

parties to make sure that the lobster trade will be in compliance with the legislation. It is the responsibility of the seller to ensure they participate in a legal transaction, and thus to ensure their buyer is in possession of a permit.

- On the Saba Bank there are at least 10 FAD, which are used communally by the fishermen. The fishermen have started to fish on pelagics more than before.

Bonaire

- The Ministry of I&W has issued 6 permits for the 6 FAD of fishermen cooperative Piskabon. In the first phase, 2 of the 6 FADs will be deployed by Piskabon.
- The OLB has posted a job vacancy for policy officer for agriculture, animal husbandry and fisheries.

Following the island reports, the following requests were made to the Secretariat and/or to LNV:

- To add IUU fishing (Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated fishing) as a recurrent agenda point of the FCBES Meeting.
- To send a request to the Coast Guard to facilitate workshops on each island.
- To send a request to the Coast Guard to effectively enforce on IUU fishing.
- To start or facilitate the start of a centralized tagging system.

Outcomes of regional meetings

The Secretariat informed the attendants about the regional meetings that deal with fisheries which had taken place in the six-month period since the 8th Meeting of the Fisheries Commission BES.

For the Western Central Atlantic Fisheries Commission (WECAFC) several meetings took place:

- The 1st Preparatory Meeting of the WECAFC Reorientation Workshop, Barbados, March 25–26th 2019. For the Caribbean Netherlands Ms. Gelare Nader and Mr. Yoeri de Vries were present. The goal of this meeting was to give direction to the process of strengthening the efficiency and mandate of WECAFC. The recommendation of this workshop to the WECAFC Commission is to continue exploring possibilities to strengthen WECAFC, amongst which the option of RFMO status.
- The 3rd Meeting of the WECAFC/IFREMER Working Group on Fisheries using Fish Aggregating Devices (FADs), Puerto Rico, 30 April – 2 May 2019. The goal of this meeting was to provide members with the relevant tools to better mainstream the sustainable management practices in FAD fisheries in the region, drawing on best practices, regional linkages, and strong stakeholders collaboration. One of the recommendations from this working group is the establishment of a regional moored FAD management plan.

Other meetings related to fisheries that took place were:

- The 17th Meeting of the Caribbean Regional Fisheries Forum (CRFM), St. Kitts and Nevis, March 20-21 2019. The Netherlands is not a member of the CRFM, therefore the Caribbean Netherlands was present as an observer to this meeting in the person of Mr. Yoeri de Vries.

- The CRFM report on the state of fisheries 2015/2016 was presented. This report shows increases in landings of Yellowfin tuna, other tuna's, barracuda, wahoo, sharks, rays and skates. Due to these species an overall increase in landings can be observed. It is however important to note that for many other important species there is a decline in catches in the report.
- One of the requests of the CRFM to its members is to place a high priority on better fleet data. This can be achieved through 1) cleaning vessel registries in order to get a more clear picture of the number of fishing vessels; and 2) issuing and maintaining a clear record of fishing licenses, as these give a better indication of the amount of fishing. With regard to fleet data, the added value of using fishing licenses as opposed to a vessel registry is that in a vessel registry fishing vessels will be present which in reality are no longer fishing or active at all. Also more specific data regarding the amount of vessels that fish certain stocks will not be captured through vessel registries.
- There are 5 CRFM countries that showed a decline in trends of Queen Conch catches. This could be a result of hurricanes, a decrease in demand in Queen Conch, an increase in demand for other species, lower quota, or decline of the stock. Some areas show an increase in total catch, but everywhere the catch per unit effort has declined.
- A JICA survey on sargassum shows presence of heavy metals (e.g. arsenic) in sargassum, which will contaminate the soil if used as fertilizer. Other studies have showed this presence of heavy metals as well.
- The CRFM is interested to attract a research vessel to the Caribbean region. The research vessel of the FAO will be in the waters around Africa in 2020/2021 and therefore cannot be used in the Caribbean. FAO advises CRFM to contact a certain Mexican research vessel.
- The 8th Scientific and Technical Advisory Committee (STAC) meeting of the SPAW-Protocol, December 5-7 2018.
 - National Park Mt. Scenery on Saba was recommended by the STAC for SPAW listing
 - *Pristis pristis*, Largetooth Sawfish, proposed by the Netherlands, was recommended for Annex II and *Carcharhinus falciformis*, Silky Shark, was recommended for Annex III
 - Working groups for Sargassum and for listing of parrotfish will be established
- The 8th meeting of the Consultative Committee of Experts (CCE) of the IAC (Video Conference), February 12-13 2019.

Various resolutions were prepared for the COP in June 2019 to:

 - Take action on the North West Atlantic Leatherback Turtle population because of alarming declines in nesting numbers
 - Develop an online reporting system
 - Set a process for data requests by third parties
- The Trans-Atlantic MPA Partnership 1st workshop on twinning for marine mammals' protection, [date]
 - Main outcome of this meeting was a Checklist for Marine Mammal management plans for MPAs
- The 2nd meeting of the CARI'MAM network, May 9-10 2019:
 - Increased number of islands participating: Bahamas, Barbados, Bermuda, Jamaica, Dominican Republic, Anguilla, Mexico, USA, Turks & Caicos, Aruba and BES. From the

Caribbean Netherlands LNV, SBMU, Stenapa, St. Eustatius DMO and Stinapa Bonaire were present.

- Report on test of Passive Acoustic Monitoring hydrophones on Saba Bank and St. Barth was presented; exchange of acoustic data with Wageningen was agreed.
- A number of Working groups discussed: Stranding Network data management; Whale watching and certification; Communication and Awareness and MPAs and Marine Mammal Management

Upcoming regional meetings

- The UNEP CEP 18th IGM and 15th COP of the Cartagena Convention, SPAW (Biodiversity) and LBS (Pollution) Protocols, June 3-7 2019
- The IAC 9th COP, June 12-14 2019
- The 17th WECAFC Commission Session, July 15-18 2019
- CLME+ Meeting, July 30 – August 1 2019

Update on the Yarari Sanctuary

Action plan for the Yarari Sanctuary is in place. A management plan will be written in the coming period. Legislation will be changed accordingly. The Yarari Sanctuary will become a Nature Park under the SPAW-Protocol.

Sustainable Fisheries Plan (SFP)

Ms. Stacey MacDonald of Mac & Field Consultancy was present through Skype to present and discuss the concept-SFP with the Commission. The Commission gave the following feedback on the concept-SFP:

- A 5-pager to be added in which the plan is worked out in written form. This 5-pager should set out where the Caribbean Netherlands is heading with its fisheries: in the future (the dot on the horizon) and in the coming 5 years. It should include a clear goal for the BES-islands (e.g. in 20 years the fish stocks will be blooming). The 3 pillars of sustainability - social, environmental and economic - should come back in this 5-pager.
- A prioritization to be added for the goals and action points. This prioritization is the following: IUU, stock assessment/conservation, food security and markets access.
- Development and operationalization of instruments and means for stock conservation to be included. Data monitoring and baseline studies can be mentioned explicitly under this goal.
- A mandatory requirement for all vessels to have VMS/radar to be added.
- To add stock assessment to the research agenda.

Presentation on Nurse shark bycatch

Mr. Rob Nowicky, researcher at Mote Marine Laboratory in Florida was present at the meeting to give a presentation on by-catch of Nurse sharks in lobster traps.

The presentation by Mr. Nowicki shows how Nurse sharks rarely attack lobsters in a trap. Rather, the Nurse sharks actively search for a way to escape and, in the case they fail to escape, stop moving completely. Two different types of lobster traps were compared. The data suggests that, with regard to by-catch prevention, box-traps can be preferred over swallowtail/chevron-traps. The tests by Mote Marine Lab take place in a controlled environment. It is unclear if on-site tests will lead to the same results.

Next Meeting Date and Venue

The next meeting is scheduled to take place December 17th 2019 on Saba.