

Preparing the next assessment of the State of Environment and Conservation in the Pacific Islands Region

1.0 Introduction

First published in 2020, the *State of Environment and Conservation in the Pacific Islands Region* (SOEC):

- progresses and informs ongoing national State of Environment reporting using consistent indicators,
- serves as a monitoring mechanism for the regional *Framework for Nature Conservation and Protected Areas*,
- updates and progresses the *State of Conservation in Oceania* reporting, and
- serves as a flagship report for SPREP, with planned production on a 5 yearly cycle serving the functions of:
 - monitoring the state of environment and conservation measures, including SPREP efforts,
 - informing regional managers, including SPREP staff,
 - informing national partners and regional policymakers, including negotiators,
 - informing and demonstrating priorities for potential partners, and
 - supporting national, regional, and global reporting through alignment and contextualization of national, regional, and global goals, such as multilateral environment agreements and the Sustainable Development Goals.

The indicators assessed during the SOEC process are formally endorsed by Pacific Leaders, aligned with Pacific priority areas for environmental management. Each indicator is a proxy, but the scope is regional and broad across sectors, environmental research topics, and management tools.

2.0 Rationale

For that reason, the report would benefit from a **diverse project team** blending scientific, policy, and communication expertise with Pacific experience. A commitment to sharing capacity—taking advantage of the range and production schedule of such a major report—will serve the SPREP Members; for this reason, it is recommended that the 2025 edition incorporate an early-career professional from the islands as a deputy editor and co-author. This hands-on experience will further that person’s understanding of the region, environmental science and management, and effective ways to produce (and manage sensitivities around) regional assessment and reporting.

The report will be broad in scope and highly visible. The major uses include as contextualized introductions to priority topics for new managers or national delegates and for potential partners and donors.

- To serve these audiences, the report uses accessible language that blends scientific rigour with policy interpretations and text that serves non-native-English speakers. Future

editions could consider translation of report sections or knowledge products in Member country languages.

- In 2020, additional efforts for interpretation and ease of use led to a segmentation of the report among themes and indicators, allowing extraction without loss of branding and context; an interactive website segmented by theme; and ready-made communication materials including data graphics, photos, and fact memes.

The original set of 31 indicators used in the 2020 report were (1) based on the set of core national environment indicators defined by Pacific Leaders in 2012 and (2) reviewed and revised in a regional process beginning in 2018, involving regional workshops. Through regular review, we hope to further the relevance of the selected core regional environment indicators and align their use with global and regional processes. **Subject-expert input and national input (not exclusive) are needed to refine, add, or remove indicators to serve Pacific priorities.** Indicator selection, revision, or removal must consider the benefits of sustained, comparable monitoring. Indicator revision should also take into account the monitoring function for the regional *Framework for Nature Conservation and Protected Areas*, including assessment of the principles as well as the specifically environmental targets.

3.0 Consultation

In practical terms, the scope of the report requires broad reach for consultations, review, and internal SPREP participation. In return, each consultation or review is a chance to further the report's reach and raise the Pacific profile, improve the assessment and therefore utility of the recommendations, and in many cases to highlight high-quality work ongoing in the SPREP Member countries.

- The extensive review and participatory process requires greater time.
- A blend of formal and informal approaches proved most successful to gain effective review and contributions, particularly for priority topics outside of SPREP's core stable of effort.
- Popular work areas, such as coral reef management, received intense review; significant effort will be required to address other priority areas, such as sewage management, hazardous waste, and water quality.

The report's introduction provides space to assess the reporting process and its regional foundation, itself. For instance, the 2020 edition introduced the concept of assessing the state of the regional environmental and conservation workforce, not addressed in existing indicators but essential for sustainable management. Based on country needs at the time, each report edition could take a thematic approach on top of fulfilling its role of consistent monitoring.

4.0 SOEC Development Planning

The report team should plan for weekly meetings with the consultant and project co-ordination team to address the multiple issues and decisions that come up during the reporting process. Regular check-ins help to ensure a consistent tone, strong data choices, and prioritization throughout.

Strategic planning will be essential to gain visibility, using regional and international media, for the report. The release of an advance copy served the Pacific Islands Nature Conference but

hurt the media visibility in the long term. Based on requests in 2021 by Pacific media representatives, the 2025 edition should consider pre-launch engagement with Pacific media to interpret and apply the regional findings to locally relevant media.

Planning for the priority uses of the report can also influence the time of release: if released sufficiently in advance, the report directly serves preparations for events targeting regional conservation (such as the PIRT Pacific Islands Nature Conference), regional or global biodiversity management (such as CBD conference of parties), and other regional or global events targeted to themes addressed in the report (such as conferences of parties on waste, climate, threatened species, and so on).

5.0 Estimated timeline for SOEC production

Assuming a launch mid-2025, preparation must start in 2023 with the approval of final indicator definitions and approach for measurement.

Drafting of the actual report must begin the year prior to the launch, with the document fully completed three months prior to launch to allow time for design, printing, production of a website, and development of communication materials.

Year, if launch 2025	Task	Notes	Responsibility
2021	Establish task. Nominate SPREP staff to lead on SOEC preparation. Plan budget for SOEC: 1. Indicator determination 2. SOEC report development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initiate the planning process two years in advance. Nominate leads from SPREP Budget planning: 150,000 USD 	SPREP
2023	Indicator selection:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consult regarding amendment, removal, or adoption of regional environment indicators 	
	(1a) SPREP staff as regional env experts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create & complete table of existing and proposed indicators, with any proposed amendment(s). Concurrent with PIRT. 	SPREP
	(1b) PIRT working group re. Framework for Nature Conservation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete table of existing and proposed indicators. Concurrent with SPREP internal consultations. 	PIRT
	(2) Pacific island countries & territories	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Request feedback or endorsement of proposed indicator amendment(s) 	Members
	Slush: indicator prep, feedback, amendment in light of available data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Finalise 	SPREP / consultant (?)
2023/4	Create ToR and contract report author(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recommendation: the team creating the report must blend scientific expertise across the range of indicators as well as communication/journalism skills, on top of Pacific experience. 2020 SOEC involved co-development of the report across SPREP working groups 	SPREP

Year, if launch 2025	Task	Notes	Responsibility
2023/4	Prepare to contract SOEC consultant(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set budget and develop contract, obtain bids, etc. • Plan for weekly meetings • final indicators • national SoEs along with any backing data • starting contact list • recent and forthcoming SPREP publications. 	SPREP
2024	Scientific assessment and technical writing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expect 3 weeks per indicator • Ensure mechanism for country contribution of data/information • Final product must be delivered for copy-editing 3 months before launch date 	Contractor (author)
2024/25	Photograph/illustration collection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sequentially, coordinate with author to collect the high-res photographs • Engagement: requesting photos from others gave a reason to share the final report with them and increased visibility. • Copyright note: any photograph or reproduced/adapted figure must be obtained with clear record of copyright permissions. 	SPREP, contractor
2024	If needed separately: interpretation of scientific assessment into (speech-ready) language for policymakers, headline statements, and summaries that will be harmonized across the report and its website	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If contracted as a separate element, plan for at least 4 team meetings and for the work to span at least 1 month. • The person who takes on this component should also be able to write the website content, much of which could overlap. 	Contractor
2024/25	Review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Important to have transparent process for partners and members to contribute • Having both formal and informal communication with reviewers helps to receive timely feedback • Consultant may need assistance in obtaining follow-up • Review should be on scientific grounds and to remove <u>unnecessary</u> political sensitivities. 	SPREP, countries, contractor (author)
2024/25	Post-review completion of report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allot an additional month for revision after 	Contractor (author)
2025	Copy editing to SPREP style	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expect 3 weeks for editing: 	Contractor
	Translation, if desired	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If the report is translated: • Translation cost 30K USD including layout • Copy-editing within destination language • Graphic design again • Media and social media • Sufficient time must be allotted for the contracting process and for the actual translation itself 	Translator, SPREP
2024/25	With SPREP Comms, develop short & long-term comms strategy and action plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (1) prepare comms materials for launch and (2) build and maintain internal awareness among SPREP staff (for example, is th+e SOEC part of materials provided to new staff during orientation?) 	SPREP, comms consultants as needed

Year, if launch 2025	Task	Notes	Responsibility
2025	Graphic design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Could be paced by indicator for speed. Expect at least 3 reviews of each component to check accuracy of translation into design layout, style development, etc. • Preferable to contract a designer who can handle and assist with data graph design. 	Contractor
2025	Social media prep	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider fact-based memes to be disseminated from SPREP and at major. • Assess impact of 2020 efforts to determine desired level of investment: posts, memes, gifs. 	SPREP, comms consultants as needed
2025	Website production	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Estimate 100 to 140 hours of web team time • Estimate 50 hours of time from the report author/interpreter (SPREP comms, otherwise) • Plan for SPREP internal review time Aim to complete 1 week prior to launch event. Turn on analytics early. • Consider web tour/instructions 	Contractor (web), contractor (author/editor)
2025	Printing and distribution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Estimate 300–500 hard copies, depending on feedback from 2020 edition, 	Contractor
2025	Publication & launch event	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider alignment with PIRT Pacific Islands Nature Conference, as the SOEC report is a monitoring mechanism for the <i>Framework for Nature Conservation and Protected Areas</i>. Request speakers from partners and members. Each will need at least 4 weeks notice. Coordinate with Comms for invitation (email, 'poster'/meme, social, media alert), IT, etc. 	SPREP
2025	Media alert and press release(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allow time for executive approval of quotes. • Media alert to be sent days before launch. PR to be posted day of. • Consider media awareness/training session with journalists days prior to report launch so their stories could come out day of. 	SPREP, comms consultants as needed
2025	Post-launch follow-up	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • press release with quotes from launch 	Comms
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • edit & upload video within days of launch 	IT/Comms
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draft and send messages to attendees, participants, contributors and partners with links, including to event recording 	Comms/Project team
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Long-term communications to ensure use throughout 5 year period to next report • SPREP staff awareness • CROP awareness • Pacific region awareness (media, countries) 	Comms, Knowledge management