

BAA ATOLL CONSERVATION FUND/BR MEETING

Meeting No: 01

Date: 24 May 2017

Time: 11.00 am to 12.15 pm

Venue: Baa Atoll Biosphere Reserve Office, Eydhafushi

Minutes of BACF/BR Meeting

Participants:

1. Dr. Abdulla Naseer, Senior Policy Executive, MEE
2. Muhusina Abdul Rahman, Assistant Director, MEE
3. Maura Siena, Assistant Marine Biologist, Sonevafushi
4. Mohamed Sujau, Water Sports Team, Sonevafushi
5. Robert Schnieder, Sea Explorer Dive School, Reethi Beach Resort
6. Abdulla Khalid, Chief Inspector, Maldives Police Service
7. Shiman Saeed, Station IN Charge, Maldives Police Service
8. Mabrook Naseer, Vice President, Baa Atoll Council
9. Shafee Ali, Baa Atoll BR Office
10. Ahmed Shan, Baa Atoll BR Office
11. Abdulla Shibau, Baa Atoll Conservation Fund
12. Mariyam Rifga, Environmental Protection Agency

Agenda

1. Introduction
2. Update of BR Workplan and Activities
3. Discussion

The meeting was attended by 11 participants from 7 Organizations and was chaired by Mr. Abdulla Shibau, BACF Fund Manager.

1. Agenda Item 1 Introduction

The Chair welcomed the participants to the meeting and informed all attendees that this is the first meeting for 2017 with all stakeholders.

The Chair spelled out the Agenda Items for the day and asked all participants to formally introduce themselves.

With that undertaken the Dr. Abdulla Naseer and Mrs. Muhusina briefed the participants the changes that have been made at the policy level in the management of Baa Atoll Biosphere Reserve by the Minister of Environment with regards to management of Baa Atoll Biosphere Reserve.

These changes include:

1. BACF meetings to be undertaken together with BR Office for more stakeholder participation during Hanifaru season.
2. Environment Department to act as the focal point in the day to day management of Baa Atoll BR.
3. Mrs. Muhusina Abdul Rahman appointed as the focal point from Environment Ministry.
4. Dr. Abdulla Naseer to oversee the management of Baa BR working together with Mrs. Muhusina.

5. EPAs role has not declined as per the change brought rather it would benefit BR management.
6. The Government is fully committed to manage Baa Atoll BR, hence these changes are being made.

2. Agenda Item 2 Update of BR Activities

A presentation of the the BR Workplan and activities undertaken to date 2017 was presented by Shafee Ali, Outreach Officer of BR Office. In his presentation he outlined the activities undertaken by the 3 areas of work of BR Office namely Conservation, Education, Awareness and Research and Livelihood Programs.

- Full maintenance of Hanifaru moorings undertaken
- Hanifaru Tout Guide Exams undertaken by 14 individuals
- Guest House Forum for all Baa Atoll Guest Houses
- Regular Meetings with Maldives Police Service
- BR Office participated in the Moodhumaa Kanduu Festival organized by IUCN and MEE , Rasdhoo Ari Atoll
- Work ongoing to complete 2 more management plans by the end of the year
- Awareness sessions for schools undertaken

The following was also highlighted by Shaafi

Need for revisions needed to be made to Hanifaru MPA for registration of Hanifaru Tour Guides as Operators of Guest Houses has been asking for qualification of Guides to be brought down.

3. Discussion.

The following points were discussed by the participants when the floor was opened for discussion.

1. The need to inform Ranger Hotline prior to visiting Hanifaru MPA

- In order to better manage the area it was informed by BR Office that it would be advisable for better management of the area to inform as has been the the past to Ranger HOTLINE prior to visiting HANifaru MPA.

2. Validity of TOKENS purchased in 2016

- Tokens purchased in 2016 to be extended until end June 2017.
- Details of mooring bouys installed at Hanifaru MPA/
 - All bouys have been reinstalled and will be in good condition for start of Hanifaru season.

3. TOKENS

- Will be available from Male' and Eydhafushi only, work ongoing for these to be made available online.

4. Necessity for manta movement to be made available

- To inform all of manta movement and sightings by BR Office

5. Maldives Police role in BR management

- How Maldives Police Services could be more involved in managing the areas.

6. Hanifaru MPA, safety of Guests

- **Strong Current, Snorkelling security measures –**

- **What to do if such is the case?**
 - Taking less people if the current is strong
 - Wearing a life jacket

7. Safety at General Diving Points

- Vessels driving at outrageous speeds, with no registration numbers - not safe for Divers
- What to do in case of such incidents?
- How to report and whom to report, POLICE or BR Office

8. Recreational Fishing and Night Fishing by the Resorts

- The need to put a stop to this

9. Awareness for Guest Houses

- They need to be informed about Baa Atoll Biosphere reserve

Comments

VP Atoll COUNCIL, Mabrook

- Baa Atoll residents are aware of Baa Atoll Biosphere Reserve rather it is the vessels from other atolls who are breaching the Guidelines
- Management Plans should come in for other areas for successful management of Baa BR
- Need the support of the management of more resorts as partners to sustain Baa Atoll Biosphere Reserve status.

ENVIRONMENT MINISTRY

- Right now there exists only 1 management plan but working on 2 others to be completed by the end of the year.
- Need to create awareness among speed boat captains and their owners and a start would be to send a sticker to all speed boats

DR.NASEER

- Agreed if the need is there to bring changes to Hanifaru Management Plan after discussions.
- Conflicts between resource users (FISHERIES, TOURISM, ENVIRONMENT) has been there in the past as well and it still is there.
- Regulations do exist at present
- There is a strong need to work on harmonizing these regulations

ROBERT (RESORT REPRESENTATIVE)

- Fishing on reefs by RESORTS need to be stopped.
- Local fishermen Fishermen should be allowed to do fishing in designated areas.
- Recreational fishing targeting Guests by resorts should be stopped

DR.NASEER

- FISHERIES Ministry has been working on Species Management Plans for a long time some are in place
- Management Plans for REEF FISHERY exist and in place by Fisheries Ministry.
- There is an approved GROUPER MANAGEMENT PLAN regarding Spawning and Aggregation Sites and the DOs and DONOTs.
- Sustainable Fishery is the way forward.

EPA

- EPA is working very closely with BR Office and will continue to do so as Protected Area Management within a Biosphere Reserve is of utmost importance and is ready to work with all involved.

MALDIVES POLICE SERVICES

- Willing to work very closely with all stakeholders
- Inform directly to them if there are any breaches
- Will work with others to find solutions

BACF

- Recreational Fishing (Night Fishing) is a very attractive activity for the guests, up to the resort to stop it.
- Discussions were undertaken initially to put a complete halt to this.
- Resort decided against this as this was an activity which interests their Guests.
- The main objective of the Guest House Forum held earlier in the month was to inform all guest houses about Baa BR.
- The need for more voluntary participation from resorts.

DR. NASEER

- There are 100 or more resorts
- No formal landing sites to get exact data on reef fish catch
- No data right now available
- Would be a good start to take this up by BR OFFICE and work with the resorts in getting data which is not there right now.
- Once the data is there then work can be undertaken by Atoll Council, BR Office, EPA, MEE and the other stakeholders to follow up action on this.

GENERAL CONCLUDING REMARKS

DR. NASEER

- Baa Atoll to be a model for Conservation of reefs
- Assessment of Baa Atoll Biosphere Reserve to be undertaken in 2021 by UNESCO.
- By then all core areas should be managed properly with the right monitoring mechanism in place.

VP Atoll COUNCIL, Mabrook

- More participation from resorts needed

SONEVAFUSHI (RESORT REPRESENTATIVE)

- This is good start and need to keep moving forward

REETHI BEACH RESORT (RESORT REPRESENTATIVE)

- Good step forward
- Ready to work with all stakeholders.

MALDIVES POLICE SERVICES

- Ready to work with all involved in finding solutions

The following conclusions were made after discussing amongst those present:

1. Proposed revisions to Hanifaru Management Plan to be sent to the Ministry of Environment and EPA by BR Office for further action.
2. BR Office to start work with the resorts in obtaining data in relation to reef fish landings.
3. BR Office to inform stakeholders of manta sightings when the Manta season starts.