

## Letter from the Cook Islands

by David Ngatae

*In August, 2004, Daniel Pauly travelled to New Zealand and delivered several public lectures in Auckland, Christchurch, Wellington and Kaikoura, sponsored by the New Zealand Department of Conservation. Dr Pauly's message has become familiar: the world's oceans are overfished and governments and citizens must be mobilised to act before the world's marine ecosystems cease to provide us their bounty. Sadly, it seems, that his story still needs to be told and that the southern oceans may soon be as overexploited as those of the north. Mr David Ngatae attended Dr Pauly's lecture at the Auckland Girls Grammar School on August 17 (see p. 2). Here, we publish his response to the lecture.*

Dear Dr Pauly,

I attended your lecture recently at the Girl's Grammar in Auckland on world fish populations. I have always feared that what you painted of the real state of world fish stocks to be true, but was devastated to learn the extent of the damage. I have recently returned to Rarotonga, in the Cook Islands, to live and am appalled at what is about to happen to these islands in the name of progress and growth. We have recently acquired five Taiwanese fishing boats to help us clean out what little fish we have remaining. This was out of the blue last week, an arrangement by government and a private processing plant, while we were all focused on larger vessels being built by the Chinese. We are told that eight vessels will be coming as each one is completed. They are too large to be built in the region.

There is a sense of overwhelmed helplessness amongst the people here to prevent the pace at which a few in power are being enticed with gifts, while using the ignorance of the people to the laws and the real statistics on the state of world fisheries, to push through their deals. There is also a lack of knowledge on the reasons we should protect these fisheries now, before the damage is done, in not only sustaining the resource but positively working towards creating your vision of world reserves to replenish the fish stocks.

The North is dead and the pillage is about to take place in the last remaining relatively unspoiled part of the world. The Chinese have also designated the Cook Islands a preferred visiting country. They have set up fish factories in Fiji, Samoa, Tonga and are firmly focused on this part of the world. France is holding

tightly on to Tahiti. The statistics you provided in your lecture virtually paint the picture that apart from commercial fishing being economically redundant, it is already too late for most of the fish stocks to sustain the present reported catch let alone the unreported catch. Establishment of these fish park/ reserves must be enacted as soon as possible. The UN will not do anything in the short term and nor will any of the major powers. They have too much to lose to entertain the idea of not fishing anywhere and creating a reserve. I believe that the Cook Islands with its vast economic zone can become an example of such a vision. However, political change through awareness and alternative economics is the key to enabling such a concept to actually become a reality. The fifteen islands are all small volcanics and atolls

*Continued on page 2 - Cook Islands*

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**Cook Islands - Continued from page 1**

and are inhabited by a mere 10-12,000 people. There is however very strong growth in all facets of the economy. The Cooks have finally been discovered and everyone wants a piece. There are foreign investors well embedded in the society who also will not let go easily the foothold they have and the wealth they are about to make. With such growth however comes the price of the few getting most while most will get very few.

*The Cooks have finally been discovered and everyone wants a piece*

I speak fluent Maori and as I walk amongst the people I am constantly reminded by them that it is my responsibility to voice and do something about their concerns, being able to communicate their feelings in English and to people who may be able to help. I couldn't think of anything more pertinent than attending your lecture on my

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The *Sea Around Us* website may be found at [saup.fisheries.ubc.ca](http://saup.fisheries.ubc.ca) and contains up-to-date information on the project.



## Daniel Pauly visits New Zealand



*Daniel Pauly delivers a public lecture at the Auckland Girls Grammar School (left) and speaks with students afterwards (right).*



*Jim Fyfe (Programme Manager Coastal, Otago Area Office, NZ Department of Conservation), Daniel Pauly and Ann McCrone (Senior Marine Conservation Officer, Marine Conservation Unit, Department of Conservation), just prior to (left) and during (right) a successful whale watching trip out of Kaikoura on the northeast coast of New Zealand's South Island. Photos by Roger Williams of Whale Watch Kaikoura Ltd*

visit back to Auckland. I wanted to communicate with you to get your initial feelings as I am gathering those around me who can and want to stop this ridiculous plunge into unconscious wastefulness, having learnt nothing from the northern fisheries already in their death throes. It is a medium to long term plan that must begin by the publishing and education of relevant and

accurate statistics to at least paint the other side of the picture even if it is to bring pressure on those in power to slow down the so called progress. The Cook islanders are mainly shy people who have been relatively left alone until now but are being hurled into the 21st century by those who are willing to destroy the resources and culture at all cost. Apart from the fisheries and

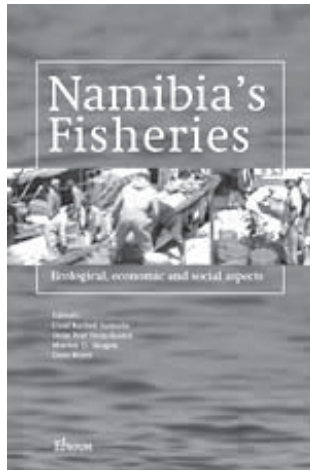
*Continued on page 3 - Cook Islands*

**T**he *Sea Around Us* project is a Fisheries Centre partnership with the Pew Charitable Trusts of Philadelphia, USA. The Trusts support nonprofit activities in the areas of culture, education, the environment, health and human services, public policy and religion. Based in Philadelphia, the Trusts make strategic investments to help organisations and citizens develop practical solutions to difficult problems. In 2000, with approximately \$4.8 billion in assets, the Trusts committed over \$235 million to 302 nonprofit organisations.

# New Book: *Namibia's Fisheries*

We are pleased to announce a new book focusing on the fisheries of Namibia, edited by Ussif Rashid Sumaila, David Boyer, Morten D. Skogen, and Stein Ivar Steinhavn; published by Eburon Publishers.

*Namibia's Fisheries* is a timely contribution to the global debate over destructive modern fishery methods. The book examines Namibia's Benguela upwelling



system: an area that supports traditional and modern forms of fishery. It also analyzes the Namibian experience in fishery management, featuring essays by researchers, Namibian fishery managers, and international specialists that cover a range of ecological and social issues.

*Namibia's Fisheries* will be a valuable resource for researchers, conservationists, and students of fishery management.

Contributions from the Fisheries Centre include several chapters co-authored by Ussif Rashid Sumaila on aspects of the economics of Namibian fisheries and chapters by Daniel Pauly, Maria Lourdes Palomares and Sheila Heymans. The book is available from Chicago University Press: [www.press.uchicago.edu/cgi-bin/hfs.cgi/00/16501.ctl](http://www.press.uchicago.edu/cgi-bin/hfs.cgi/00/16501.ctl) or [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com).

*Namibia's Fisheries is a timely contribution to the global debate over destructive modern fishery methods*



## *Cook Islands - Continued from page 2*

the invasion of tourism, I am also watching the rapid decline of my culture in front of my eyes. The things that make us who and what we are. The things that are dear to us. However, it is not irreversible yet.

I guess one can only do what one can do and our paths did cross. I hope that you and/or your department can help or at least give some advice.

Sincerely Yours,  
David Ngatae

*David Ngatae is a Producer with Cook Islands Film Company making documentaries on the Cook Islands. He is also spokesperson for a political and environmental lobby group, "Te Tu Maori", which aims to protect and preserve the culture and resources of indigenous people in the Cook Islands and the Pacific, through awareness and economic alternatives.*



## What, no canals?

by Jackie Alder

Dateline .....24 & 25 September, 2004, Venice, Italy  
(without the canals)

A meeting of the Global Ocean Observation Systems (GOOS) Working Group of the Scientific Committee on Ocean Research (SCOR) met in Venice September 24 and 25. I thought what an appropriate a place, given the canals and looming marine issues facing Venetians. The meeting was in fact in a Holiday Inn crammed between two freeways with not a canal in sight! Nevertheless it did not stop my presentation of the marine and coastal aspects of the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (MA) to SCOR's Working Group. An overview of concept of the MA, the process to date and the marine and coastal topics that are included in the various reports was given. The presentation resulted in considerable discussion about indicators and more importantly, how, members of SCOR, in particular the Global Observation Systems Group, could contribute to MA initiatives in the future. The consensus of the group was that progress has been made towards investigating a set of indicators that could be developed for an assessment such as the MA, and that the SCOR-GOOS Working Group has a key role to play. The way ahead is to propose a workshop with SCOR members, as well as other groups involved in monitoring coastal and marine areas on large scales, to determine the range of indicators that might be appropriate and to identify the data requirements so that Global Ocean Observation Systems can begin to incorporate them into their programs. Watch this space for updates!

# The Millennium Ecosystem Assessment – moving it to the next level

by Jackie Alder

The third and final meeting to finalize the three main volumes of the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (MA) was held in Kuala Lumpur in late September. The meeting included chapter review editors who assisted in advising on the finishing touches to the various chapters. The meeting also provided the opportunity for authors of various chapters to consult with colleagues on overlaps and information gaps, as well as ensuring consistency across the chapters. It has been a Herculean task to pull information together on ecosystems (natural and built) and their services; explore four plausible and possible futures for these ecosystems; and to discuss potential response options to address current and potential issues. In addition to producing three information-rich technical volumes, several syntheses are currently being drafted that will focus on communicating the MA's major outcomes to decision makers and the wider public.

The oceans and their services (fisheries in particular) were initially left out of the MA, but they are now included. Although the oceans cover about 70% of the world's surface, there is a much smaller level of coverage in the MA volumes. Fisheries and oceans topics are focused on in two chapters in the Conditions and Trends volume (Chapters 18 and 19). As well, in the same volume, Chapter 4 includes marine biodiversity, Chapter 8

covers fisheries as a food provisioning service, Chapter 12 outlines nutrient cycling, and Chapter 13 climate regulation. In the Scenarios volume, Chapter 6 (Models) provides an overview of fisheries models and the models used in the development of the volume; Chapter 8 describes the future scenarios for fisheries as well as coastal ecosystems; Chapter 9 presents the results of modeling three ecosystems using the four scenarios described in Chapter 8; and Chapter 10 examines how landing diversity might change under the four scenarios. The various responses policy makers can take to manage fisheries are described in Chapter 6 (Food and Ecosystems) of the Responses volume, while Chapter 15 (Integrated Responses) includes managing coastal areas.

Over the next three months the various chapters will be finalized and reviewed by MA board

members and then edited for publication in early 2005. The launch date of the MA results is scheduled for early 2005 in New York. After the launch the various volumes will then be available from the MA's website: [www.millenniumassessment.org](http://www.millenniumassessment.org) and, more importantly, decision makers will hopefully start to implement the findings of the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment.

Working with colleagues on the MA over the last two years has been interesting and exciting, and at times challenging. After spending a week in Kuala Lumpur, it was exciting to see the final product come together into a series of publications that will no doubt influence decision makers in managing the world's ecosystems. However, it was even more rewarding to know that the work of the *Sea Around Us* project made a significant and lasting contribution to this global initiative.



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## Alternative office space ideas?



On a recent trip to California, *Sea Around Us* research assistant Adrian Kitchingman spotted this potential new office space, should the new AERL building be unsatisfactory. The building comes with ready-made sign and a built in ecosystem of various silk octopuses and sea creatures.