

PROVINCIAL FISHERIES COUNCILS

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Three Provincial Fisheries Councils have been set up to make sure that the Provincial Governments, the fishing industry, the fishermen and the people of Papua New Guinea have the opportunity to give their opinions about the running of our fisheries. These councils will meet three times a year to discuss their ideas on fisheries management and development and to make recommendations to the National Fisheries Advisory Board (NFAB). NFAB will then use these recommendations to advise the National Government.

The Provincial Fisheries Councils are needed because:-

1. Provincial Governments need to cooperate since:-
 - (a) fish stocks are an interprovincial resource, i.e. they move from Province to Province;
 - (b) good fisheries development needs to be based on a large area;
 - (c) fish stocks and other marine resources need to be shared among the Provinces;
2. The National Government needs the help, advice and views of the Provinces in making decisions about fisheries development;
3. Each Province needs to be aware of the interests and needs of the other Provinces;
4. The National Government needs to allocate its scarce financial, manpower and technical resources in accordance with the views and needs of the Provinces.

The advantages of the Provincial Fisheries Councils system are that:-

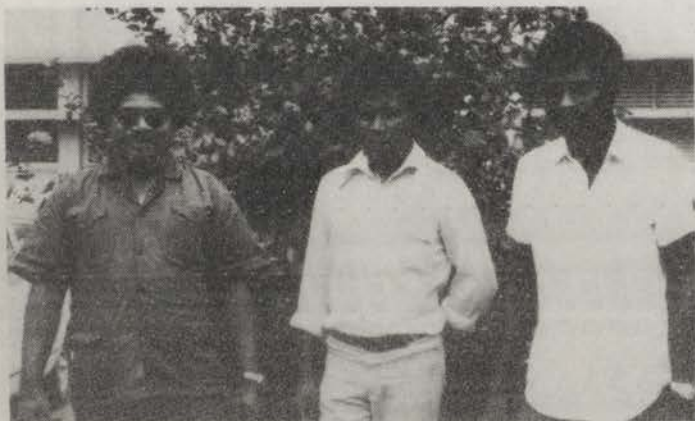
1. Management policies will be similar throughout Papua New Guinea;
2. Scarce and expensive equipment and personnel will be used efficiently;
3. Development programmes will be well organised;
4. Development opportunities will be shared fairly between the Provinces;
5. Financial returns from the fisheries will be improved.

The three councils are called the South Coast Provincial Fisheries Council, the North Coast Provincial Fisheries Council and the Islands Provincial Fisheries Council. The Provinces involved in each of the councils are shown in Table 1. Only the Provinces with a sea coast are included because, so far, the National Fisheries Policy refers only to the coastal fisheries. As inland fisheries become more developed, policies will be drawn up for them and the inland Provinces will be included in the policy making process.

The council members represent Provincial Governments, industry and the fishermen. The meetings are also attended by observers from



This is the symbol of the Provincial Fisheries Councils



J. Kupe (left) represented the South Coast Provincial Fisheries Council at the Islands meeting. With him are J. Gwana from Manus and Z. Areng from New Ireland

Some delegates from New Britain to the Islands Provincial Fisheries Council. Left to right:- R. Tovue, S. Kautu and Y. Hotta. Mr Hotta represented shore based fishing industries





These delegates to the Islands Provincial Fisheries Council are (left to right):- J. Kaetavara, J. Kove, J. Momoi and S. Eka. J. Kove is from Manus while the others are all from the North Solomons

Abelis Boe, an East New Britain fisherman, explains the use of a Tolai fish trap to some Fisheries Council delegates
Photo: J. Wankowski



Members of the National Fisheries Advisory Board in session. Left to right:- C. Tenakanai, P. Joku, K. Kelleher and P. Wilson
Photo: N. Birge

the other councils and from the National Government. The first council meetings were held early this year.

A Fisheries Division Technical Support Group has also been set up. This group is made up of experts in all aspects of fisheries. They will provide the technical knowledge to help the councils and NFAB to make their decisions. They will also provide a Fisheries Information Service to keep the public fully informed on all fisheries matters.

TABLE 1. DIVISION OF PROVINCES BETWEEN THE PROVINCIAL FISHERIES COUNCILS

Council	Provinces
South Coast	Central, Gulf, Milne Bay, Western
North Coast	East Sepik, Madang, Morobe, Oro, West Sepik
Islands	East New Britain, Manus, New Ireland, North Solomons, West New Britain

At their first meetings, all the Provincial Fisheries Councils discussed fisheries training. Recommendations on this subject included more encouragement for youth groups to take an interest in fishing activities; better coordination of fisheries extension, and a reassessment of training for fishermen, marine engineers, navigators and fisheries extension staff.

The councils also recommended that local boat building projects should be encouraged and that provincial facilities for boat repair and manufacturers' services for engine repair and maintenance should be improved. Other suggestions to help develop the fisheries included surveys of the resources off the North Coast; removal of export tax from Beche de Mer; reductions in port charges for fishing vessels; improvements in handling, transport and marketing of fish, and fair distribution of processing plants between the Provinces.

Two other topics which were discussed were the possibility of extending the term of fishing licences from one to five years and the introduction of stronger measures to prevent the use of explosives and poisons in fishing.

There were also recommendations for better charting of the South Coast; for research into the less common marine resources such as shells and shark fins, and for improvement of small boat purchase loan schemes. Problems of traditional fishing rights and the effects of baitfishing on the traditional reef fishery were also discussed.

As the Minister for Primary Industry, the Honourable Mr R. Evara, said at the opening of the first Provincial Fisheries Council meeting, the councils are "a unique and important experiment in Provincial Government". If this attempt at formal cooperation between the Provinces is successful for fisheries, then similar councils may be set up in other fields.



Members of the National Fisheries Advisory Board
Photo: N. Birge