



When ocean grabs go wrong

We have previously written about the threat to small island nations by global NGOs offering them a 'cash for ocean space' deal.

This is where large, hugely resourced environmental organisations offer to buy debt off small island nations as an inducement for them locking up their ocean resources and making them no-take marine reserves.

Ocean grabbing is where often large tracts of resource-rich marine environment is cleverly removed from commercial use, such as fisheries, and placed in a no-take marine reserve or other construct. It mostly affects small-scale fishers who previously had direct physical access to their customary fishing waters suddenly losing access. One way is through the establishment of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) with fishing bans or restrictions, for 'conservation' purposes.

MPAs are frequently located around biodiversity hotspots in Central America and Caribbean islands, or along the coasts in Southern Pacific Ocean and Indian Ocean. Declared as non-access zones, these are often the best fishing grounds for local fishing communities.

We wrote about the Seychelles, where an area the size of Texas was blocked off from all commercial activity. Their government committed to lock up 350,950 km of ocean space in conjunction with The Nature Conservancy (TNC) and the World Bank. It shut down 26 percent of the Seychelles EEZ to fishing. This involved the Seychelles selling the debt it owed other countries to TNC and buying it back at a better interest rate.

As a result, they have given up sovereignty of their waters, lost valuable fishing grounds, and

ended up in more debt than when they started.

This week, we have another example of a deal that went wrong.

This time it is Kiribati, a central Pacific string of atolls that is one of the least developed countries in the world and hugely reliant on international aid.

Previously, Kiribati earned 70 percent of its GDP from fishing.

Until the very well-resourced Pew Foundation promised Kiribati it would earn more from tourism than fishing if they locked their oceans up.

Kiribati gets 6,000 tourists a year. There was no chance of that happening.

This week, the Kiribati Cabinet reversed that decision.

The Kiribati government say they were misled, in order to lock them out of their maritime zone and take away their sovereign rights.

It is a discussion that all small island nations should be having. The lure of cheaper finance and erasure of debt is attractive, but it does not stack up when your very livelihood from commercial fishing will be taken away.

Palau has also learned the hard way.

This western Pacific country introduced a new 500,000 square kilometre marine sanctuary, also at the behest of Pew, and tied up 80 percent of its EEZ as a reserve. As a result, the vulnerable local reef fish are now threatened because foreign fleets are not supplying the local market from deeper waters.

The global push by eNGOs for 30 percent of the world's oceans to be off limits to fishing by 2030 is fuelling the exploitation of small island nations looking for an easy fix to economic woes.

Caveat emptor.

Nominate a mate!

Seabird Smart Awards 2021

SOUTHERN SEABIRDS
CATCH FISH NOT BIRDS

Tell us how your nominee has shown outstanding leadership or commitment towards seabirds while fishing. It could be through their own actions on the water, or by encouraging or supporting others.

Nomination Forms: www.catchfishnotbirds.org
Email for Nominations: info@southernseabirds.org

Nominations close on
Tuesday 21 December 2021

Photo: N. Fitzgerald



Check out the latest Seafood Magazines



CONTACT

Email info@seafood.org.nz

Phone [+64 4 385 4005](tel:+6443854005)

Physical address

Level 6
Eagle Technology House
135 Victoria Street
Wellington 6011
New Zealand

This email was sent to janan@seafood.org.nz
[why did I get this?](#) [unsubscribe from this list](#) [update subscription preferences](#)
Seafood New Zealand · Eagle Technology House · 135 Victoria Street · Wellington, 6011 · New Zealand