



**MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE, CLIMATE CHANGE & ENVIRONMENT
ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT AND PERMITS SECTION (E.A.P.S)
SCOPING VERIFICATION FORM**

PROJECT TITLE: Assumption Island Tourism Development

EIA CONSULTANT: Island Conservation Society (ICS) - 4375354, 2539529, 2506437

LOCATION: Assumption Island

ISSUES DISCUSSED

(Please use additional sheets if required – a separate sheet is to be used for each organisation/person undergoing scoping)

Assumption is part of the Aldabra Group archipelago, in a Zone 1 of the Seychelles Marine Spatial Plan zoning design. The Aldabra Group was legally designated and gazetted as a Marine National Park in Milestone 1 (S.I. 11 of 2018) and the area was expanded and redesignated in Milestone 2 (S.I. 23 of 2019) and again in Milestone 3 (S.I. 52 of 2020) (See Rationale Table below for details on the area).

From nomination file (milestone 3). Rationale Table for Aldabra Group (Marine) National Park

Name: Aldabra Group (Marine) National Park		Size: 201,235.80 km ²
Milestone: 3	Zone: 1	Percent of EEZ: 14.89 %
Primary Objective:	To expand high protection status for the waters and seabed surrounding the Aldabra Group and other atolls.	
Geographical Description:	This area is in the south west of Seychelles' EEZ and extends from north of Aldabra Group west to boundary with Tanzania and south to boundary of the EEZ. The eastern boundary of this area is west of Farquhar Archipelago. Note: the EEZ boundary is not finalised in all areas. Coordinates for the EEZ are accurate as of November 2019 and the coordinates of this area always will align with the existing EEZ boundary, which may change on review and revision by Government of Seychelles.	
Existing Marine Designations:	Aldabra (Marine) Special Reserve (2018) Foreign Fishing Prohibited Area #9 (Aldabra and Assumption): 6,971 km ² Area to be Avoided (International Maritime Organisation, IMO)	
Ecological Description:	This area contains shallow, pelagic and deep sea habitats surrounding Aldabra Group including "Giraud" and "Tchernia" seamounts, canyons, slope, hills, mountains and plains. Species associated with the area include demersal and pelagic fish, turtles, sharks, rays, cetaceans and seabirds. Unique shallow water habitat features are found only in this part of the EEZ because of the distinct geological features inside the Aldabra (Marine) Special Reserve – the second largest raised atoll in the world. Foraging habitat of frigatebirds and humpback whale breeding habitat. The area includes a portion of WIOMER expert polygon for upwelling (#47). Scientific research in Aldabra Group shows high fish biomass in waters surrounding the atolls and islands, the highest in the EEZ (Friedlander <i>et al.</i> 2017). The waters contain important populations of sharks and there is concern about decline of top trophic predators in key habitats. Lagoons are shark and fish nurseries.	
Summary of Biodiversity Representation:	Contains 41 biodiversity features. There 16 of 44 habitat conservation features, 25 of 38 species conservation features including 6 seabirds, 14 cetaceans, 11 deep water and 5 shallow water habitats, 1 BirdLife IBA, turtle foraging and nesting habitats, and 1 WIOMER site. Cetacean distributions overlap 98% of the area and WIOMER regional priority site covers 65%. Frigatebird foraging covers 48%, deep water features such as abyssal plains and hills and deep sea mountains cover 33%, 22% and 11% respectively. Only remaining location with <i>Dugong dugong</i> in Seychelles. Migration route for calving Southern Ocean humpback whales, <i>Megaptera novaeangliae</i> (Appoo <i>et al.</i> 2019).	
Economic Description:	Marine charters for sport and big game fishing surrounding the atolls with live-aboard charters. The atolls are important as "safe havens" in bad weather. Subsistence fishing occurs for staff and volunteers on the islands. Cruise ships visit Aldabra and guests transit via Assumption Island, where there is an airstrip. Since the 1970s, the waters have been used for tuna fishing (Seychelles-flagged and foreign flagged) with purse seine and longline gear. International shipping passes to the west of Aldabra, coming within 12 nautical miles of the Atoll. Marine research and monitoring is conducted by Seychelles Island Foundation. Radar stations to monitor vessel traffic are on Assumption and Astove.	



Possible New Future Uses:	In 2017, a proposal was being developed for a "Particularly Sensitive Sea Area" (PSSA) for the waters surrounding Aldabra Atoll. This is currently on hold until new capacity to lead the file. IDC has a development plan (2018-2023) that includes potential future tourism on Assumption.
Comments:	Aldabra Group (Marine) National Park was designated in Milestone 1. The area was expanded and re-designated in Milestone 2. The area is proposed for expansion in Milestone 3 and re-designation.

Source: [Milestone 3 - Nomination File - Seychelles Marine Spatial Plan Initiative \(seymsp.com\)](#)

From the Nomination file- Area based management considerations for Aldabra Group MNP (Milestone 3) include:

- The beaches on Assumption are very important for nesting sea turtles. Management of disturbance to nesting turtles including artificial lights, noise and changes to beaches or dunes will need to be evaluated for impact to sea turtles.
- Concerns regarding the Jetty, which requires extension and renovation and whether the passage needs to be dredged for deepening? If so, these potential impacts and mitigation measures should be included in an impact assessment with proposed mitigation measures.
- Waters surrounding the atolls and islands have very high fish biomass compared to other islands in Seychelles' Archipelago (Friedlander et al). Illegal fishing in waters on eastern side of Assumption are a concern. IUU fishing has been noted in waters around Aldabra Group.

Other considerations based on the presentation at scoping stage:

- Nesting turtles: impacts from shore-based lighting sources at the buildings and infrastructure; noise from the proposed resort; changes to the beaches and dune vegetation; disturbance to beaches during nesting, incubation, and hatchling migration to sea; use of machinery on the beach during and after development.
- Nesting seabirds: lighting from shore-based sources; noise from activity from the proposed resort; and changes to vegetation including any plant species used for nesting materials.
- Fishing; SMSZ zone 1 and MNP is a no extraction and no seabed disturbance area. Concerns were raised in MSP meetings on the risks associated with the potential impacts of extraction of large amounts of fish from the surrounding waters which will impact on the biodiversity of the area. Noted by the MFBE is that if fishing is allowable for the resort then other fisheries stakeholders may want to access this area for commercial fishing – equity issues associated with fishing within Seychelles MPAs. Subsistence fishing is conditionally allowable for persons residing on the islands. The MSP Executive Committee recommended that Seychelles Fishing Authority provide the technical and scientific inputs regarding the allowable catch levels and species for subsistence fishing within the Aldabra Group MNP.
- Biosecurity; considerations of biosecurity protocols and measures on the island and in the surrounding waters.
- Horses on turtle nesting beaches and on reefs; consideration of impacts of horses trampling on turtle nests, seabirds nests and on sensitive ocean benthos such as seagrass and corals and disturbing nesting seabirds and nesting turtles.
- Shore-based desalination: intake pipe and hypersaline outfall point to be considered. Consideration of impact of laying the pipes with minimal disturbance. Activity is conditionally allowable in a Zone 1 – approved management plans may apply; restrictions may apply to avoid or minimise disturbance on key species and ecological functions.
- Barge landing and transportation: Activity is conditionally allowable in a Zone 1 – approved management plans may apply; restrictions may apply to avoid or minimise disturbance on key species and ecological functions; for delivery of construction materials. Considerations to reduce impacts.
- Oil spill contingency especially during transportation of materials to the island.

PERSON/ORGANISATION SCOPED

Name: Ms. Helena Sims & Dr. Joanna Smith **Post Title:** SMSP Core Team
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Sign: _____ Date 6.03.2024

The completed form can be posted on the following e-mail address Class1@env.gov.sc; or contact the ENV ASSESSMENT AND PERMITS SECTION- Environment Department-Tel; 4670594 to organise for collection.

DEADLINE: 6th March 2024

