

HON. INIA B. SERUIRATU

**MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE, RURAL & MARITIME DEVELOPMENT AND
NATIONAL DISASTER MANAGEMENT**

**(Ministerial Response on Sigatoka River Dredging
9th February 2017)**

The following constitutes the response to question 49/2017, as raised by the Leader of the Opposition Hon. Ro Teimumu Kepa, on the Environment Impact Assessment (EIA) undertaken for Sigatoka River dredging.

Dredging of rivers is by far the largest single project undertaken in the country as a flood mitigation activity, as part of the dredging program to improve the flood discharge capacities of the river systems in Fiji. Over the years it has proved to be a sound investment in disaster mitigation through the reduction in impact of flooding in the low lying areas of Fiji.

These dredging and flood protection works reduce the frequency and intensity of flooding thereby providing more confidence for investors to develop land for crop and livestock production which contributes significantly to improved living standards of most rural communities.

River dredging works had previously been undertaken in Ba, Nadi, Labasa, Qawa, Navua and Rewa Rivers and has improved the flow of these river

systems, averted flood damages and contributed to stable development in agriculture and other sectors. The Government's current budget under the Land Drainage and Flood Protection Programme is FJ\$5 million and similar benefits is expected from the dredging of the Sigatoka River.

From our past experiences of flooding that occurred in Sigatoka Town and the low lying areas of the Sigatoka Valley has caused significant loss to the economy. Government is therefore committed to undertake river dredging works in the Sigatoka River in this Financial Year.

The focus for this Sigatoka River Dredging is no different from the other projects I outlined earlier. It is to reduce the threat of flooding, and flood damages to properties, infrastructure, agriculture produce, industrial and the business sector along Sigatoka River; and to see the sustainable development of land and water resource with special emphasis on the tourism industry.

This project will be undertaken in three (3) stages:

- 1st stage currently underway 2016/2017;
- 2nd stage will be from 2017/2018; and
- 3rd stage is planned to be in 2018/2019.

The dredging sites/areas is 550m from the river mouth to upstream and a total of 300,000 cubic meters of dredged sand and soil will be removed. Dumping sites are 2 state lands that have been approved through EIA study by the Department of Environment.

With regards to the Environment Impact Assessment (EIA), the study was undertaken in 2013 after the tender was approved and awarded by the Government Tender Board to '**COREREGA Environment Consultant**'.

This was also approved by the Department of Environment and Ministry of Lands to be extended for another two years if EIA approval expires and construction has not commenced. (**Annex 1**)

The EIA recommendations included mitigation methods on impacts during construction, mitigation methods on operational impacts and other issues to be dealt simultaneously or staggered in stages. (**Annex 2**)

The EIA was discussed in consultation with Ministry of Agriculture, Department of Environment, Ministry of Lands and Mineral Resources, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Rural & Maritime Development, Sigatoka Town Council, iTaukei Affairs and resource owners. The dredging contract was signed on 14th December 2016 and dredging works commenced on 12th January this year. (**Annex 3**)

Currently the Ministry of Agriculture has completed 60 percent of the dredging work, which is 400 metres from river mouth and 191,000m³ (cubic metre) of waste sand and soil being removed . These dredging work is expected to be completed on 17th February 2017.

Vinaka vakalevu.



Ministry of Lands & Mineral Resources

Head Office
Fijian Trust Fund Complex
Nasese, Suva
(South Wing Ground Floor & First Floor)

P O Box 2222
Government Buildings, Suva, Fiji
Ph: (679) 3313555 Fax: (679) 3239754
Website: www.lands.gov.fj



From: Director of Lands

Phone: 3239708

To: Director Land & Water Resource Management

File: DSW 6/8

Re: Sigatoka River Dredging

Date: 13/07/15

Sir,

Reference is made to your request dated 16th instant for a dredging license to dredge the Sigatoka River as a flood mitigating measure.

I am pleased to inform you that Director of Lands has approved your request and granted consent for the dredging of the Sigatoka River.

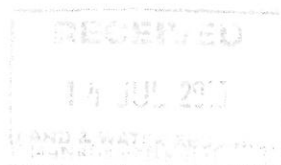
Since this is a government project to assist the community no license is required for the dredging works, but it is your duty to liaise with landowners for a dumping site of the spoils from the river.

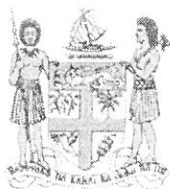
Also you should discuss with Magma Mines Limited on the dredging works as they hold a Special Prospecting license at the mouth of the Sigatoka River.

For any queries please discuss with our Divisional Land Manager West.

Thank You,

Thomas Pesau
for Director of Lands





Ministry of Local Government, Urban
Development, Housing and Environment

Level 3, FFA House
4 Gladstone Road
Box 2131, Government Buildings, Suva, Fiji

Telephone : (679) 3309-917
: 3304-364/3309-918
Facsimile : (679) 3303-515



Memo

To: Director Land & Water Resource Management Phone: 3311699/3311930
From: A/Director of Environment Fax: 3312879
Date: 9th October 2015 File Ref: EP 5/1/1-B
Re: **Revision of Environment Impact Assessment (EIA) report for the proposed
Sigatoka River Dredging Project**

Attention: **Mr. Collins Simmons**

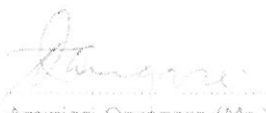
Reference is made to your letter on the above mentioned development.

The Department of Environment after reviewing your request on the EIA approval dated **16th July 2013**, has reconsidered and removed *Conditions 5* of the approvals as quoted below,

"Conditions 5 This approval expires if construction has not commenced within two years"

Nevertheless the remainder of the conditions still stands and the new condition as attached.

For further clarification, please do not hesitate to contact the undersigned or the Environment Impact Assessment Unit - Mr. Viliame Momoivalu on 3311699 or email at viliame.momoivalu@govnet.gov.fj.


Aminiasi Qareqare (Mr.)
Acting Director of Environment

Cc: Commissioner Western Division
Director of Land & Water Resource Management
Director of Mineral Development
Secretary - Nadroga Rural Local Authority
File

Corvega Environment Consultants
Senior Environment Officer Western
P.A. Nadroga
Boko, Tui Nadroga Navasa

Conditions of Consent

Proposal

1. The proposed dredging of the Sigatoka River is part of the Land & Water Resource Management ongoing flood mitigation programs of a clear passage through the river channel/ estuary to the sea under which various major rivers namely Navua, Ba, Labasa and Wailevu, Rewa have been dredged in the past years

General and administration

2. All works executed must incur minimum damage to the environment. Works must be as detailed in the EIA, except where specified in these conditions; in the event of any conflict between the EIA report and these conditions, these conditions take precedence.
3. Developer shall ensure that all staff and contractors are appropriately trained, and comply with these conditions.
4. The developer and contractor must follow all legislative requirements, as well as this approval.
5. Appropriate signage must be placed at the point/land entrance of loading trucks and visible from the landward side or main road to warn pedestrians and traffics. The signage must include a contact name and number available 24hrs and warning trespasses of dangers and risks.
6. A contact centre needs to be established on site to receive any form of claims or concerns. Any concerns raised need to be recorded in the complaints log book and forwarded to management to resolve. Reports of any environmental emergency occurring should be forwarded to the Provincial Administrator Namosi/ Serua, Navua Rural Local Authority and the Department of Environment within 24hours of such an incident occurring.
7. The proposed dumpsite should have the collective agreement of the landowners, Department of Land & Water Resource Management (LARWM) and the Department of Environment.
8. The dumpsites for the dredging development are only those that was proposed and approved by the Department of Land & Water Resource Management (LRWM), the landowners and the Department of Environment.

Pre-operation

9. The developer must obtain all necessary approvals and permits, as this does not relieve the developer of legal requirements under other acts. This will also include the approval of the landowners '*qoliqoli owners*'.
10. Site drainage is required throughout operation, to minimise uncontrolled runoff and sediment release to the river. No storm water may run directly to the river without treatment to remove elevated sediments.
11. Hazardous or potentially hazardous materials, fuels, oils, and chemicals, are to be kept in minimal quantities only, and stored in a bended area, that does not drain to the river. Storage and handling is to adhere to OHS requirements. Appropriate spill kits are to be available, and trained staffs are to be on hand whenever these fuels/chemicals are being handled.

12. Operational workers are to be provided access to the amenities at all times while on site
13. The site is to be kept secure throughout the operational period.
14. This approval does not include approval to clear a channel to the site, nor any works outside the development lease area
15. The first task is to be boundary demarcation. No works are to take place outside the boundary. Site induction is to include explanation of boundary and markers.
16. Excavation is to occur during dry season only.
17. Experienced operators should be employed to operate machinery, to minimise spillage of sediments and the potential for plume generation.
18. Sand Extraction or removal of any other material is to be considered as another activity and which requires consent and licensing.
19. Extraction works are to be as generally identified in the plans provided. The Department of Environment is to be consulted as to any reasonable change to the plans, such as volume, depth or other features.
20. Fuels, oils and greases must be kept as far from the river as reasonable.

Operation

21. A monitoring committee which will include the Provincial Administrator Nadroga, Secretary Nadroga Rural Local Authority, Roko Tui Nadroga/ Navosa, Department of Land & Water Resource Management (DLRWM) and Department of Lands, Department of Environment and representative from land owners..
22. The Department of Land & Water Resource Management (LRWM) and its contractor must carry out fortnightly meeting/ consultation with the respective qoligoli owner or land owning unit in which dumpsites has been set up.
23. Operating hours to be restricted to reasonable hours to avoid amenity impacts to neighbors.
24. A monitoring inspection will conducted one (1) month after operation of dredging has commenced.
25. DLRWM and the contractors will need to update the monitoring committee on the status of the dredging development.
26. The Department of Environment will be conducting its random monitoring inspection of the proposed development and has power to stop the development if the developer breaches the approval condition above.

Colin Simmons

From: Colin Simmons
Sent: Friday, 3 February 2017 11:08 AM
To: Osea L. Ratuyawa
Subject: Sigatoka Brief
Attachments: Sigatoka River Dredging Brief.docx; NN Provincial Council Letter.docx; Sigatoka Dredging Plan .doc.pdf; Fwd: FW: Sigatoka River Dredging

Bula Osea

Attached is the brief requested.

Support documents

- Letter from Provincial Council
- Dredging Plan
- Email from Chairman Parliament Standing Committee on Natural Resources

Vinaka

Colin Simmons
Director LWRM Division
Ministry of Agriculture

Sigatoka River Dredging Brief

- 14.12.16 - Contract signed
- 16.12.16 - Letter received from Public Standing Committee on Natural Resources on issues raised by resource owners on the Sigatoka Dredging Project, EIA and Qoliqoli issues.
- 22.12.16 - Meeting with Parliament Standing Committee deferred
- 11.1.17 - Consultation meeting with Nasigatoka Tikina, brief on project, EIA, and Qoliqoli issues. Resource owners express their consensus for the project. Letter received from Nadroga/Navosa Provincial Council on the outcome of the meeting. Copy attached.
- 12.1.17 – Dredging works commence. Copy of Plan attached.
- 13.1.17 – Email from Chairman of the Parliament Standing Committee on Natural Resources informing the members of the outcome of the meeting with the Nasigatoka Tikina and all issues that they raised have been addressed. Copy of the email attached.
- 19.12.17 – PSA trip to Sigatoka River Dredging site, meet with Provincial Office, Chairman N/N Provincial Council, Provincial Administrator, Sigatoka Town Council.
- 26.1.17 – Establishment and meeting of the Project Environment Management Committee as required under the EIA approval conditions. Members LWRM, Environment, Lands, Fisheries, Health, Mineral Resources, Provincial Council, Sigatoka Town Council.
- 1.2.17 – Public and concerned residents stakeholder consultation meeting. Nil attendance, meeting cancelled after waiting for an hour.

Current Status

➤ **1st Phase : 300, 000m³, Length : 550m**

Commence from River Mouth

➤ **Contract : \$2,113, 510.00 VIP**

➤ **Complete : 191,000m³, Length : 400m**

➤ **Expected Time for Completion Feb-17**



NADROGA/NAVOSA PROVINCIAL COUNCIL

P.O. Box 267, Sigatoka, Fiji. Phone: 650 0004/6500137

Fax No. 6500 005/6500203 E-mail: nadroghanavosapcoffice@gmail.com

11/1/17.

The Director
Land & Water Resource Management
Ministry of Agriculture

Sir,

CONSULTATION ON DREDGING ACTIVITIES WITH THE SIGATOKA DISTRICT COUNCIL

Cola Vina!

The Provincial Council together with members of the Sigatoka District Council would like to extend its appreciation on the effort put forward in enlightening members on dredging activities carried on the mouth of the Sigatoka River.

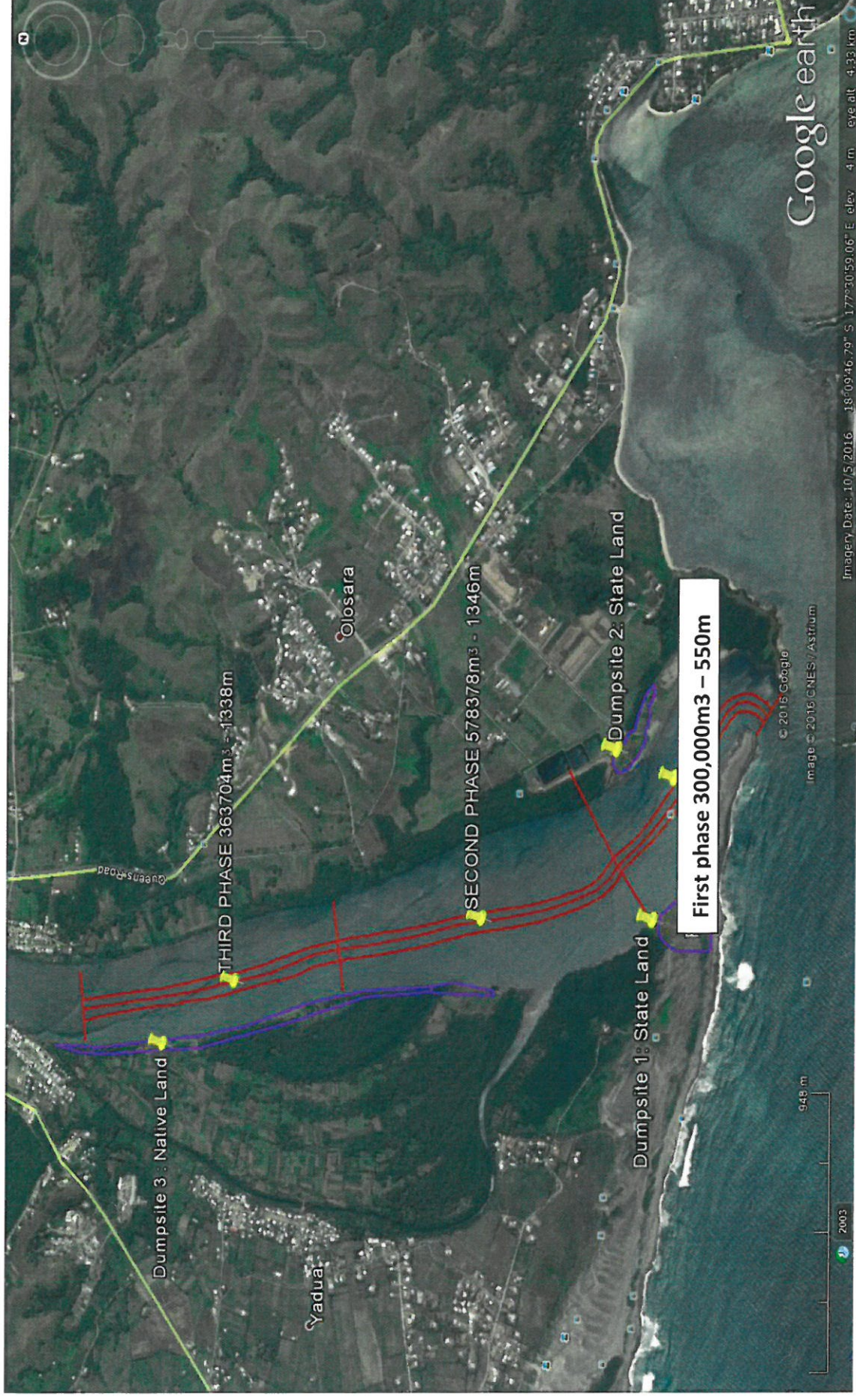
The meeting proved to be a success with members present re-affirming their support on such activity as a result of a thorough presentation conducted by your staff and we take our hats off for a well-structured and informed consultation.

In light of the above, we look forward to more communication whether it be verbal or written and is in line with our common goal i.e. a better Fiji for all.

Thank You.

B Ravoka
for: ROKOTUI NAD/NAVOSA.

SIGATOKA RIVER DREDGING



Colin Simmons

From: JOELI CAWAKI <jrcawaki@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, 13 January 2017 7:59 AM
To: Kiniviliame Kiliraki; alivereti nabulivou; Samuela Vunivalu; josefadulaki@connect.com.fj; Akanisi Rumasakea
Cc: Colin Simmons; seuseuv@gmail.com; Rusiate Raidaveta; Filipe C. Sama
Subject: Fwd: FW: Sigatoka River Dredging
Attachments: Dredging activity.docx

Follow Up Flag: FollowUp
Due By: Sunday, 22 January 2017 9:26 AM
Flag Status: Flagged

Dear NRC Members

Please find the attached email from Director LWRM and the letter of appreciation from the Nadroga Provincial Office for the meeting that was done to enlightened the people of Sigatoka as per their grievances and concerns raised to us last year

We thank Director LWRM and the Nadroga Provincial Office for the conduct and the successful conclusion of the meeting addressing all issues that was raised to the Natural Resources Committee

Forwarded for your information and record

Vinakwa

Mr Joweli R Cawaki
Assistant Minister
Agriculture, Rural & Maritime Development & National Disaster Management

----- Forwarded message -----

From: "Colin Simmons" <csimmons@agriculture.gov.fj>
Date: Jan 12, 2017 07:37
Subject: FW: Sigatoka River Dredging
To: "Joeli Cawaki (jrcawaki@gmail.com)" <jrcawaki@gmail.com>
Cc:

Hon Assistant Minister

This is to inform you of the outcome of the consultation meeting held with the Tikina Sigatoka on Wednesday 10th Jan-17

A presentation was made on the Project, EIA Study, and Qoliqoli issues.

The meeting was informed that there is no compensation as there is low risk to fisheries resources.

The project is of national importance and beneficial to the community.

The meeting reaffirmed their support for the Project. Attached is a letter from the Roko Nadroga/Navosa on the outcome of the meeting.

The Hon Minister has been informed of the meeting outcome and the commencement of the Sigatoka River Dredging Works.

Vinaka

Colin Simmons

Director LWRM Division

Ministry of Agriculture

From: Inia B. Seruiratu
Sent: Wednesday, 11 January 2017 10:45 PM
To: Colin Simmons
Cc: Jitendra Singh; Uraia Waibuta
Subject: Re: Sigatoka River Dredging

Noted. vinaka

Sent from my Samsung Galaxy smartphone.

----- Original message -----

From: Colin Simmons <csimmons@agriculture.gov.fj>

Date: 11/01/17 7:05 PM (GMT+12:00)

To: "Inia B. Seruiratu" <inia.seruiratu@govnet.gov.fj>

Cc: Jitendra Singh <psa@govnet.gov.fj>, Uraia Waibuta <uraia.waibuta@agriculture.gov.fj>

Subject: Sigatoka River Dredging

Hon Minister

The meeting with the Sigatoka Tikina was held today at Sigatoka Village. A presentation was made on the Project, EIA Study, and Qoliqoli issues. The meeting was informed that there is no compensation as there is low risk to fisheries resources. The project is of national importance and beneficial to the community. The meeting reaffirmed their support for the Project. Attached is a letter from the Roko Nadroga/Navosa on the outcome of the meeting. The dredging works will commence from tomorrow Wednesday 12th Jan-2017.

Vinaka

DLWRM

Sent from my Samsung Galaxy smartphone.