Shared water policy in New-Caledonia
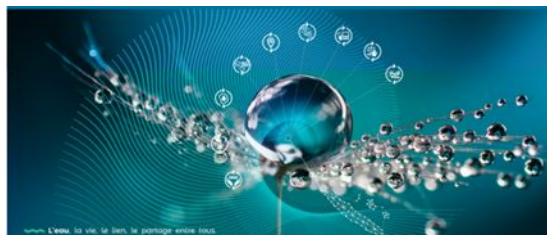
Aquawatch 15/04/2024
Aude ARRIGHI - Water department
Government of New Caledonia

New Caledonia has a globally abundant surface water resources BUT the resource is **unevenly distributed** across the territory (in time and space).

Most of the water is drawn from rivers, making it **particularly sensitive** to pollution, floods and droughts.

Watersheds are small: a drop of water takes few hours from source to sea during floods and few months during droughts.

There are periods of **drought** with very low water levels and **flash floods**.

Precipitation: strong east/west contrasts
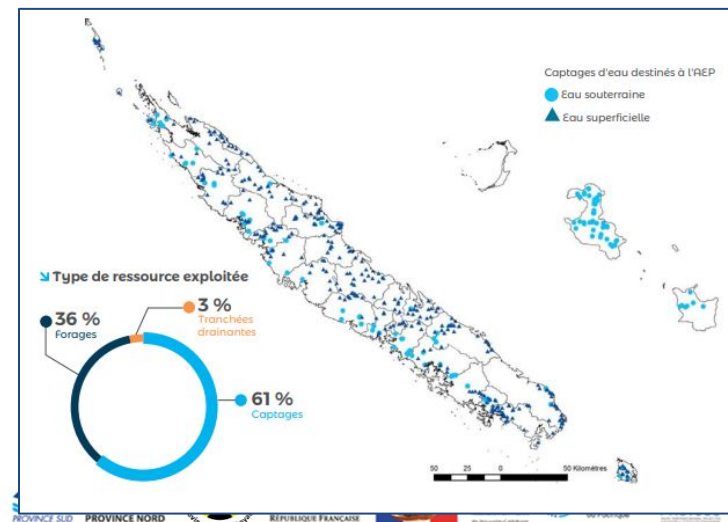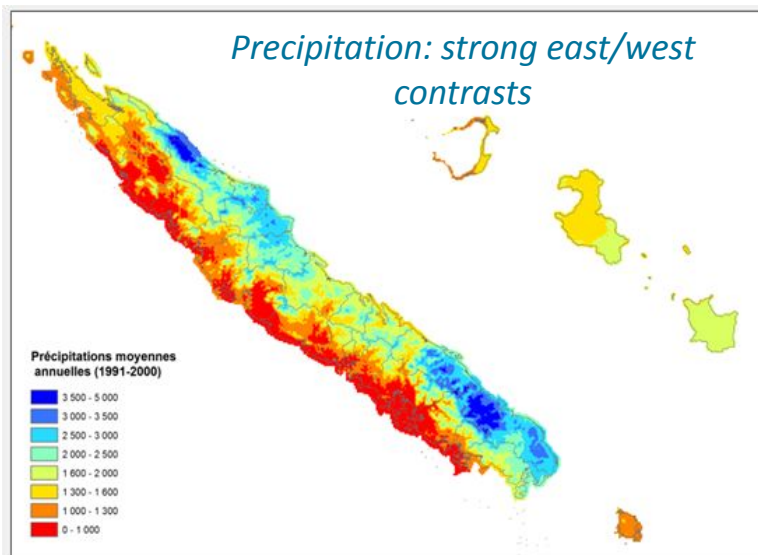
Tensions are beginning to appear over water resources.

The main threats are linked to :

- over-engraving rivers due to erosion under the effect of fires, mining activities, invasive species such as deers or wild pigs that destroy vegetation cover in watersheds;

- point or diffuse pollution linked to agricultural practices, urban and industrial wastewater discharge;

- excessive withdrawals…

Water quality issues are emerging in New Caledonia. Today, monitoring is in place on the following points:

- pesticides
- heavy metals (nickel and chromium 6)
- nitrates

- More than 7 households out of 100 do **not have access to water;**

- Only 54% of water catchments have **protection perimeters**;

- 31% of water catchments deliver **untreated water;**

- **Unresponsible consumption behavior**;

- A large part of the population does **not pay for water service;**

- There is **no standard on individual sanitation** covering the entire territory;

- **More than 200 rivers (or 600 km) are over-engraved**;

- **More than 19,000 buildings are located in flood zones**

- …

Water governance in New Caledonia is the result of a particular institutional organization, particularly with regard to the public domain and the customary domain.

NC government
Preservation of the public river domain
Resource management on the public domain
Water protection perimeters
Public hygiene and health
Civil security

33 municipalities
Public health
Drinking water supply and sanitation

3 provinces
Environmental protection

French government
Public health

8 customary authorities
Resource management on customary lands

270 000 inhabitants
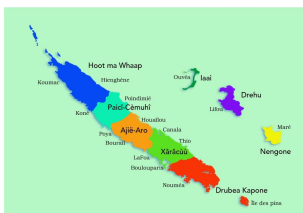
To meet the challenges of preserving the resource

To propose shared governance of the water resource through an inter-institutional approach

To create coherence between different public policies and stakeholders in charge of them

At the beginning of 2018, the government of New Caledonia launched the construction of the country's first water policy.

April 2018 : The first water conference gathering 350 water stakeholders presents the expected results of the future water policy

Mars 2019 : The water policy is voted unanimously by the congress of New Caledonia
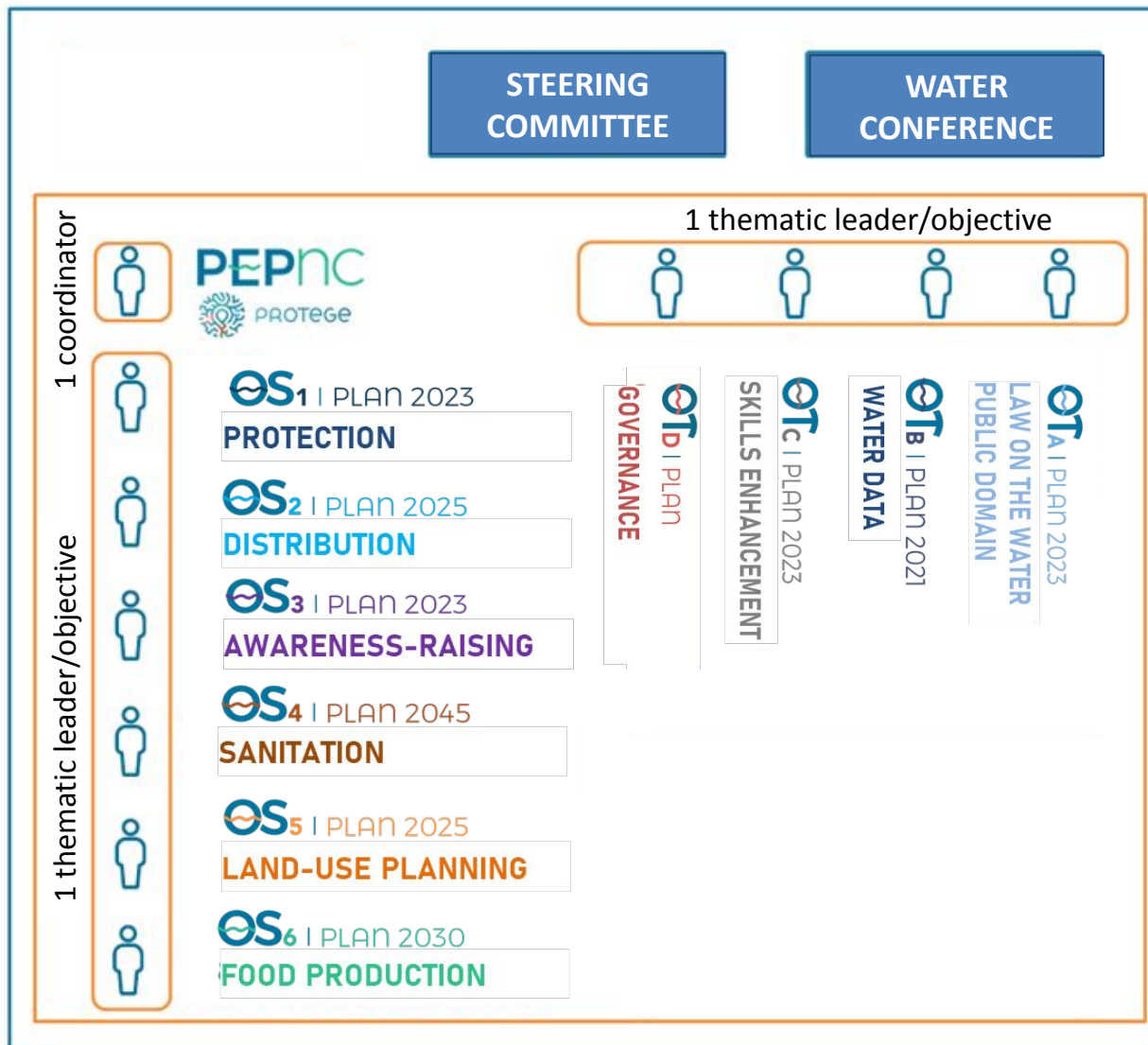
November 2021 : A political steering committee and a fund to support water policy have been set up

May 2023 : A law on the public domain has been approved by the government and is currently being studied by the congress.

PEPnc
Politique de l'eau partagée
de la Nouvelle-Calédonie

6 STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

OS1 I PLAN 2023
PROTECTION

OS2 I PLAN 2025
DISTRIBUTION

OS3 I PLAN 2023
AWARENESS-RAISING

OS4 I PLAN 2045
SANITATION

OS5 I PLAN 2025
LAND-USE PLANNING

OS6 I PLAN 2030
FOOD PRODUCTION

4 CROSS-CUTTING OBJECTIVES

OTA I PLAN 2023
LAW ON THE WATER PUBLIC DOMAIN

OTB I PLAN 2021
WATER DATA

OTC I PLAN 2023
SKILLS ENHANCEMENT

OTD I PLAN
GOVERNANCE

THE CALEDONIANS
THEIR HEALTH
THEIR ECONOMY
THEIR LIFESTYLES
THEIR CULTURES

WATER
ITS QUANTITY
ITS QUALITY

THE ENVIRONMENT
ITS WATERSHEDS
AQUATIC ENVIRONMENTS
CLIMATE

More than 700 actions registered

Eau.nc

The water department works with local communities, individuals, and associations at various levels:

- delimitation of the public water domain;

- issuing water abstraction authorizations;

- setting up water protection perimeters;

- co-financing of maintenance and development works on watercourses;

- co-financing of equipment (water meters, etc.);

- co-financing of watershed preservation actions (planting, etc.);

- co-financing of awareness-raising initiatives;

- ...

As part of the PROTEGE project supported by the South Pacific Community, exchanges are underway between New Caledonia, Wallis and Futuna and French Polynesia, notably on the following points:

- setting up technical exchanges in water monitoring: **companionship**;

- **joint training programs**;

- the purchase of shared equipment to acquire and process data through the creation of a **regional observatory**.

GIS: geoportal in which various data are currently available: Georep:

→ RHM: digital version of the hydrological network (with slope calculation for example)

→ measurement sensors : water level, rain gauge

→ sampling points for quality analyses

→ water protection perimeters

→ water catchment points

→ flood zones…
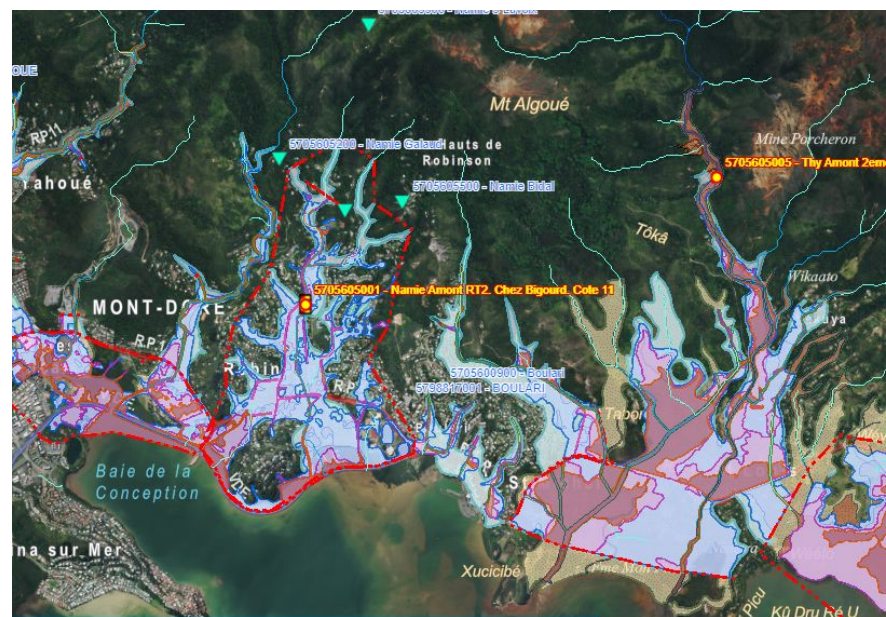
Research: Regular exchanges/meetings with Cresica (Consortium for the research higher education and innovation in New Caledonia), the CNRT (National Centre for Technological Research), IRD (Institute of Developmental Research).

The water department acquires quality and quantity data that are made available for research purposes.

→ Ref'Eau project: data acquisition project to define water quality thresholds adapted to NC.

→ Provision of water quality data for thesis research.

Thank you !

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Government of New Caledonia