



KIRIBATI METEOROLOGICAL SERVICE CLIMATE UNIT PRESS RELEASE

 1055 75126511 75125444	 EMAIL climate@met.gov.ki dmet@met.gov.ki	VISIT US ON: www.met.gov.ki	 Like us on facebook Kiribati Meteorological Service
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Missing Tarawa wave buoy found aboard local fishing boat

Kiribati Meteorological Service staff located and successfully recovered a wave buoy that appeared to be drifting from its location 20 nautical miles from its mooring position on Monday, 2nd August 2021. Using the buoy's in-built systems, Kiribati Met was able to track its position and charter a speedboat to rescue the valuable sensor. The buoy was found aboard a local wooden fishing boat, raising concerns that it may have been deliberately removed from its mooring.

Deployed in Betio lagoon late May of this year in collaboration with Kiribati Fisheries Department, the Pacific Community (SPC), and the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), the buoy is Kiribati's first wave buoy and one of only a handful across the Pacific.

The buoy provides real-time information on wave height, direction, wave period, and wind speed and direction to Kiribati Met Service. This information builds understanding of ocean conditions in a region that has very limited ocean observing equipment. Over time, the buoy will help improve forecasts for local mariners, contributing to improved safety at sea for fishing vessels, like the one suspected of vandalizing the buoy.

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Mr Mauna Eria was the Kiribati Met Service (KMS) officer in charge of the buoy deployment, describes his experience on the rescue mission:

“At around 9:30am on Monday, I received a notification that the wave buoy was drifting away from Tarawa in a northwest direction from its normal position, toward Abaiang Island. By then we organized the team and boat for the rescue and recovery of WB. When our rescue boat arrived at the site, there were a number of fishing boats in the vicinity. We suspected a wooden fishing boat that started to move in an unusual manner. We followed the boat and when we drew near, the fishermen onboard revealed they had the wave buoy with them.”

The fishermen in question said they had found the wave buoy floating and intended to return it to marine division later upon their return to land.

According to Eria, however, *“It was extremely sad to hear from the other fishing boats that the fishermen in question were boasting to other fishing boats that they had vandalized the buoy that morning.”*

In response to the incident, Mr Ueneta Toorua, Director of KMS notes,

“I applaud my staff and all involved for their decisive action to rescue the wave buoy. I also wish to thank those who been taking good care of the wave buoy over the last few months and convey a special request again, mostly to fishermen who usually travel near to the Tarawa wave buoy to kindly take note of this valuable equipment and to always safeguard and report any unlawful actions toward it.”

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This equipment belongs to all of us. It will enhance our national capacity to issue timely warnings on extreme waves for the people of South Tarawa.”

The total cost for the rescue mission is approximately more than AUD2000...and redeployment will also be a costly exercise. KMS has reported this incident to the Betio police station for further investigation.

Media contacts:

Mauna Eria, KMS | qao@met.gov.ki

Merana Kitone, SPC | meranak@spc.int

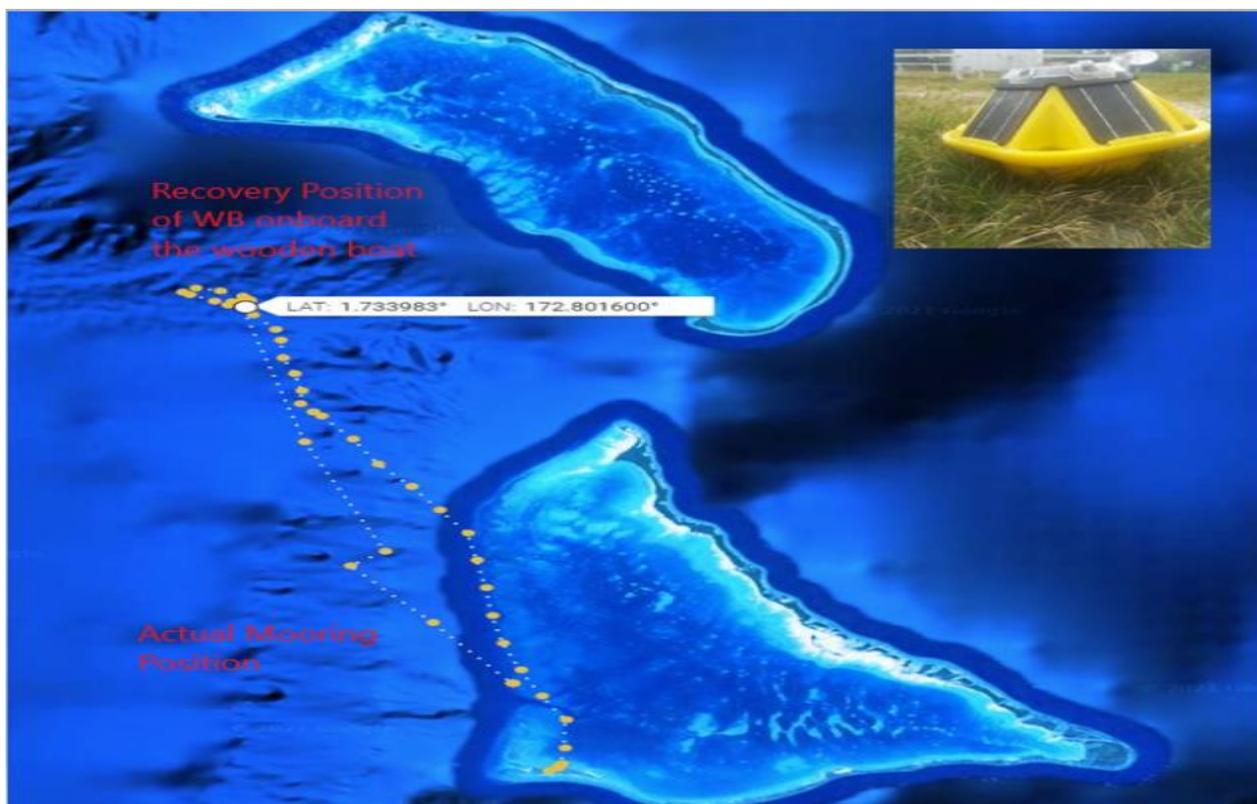
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