

Secretariat Updates

April 2024

Ocean Guardians: Celebrating 20 Years of Sustainable Fisheries

In this issue of the WCPFC Secretariat's quarterly updates, we reflect on the progress made since the inception of the WCPFC Convention, explore the current intersessional work, share insights from our latest diplomatic engagements, and forecast some of the work ahead for 2024 in an "issue spotlight".

The WCPFC Convention Turns 20



Image: ©K. Staisch



Image: ©S. Rikin

2024 marks two decades since the WCPFC Convention entered into force. As we continue to mark WCPFC's milestones this year, we acknowledge the Convention's role in achieving significant strides in sustainable fisheries management in the Western and Central Pacific Ocean. This pivotal agreement stands as the foundation for managing the world's largest tuna fishery, reflecting the joint efforts to conserve and sustainably use highly migratory fish stocks. Throughout these years, the WCPFC has enacted measures to curb overfishing, safeguard vulnerable ecosystems, and bolster the well-being of dependent coastal communities. As we honor this milestone, it's an opportunity to celebrate progress and renew our commitment to overcoming the persistent and new challenges in this crucial ocean region, ensuring its health and the well-being of its communities and stakeholders for future generations.

FADs, Seabirds,
ERandEM,
observers, and
Crew Labour
Standards

2024 Interseasonal Work

The Commission commenced its interseasonal activities in January with the FAD-Management Options IWG, led by Jamel James (FSM), distributing a proposed work plan to CCMs and Observers. Efforts progressed in February with New Zealand spearheading a review of the Commission's Seabird measure, alongside Dr. Shelton Harley (NZ) setting expectations for advancing an electronic monitoring program. Further discussions aimed at protecting crew labour rights and safety on fishing vessels continue in 2024, under the joint leadership of Heather Ward (NZ) and Putuh Suadela (ID). Harold Vilia (SB) also resumed discussions of the IWG on the Regional Observer Programme.

Interseasonal Meeting Schedule

(as of April 2024)

- **FAD-MO IWG: Meeting electronically**
- **ERandEM WG: Tentative session in May (virtual)**
- **Seabirds: 2nd Informal Session on 7 May (virtual)**
- **Crew Labour Standards: 4th Workshop on 21 May (virtual)**
- **IWG-ROP: Meeting electronically**

WCPFC SECRETARIAT UNDERGOES STRATEGIC RESTRUCTURING

The Secretariat is undergoing restructuring in 2024 to realign its work in a way that reflects the growing priorities of the Commission and the increasing use of technology by members. This reorganization involves transforming the Regional Observer Programme (ROP) Coordinator role into a consultancy focusing on ROP Training and Audits to maintain WCPFC's high standards of training and auditing capabilities.

Karl Staisch (pictured left), who has dedicated years to the ROP Coordinator role, will lead this new consultancy. His extensive experience and profound understanding of ROP standards have been instrumental in their development, including the establishment of the WCPFC's ROP. In his new role, Karl will focus on improving training and audit processes to meet the highest standards of excellence and efficiency. Karl will also continue to support the Commission's interseasonal work on strengthening elements of the ROP.

Working from his home in Brisbane, Australia, Karl's ongoing involvement ensures our commitment to strong and effective ROP practices. This transition not only acknowledges his invaluable contributions but also positions us for continued success in our operational objectives.



Image: ©WCPFC

Expanding Horizons: WPEA Workshop and Strategic Global Engagements:

Highlighting the progress and plans from the WPEA workshop in Vietnam, our contributions to the UN Conference on UNFSA, and the development of tools to support flag State obligations.

Charting the Course: WPEA Workshop Outcomes and Priorities



Image: ©WCPFC

In January, the bustling city of Ho Chi Minh, Vietnam, played host to a workshop of the Western Pacific East Asia Integrated Tuna Monitoring Project. This workshop brought together representatives from project countries along with the WCPFC Secretariat and science provider to chart the next phase of the WPEA project. The discussions were aimed at defining priority activities that would drive forward our collective mission in the region. The collaboration set the tone for a year of action and reaffirmed our commitment to sustainable fisheries and the communities they support.

WPEA-ITM

WESTERN PACIFIC EAST ASIA -
IMPROVED TUNA MONITORING
PROJECT

Who are the three WPEA-ITM project countries?

Vietnam, Indonesia, and Philippines

What is the goal of WPEA-ITM? To improve monitoring and management of tuna catches in Indonesia, Philippines, and Vietnam and contribute to reduced Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing.

What is the volume of tuna catch in WPEA Project Country fisheries? 28.7% (2021) of total catch of oceanic tunas in the WCPFC Convention Area.

How is the WPEA-ITM project funded? Through a multi-year grant by the Government of New Zealand.



Strategic Global Engagements:

Climate Change and Fisheries Management

Acknowledging the critical impact of climate change on our oceans and the Commission's efforts to incorporate climate change into its discussions, the Secretariat submitted a paper to the 17th Informal Consultations of States Parties (ICSP17) to the UN Fish Stocks Agreement. The paper provides an in-depth analysis of how the WCPFC addresses climate change within its sustainable fisheries management practices, underscoring the Commission's commitment to resilient and adaptive ocean stewardship.

The document outlines a comprehensive framework and ongoing efforts by the WCPFC to address the challenges of climate change on fisheries, emphasizing the importance of scientific research, collaborative international efforts, and the need for adaptive management strategies to safeguard marine ecosystems and the livelihoods dependent on them.

Key points from the paper include:

1. **SEAPODYM Model and Climate Change Research:** The introduction of the SEAPODYM model in 2008 facilitated research into the future abundance and distribution scenarios of key tuna species, considering climate change impacts. This model has been pivotal for stock assessment and understanding climate change effects on tuna populations.

2. **Scientific Committee Discussions and Recommendations:** Through various SC meetings, the WCPFC discussed incorporating ecosystem indicators into management objectives, the application of the SEAPODYM model for spatial management, and the integration of climate change considerations into harvest strategy frameworks and management procedures.

3. **WCPFC Resolutions and Actions:** Resolution 2019-01 on Climate Change was adopted in 2019, committing to consider climate change impacts on fisheries, support further scientific development, and integrate climate change analyses into conservation and management measures.

4. **Assessing and Addressing Climate Change Impacts:** Efforts to assess climate change impacts include the SEAPODYM tool's use for projecting tuna population changes and the initiation of studies to evaluate the vulnerability of Conservation and Management Measures (CMMs) to climate change.

5. **Sustainable Management and Climate Change:** The paper underscores the integration of ecosystem and precautionary approaches, emphasizing the need to account for economic, social, and cultural dimensions in fisheries management amid climate change.

6. **Challenges and Future Directions:** It highlights the importance of collaborative efforts with other organizations, the need for adaptive management strategies, and the focus on developing countries' challenges, suggesting capacity-building measures to support their participation in sustainable fisheries management.

Sustainable fisheries management in the face of climate change requires a multifaceted approach, integrating scientific research, management strategies, and international cooperation to ensure the resilience and sustainability of fisheries and marine ecosystems.

Innovation for Improved Management: Advancing Analytical Tools for Members



Meeting and reporting on the vast range of obligations adopted by the WCPFC is a complex and necessary challenge for Commission members.

To assist in these efforts, the Secretariat is dedicated to the further development of sophisticated analytical tools. These tools are designed to enhance the capacity of CCMs to monitor, report, and ensure compliance, thus strengthening the overall governance of our fisheries. This technology-driven approach represents our investment in a future where sustainability is not just an ideal, but a practical reality.

The Secretariat's Compliance team (pictured above) is learning the necessary skills to ensure it can provide optimal support to members in their efforts to effectively manage and monitor their fishing activities in the Western and Central Pacific Ocean.



Image: ©WCPFC

The Secretariat recently upgraded the system for members to submit their Annual Report Part 2. Dedicated online training sessions are scheduled for 15 April and 18 April. Members can register at the relevant links on [this page](#).





Image: Malo Hosken, ©SPC

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SOUTH PACIFIC ALBACORE

The Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC) has made a strategic decision to prioritize the development of harvest strategies for South Pacific albacore in 2024. This initiative is a proactive response to the pressing need for sustainable management practices in the face of environmental and economic challenges affecting this vital fishery.

South Pacific albacore is a key species for many of our member economies and holds significant value for the commercial and artisanal sectors. Ensuring the long-term viability of albacore stocks is paramount to the WCPFC's objectives.

To facilitate this, the Commission has resolved to hold a second science-management dialogue in September 2024, concentrating specifically on South Pacific albacore. The meeting will gather scientific experts and fisheries managers to deliberate on data-driven approaches and to refine the strategies that will govern the harvesting of albacore.

The dialogue aims to establish a comprehensive management framework that aligns with the WCPFC's commitment to maintaining fish stocks at sustainable levels. It is an opportunity to review current research, assess management options, and agree on actionable steps that will lead to robust conservation and management measures.

The Commission recognizes the complexity of implementing effective harvest strategies and is dedicated to engaging in thorough discussions to achieve consensus among stakeholders. The outcomes of the September dialogue will be crucial in shaping the sustainable future of the South Pacific albacore fisheries and supporting the economic wellbeing of our member nations.

As we proceed with these critical initiatives, the WCPFC reaffirms its dedication to science-based management and the sustainable use of marine resources for the benefit of current and future generations.



Image: Office of the President, FSM

Forging Stronger Ties: Executive Director's Diplomatic Engagements

The Executive Director's recent diplomatic efforts highlight the critical role that strong, supportive relationships play in our mission. These endeavors include courtesy visits to the President and Vice President (pictured above) of the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM) as well as to the newly appointed Governor of Pohnpei State (pictured below). Each meeting served not only as a formal recognition of our mutual interests but also as a strategic step towards fostering deeper collaboration.

These visits are more than ceremonial; they are instrumental in reinforcing the WCPFC's commitment to working closely with its host nation, the FSM. By engaging with the country's top officials, we underline the importance of our partnership and shared objectives in regional fisheries management. Such interactions pave the way for enhanced cooperation and collective success, ensuring that both the WCPFC and the FSM can achieve their goals in conservation and sustainable use of the region's important fisheries resources.



Image: Office of the Governor, Pohnpei State

Strengthening Regional Cooperation: The Philippines' Engagement with WCPFC



We were honored to welcome the Philippines Ambassador to the FSM at the Secretariat. The visit, which included a comprehensive briefing on our activities, was a meaningful opportunity to discuss the Philippines' role in the Commission, as a key player in regional fisheries management.



Closing Notes

A revised version of the [WCPFC20 Summary Record](#) can be found on the WCPFC20 Meeting Webpage. It includes clarifying edits to paragraphs 302, 841, and 842 that were inadvertently omitted from the Summary Record released on March 21, 2024.

The Secretariat extends congratulations to Feleti Teo, OBE, former WCPFC Executive Director, on his recent appointment as Prime Minister of Tuvalu. Wishing Feleti all the best in his new position on behalf of the Secretariat and WCPFC members.

On 6 April, the Secretariat co-sponsored a fishing tournament in Pohnpei with FSM's Caroline Fisheries Corporation. The grand prize winner caught a 63-lb yellowfin tuna.

The Secretariat plans to hire new professional staff members in line with the 2024 restructuring of the Compliance section. Stay tuned for more information on the WCPFC website.

World Tuna Day is May 2

On May 2, get ready to celebrate World Tuna Day in a big way! Whether you're a seafood enthusiast or simply appreciate the wonders of the ocean, this is the perfect opportunity to honor the mighty tuna. From delicious tuna dishes to learning about sustainable fishing practices, there are endless ways to mark the occasion. Consider hosting a tuna-themed dinner party, sharing tuna recipes with friends and family, or even supporting conservation efforts for these incredible marine creatures. Let's make this World Tuna Day a memorable one full of appreciation for the ocean's bounty!

KEY DATES IN 2024

Joint WCPFC/IATTC Working Group on Pacific Bluefin Tuna	10-13 July
20th Northern Committee	15-16 July
20th Scientific Committee	14-21 August
2nd Science-Management Dialogue	10-12 September
20th Technical and Compliance Committee	25 Sept - 1 Oct
18th Finance and Administration Committee	1-8 December
21st Regular Annual Session of the Commission	2-8 December