TO ALL COMMISSION MEMBERS, COOPERATING NON-MEMBERS, PARTICIPATING TERRITORIES AND OBSERVERS

Subject: Next steps to progress the ER and EM IWG workplan and notice of an IWG meeting

Dear All,

The purpose of this paper is to:

- Summarize activities undertaken by the interim Chair since being nominated through TCC21;
- Highlight important insights and feedback received by the interim Chair that are relevant to the development of the Electronic Monitoring Program (EMP);
- Propose effective ways of working for the Inter-sessional Working Group (IWG); and
- Recommend priority areas of work for the IWG, based on the workplan adopted at WCPFC21 for the 2024–2025 period (Attachment 18), with a view to building on this foundation in 2025–2026. A Gantt chart outlining the work is provided as Appendix 1;
- Describe and distribute a draft document provided as Appendix 2, describing an audit and assurance process to be reviewed by the group for feedback, and request national and subregional programs to share any Vessel Monitoring Plan's (VMPs) currently in use. Participants are encouraged to provide feedback by October 31st, so that key issues and suggestions can be consolidated for discussion during our upcoming virtual meeting. Please send all responses to Lesley.Hawn@noaa.gov, and cc eidre.sharp@wcpfc.int.
- Provide a provisional agenda, as Appendix 3, for consideration ahead of the 7th ERandEM IWG intersessional virtual meeting on November 7th, 2025.

Interim Chair's Activities

1. In August the Secretariat disseminated WCPFC Circular 2025/54 describing a path forward and announcing an intersessional virtual meeting on October 23, 2025.

2. At TCC21, the interim Chair engaged with CCMs to better understand how we can best advance the work of the IWG and the forthcoming online IWG will be an opportunity for full Commission engagement on the issue.

3. **General observations from the TCC21 consultations:**

   a. Not only is there a near universal acceptance that EM is a very promising tool that is expected to assist with data collection and compliance monitoring, and verification, there is a sense of urgency to implement EM as soon as possible;

   b. CCMs are at very different stages in their actual experience with EM. While many have conducted small-scale trials or pilot programs, few have taken the next step of establishing regulated (legally required) EM programs. In parallel, some EM vendors remain hesitant to invest until EM is formally implemented within the WCPFC, as this would create clearer opportunities for scaling; and

   c. Some CCMs have suggested that the Interim Standards, Specifications, and Procedures (SSPs) for Onboard EM Systems be revisited and further refined, which is consistent with the outcome at WCPFC21[1]. This recommendation stems from a shared interest in ensuring that the SSPs provide a robust framework to support the integrity, reliability, and credibility of EM data collection across all programs.

4. **Proposed ways of working for the ERandEM IWG:**

   a. IWG will primarily operate electronically, with work progressing throughout the year via email and virtual meetings. Meetings, whether virtual or in-person, will be announced through WCPFC official circulars. When input or feedback is required, it will be requested via email and directed to those who have registered their interest in the IWG. The 7th ERandEM IWG intersessional virtual meeting is scheduled for **Friday, November 7th. This meeting will be held online between 10am –1pm Pohnpei date/time (UTC+11). Participants will need to register through the WCPFC Meeting webpage.**

   b. All material related to the IWG, will be found on the dedicated page within the WCPFC website https://www.wcpfc.int/erandem-iwg

   c. Work progressed through the IWG will be reviewed by relevant WCPFC subsidiary bodies, which will be expected to provide recommendations to the Commission.

   d. The IWG will draw on expertise and existing templates from other intersessional working groups, national and subregional programs, and other RFMOs where appropriate.

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[1] The Commission tasks SC22 and TCC22 in 2026 to recommend to WCPFC23 in 2026 any necessary changes to the interim EM Standards based on the work of the ER and EM IWG and any other relevant information (see page 70 of WCPFC Summary report Task 478).

5. **Proposed work priorities for the development of the WCPFC EMP for 2025-2026 based on the work plan adopted at WCPFC21.** The following key work areas are proposed below and a Gantt chart for the work is provided as Appendix 1.

   a. Develop a proposed **assurance/audit process** for EM standards for longlining based on ROP audit model.

   b. Review and **develop templates for Annual Report Part 1 EM program reporting** and other parts of the EM standards where standardized reporting would be of value to members.

   c. **Review EM data requirements based on relevant CMM** requirements not already covered in the ROP minimum data fields. This work will also include addressing outstanding EM data requirements that have yet to be discussed. Additionally, the IWG will revisit and refine the SSPs for onboard EM systems and data fields. This will help to ensure the SSPs are aligned and harmonized with standards adopted by other RFMOs, and the outcomes of Project 93, which identified data gaps and established standardized data fields for electronic monitoring.

   d. **Initiate work on EM standards for carrier vessels** conducting transshipment for longline vessels. Given the strong interconnections between EM and observer program activities, close collaboration with the ROP will be essential.

6. **Tasking for IWG in preparation for the 7th ERandEM IWG intersessional virtual meeting.**

   a. Members of the IWG are kindly requested to review and provide feedback on the draft audit and assurance document (appendix 2).

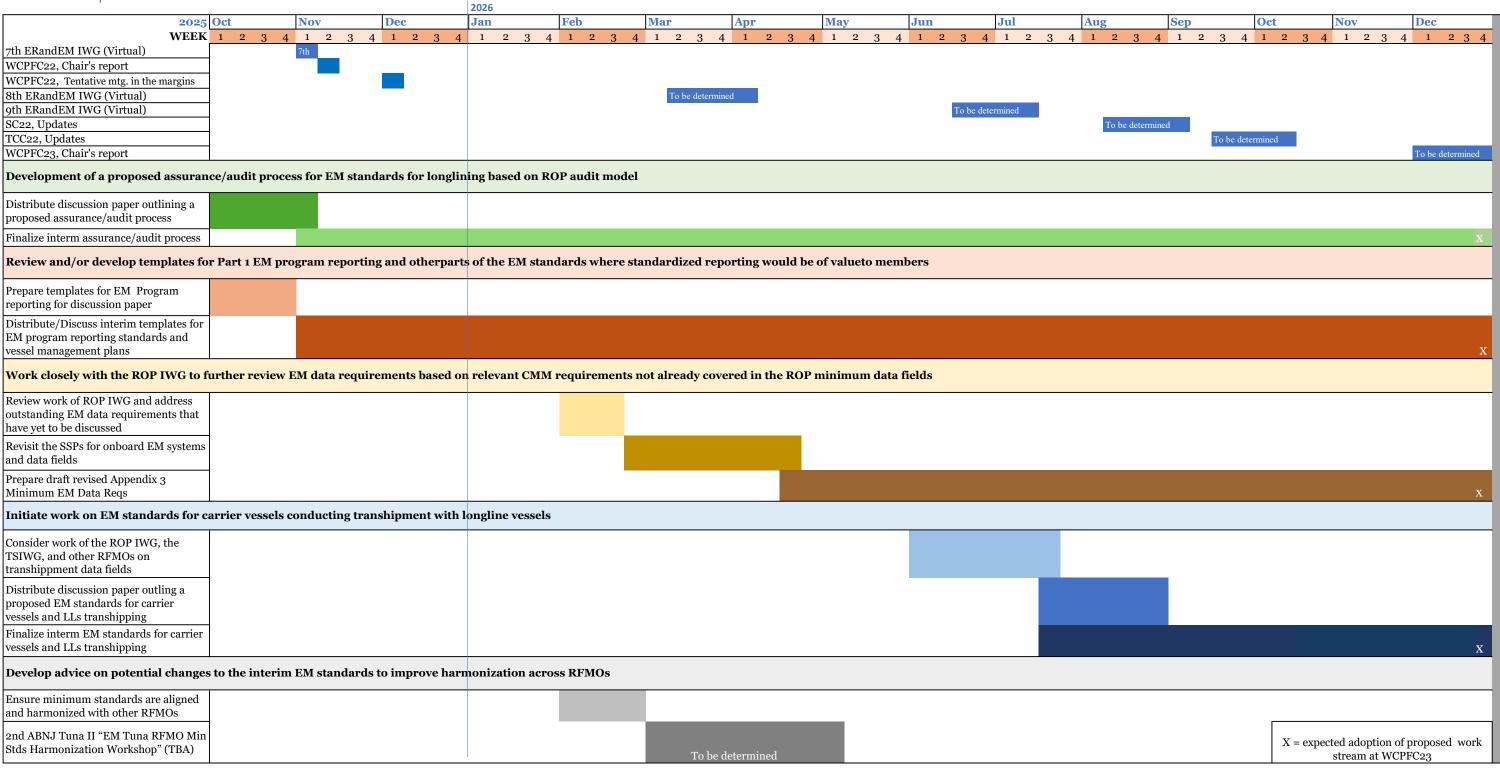   b. Members are also requested to submit any VMPs currently in use.

Please send all document feedback and VMP submissions via email to Lesley.Hawn@noaa.gov, cc eidre.sharp@wcpfc.int by **31 October (Pohnpei date)**.

Sincerely,

Lesley Hawn
Interim ERandEM IWG Chair

WCPFC21 Adopted ERandEM IWG 2025-2026 Work Plan

Gantt chart showing the WCPFC21 Adopted ERandEM IWG 2025-2026 Work Plan.

Timeline spans 2025 (Oct, Nov, Dec) through 2026 (Jan–Dec), divided by week (1 2 3 4).

Tasks (top section):
- 7th ERandEM IWG (Virtual) — 7th, Nov
- WCPFC22, Chair's report — Nov
- WCPFC22, Tentative mtg. in the margins — Dec
- 8th ERandEM IWG (Virtual) — Mar, To be determined
- 9th ERandEM IWG (Virtual) — May, To be determined
- SC22, Updates — Aug, To be determined
- TCC22, Updates — Sep/Oct, To be determined
- WCPFC23, Chair's report — Dec, To be determined

Development of a proposed assurance/audit process for EM standards for longlining based on ROP audit model
- Distribute discussion paper outlining a proposed assurance/audit process — Oct–Nov
- Finalize interm assurance/audit process — Nov onward, X

Review and/or develop templates for Part 1 EM program reporting and otherparts of the EM standards where standardized reporting would be of valueto members
- Prepare templates for EM Program reporting for discussion paper — Oct
- Distribute/Discuss interim templates for EM program reporting standards and vessel management plans — Nov onward, X

Work closely with the ROP IWG to further review EM data requirements based on relevant CMM requirements not already covered in the ROP minimum data fields
- Review work of ROP IWG and address outstanding EM data requirements that have yet to be discussed — Feb
- Revisit the SSPs for onboard EM systems and data fields — Feb–Mar
- Prepare draft revised Appendix 3 Minimum EM Data Reqs — Mar onward, X

Initiate work on EM standards for carrier vessels conducting transhipment with longline vessels
- Consider work of the ROP IWG, the TSIWG, and other RFMOs on transhippment data fields — Jun
- Distribute discussion paper outling a proposed EM standards for carrier vessels and LLs transhipping — Jul
- Finalize interm EM standards for carrier vessels and LLs transhipping — Jul onward, X

Develop advice on potential changes to the interim EM standards to improve harmonization across RFMOs
- Ensure minimum standards are aligned and harmonized with other RFMOs — Feb
- 2nd ABNJ Tuna II "EM Tuna RFMO Min Stds Harmonization Workshop" (TBA) — To be determined

X = expected adoption of proposed work stream at WCPFC23

ERandEM IWG Proposed Assurance and Audit Process for EM Standards Based on the ROP Model

30 September 2025

With a solid assurance and audit process, we can help enhance confidence in EM as a viable monitoring tool and ensure that data collected is aligned with the Commission's broader objectives.

How do we ensure the WCPFC EMP is providing reliable and credible data?

The ERandEM IWG has been tasked to develop an assurance and audit process based on the current assurance and audit processes used by the ROP.

- o In preparation for discussion, ROP and observer language was replaced with WCPFC EMP language.
- o As you review this document, consider if the ROP assurance and audit process translates effectively to the WCPFC EM
- o What documentation may be required to confirm the national and sub-regional EMPs are in compliance with the WCPFC EMP's minimum standards.

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AUTHORIZATION PROCESSES

a. Interim Authorization is an almost immediate authorization for active EM programs that are already operating to standards similar or better than the WCPFC EMP's minimum standards. This is not a full authorization - this can only be attained after an audit of the program is carried out by the Secretariat. Nevertheless, interim authorization allows a program to operate on behalf of the WCPFC EMP.

b. Full Authorization will be granted following a successful program audit by the Secretariat. From the point of full authorization being granted, the national or sub-regional program will be permitted to operate on behalf of the WCPFC EMP. Further audits of the program will be carried out by the Secretariat from time to time (approx. every 5 years) to ensure standards are being maintained.

Interim authorization process for national and sub-regional EM programs

1. CCMs seeking authorization for their respective national EMPs to be included in the WCPFC EMP shall apply to the Secretariat declaring that their national EMP meets the WCPFC EMP's minimum standards. Upon receipt of an application from a CCM for its national EMP, or an application from CCMs in respect of a sub-regional program and based on an initial review for completeness of the application, the Secretariat will issue an interim authorization for the national EMP or sub-regional EMP program to be included in the WCPFC EMP. Interim Authorizations will be valid until a full audit is made.

2. If the Secretariat detects a deficiency in compliance with one or more of the WCPFC EMP's minimum standards, the CCM or sub-regional program shall be notified of the deficiencies. The CCM or sub-regional program will work with the Secretariat to correct the deficiencies within 90 days, or some other timeframe determined by the Secretariat in consultation with the CCM or sub-regional program concerned. Failure to correct such deficiencies may result in the removal of the interim authorization by the Secretariat.

3. As part of a CCM's application a national WCPFC EMP Coordinator must be nominated, and the names of all eligible vessels with EM systems in compliance with WCPFC minimum standards must be supplied to the Secretariat.

Full authorization of national and sub-regional programs

1. The Secretariat shall conduct a program audit of each national EMP and sub-regional program that receives an interim authorization to ensure that they meet the WCPFC EMP's minimum standards.

2. CCMs seeking Full Authorization will have previously been granted interim authorization. The program shall further apply to the Secretariat declaring that their national EMP meets the WCPFC EMP's minimum standards. The CCM will include relevant supporting documentation to the Secretariat to demonstrate compliance with the WCPFC EMP's minimum standards. Relevant CCMs may also nominate sub-regional observer programs to be authorized for inclusion in the WCPFC EMP through the application process.

3. If the Secretariat detects a deficiency during the program audit regarding compliance with one or more of the minimum standards, the CCM or sub-regional program shall be notified of the deficiencies. The CCM or sub-regional program will work with the Secretariat to correct the deficiencies within 90 days or some other timeframe determined by the Secretariat in consultation with the CCM or sub-regional program concerned. Failure to correct such deficiencies may result in the removal of the interim authorization.

4. Upon the successful conclusion of each program audit, the Secretariat shall authorize national EMPs and sub-regional programs to be included in the WCPFC EMP. In consultation with the relevant CCM or sub-regional program the audit organized by the Secretariat will take place as soon as practical after the interim authorization has been granted. If a CCM or sub-regional program fails to correct reported deficiencies identified during the audit, the national EMP or sub-regional program may not be authorised until such deficiencies are corrected.

5. All authorized national EMPs and sub-regional programs will be kept under continuous review by the Secretariat to ensure they meet the WCPFC EMP's minimum standards. CCMs shall ensure national EMPs and sub-regional programs are refined, as necessary, and within the agreed timeframe, to meet any further standards adopted by the Commission.

SUMMARY OF AUTHORIZATION PROCEDURES

Interim authorization of national EMP's

CCMs seeking interim authorization for their national EMPs to be included as part of the WCPFC EMP should use the following as a guide.

Interim authorization of national EMP to participate in the WCPFC EMP
1. Submit an application for their national program by letter stating that their national EMP program wishes to participate in the WCPFC EMP;
2. Declare that their national EMP meets the minimum standards for the WCPFC EMP agreed to by the Commission.
3. Provide a list of the names of eligible vessels with EM systems to participate in the WCPFC EMP; and
4. Nominate a national EMP coordinator.

The Secretariat will
a. Respond to the application, and if required will highlight any deficiencies.
b. Work with CCM to correct any deficiencies.
c. Grant interim Authorization if a national EMP meets the WCPFC EMP's minimum standards.
d. Inform CCM of interim authorization.

Full Authorization of national EMP to participate in the WCPFC EMP

CCMs seeking full authorization to have their national EMP included in the WCPFC EMP will have previously been granted an interim authorization.

To attain Full Authorization CCMs shall:
1. Submit to the Secretariat an application by letter stating that they wish to attain full authorization of their national EMP.
2. Declare to the Secretariat that their national EMP meets the minimum standards for the WCPFC EMP.
3. Include relevant supporting documentation to demonstrate compliance with the minimum standards.
4. Provide a list of the names of eligible vessels with EM systems to participate in the WCPFC EMP; and
5. Nominate a national EMP coordinator.
6. Agree that they will ensure national EMPs and sub-regional programs are refined, as necessary, and within the agreed timeframe, to meet any further standards adopted by the Commission.

The Secretariat will:
a. Conduct a program audit of each national EMP and sub-regional program that has received an interim authorization.
b. Ensure that the national EMP meet the WCPFC EMP's minimum standards.
c. Notify the CCM of any deficiencies with their national EMP.
d. Work with the CCM to correct any deficiencies within 90 days.
e. Fully authorize national EMPs and sub-regional programs to be included in the WCPFC EMP as each audit is successfully completed.
f. Inform the CCM if qualified of the full authorization of their national EMP.
g. All authorized national EMPs and sub-regional programs will be kept under continuous review by the Secretariat to ensure they continue to meet the WCPFC EMP's minimum standards.

Summary of Secretariat procedure for initial and continued authorization
1. Interim and full authorization will occur after all the procedures have been satisfied following a program audit organized by the Commission Secretariat.
2. The Secretariat will prepare an audit report and summary of their findings after reviewing minimum standards implemented by the EM program.
3. If the final summary or report indicates deficiencies in the program, the Secretariat and the program will work together to correct these deficiencies. There is a 90-day timeframe to rectify any deficiencies, but this can be extended if required and agreed by both parties.
4. The program will be informed of the deficiencies by the executive director outlining the deficiencies in a letter to the official contacts and the persons from the program involved in the audit.

5. If the final summary or report indicates that there are no problems, and all minimum standards are satisfactory, then the report will be passed onto the executive director for final approval.
6. The executive director will sign a letter to be sent to the nominated persons and official contacts from the EM program being audited. The letter will indicate that the program is authorized to carry out WCPFC EMP duties on behalf of the Commission.

AUDITS PROCESS

1. WCPFC4 agreed that audits are a Secretariat function and included this in CMM 2007-01 (now CMM 2018-05).
2. There is an obvious need for an understanding of the role and functions that audits will play in the evolution of the WCPFC EMP, including harmonization and consistency, and standards to ensure that the operation of individual programs meet a certain standard. One of the Secretariat's roles in the audit process will be to ensure that national EMPs are collecting the required WCPFC minimum standard data fields in a harmonized manner.
3. Audits will play a role in improving the efficiency and efficacy of EM programs based on identification by auditors of areas that may require improvements.
4. The role of an audit will be to work with CCMs to review the effectiveness of their program's contribution to the WCPFC EMP. The purpose of the audit is to inform CCMs and the Commission:
   a. Gaps in EM coverage of fleets active in the WCPO.
   b. Gaps in respect of achieving standards agreed by the Commission.
   c. Opportunities to harmonize the operations and activities of individual EM programs.
   d. Identify opportunities for achieving efficiency gains among contributing EM programs; and
   Identify other matters as identified by the Commission and its subsidiary bodies.

Audit procedure

1. A list of program audits and years of the past audits shall be placed on the WCPFC Website.
2. The program will be audited and confirmed to use EM for monitoring on behalf of the WCPFC EMP approximately every 5 years; Programs can request earlier audits if they wish.
3. When the program is due for an audit, the program will be contacted by the Secretariat and arrangements for an audit agreeable to both the program and the secretariat will be made.
4. Audits will generally be carried out in the face-to-face mode; however, if agreeable to the Secretariat and the CCM an online audit may be arranged.

In-person audit

1. All newly established EM programs must be audited in a one-on-one, in-person mode.
2. Programs previously audited and asking for continuation of their WCPFC EMP status should be audited in-person, when possible, but may be audited online if this is more convenient for both parties.
3. In-person audits must occur for the first audit of a program wishing to be part of the WCPFC EMP. This is so the Secretariat can visit some of the vessels outfitted with EM systems and the data review center.
4. After this has occurred, and a review of the program after a timeframe (Approx 5 years) another in-person audit will be organized, or if requested an online audit may be used to audit the program.
5. In-person audit requires the following:
   a. The program being advised of dates plus meeting place arrangements suitable for both parties.
   b. Audit timing of 2/3 days is allocated; but can be extended if required.
   c. A copy of a previous audit summary if applicable, plus a copy of the questions on the minimum standards to be asked during the audit. These should be made available to the program being audited prior to the audit meeting.
   d. During the audit, the audited program must provide the required documentation for the WCPFC EMP's minimum standards. Any relevant documentation should be provided, preferably in electronic format, though hard copies are acceptable. Note Programs using FFA/SPC documentation available on the SPC website do not need to submit physical copies but should acknowledge their availability.
   e. Flexibility should be shown during the audit, as there may be a number of different methods and ways the required standards can be attained by the program.

Online Audits

Online Audits can only occur if a program has been previously audited by the Secretariat staff in country, and there has been no change in the structure of the program since the last audit.

Online audit requires the following:
   a. The program advises dates plus times and communication method to be arranged suitable to both parties.
   b. Audit timing of 2/3 days allocated with a timetable produced to indicate breaks and discussion times.
   c. A copy of a previous audit summary, if applicable, plus a copy of the questions on the minimum standards to be asked during the audit, should be made available to the program being audited prior to the online audit meeting.

d. It would help if the questionnaire sent by the Secretariat to the program prior to the online meeting was filled out as this would cut down on the questions asked.

e. During the online audit, the audited program must provide the required documentation for the WCPFC EMP' minimum standards. Any relevant documentation should be provided, preferably in electronic format.

f. Flexibility will be shown during the audit, as there may be several different methods and ways the required standards can be attained by the program.

g. The final draft summary will be sent to the program to ensure that the person doing the online audit has not misinterpreted the information given by a program.

h. Changes to the final summary should not deflect from any deficiencies found in the initial audit findings unless it can be proved to have been rectified.

i. In the case of deficiencies, the program is given 90 days to rectify the deficiency, if program already authorized the program may continue to operate while they rectify the deficiency.

j. If the deficiency is not rectified after 90 days and no extension of time has been granted to rectify the deficiency. The program may no longer operate as a WCPFC EMP program and therefore coverage by EM from this program is not counted as part of the overall ROP and WCPFC EMP coverage requirements.

Western and
Central Pacific
Fisheries
Commission

**Seventh E-Reporting and E-Monitoring Intersessional Working Group
7 November 2025 10:00am – 1:00pm (Pohnpei date/time)**

DRAFT EMandER-IWG7 Annotated Agenda

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30 September 2025

1. Opening of the Meeting

   a. Welcome address by Chair
   b. Introduction
   c. Adoption of agenda
   d. Review of EM workplan

2. Objectives of the EMandER-IWG7 Virtual Meeting

   a. Discuss the draft audit and assurance document and associated comments/feedback
   b. Discuss draft templates for vessel monitoring plans, and other templates to streamline reporting processes for EM.

3. Planning Ahead

   a. In-person meeting during WCPFC22?
      1. Would members recommend an in-person meeting on the margins of WCPFC22 to continue to address the assurance and audit document and/or the draft templates, including the VMP?

   b. Virtual Meeting in 2026
      2. Would members recommend a virtual meeting early in the new year review and finalize revisions to the draft audit and assurance document and reporting templates?