



**SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE
ELEVENTH REGULAR SESSION**

Pohnpei, Federated States of Micronesia
5-13 August 2015

INTERSESSIONAL ACTIVITIES OF THE SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE

WCPFC-SC11-2015/GN-WP-04

Secretariat

I. Summary Report of the Tenth Regular Session of the Scientific Committee

1. The Secretariat posted on the SC10 website an adopted version of the Summary Report of the Tenth Regular Session of the Scientific Committee on 21 August 2014, and a professionally edited version on 25 November 2014.

II. Science Services from the SPC-OFP

2. In 2006, the Commission signed the first memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the Commission's scientific services provider (SPC-OFP) to provide science and data management services, and has been updating Annex I (*Agreement for the Provision of Scientific Services to the Commission and Assistance to Members by the Secretariat of the Pacific Community*) of the MOU each year to accommodate the specific services and terms of reference for the provision of scientific services as requested by the Commission for each calendar year. In 2009, the Commission and the SPC agreed to revise the MOU to provide for a three-year arrangement as directed by the Commission. The three-year MOU applied through 2012 was terminated and a revised three-year MOU was signed in March 2013, which included implementation of the Shark Research Plan adopted by the Commission. The components for 2015 services in Annex I include:

- Data management, statistical analyses and related services
 - Data management
 - Compilation of catch and effort estimates
 - Data dissemination
 - Technical / policy advice
 - Support of other data-related projects of the Commission
- Stock assessment and related analytical services
 - Target species stock assessments and auxiliary analyses
 - Implementation of the Shark Research Plan
 - Model development and refinement
- Management analyses and CMM performance monitoring
 - Conservation and management measure performance monitoring

- Analyses to support development of conservation and management measures
 - Other advisory and technical services
3. The SPC-OFP produced 30 papers and reports and involved in four other papers for SC11 and provided *ad hoc* advice and support throughout the year. In addition, SPC-OFP assisted the following activities:
- Participated in TCC10, MOW3 and WCPFC11, producing several key papers and presentations for each meeting;
 - Participated in the tuna data review and annual tuna catch estimates workshops of the WPEA Project participating countries (Indonesia, Philippines and Vietnam); and
 - Conducted the Pacific Tuna Tagging Program (PTTP) and coordinated PTTP Steering Committee Meeting.

III. Progress of SC Work Programme Activities

4. SC work programmes conducted in 2014-2015 include:
- *(Project 15) West Pacific East Asia Project*
Since the first GEF-funded project was terminated, the Secretariat continued coordinating the core project activities such as tuna catch data collection from port sampling and estimation of annual tuna catches in Indonesia, Philippines and Vietnam. A new GEF-funded project (Sustainable Management of Highly Migratory Fish Stocks in the West Pacific and East Asian Seas) was approved and the Project Inception Workshop was convened in Da Nang, Vietnam, 4-5 November 2014. UNDP, WCPFC and three country representatives attended the workshop and agreed to have the project steering committee meeting in November each year.
 - *(Project 35) Refinement of bigeye parameters Pacific-wide (A comprehensive review and study of bigeye tuna reproductive biology)*
WCPFC had a three-year contract with SPC-OFP on this project (Jan 2013-Dec 2015). Allocated budgets for the three years were \$70K, \$75K and \$75K, respectively. At SC11, SPC-OFP will present a progress report on the Pacific-wide sampling and preliminary analysis, and in April 2015, this project was extended to December 2016 for further analysis, subject to decision of WCPFC12.
 - *(Project 42) Pacific-wide tagging project*
A PTTP Steering Committee meeting will be convened during SC10 and SPC-OFP will present a progress report on 2014 tagging activities and the status of tag recovery. The Commission supports \$10K to assist operations and activities related with the PTTP including tag recovery.
 - *(Project 57) Limit Reference Points: Expert panel work on the identification of appropriate life history parameters for use in developing shark LRPs*
ABNJ Tuna Project Technical Coordinator coordinated the Pacific shark life history expert panel workshop during 28-30 April 2015. The workshop report is posted as SC11-EB-WP-13.
 - *(Project 70) Improvement of stock assessments in line with recommendations from the report of the Peer Review for the 2011 Bigeye Tuna Stock Assessment*

This project is funded \$160,000 per year for three years for SPC to hire an additional staff member to focus on this work. This is the last year and the final report on the ‘Overview of the implementation of the recommendations from the Independent Review of the 2011 bigeye tuna stock assessment’ is posted as an information paper on SC11 website.

- *(Project 71) South Pacific Swordfish Biology*
Along with the SC9 recommendation for additional work to be undertaken on age, growth and age validation of SP swordfish, the Secretariat arranged a contract with the CSIRO to partly support their project (*Determination of Swordfish growth and maturity relevant to the southwest Pacific stock*), which includes the requests from SC9 and terminates in December 2016. The CSIRO’s progress report for 2015 is posted at SC11.
- *(Project 74) Pacific-wide bigeye tuna stock assessment*
SC10 proposed \$92,000 for this research but the funding support was provided by the European Union. SPC produced a paper ‘*Sensitivity of the WCPO bigeye tuna stock assessment results to the inclusion of EPO dynamics within a Pacific-wide model*’ which responds to the recommendation from the 2011 Bigeye Peer Review:
The Panel therefore recommends that a Pacific-wide assessment be conducted soon to evaluate whether the past conclusion that the results from a WCPO-only assessment are consistent with expectations from a Pacific-wide assessment remains true. In addition, the Panel recommends that Pacific-wide assessments should be conducted regularly (~ every five years) to confirm the assumption that a WCPO-only assessment will provide robust estimates of stock status.
- *(Project 54) Bycatch mitigation study in longline fisheries (Monte Carlo simulation of mitigation options for longline shark bycatch)*
SPC produced, through DMP Consulting, *Monte Carlo analysis of measures to mitigate longline fishery impacts on silky and oceanic whitetip sharks*, which is posted under Ecosystem and Bycatch theme.
- *(Project 67) Range contraction of tropical tunas, sharks, and billfish (Review of impacts of recent high catches of skipjack tuna on fisheries on the margins of the WCPFC Convention Area)*
SPC produced ‘An examination of trends in skipjack abundance outside the tropical area’ to cover range contraction issues under Stock Assessment theme.

IV. Cooperation with other organizations

5. The Secretariat was represented at the following science-related meetings during the last 12 months:

- SPC Operational Longline Data Workshop, 4-10 February 2015, Noumea;
- SPC Tuna Data Workshop (9th TDW), 20-24 April 2015, Noumea;
- ISSF Stock Assessment Workshop on Stock Assessment Workshop: Characterizing uncertainty in stock assessment and management advice. March 16-18 2015, Monterey;
- ISC MSE Workshop, 16 – 17 April 2015, Yokohama, Japan;
- The 15th ISC and its Working Group meetings, 9-20 July 2015, Kailua-Kona, Hawaii; and
- WPEA Project related workshops and meetings in Indonesia, Philippines and Vietnam, including tuna data review and annual catch estimates workshops.

V. Research Projects

West Pacific East Asia Project

6. Since the WPEA Inception Workshop in November 2014, there have been national endorsement processes in Indonesia and Vietnam, which delayed the implementation of the planned project activities in these two countries. In Indonesia, it was approved in mid-June 2015, but we are still waiting for the Prime Minister's approval in Vietnam. Therefore, many activities are expected to occur later this year in the two countries. Philippines continued to conduct its activities as scheduled.

Japanese Trust Fund Project

7. This is the fourth year of the second 5 year phase of the Japan Trust Fund, with JTF support amounting to USD \$140,553.75 in 2015. Seven projects were supported for FSM, Nauru, SPC for Pacific Islands and Territories (x2), Tonga (x2) and Vietnam.

8. A Samoan Project on 'Data Collection Improvements (\$16,845.00) and an FFA project, National Observer Programme Manager (OPM) Rollout (\$28,400.00), were carried over from 2014; an SPC project 'Stock Assessment workshop' (\$25,464.08) was conducted in 2015 to complete their 2013 proposal.