



**SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE  
TWELFTH REGULAR SESSION**  
Bali, Republic of Indonesia  
3-11 August 2016

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**INTERSESSIONAL ACTIVITIES OF THE SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE**

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**WCPFC-SC12-2016/GN-WP-04**

**Secretariat**

**Introduction**

This purpose of this paper is to inform the SC12 of the relevant activities to the work of the SC that were pursued and undertaken since SC11.

**I. Summary Report of the Eleventh Regular Session of the Scientific Committee**

1. The Secretariat posted on the SC11 website an adopted version of the Summary Report of the Eleventh Regular Session of the Scientific Committee on 19 October 2015.

**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 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. In 2016, the three-year MOU was revised and included the development of management strategy evaluation to support the implementation of the harvest strategy framework. The components for 2016 services in Annex I include:

*Core SPC services*

- 1) 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

- 2) Stock assessment and related analytical services
  - Target species stock assessments and auxiliary analyses
  - Implementation of the Shark Research Plan more here?
  - Model development and refinement
- 3) Management analyses and CMM performance monitoring
  - Conservation and management measure performance monitoring
  - Development of harvest strategy framework
  - Analyses to support development of conservation and management measures

*Other advisory and technical services*

3. The SPC-OFP produced 43 papers and reports, covering all four theme issues, and provided *ad hoc* advice and support throughout the year. In addition, SPC-OFP assisted the following activities:
  - Participated in TCC11, HSW (MOW4) and WCPFC12, 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);
  - Conducted the Pacific Tuna Tagging Program (PTTP) and coordinated the PTTP Steering Committee Meeting;
  - Hosted a preparatory workshop for 2016 stock assessments; and
  - Hosted an MSE expert consultation workshop.

### **III. Progress of SC Work Programme Activities**

4. SC work programmes conducted in 2014-2015 include:
  - ***(Project 15) West Pacific East Asia Project***  
The GEF-funded WPEA project continued in 2016 and an annual report of Project Implementation Report (PIR) is under progress. During the past one year, over 40 meeting reports and consultation documents were produced and submitted to UNDP.
  - ***(Project 35) Refinement of bigeye parameters Pacific-wide (A comprehensive review and study of bigeye tuna reproductive biology)***  
Addendum to 2013 Contract was made in April 201 to finalize this project.
  - ***(Project 35A) Maintenance and enhancement of WCPFC Tissue Bank***  
The project contract was made with SPC and tissue bank is now functional.
  - ***(Project 42) Pacific-wide tagging project***  
A PTTP Steering Committee meeting will be convened during SC12 and SPC-OFP will present a progress report on 2015 tagging activities and the status of tag recovery. The Commission supports \$10,000 to assist operations and activities related with the PTTP including tag recovery. Korea funded \$175,286 to support the SPC-OFP's PTTP activities.
  - ***(Project 54) Sharks Monte Carlo mitigation analysis for purse seine, and extension of longline analysis***  
WCPFC contracted with SPC to conduct this project and the results will be presented at SC12.
  - ***(Project 57) Limit reference points - Develop proposed limit reference points for elasmobranchs (requires scope of work to progress)***

The 9<sup>th</sup> Finance and Administration Committee recommended that WCPFC12 task SC12 with developing a scope of work to progress development of limit reference points for sharks within the budget allocated for 2016. This will be covered under SC12 Agenda 5.1.1.

- ***(Project 60) Further paired sampling and unloading data comparisons***  
Budget would cover at-sea data collection (2<sup>nd</sup> observer), associated travel, some analytical support. A budget of \$50,000 allocated in each of 2016 and 2017 and contract signed.
  
- ***(Project 67) Review of impacts of recent high catches of skipjack on fisheries on the margins of the WCPFC Convention Area***  
Project 67 aims to identify the relationship between high catches in the equatorial region and the availability, or trends in abundance, of skipjack tuna to high latitude fisheries. However, this project is not implemented yet. Noting the previous research of this project (WCPFC-SC11-2015/SA-WP-05), considering recommendations from SC11 (Paragraph 282 below), SC12 will consider how to implement this project.  
*282. SC11 reviewed information related to identifying changes in the spatial distribution of skipjack (including range contraction) in response to increase in fishing pressure. Project 67 on the impacts of recent catches of skipjack tuna on fisheries on the margins of the WCPFC Convention Area demonstrated no statistical evidence for skipjack range contraction (SA-WP-05). SC11 recommends that WCPFC12 take note of the analyses completed to date and that further work on this issue be undertaken, including:*
  - *more extensive skipjack tagging activities, including in sub-tropical and temperate regions to provide better information on stock connectivity and movement; and*
  - *analysis of operational longline data including skipjack catch to improve the estimation of relative abundance trends by latitude.*
  
- ***(Project 75) Technical support for the harvest strategy***  
An MSE Expert Consultation Workshop was convened at SPC headquarters in late June to develop an initial work plan and schedule for an MSE process that will enable SPC to provide appropriate advice to the WCPFC, focusing on the technical aspects of developing an MSE modelling framework for the tropical tuna fisheries in the WCPO. The workshop report is posted on SC12 website, SC11-MI-WP-05.

#### **IV. Cooperation with other organizations**

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

- SPC Pre-Assessment Workshop, 11-14 April 2016, Noumea;
- ISC MSE Workshop, 24-25 April 2016, Yokohama, Japan;
- SPC MSE Expert Consultation Workshop, 28-30 June 2016, Noumea;
- The 16<sup>th</sup> ISC and its Working Group meetings, 8-18 July 2016, Sapporo, Japan; and
- WPEA Project related workshops and meetings in Indonesia, Philippines and Vietnam, including tuna data review and annual catch estimates workshops.

#### **V. Research Projects**

### ***ABNJ (Common Oceans) Tuna Project-Shark and Bycatch Components***

6. The ABNJ (Common Oceans) Tuna Project includes activities on sharks and bycatch that are being led by the WCPFC Secretariat and SPC during the period October 2014-January 2019. These activities are comprised of three components: 1) shark data improvement and harmonization, 2) shark stock status assessment, and 3) bycatch management and information. Under Component 1, over the past year the project has contributed to the adoption of new ROP minimum standard data fields for bycatch, whale shark safe release guidelines, the first WCPFC bycatch data summary template (BDEP), and a global browser tool for t-RFMO shark data. The project will continue to engage with other t-RFMOs on the latter two initiatives. Under Component 2, two of four Pacific-wide stock status assessments are underway in the form of a southern hemisphere porbeagle shark assessment and a bigeye thresher shark assessment. Further cooperation with IATTC is anticipated for the remaining two assessments. Under Component 3 on bycatch mitigation, SPC is continuing to re-develop the Bycatch Management Information System (BMIS), and the first joint analysis workshop on sea turtle mitigation effectiveness was held in Honolulu in February 2016. The second workshop to complete the sea turtle analysis will take place at the same venue in November 2016. An expert workshop to develop an experimental design for a WCPO shark post-release mortality tagging programme is being contemplated for January 2017. The ABNJ Tuna Project-Shark and Bycatch components report to the SC (see paper WCPFC-SC12-2016/RP-ABNJ-01) and to a Sharks and Bycatch Consultative Committee meeting held in the margins of the WCPFC's Annual Commission meeting each year.

### ***Japanese Trust Fund Project***

7. This is the fifth and final year of the second 5 year phase of the Japan Trust Fund, with JTF support amounting to USD \$140,553.75 in 2016. Five projects were supported for Fiji, Niue, SPC for Pacific Islands and Territories, and two projects in Tonga. A Samoan Project on 'Data Collection Improvements (\$16,845.00) is carried over from 2014/15.

### ***West Pacific East Asia Project***

8. The new GEF-funded Sustainable Management of Highly Migratory Fish Stocks in the West Pacific and East Asian Seas Project continued since the Project Inception Workshop in November 2014. Because of the delay of domestic project approval in Indonesia and Vietnam, implementation of several projects also delayed but they expressed their strong intention to accelerate their activities to meet the planned schedule. Key activities include i) tuna catch data collection and estimation of annual catch by species and gear; ii) development of guidelines to adaptively manage highly migratory stocks against the impacts of climate change; iii) establishing market-based sustainable fisheries, iv) establishing reference points and harvest control rules; v) applying ecosystem approach to fisheries management to tuna fisheries, etc. Recently, New Zealand government expressed its funding support to the WPEA project activities.