COMMISSION
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AMENDMENTS TO THE WCPFC REGIONAL OBSERVER PROGRAMME MINIMUM STANDARD DATA FIELDS

United States of America

Proposal by the United States of America
to the
Fifteenth Regular Session of the
Commission for the Conservation and Management of
Highly Migratory Fish Stocks in the Western and Central Pacific Ocean

Explanatory Note:

In 2016, the WCPFC convened two workshops, funded by the ABNJ (Common Oceans) Tuna project, to analyze the effectiveness of sea turtle mitigation in Pacific longline fisheries with respect to rates of interaction and mortality. The second workshop included recommendations on data collection by fishery observers. The participants of the workshop agreed that one of the best approaches to obtaining high quality data for similar analyses in the future is to ensure that data collection protocols for turtle interactions with fisheries, and those describing the associated fishing effort, are standardized. The workshop final report recommended specific updates to the WCPFC Regional Observer Programme (ROP) Minimum Standard Data Fields (MSDF).

At WCPFC14 the Commission tasked SC14 with considering the workshop-recommended updates to the ROP MSDF, and recommending any modifications for consideration by the ROP coordinator, TCC14, and WCPFC15. Modifications to the ROP MSDF were considered by both SC14 and TCC14. While SC14 was unable to agree on specific recommendations, significant progress was made towards development of modifications to the ROP MSDF. Recognizing the need for improved data collection on sea turtle interactions, TCC14 recommended to WCPFC15 that the Commission consider revisions to the ROP MSDF.

The modifications considered by SC14 and TCC14 would serve to link individual catch events to gear information at a finer scale than is currently being collected, would generally improve data collection on sea turtle interactions, and would serve to address gaps that are currently precluding the Commission's ability to properly assess the effects of mitigation measures for sea turtles.

The United States recognizes previous concerns by some members that collection of information at a finer scale would equate to an additional burden on observers. As proposed, additional details would only be required when a sea turtle interaction is observed. Table 2 of the Final Report from the ABNJ workshops[1] reports that the total number of sea turtle interactions recorded by all WCPO observers between 1989 and 2015 was a maximum of 347. Using this maximum, and assuming the additional fields would require 4 minutes per turtle, we estimate that the additional burden across the entire WCPFC ROP would equate to only ~23 hours annually. We note that this burden is estimated based on the maximum number of interactions ever recorded – the actual number of interactions recorded by observers would vary and could be

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[1] See workshop final report presented at SC13: *https://www.wcpfc.int/system/files/EB-WP-10%20Sea%20Turtle%20Mitigation.pdf*

substantially lower. Given this information, the United States does not consider that such a marginal addition of burden is sufficient reasoning to preclude the Commission's ability to improve data collection.

Explanatory Note Addressing CMM 2013-06 Criteria

CMM 2013-06 requires that in considering any new proposal, the Commission shall apply the following questions to determine the nature and extent of the impact of the proposal on SIDS and territories in the Convention Area.

1) *Who is required to implement the proposal?*

All Regional Observer Programme providers would be required to implement additional data collection requirements in line with the proposed Minimum Standard Data Field modifications.

2) *Which CCMs would this proposal impact and in what way(s) and what proportion?*

The proposed revisions would impact all CCMs with a WCPFC Regional Observer Programme.

3) *Are there linkages with other proposals or instruments in other Regional Fisheries Management Organizations or international organizations that reduce the burden of implementation?*

N/A

4) *Does the proposal affect development opportunities of SIDS?*

If the proposed revisions are made, there would be administrative work necessary to implement the additional data collection requirements. However, we do not expect the proposal to affect development opportunities for SIDS.

5) *Does the proposal affect SIDS domestic access to resources and development aspirations?*

We do not expect that the proposed revisions would affect SIDS domestic access to resources or development aspirations.

6) *What resources, including financial and human capacity, are needed by SIDS to implement the proposal?*

Technical and budgetary assistance may be needed to revise existing data collection requirements. Data standards and forms would need to be updated, and slight modifications may be necessary for observer trainings. Printing and distribution of new observer forms may be necessary.

7) *What mitigation measures are included in the proposal?*

[Potentially phased implementation of the data collection requirements?]

8) *What assistance mechanisms and associated timeframe, including training and financial support, are included in the proposal to avoid a disproportionate burden on SIDS?*

There are currently no assistance mechanisms included in the measure; however, the Commission could consider obligation of SRF resources towards the implementation of additional data collection requirements.

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SPECIES OF SPECIAL INTEREST Marine ~~Reptiles~~Turtles, Marine Mammals, ~~Sea Birds~~Seabirds, ~~Designated~~ certain Shark Species[2]		For information only; not for inclusion in the ROP MSDF
GENERAL INFORMATION		**Already Collected?**
Type of interaction	Indicate what type of interaction, i.e. caught on line - tangled in net, swimming around outside of net, etc~~.~~, using the species interaction codes (G01-G06) and new codes for 'entangled in purse seine net (G07)' and 'entangled in FAD (G08)'.	Yes (text change only)
Date and time of interaction	Record ~~ships~~ ship's date and time of	Yes (text change only)
Latitude and longitude of interaction	Record geographic position of the interaction.	Yes (text change only)
Species code of marine ~~reptile~~turtle, marine mammal, or seabird.	Use FAO codes for Species.	Yes (text change only)
LANDED ON DECK		
Length	Measure length in ~~Centimetres~~ centimetres.	Yes (text change only)
Length measurement code	Measure using the measur~~ing~~e method determined for that species.	Yes (text change only)
~~Gender~~ Sex	Determine the sex and record using codes 'male', 'female, 'indeterminate' or 'unknown' ~~Sex the animal if possible.~~	Yes (text change only)
Estimated shark fin weight by species	Weigh each ~~species~~ species' shark fins separately if shark has been ~~fined~~finned by crew, if no scales estimate the weight.	Yes (text change only)
Estimated shark carcass weight by species	Weigh each carcass of a finned shark, if no scales available or body is discarded, or if it is too large to handle; estimate the weight.	Yes (no change)

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[2] SC13 agreed that shark species of special interest include silky shark, oceanic whitetip shark, whale shark and all species of mantas and mobulid (devil rays) (SC13 Summary Report, para. 134). WCPFC14 adopted the SC's recommendation.

		Already collected?
Condition when landed on Deck	Record ~~What is~~ the condition of the animals when caught us~~e~~ing "Species Caught and Released Condition C~~c~~odes" (A0-A3, D and U).	Yes (text change only)
Condition when released	Record~~What is~~ the condition of the animal when discarded us~~e~~ing "Species Caught and Release Condition C~~c~~odes" (A0-A3, D, and U)	Yes (text change only)
Tag recovery information	Record as much as information as possible on any ~~T~~tags recovered.	Yes (text change only)
Tag release information	Record as much as information as possible on any ~~T~~tags placed on the ~~species~~animal before being released.	Yes (text change only)
Hook, bait and material	For each sea turtle caught record hook type and hook size using the SPC "Terminal Gear Identification Guide", the branch line material and the bait (if known) that the animal was caught on	Yes, but collected at the trip or set level, not at the hook level. (Hook type and size and bait type are collected at the set level. Branchline material is collected at the trip level.) ***Information is required at the hook level because often several types (or "mixed") are recorded at the trip or set level and this severely limits analysis.*** To reduce observer workload this data collection would be required for sea turtles only.
Gear remaining when released	If a sea turtle is released alive describe whether gear is left attached (yes/no). If yes, describe any gear that is left remaining.	Partially. Whether the hook and/or line is removed is now required, but the type and length of gear left attached is not. To reduce observer workload this data collection would be required for sea turtles only.
INTERACTION WITH VESSEL OR GEAR ONLY		
Vessel's activity during interaction	What was the vessel doing when the interaction took place i.e. setting, hauling, etc.	Yes

Condition observed at start of interaction	Condition of ~~species~~ animal at the start of the interaction (use codes A0-A3, D or U).	Yes (text change only)
Condition observed at end of interaction	Condition of ~~species~~ animal at the end of the interaction (use codes A0-A3, D or U).	Yes (text change only)
Description of interaction	Indicate interaction, with the vessel gear only - caught on line - tangled in net, etc.	Yes
Number of animals sighted	How many animals sighted during interaction.	Yes

Code guidelines for use with Minimum Standard Data Fields

Purse seine Activity and Helicopter Codes	
1	Set
2	Searching
3	Transit
4	No fishing -Breakdown
5	No fishing – Bad weather
6	In port – please specify port
7	Net Cleaning Set
8	Investigate "Free School"
9	Investigate "Floating Object/s"
10R	Retrieve - Raft FAD or Payao
10D	Deploy - Raft, FAD, Payao
11	No fishing – Drifting at day's end
12	No fishing – Drifting with a floating object
13	No Fishing – Other Reason
14	Drifting with Fish aggregating lights
15R	Retrieve Radio beacon/GPS buoy, etc.
15D	Deploy Radio beacon/GPS buoy, etc
16	Transhipping or bunkering
17	Service FAD or floating object
H1	*Helicopter takes off to search*
H2	*Helicopter returns fro search*

Purse seine - "How tuna is Detected Codes"	
1	Seen from Vessel
2	Seen from Helicopter
3	Marked with Beacon
4	Bird Radar
5	Sonar/Depth Sounder
6	Information from other Vessel
7	Anchored FAD/Payao (Previously recorded)

Purse seine – "School Associations (Tuna only)"	
Free Schools	
1	Unassociated with any other object or animal;
2	Unassociated but feeding on Bait Fish only;
Associated Schools	
3	Drifting Log /debris or a dead animal.
4	Drifting, Raft, FAD or Payao
5	Anchored Raft Fad or Payao
6	Live Whale
7	Live Whale Shark
8	Other (please specify)
9	No tuna associated

Fate Codes	
Retained Codes	
RWW	Whole weight
RHG	Headed & Gutted (Billfish only)
RGG	Gilled & Gutted (kept for sale)
RPT	Partially retained (e.g fillet loins etc)
RCC	Retained for crew consumption
ROR	Retained for other reasons (specify)
RFR	Trunk and fins retained (shark only)
Discarded Codes	
DFR	Discarded trunk - fins retained (shark only)
DTS	To small (record only for tuna)
DGD	Gear Damage (record only for tuna)
DVF	Vessel fully loaded (no more storage)
DUS	Unwanted species
DSD	Shark Damage
DWD	Whale Damage
DPQ	Poor quality
DPA	SSI species released alive
DPD	SSI species released dead
DPU	SSI species released in unknown condition
DOR	Other reason for discard.
ESC	Tuna escaped from net.
DAH	Alive Hook/Line removed (SSI & Sharks)

Species Caught and Released - Condition Codes	
A0	Alive but unable to describe condition
A1	Alive and healthy
A2	Alive and injured or distressed
A3	Alive but unlikely to survive
D	Dead
U	Unknown

Species Interaction Code	
G01	Entangled
G02	Hooked Externally
G03	Hooked Internally
G04	Hooked in mouth (SSI & Shark)
G05	Hooked deeply - throat stomach (SSI or Sharks)
G06	Hooked Unknown
G07	Entangled in purse seine net
G08	Entangled in FAD

The guideline Codes in these tables are used by most programmes collecting data for the Commission ROP. The codes in these tables can be used help to describe the Minimum Standard Data fields of the Commission. These data field codes were created by, and used by SPC in their data base; use of these codes will assist in harmonizing data entry.