



SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE
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**PROPOSAL TO AMEND THE REGIONAL OBSERVER PROGRAMME MINIMUM STANDARD DATA FIELDS
AND SCIDATA TO SUPPORT SEA TURTLE CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT**

WCPFC-SC22-2026-EB-WP10
11 July 2026

Submitted by the United States

At WCPFC20, the Commission recommended that SC20 and TCC20 review the current requirements under the [Scientific Data to be provided to the Commission](#) (SciData) to capture sea turtle interaction reporting requirements under CMM 2018-04, paragraphs 5c and 7e (WCPFC20 Summary Report, Para 753e.). SC20 noted that some CCMs have different interpretations of the requirements, thereby limiting collection of valuable data regarding the nature of sea turtle interactions in WCPFC convention area.

SC21 reviewed proposed enhancements to the SciData standards for longline and purse seine fisheries to improve data quality, consistency, and conservation outcomes for sea turtles. The proposed changes included clarifying catch reporting, ensuring operational data fields support identification of shallow-set fisheries, and strengthening the collection of key gear characteristics (e.g., hook type, hook size, and bait type). SC21 agreed that these issues should be considered as part of the intersessional review of CMM 2018-04 on sea turtles, led by the United States, with outcomes to be reported to SC22 and TCC22.

In 2016, the WCPFC convened two ABNJ (Common Oceans) Tuna Project-funded workshops to evaluate the effectiveness of sea turtle mitigation measures in Pacific longline fisheries. The workshops concluded that standardized observer data collection protocols were essential for improving future analyses and recommended updates to the WCPFC Regional Observer Programme (ROP) [Minimum Standard Data Fields](#) (MSDF).

The United States submitted a proposal to WCPFC15, WCPFC15-2018-DP07, which sought to improve observer data collection by strengthening the linkage between catch events and gear information and enhancing the recording of sea turtle interactions. While the proposal was not adopted due to concerns over additional observer workload, many of the proposed changes focused on clarifying instructions for information already being collected rather than creating new reporting requirements.

As the Commission is currently reviewing CMM 2018-04 on sea turtles, the United States considers it timely to revisit these proposed updates.

During the Informal Intersessional Working Group to Review the Conservation and Management Measure (2018-04) for sea turtles ([CMM 2018-04 Review Report](#)), suggestions were made to modify specific data fields in both ROP Minimum Standard Data Fields and SciData to ensure that reporting requirements in CMM 2018-04 are clearly defined and to improve understanding of sea turtle interactions with fisheries.

Based on the above mentioned discussions and outcomes, the United States is proposing the following revisions to the SciData (Annex I) and ROP MSDF (Annex II) in order to improve data on sea turtle interactions in the WCPFC:

Annex I: Proposed Revisions to the Scientific Data to be Provided to the Commission (SciData)

This proposal builds on recommendations previously put forward by the Scientific Services Provider and considered by SC21 ([SC21-ST-WP-05](#)). At that time, members agreed that the proposed enhancements should be considered within the broader context of the review of CMM 2018-04. Accordingly, SC21 agreed that these issues would be addressed through the intersessional review of CMM 2018-04 on sea turtles, led by the United States, with the outcomes to be reported to SC22 and TCC22.

During the Informal Intersessional Working Group reviewing CMM 2018-04, participants noted that the current requirement for annual SciData submissions has been interpreted inconsistently across CCMs, particularly with respect to whether data must be provided at the operational or summary level. Participants also agreed revisions to the current sea turtle reporting requirements would improve understanding of bycatch patterns, and also emphasized the importance of reporting bait type.

The proposed revisions in Annex I are intended to ensure greater alignment between the reporting requirements outlined in CMM 2018-04 and the current SciData requirements, and to allow for more comprehensive data collection on sea turtle interactions in WCPFC fisheries.

Annex II: Proposed Amendments to the WCPFC Regional Observer Programme Minimum Standard Data Fields

The proposed revisions in Annex II largely reflect amendments previously proposed in [WCPFC15-2018-DP07](#). Most changes provide greater clarity to existing data fields, while two additional fields are proposed: one to record hook type and hook size, bait type, and branch line material information that the sea turtle was caught on when a sea turtle interaction occurs, and another to record the type and amount of gear remaining upon release for all species of special interest. The first change would support data collection to comply with provision 7(a)(i) in CMM 2018-04. The latter would also support implementation of paragraph 22 of CMM 2025-06 and may provide useful information for future shark assessments. The proposal to collect data at the interaction level, rather than the set level, reflects the recognition that hook size and type may vary not only between trips, but also within individual sets, and that the use of mixed hook and bait types is common in some fisheries. These considerations were confirmed during discussions at SC21, where members noted that hook size and type can vary within both trips and sets, and that mixed bait types are frequently used ([SC21 Summary Report](#), paragraphs 80–95).

We welcome feedback from SC22 on the proposed changes included in **Annex I** and **Annex II**.

ANNEX I

PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO THE SCIENTIFIC DATA TO BE PROVIDED TO THE COMMISSION

- Revise section 1.3 to add hook size and type (with standardized reporting options) to the longline gear characteristics to comply with provision 7(a)(i) in CMM 2018-04.
- Revise sections 1.3 and 1.5 in Annex 1 to capture interactions with sea turtles.
- Revise Annex 2 tables A2.1.3 and A2.2.4 to add footnotes to the text “and other species as determined by the Commission” in the SPECIES CODE reference text field and in the NOTES columns for the following fields:
 - CATCH NUMBER and CATCH WEIGHT fields to align with the requirements for reporting catches of sea turtles under CMM 2018-04(table A2.1.3)
 - DISCARDED/RELEASED NUMBER field to align with the requirements for reporting catches of sea turtles under CMM 2018-04 (table A2.2.4)

ANNEX II

**PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO THE WCPFC REGIONAL
OBSERVER PROGRAMME MINIMUM STANDARD DATA FIELDS**

SPECIES OF SPECIAL INTEREST Marine Turtles Reptiles, Marine Mammals, Sea b -Birds, certain Designated Shark Species ¹			For Information only; not for inclusion in ROP MSDF
GENERAL INFORMATION		#	Already Collected?
Type of Interaction	Indicate what t Type o f i nteraction, i . e . C caught O n L ine - T angled i n N et, S swimming A round O utside O ff N et, E tc., using the species interaction codes (G01-G06) and new codes for 'entangled in purse seine net (G07)' and 'entangled in FAD (G08)	154	Yes (text change only)
Date and Time of interaction	Record S ship's D ate and T ime of i nteraction	155	Yes (text change only)
Latitude and Longitude of interaction	Record g eographic P osition of the i nteraction.	156	Yes (text change only)
Species Code of Marine Turtle Reptile, Marine Mammal, or Seabird.	Use FAO codes for S species.	158	Yes (text change only)
LANDED ON DECK			
Length of Species	Measure length in c Centimetres.	159	Yes (text change only)
Length Measurement code	Measure using the M measuring M ethod determined for that S species.	160	Yes (text change only)
Sex Gender	Determine the Ssex and record using codes 'male', 'female', 'indeterminate' or 'unknown' the Animal if possible.	161	Yes (text change only)
Estimated Shark Fin Weight by species	Weigh each S species' S shark F fins separately if shark has been f inned by crew, if no scales estimate the weight.	162	Yes (text change only)
Estimated Shark Carcass Weight by species	Weigh each C carcass of a finned shark, if no scales available or body is discarded, or if it is too large to handle; estimate the weight.	163	Yes (no change)
Condition when Landed on Deck	Record What is the C condition of the animals when caught u seusing "Species Caught and Release Condition C -codes" (A0-A3, D and U):	165	Yes (text change only)
Condition when Released	Record What is the C condition of the	166	Yes (text change only)

¹ 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). WCPFC 14 adopted the SC's recommendation.

	<u>animal</u> when discarded use using “Species Caught and Release Condition - <u>Codes</u> ” (A0-A3, D and U);		
Tag Recovery information	Record as much as information as possible on any <u>T</u> ags recovered	167	Yes (text change only)
Tag Release information	Record as much information as possible on any <u>T</u> ags placed on the <u>animal</u> species before being released.	168	Yes (text change only)
<u>Hook, bait and material</u>	<u>For each sea turtle caught, record hook type and hook size using the PSC “Terminal Gear Identification Guide”, the branch line material, and the bait (if known) that the animal was caught on.</u>		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.
<u>Gear remaining when released</u>	<u>If animals are released alive describe whether gear is left attached (yes/no). If yes, describe any gear that is left remaining.</u>		Partially. Whether the hook and/or line is removed is required, but the type and length
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.	169	Yes (no change)
Condition Observed at start of interaction	Condition of <u>animal</u> species at the start of the interaction <u>(use codes A0-A3, D or U).</u>	170	Yes (text change only)
Condition Observed at end of interaction	Condition of <u>animal</u> species at the end of the interaction <u>(use codes A0-A3, D or U)</u>	171	Yes (text change only)
Description of interaction	Indicate interaction, with the vessel gear only - caught on line - tangled in net, etc.	174	Yes (text change only)
Number of Animals Sighted	How many animals are sighted during interaction.	175	Yes (text change only)