

ROP-IWG

22nd REGULAR SESSION of the SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE
11TH – 19TH August 2026
Apia – Samoa

Agenda item 3.3 Regional Observer Programme

WCPFC Compliance Case File System (CCFS) Cases and Next Priorities for the ROPIWG

by IWG-ROP Chair

Purpose

Why this paper is before SC22 (*Draft scope of monitoring (WCPFC-SC22-2026-ST-WP07)*)



Update MSDF

Add or revise ROP Minimum Standard Data Fields to better monitor new or updated CMMs.



Clarify Purpose

Distinguish scientific monitoring needs from compliance data collection by observers.



Improve CCFS Feed

Strengthen how ROP data supports the WCPFC Compliance Case File System.

SC22 is asked to provide feedback on proposals to retain or remove MSDF fields, and on existing or new priorities for the ROP-IWG.

Scope of Obligations Reviewed

Where observers can collect data relevant to potential infringements

Observer Obstruction

Driftnet Prohibition

Fishing on Data Buoys

Marine Pollution

FAD Closure – Tropical PS

Seabirds

Sea Turtles

Mobulid Rays

Sharks

Whale Sharks

Cetaceans

Overall CCM Feedback Summary

High-level direction emerging from ROPIWG08/09 and CCM comments

RETAIN

- Observer Obstruction (strengthen reporting)
- Driftnet prohibition (use para 01)
- Data buoys 01 & 03
- Marine pollution 02 & 03
- FAD additional month
- Sea turtle mitigation (core)
- Mobulid retention prohibitions (04/05)
- Shark full utilisation (07)
- OCS/FAL 01, 02, 04
- Whale shark & Cetacean core rules

REMOVE / LIMIT

- Data buoys para 05 (lacks specificity)
- Marine pollution 05 (non-binding)
- FAD main closure case creation (replace with public notice + debrief)
- OCS/FAL para 03 (unintentional freeze)
- Some proposed SSI fields (157, 173) – safety & practicality

NO AGREEMENT / UNDER DISCUSSION

- Seabird technical specs practicality
- Shark paras 08–09, 14, 15
- Mobulid para 10 (sighting/encircle)
- Cetacean intentional vs unintentional assessment
- New SSI first-sighting & line-length fields

Key Areas (1/3)

Observer Obstruction • Driftnet • Data Buoys • Marine Pollution

RETAIN

Observer Obstruction (CMM 2018-05 15(g))

Keep current MSDF Issue Codes (RS-A/B/D). Strengthen content of observer reporting to give flag CCMs more reliable information for follow-up assessments.

RETAIN

Driftnet Prohibition (CMM 2008-04)

Covered in observer training & diary. Prefer referencing paragraph 01 (more enforceable against vessel operators). Include in debriefing.

MIXED

Fishing on Data Buoys (CMM 2009-05)

Retain 01 & 03 – provide clear observer instructions. Remove 05 – lacks specificity for practical assessment.

MIXED

Marine Pollution (CMM 2017-04)

Retain 02 (plastics) & 03 with robust reporting. Remove 05 (non-binding). Pending outcome of ongoing CMM review.

Key Areas (2/3)

FAD Closure • Seabirds • Sea Turtles • Mobulid Rays

ADJUST

FAD Closure – Tropical Purse Seine (CMM 2025-02)

Main 1½-month closure: remove automated CCFS case creation; instead circulate information widely to observer providers for placement/debrief assessment. Retain monitoring for the additional one-month nominated by flag State.

UNDER REVIEW

Seabirds (CMM 2025-05)

Current MSDF covers tori lines, blue-dyed bait, offal, etc. NZ proposed additional technical fields. One CCM raised practicality concerns (highly technical for a single observer); another questioned para 07 practicality.

RETAIN + LIMIT

Sea Turtles (CMM 2018-04)

Core mitigation & handling already captured. Retain. One CCM recommended removing proposed new fields (SSI first-sighting time & length of line on live animal) – no clear CMM basis and serious practical/safety concerns at sea.

MIXED

Mobulid Rays (CMM 2019-05)

Retain 04 & 05 (limit to retained on board). Remove 06 and possibly 08 (encouragement). No agreement on para 10 (sighting/encirclement) – already collected, could move to debriefing.

Key Areas (3/3)

Sharks • Whale Sharks • Cetaceans

PARTIAL

Sharks – Full Utilisation & Finning (CMM 2025-06 07–09, 14, 15)

Retain para 07 (full utilisation / no finning). No agreement on 08–09, 14 or 15. Observers can report retention/transshipment of fins; some CCMs prefer transshipment observers and port inspection for carcass–fin pairing.

RETAIN MOST

Sharks – Specific Protections (CMM 2025-06 24 (01,02,03,04) OCS & FAL

Retain 01, 02 and 04 (prohibition on retention, safe release, biological sampling). Remove paragraph 03 (unintentional freezing on purse seine). Existing MSDF already supports CCFS case creation.

RETAIN

Whale Sharks (CMM 2025-06 25)

Already captured for purse seine. Cover during debriefing. Same practicality concerns raised on new proposed SSI fields (first-sighting time & line length).

MOSTLY RETAIN

Cetaceans (CMM 2024-07)

Core prohibitions and safe release already supported by MSDF. No agreement on intentional vs unintentional encircling (para 02) – highly dependent on observer judgement and hard for flag State to verify afterwards.

Cross-Cutting Issues

Proposed new SSI data fields & practicality concerns

Proposed New Fields

Row 157 – Time of SSI first sighting (before/after set time)

Row 172 – SSI incidentally encircled in purse seine net

Row 173 – Length of line remaining on live animal released (longline)

These fields appear across Sea Turtles, Mobulids, Whale Sharks and Cetaceans sections.



CCM Concerns

No clear basis in the relevant CMM for these specific fields.

Serious practical and safety concerns about measuring remaining line on a live animal at sea.

Highly technical assessments may be difficult for a single observer under operational conditions.

Science-Related Issues Raised for SC22

01

Shark Species ID & Reporting

SC21 tasked ROP-IWG to assess data gaps (esp. oceanic whitetip sharks)– Low observer reporting rates relative to logbooks in some regions– Diminishing length records since CMM 2011-04– Need practical enhancements for accuracy and consistency

02

MSDF Revisions & Non-Catch Transfers

Ongoing review of Minimum Standard Data Fields– Gaps in non-catch transfer data (provisions, fuel, bait, personnel)– Alignment with electronic monitoring standards

03

Observer Data Flow to SPC

Timeliness and completeness of data transmission– Implications for scientific analyses and stock assessments– Coordination between national programmes and SPC

Next Priorities for the ROP-IWG

Workplan focus once current MSDF review is completed

01

Emerging Technologies & EM Alignment

Continued coordination with ERandEM-IWG to promote common understanding of MSDF, recognise intersection of human observer data and EM outputs, and reduce inconsistencies between systems.

02

Transshipment Observer MSDF Review

Transshipment MSDF entered into force April 2023. Review by ROP-IWG required. Also consider possible data fields for carrier-related forms and non-mandatory fields that may be collectable.

03

Species Reporting Improvements

Sharks: observer data fields, species ID materials and biological sampling. Sea turtles: review of current reporting may require changes to observer data fields.

Recommendations

SC22 is invited to.

A Provide feedback on proposals to retain or remove MSDF fields that would update the current observer Minimum Standard Data Fields for recent changes to Conservation and Management Measures.

B Provide any feedback on existing or new priorities for the ROP-IWG workplan (emerging technologies/EM alignment, transshipment MSDF review, and species reporting improvements).

Next Steps

Once SC22 and TCC22 feedback has been received, the full list of MSDF with notations indicating proposals for change will be prepared for final consideration at WCPFC22.

END

Tank u tumas !!

