



Proposal to Amend the Regional Observer Programme Minimum Standard Data Fields & SciData to Support Sea Turtle Conservation and Management

WCPFC-SC22-2026-EB-WP10

**SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE
TWENTY-SECOND REGULAR SESSION**

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Apia, Samoa

Background Related to Sci Data Changes

- ❑ **WCPFC20:** recommended SC20 & TCC20 to review the current requirements under the Scientific Data to capture sea turtle interaction reporting requirements under CMM 2018-04 [para 5c & 7e] (WCPFC20 Summary Report, Para 753e).
- ❑ **SC21:** SPC—“Strengthening Scientific Data Reporting to Support Sea Turtle Conservation (CMM 2018-04)” (ST-WP-05) proposed changes to improve data quality to enhance conservation outcomes for sea turtles.
 - *Clarify catch reporting, operational data fields support identification of shallow-set fisheries, & strengthen collection of gear characteristics, such as hook type, hook size, and bait type.
- ❑ **SC21:** agreed SciDat reporting requirements to be discussed at CMM 2018-04 Review.
- ❑ **CMM 2018-04 -Review** highlights need to clarify SciData requirements to reduce misinterpretation by CCMs.

Background Related to ROP Minimum Standard Data Fields (MSDF)

- ❑ **WCPFC-SC13:** “Joint Analysis of Sea Turtle Mitigation Effectiveness” (EB-WP-10) WCPFC/ABNJ Tuna workshops evaluated mitigation measures in Pacific longline fisheries.
 - Essential to standardize observer data protocols to improve future analyses & recommended updates to the ROP MSDFs.

- ❑ **WCPFC15:** U.S. proposal (DP07) aimed to improve observer data collection to strengthen the linkage between catch events & gear information– this is critical to better understand factors associated with bycatch & likelihood of post-release survival.
 - Proposal not adopted due to concerns over observer workload, yet most are clarifying data already being collected rather than creating new reporting requirements.
 - Additional work only occurs when a turtle interaction occurs.

- ❑ **CMM 2018-04 Sea Turtle Review** -Highlighted value to collect interaction-specific data to better inform factors associated with turtle bycatch.

Annex I:

Proposed Revisions to the SciData to be Provided to the Commission

- **CMM 2018-04 review**
 - Participants noted that current requirement for SciData submissions were interpreted inconsistently across CCMs, particularly if data must be provided at the operational or summary level.
 - Participants agreed revisions to current sea turtle reporting requirements would improve understanding of bycatch patterns, and emphasized the importance of reporting bait type.
- Proposed revisions ensure greater alignment between reporting requirements in CMM 2018-04 and current SciData requirements and allow for more comprehensive data collection on sea turtle interactions in WCPFC fisheries == FILL THE DATA GAP.

Annex II:

Proposed Amendments to the WCPFC ROP Minimum Standard Data Fields

Previous US proposal - WCPFC15-2018-DPO7.

Changes aimed to provide clarity to existing data fields plus two additional fields, and only specific for terminal gear when a sea turtle is captured:

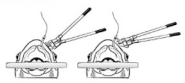
- 1) Record hook type, hook size, bait type, & branch line material that the sea turtle was caught on; and
- 2) Record type & amount of gear remaining upon release for all species of special interest.

Change 1 supports data collection to comply with provision 7(a)(i) in CMM 2018-04.

Change 2: supports information to determine likelihood of survival (and may provide useful information for future shark assessments).

Additional notes on the Need for Improved Data

- This proposal to collect data at the interaction level, rather than the set level, reflects the recognition that hook size, hook type and bait type may vary within sets, and that the use of mixed hook and bait types is common in some fisheries ([SC21 Summary Report](#), paragraphs 80–95).
- The Commission will gain access to a valuable dataset through these updates. This information will facilitate the development of effective models and joint-analyses to analyze factors influencing sea turtle bycatch and mortality, thereby supporting informed management decisions.

WCPFC Guidelines for the Handling of Sea Turtles	
If a turtle is caught, the following steps should be taken to give it the best possible chance of survival. Operators of longline fishing vessels should follow Steps A to E if a sea turtle becomes hooked, and Steps A, C, D and E if it is entangled. If a sea turtle becomes entangled in a purse seine net, then operators should stop net roll as soon as the turtle comes out of the water, disentangle the turtle without injuring it and before resuming the net roll, then follow Steps A, C, D and E.	
A Assess the turtle's size: release the turtle if it is too big to handle safely, otherwise bring it on board without damaging it further	 If the turtle is too large to bring on board, stop the vessel and bring the turtle as close to the boat as possible without putting too much strain on the line. This is especially important if the turtle is hooked rather than entangled. Cut the line as close to the hook as practical and remove tangled line from before the turtle swims away.
B Once the turtle is on board, place a piece of wood in the turtle's mouth so it cannot bite, then cut the hook or line	 If the hook is in the mouth, use a de-hooker to remove the hook from the turtle. Using a bolt cutter to remove the barb of the hook before removing the hook itself can reduce the chance of damaging the turtle during de-hooking.
C Assess the condition of the turtle before releasing it. When the turtle has recovered its strength, gently and promptly release it to the water. Resuscitation treatments may be applied to animals in bad condition.	 If the turtle is sluggish or not active when lifted on board, it may have water in its lungs. In this case the rear flippers should be raised about 20cm off the deck while it is recovering.
D Carefully return the turtle to the water	 Gently put the turtle in the water head first, after slowing down or stopping the fishing vessel. Ensure that the turtle is clear of the vessel before motoring off.
E Record the interaction in your logbook and inform your fisheries department	 Identify and record the turtle species, if possible, and record any tag numbers.

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