



**TECHNICAL AND COMPLIANCE COMMITTEE  
NINTH REGULAR SESSION**

26 September – 1 October 2013  
Pohnpei, Federated States of Micronesia

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**GUIDELINES FOR THE SAFE RELEASE OF ENCIRCLED ANIMALS, INCLUDING  
WHALE SHARKS - Attachment H to the SC9 Summary Report**

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**WCPFC-TCC9-2013-IP11**

**20 September 2013**

Paragraph 471 of the SC9 Summary Report says:

471. An informal small group (ISG-2) met in the margins of SC9 to consider the issue of draft guidelines for the safe release of encircled animals, including whale sharks. Guidelines were further discussed, and are attached as Attachment H. This draft will be forwarded to TCC9 for further consideration.

**The Commission for the Conservation and Management of  
Highly Migratory Fish Stocks in the Western and Central Pacific Ocean**

**Scientific Committee  
Ninth Regular Session**

Pohnpei, Federated States of Micronesia  
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**Guidelines for the safe release of encircled animals, including whale sharks**

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**Summary**

An Informal Small Group 2 (ISG2) meeting was held during the WCPFC SC9 in Pohnpei, FSM on 7 August 2013. Seven (7) SC9 participants took part in the meeting and discussed the development of guideline for the safe release of encircled animals, including whale sharks followed by the discussion in the WCPFC SC8, 2012. Discussion made by the ISG in 2012 was forwarded to the TCC8, 2012, however, there was no discussion at the TCC8. WCPFC9 noted the need to continue development of science-based guidelines through discussions at SC and TCC, including establishing field tests to assess handling, post-release mortality, practicality and effectiveness (WCPFC9 summary report, 2012).

**(a) Additional information for the guideline**

There was no new additional information regarding safe release methodology of encircled animals after WCPFC SC8 ISG3 discussion. Therefore, ISG2 recommended guideline for the safe release adheres fundamentally to the attachment G in summary report of WCPFC SC8 in 2012. In addition to this, the ISG2 considered following items in general principles of the guideline in case CCMs develop new methods for the safe release of encircled animals, including whale sharks.

- In case CCMs develop new methods for the safe release of encircled animals, including whale sharks under its analysis used by their purse seine vessels, these methods will be reported and considered to be added as possible release methods in this guideline at WCPFC SC.

**(b) Research recommendation**

Following items are necessarily to be considered to investigate post release mortality of encircled animals after release. Developing a concrete plan for final research goals, schedule, achievability and budget are absolutely imperative. Research should be conducted by each nation's responsibility or within regional observer program (ROP). To conduct such research, an intentional setting of net around whale shark should not be done.

**Items for investigating post release mortality of encircled animals**

- Observe swimming behavior of encircled animals to find alternative release methods during purse seine operation
- Record swimming behavior and conditions before and after release
- Record detailed release method, whale shark size and conditions during release
- Develop the techniques on how to attach satellite tag to whale sharks
- Develop analytical methods on how to estimate viability of whale sharks after release based on satellite tag data

ISG2 discussed the need to collect information on methods for attaching tags to whale sharks as there are no established methods for attaching satellite tags to whale shark during purse seine operations. ISG participants were requested to investigate reliable methods for attaching satellite tags to whale sharks during purse seine operations, and to report on any developments at SC10.