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Revisions to CMM 2008-03 Conservation and Management Measure of Sea Turtles

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Paper by USA

CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT OF SEA TURTLES

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

In accordance with the Convention on the Conservation and Management of Highly Migratory Fish Stocks in the Western and Central Pacific Ocean:

Recognizing the ecological and cultural significance of all species of sea turtles in the western and central Pacific Ocean (WCPO);

Further recognizing that the five marine turtle species in the WCPFC Convention Area are threatened or critically endangered;

Considering the adverse effects of fishing for highly migratory fish stocks on some populations of sea turtles in the WCPO through capture, injury and mortality;

~~*Recalling that the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) endorsed Guidelines to Reduce Sea Turtle Mortality in Fishing Operations at its twenty-sixth Session of the Committee on Fisheries, held in March 2005, and recommended their implementation by regional fisheries bodies and management organizations;*~~

~~*Noting that recent international scientific studies using large circle hooks in shallow-set pelagic longline fishing targeting swordfish show, when compared to conventional hooks, significantly lower sea turtle catch rates without undue adverse effects on catch rates of target species;*~~

~~*Further noting that scientific studies indicate circle hooks' further mitigative effects for sea turtles and other incidentally caught species in terms of post-release mortality, as the hooking locations tend to be such that resultant injuries are less severe than with conventional hooks;*~~

~~*Further noting that regardless of what hook type is used, international scientific studies using finfish bait show when compared to squid bait, significantly lower sea turtle catch rates in shallow-set pelagic longline swordfish fisheries;*~~

~~*Acknowledging that the Commission has adopted measures and reporting requirements for sea turtle interactions in longline fisheries that fish for swordfish in a shallow-set manner;*~~

~~*Deeply concerned that the Pacific leatherback (*Dermochelys coriacea*) subpopulations have declined drastically over the last three decades;*~~

~~*Guided by recent work that has led to advancements in best practices and technologies to avoid interactions and/or reduce the severity of interactions with sea turtles, through scientific studies including WCPFC and Common Oceans (ABNJ) Tuna Project workshops (2016) on the Joint Analysis of Sea Turtle Mitigation Effectiveness, and scientific studies that which indicate that*~~

the use of large circle hooks and fish bait, independently and together, reduce the rate of interaction and significantly decreases sea turtle bycatch when used in shallow and deep set pelagic longline fishing;

Acknowledging that many countries have undertaken circle hook trials in their longline fisheries in the last decade;

Affirming that additional measures should be undertaken to reduce sea turtle bycatch and mortality in tuna fisheries;

Acknowledging that relatively simple proactive and reactive efforts on the part of fishermen can serve to both avoid sea turtle interactions and minimize the adverse consequences of such interactions when they occur;

Noting that shallow set longline fisheries also pose significant risks to vulnerable seabird populations in higher latitudes and the necessity it necessary to achieve a balance in mitigation requirements across species vulnerable to longline interactions;

~~*Recognizing that the Inter American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC) adopted, at its 75th meeting, a Resolution to Mitigate the Impact of Tuna Fishing Vessels on Sea Turtles that includes mandatory provisions to apply to purse seine and longline vessels;*~~

~~*Recalling Article 22 of the Convention, which provides for cooperation with other organizations, particularly the IATTC, with a view to avoiding duplication of, and achieving consistency in, conservation and management measures;*~~

Adopts, in accordance with Articles 5 and 10 of the Convention, that:

1. Commission Members, Cooperating non-Members and participating Territories (CCMs) will implement, as appropriate the FAO Guidelines to Reduce Sea Turtle Mortality in Fishing Operations and ~~to~~ ensure the safe handling of all captured sea turtles, in order to improve their survival.
2. ~~Beginning in 2009,~~ CCMs shall report to the Commission in Part 2 of their annual reports the progress of implementation of ~~the FAO Guidelines and~~ this measure, including information collected on interactions with sea turtles in fisheries managed under the Convention.
3. All data collected by the WCPFC Regional Observer Program (ROP); on sea turtle interactions shall be reported ~~to the Commission as provided in paragraph 2 above or as~~ agreed to under other Commission data collection provisions.
4. CCMs shall require fishermen on vessels targeting species covered by the Convention to bring aboard, if practicable, any captured hard-shell sea turtle that is comatose or inactive as soon as possible and foster its recovery, including giving it resuscitation, before returning it to the water. CCMs shall ensure that fishermen are aware of and use proper mitigation and

handling techniques, as described in WCPFC guidelines ~~to be developed and provided to all CCMs by the Secretariat.~~

5. CCMs with purse seine vessels that fish for species covered by the Convention shall:

- a. Ensure that operators of such vessels, while fishing in the Convention Area:
 - i. To the extent practicable, avoid encirclement of sea turtles, and if a sea turtle is encircled or entangled, take practicable measures to safely release the turtle.
 - ii. To the extent practicable, release all sea turtles observed entangled in fish aggregating devices (FADs) or other fishing gear.
 - iii. If a sea turtle is entangled in the net, stop net roll as soon as the turtle comes out of the water; disentangle the turtle without injuring it before resuming the net roll; and to the extent practicable, assist the recovery of the turtle before returning it to the water.
 - iv. Carry and employ dip nets, when appropriate, to handle turtles.
- b. Require that operators of such vessels record all incidents involving sea turtles during fishing operations and report such incidents to the appropriate authorities of the CCM.
- c. Provide the results of the reporting under paragraph 5(b) to the Commission in their annual reporting of Scientific Data to be Provided to the Commission as part of the reporting requirement of paragraph 2.
- d. Provide to the Commission the results of any research related to the development of modified FAD designs to reduce sea turtle entanglement and take measures to encourage the use of designs found to be successful at such reduction.

6. CCMs with longline vessels that fish for species covered by the Convention shall ensure that the operators of all such longline vessels carry and use line cutters and de-hookers to handle and promptly release sea turtles caught or entangled, and that they do so in accordance with WCPFC guidelines ~~that are to be developed and provided to all CCMs by the Secretariat.~~ CCMs shall also ensure that operators of such vessels are, where appropriate, required to carry and use dip-nets in accordance with these WCPFC guidelines.

7. ~~Starting on 1 January 2010,~~ CCMs with longline vessels that fish ~~for swordfish~~ in a shallow-set manner¹ shall:

¹ “Shallow-set” fisheries are generally to be considered those in which the majority of hooks fish at depth shallower than 100 meters; however pursuant to paragraph 7(c) CCMs are to establish and enforce their own operational definitions.

- a. Ensure that the operators of such vessels, while in the Convention Area, are required to employ or implement at least one of the following three methods to mitigate the capture of sea turtles:
 - i. Use only large circle hooks, which are fishing hooks that are generally circular or oval in shape and originally designed and manufactured so that the point is turned perpendicularly back to the shank. These hooks shall have an offset not to exceed 10 degrees.
 - ii. Use only ~~whole~~ finfish for bait.
 - iii. Use any other measure, mitigation plan² or activity that has been reviewed by the Scientific Committee (SC) and the Technical and Compliance Committee (TCC) and approved by the Commission to be capable of reducing the interaction rate (observed numbers per hooks fished) of turtles in ~~swordfish~~ shallow-set longline fisheries.
- b. The requirements of paragraph 7(a) need not be applied to those shallow-set ~~swordfish~~-longline fisheries determined by the SC, based on information provided by the relevant CCM, to have minimal³ observed interaction rates of sea turtles over a three-year period and a level of observer coverage of at least 10% during each of those three years.
- c. For the purpose of implementing this paragraph (7), establish and enforce their own operational definitions of shallow-set ~~swordfish~~-longline fisheries, large circle hooks, and any measures under 7(a)(iii) or adopted by the Commission under paragraph 12, ensuring that they are as enforceable as possible, and report these definitions to the Commission in Part 2 of their annual reports.
- d. Provide for their longline vessels to record all incidents involving sea turtles during fishing operations and report such incidents to the appropriate authorities of the CCM.
- e. Provide the results of the reporting under paragraph 7(d) in their annual reporting of Scientific Data to be Provided to the Commission ~~as part of the reporting requirement of paragraph 2.~~

8. CCMs with longline fisheries other than shallow-set ~~swordfish~~-fisheries are urged to:

- a. Undertake research trials of circle hooks and other mitigation methods in those longline fisheries.
- b. Report the results of these trials to the SC and TCC, at least 60 days in advance of

² A mitigation plan details the actions that will be taken to achieve specified reductions in sea turtle interactions.

³ ~~To be~~As determined by SC5.

the annual meetings of these subsidiary bodies.

9. The SC and TCC will ~~annually~~ review ~~the~~ information reported by CCMs pursuant to this measure. Where necessary an updated suite of mitigation measures, specifications for mitigation measures, or recommendations for their application will be developed by these committees and provided to the Commission for its consideration and review.

10. This measure authorizes the Secretariat to obligate resources available to the Special Requirements Fund to be used to assist developing State Members and Territories in implementing the FAO Guidelines to Reduce Sea Turtle Mortality. These funds can be used to train and encourage fishers to adopt appropriate methods and technologies to reduce interactions with sea turtles and to mitigate their adverse effects.

11. The Commission urges CCMs to contribute to the Special Requirements Fund to support eligible members in their efforts to implement this measure, or to provide such support through bilateral arrangements.

12. This measure will be reviewed by the Commission in 2021 to consider expanding the scope of the measure to include ~~will regularly consider additional or new~~ mitigation measures for deep-set ~~other~~ longline ~~and purse seine~~ fisheries, based on advice from the SC and TCC and on information provided by CCMs pursuant to this measure.

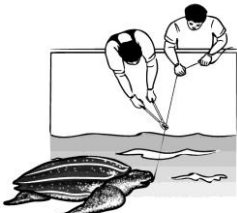
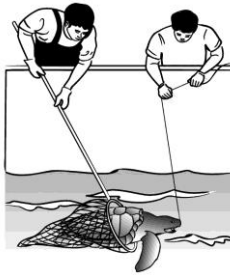
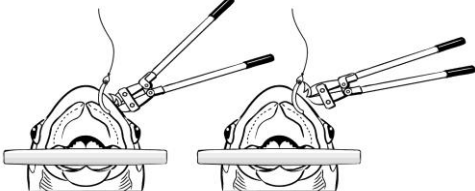

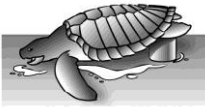



~~The Secretariat, in coordination with interested CCMs, shall develop guidelines for the handling of sea turtles and distribute them to CCMs no later than June 30, 2009.~~

13. Nothing in this measure shall prejudice the sovereignty and sovereign rights of coastal States, including for traditional fishing activities and the rights of traditional artisanal fishers, to apply alternative measures for the purpose of exploring, exploiting, conserving and managing sea turtles, including any national plans of action for the conservation and management of sea turtles, within areas under their national jurisdiction.

14. This measure will take effect on 1 January 2020, and shall replace CMM 2008-03.

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.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| <p>A</p> | <p>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</p> | |
|  <p>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.</p> | |  <p>If the turtle is small then ideally use a dip net to lift the turtle on board. When bringing the animal on board, do not damage it further by lifting it using the hooked line or gaffing its body.</p> |
| <p>B</p> | <p>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</p> | |
|  <p>If the hook is in the mouth, use a de-hooker to remove the hook from the turtle.</p> <p>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.</p> | |  <p>If the insertion point of the hook is not visible, remove as much line as possible without pulling too hard on the hook itself, and cut the line as close to the hook as practical.</p> |
| <p>C</p> | <p>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.</p> | |
|  <p>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.</p> | |  <p>If practicable, place the turtle in a secure shaded location of the boat and cover its body with wet towels. Do not spray the turtle in the face with water or cover its nostrils with the towel.</p> |
| <p>D</p> | <p>Carefully return the turtle to the water</p> | <p>E</p> <p>Record the interaction in your logbook and inform your fisheries department</p> |
| <p>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.</p>  | | <p>Identify and record the turtle species, if possible, and record any tag numbers.</p>  |

HANDLING OF TURTLES ENTANGLED BY LONGLINE GEAR

The point of this guidance is to encourage removal of as much line as possible before the turtle is free to swim away.

Visually assess whether the turtle is **hooked or entangled**. If it is entangled then the following steps should be followed, depending on whether the turtle is **dead or alive**. Note that it may be difficult to tell if the turtle is dead or alive when it is still in the water.

(1) Turtle looks dead and is too big to bring onboard:

If the turtle is too **big** to bring onboard, cut loose as much of the tangled lines as possible using a line cutter.

(2) Turtle is alive but too big to bring onboard:

Visually assess if the turtle is:

- A) Entangled only: use the line cutter to cut off the tangled lines in the water.
- B) Entangled and hooked externally: remove the hook if possible and then use the line cutter to cut off the tangled lines in the water.
- C) Entangled and hooked internally: follow the established procedure for handling a hooked turtle.
- D) Entangled turtle (heavily entangled): a gaff may be used to restrain the turtle by the tangled lines. Use the line cutter to cut off the tangled lines in the water, taking care not to cut the lines that are used to control the turtle before other lines have been cut and removed. More than one person may be required to assist, in order to prevent the turtle swimming away while still tangled.

(3) Turtle is small enough to be brought onboard:

If the turtle is **alive** then established guidelines should be applied (comatose handling, revival, and release). If it is **dead**, it should be brought on board to be measured and identified.