



**SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE
SEVENTEENTH REGULAR SESSION**
Electronic Meeting
11 – 19 August 2021

PROVISIONAL ONLINE DISCUSSION FORUM TOPICS

WCPFC-SC17-2021/04 ([Rev.01](#))

Note: A new TOPIC 25 is added in this list and the SC17-ODF website.

BACKGROUND

The Secretariat introduced the online discussion forum (ODF, <https://forum.wcpfc.int>) webpage in 2020, and SC16 was the first meeting to use the ODF platform to “facilitate discussions mostly on the 2020 SC projects and other items that were omitted from the SC16 abbreviated agenda but required acknowledgment by the SC16 in order to facilitate their progression in 2020.” Those items omitted from the abbreviated agenda were covered by the ODF as “Topics” of the ODF, and this paper provides a list of Topics for consideration on the ODF platform for SC17.

During the use of the ODF platform last year, there were two points that were highlighted namely:

- 1) How to incorporate the outcomes of the ODF exchanges into the SC plenary work if the ODF is not formally part of the SC plenary; and
- 2) How to manage the ODF discussions on SC projects that may require formal determination by the SC plenary as to their extension or closure?

Regarding 1), the Secretariat produced a *Summary of Online Discussion Forum* which was considered under the Agenda Item “*Other Matters*” for SC plenary, noting with all key substantial discussions deferred to 2021. Regarding 2), the *Summary of Online Discussion Forum* also highlighted the outcomes of communications of each SC project-related Topic under the heading “*Summary of Input from CCMs on the Progress of SC Projects*”. Where there were no objections raised from CCMs on the outputs of the project, the Secretariat would consider that the project can be formally closed or extended, as the case may be. At the plenary, progress of those 2020 projects was briefly introduced and completed under the Agenda Item *SC Work Programme and Budget*.

The Secretariat found that the ODF was a useful tool for some authors who wished to get any feedback from SC participants on their work as those information papers would not be covered at all at the plenary meeting. So, the Secretariat accommodated requests from authors who wished to post their papers on the ODF webpage, noting that they would be responsible to respond to any comments and questions as needed.

GUIDELINES FOR THE USE OF ODF IN 2021

Reviewing the progress we had last year, the following guidelines are proposed for the use of the ODF for SC17:

- 1) All SC projects that are omitted from the abbreviated agenda of the virtual plenary session will be considered on the ODF and their outputs will be finalized in plenary under the Agenda Item *SC Work Programme and Budget*;
- 2) Some information papers can be posted on the ODF if requested by the authors who wish to get feedback on their papers, noting that authors are fully responsible to provide feedback for any comments or questions, as needed.
- 3) This website is accessed by any approved SC17 participants. After the closure of the ODF, the Secretariat will produce a *Summary of Online Discussion Forum* that summarizes the exchanges on each Topic, which will be noted under the SC17 Agenda Item “Other Matters,” and may take an appropriate action as needed. Considering the continued overall disruptive impacts of the global COVID-19 pandemic on the work of the Commission, any substantive discussions and decisions related to Topic issues can be deferred to SC18. Any ‘non-controversial’ recommendations that are not requiring any substantial discussions or negotiations, e.g., “This project will continue in 2022,” can be introduced and endorsed under appropriate SC17 agenda items, either “*Work Programme and Budget*” or “*Other Matters*.”

Finally, for the efficient Q&A process, all participants are requested to prefix a comment or question when starting your input as shown below for efficient response by the authors:

- COMMENT: My comment on section 3.5 of the paper SC16-GN-IP-01 is ...
- QUESTION: My question on section 3.5 of the paper SC16-GN-IP-01 is ...

LIST OF ONLINE DISCUSSION FORUM TOPICS

TOPIC 1. Review of the WCPO fisheries

- **Task:** SC participants will review the WCPO tuna fisheries report and raise questions or provide comments as needed.
- **Responsibility:** SPC
- **Related papers:**

SC17-GN-IP-01	P. Williams and T. Ruaia. Overview of tuna fisheries in the Western and Central Pacific Ocean, including economic conditions – 2020
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TOPIC 2. Review of the Eastern Pacific Ocean fisheries

- **Task:** SC participants will review the EPO tuna fisheries report and raise questions or provide comments as needed.
- **Responsibility:** IATTC
- **Related papers:**

SC17-GN-IP-02	IATTC. The Tuna Fishery in the Eastern Pacific Ocean in 2020
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TOPIC 3. Trial publishing of Annual Catch and Effort (ACE) tables

- **Task:** As recommended by TCC16 (Para 101, TCC16 Summary Report) and endorsed by the Commission (Para 312i, WCPFC17 Summary Report), SC participants will review Section 4.2 (latest development on the Annual Catch Estimates (ACE) tables) of SC17-ST-WP-01 on the the feasibility of expanding the ACE tables to include additional estimates of effort where it is practicable to be derived based on the April 30 scientific data submissions from CCMs, and raise questions or provide comments as needed.
- **Responsibility:** WCPFC Secretariat and SPC
- **Related papers:**

SC17-ST-WP-01	SPC-OFP. Scientific data available to the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission
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TOPIC 4. Project 60 – Species composition of purse seine catches

- **Task:** SC participants will review the progress and outcomes of Project 60 and raise questions or provide comments as needed. Attention is drawn to the request that, in light of COVID-related restrictions on planned fieldwork in 2020/21, the paper seeks approval to carry over unused funds into 2022.
- **Responsibility:** SPC
- **Related papers:**

SC17-ST-IP-04	T. Peatman, P. Williams, S. Nicol. Project 60: Progress towards achieving SC16 recommendations
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TOPIC 5. Better size data for scientific analyses (Project 90)

- **Task:** WCPFC17 endorsed the extension of Project 90 to 57 months from January 2019 through September 2023 (\$27K for 2021 and \$75K for 2022). Comprehensive reports would be prepared for SC17 and SC18, and a final report for SC19. SC participants will review the progress of Project 90 and raise questions or provide comments as needed for 2022 project activities.

- **Responsibility:** SPC
- **Related papers:**

SC17-ST-IP-05	J. Macdonald, et al. Project 90 update: Better data on fish weights and lengths for scientific analyses
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TOPIC 6. Training observers for elasmobranch biological sampling (Project 109)

- **Task:** As recommended by SC16, WCPFC17 endorsed Project 109 for the training of observers to collect elasmobranch biological material for age growth and reproduction. SC participants will review the progress of this project and raise questions or provide comments as needed. Attention is drawn to the request that, in light of COVID-related restrictions on planned fieldwork in 2020/21, the paper seeks approval to carry over unused funds into 2022.
- **Responsibility:** SPC
- **Related papers:**

SC17-ST-IP-07	SPC. Training observers for elasmobranch biological sampling (Project 109)
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TOPIC 7. Electronic monitoring for improved accountability in western Pacific tuna longline fisheries

- **Task:** SC participants will review the effectiveness of electronic monitoring in comparison with logbook and human observer data in the paper and raise questions or provide comments as needed.
- **Responsibility:** Paper authors
- **Related papers:**

SC17-ST-IP-12	C.J. Brown, A. Desbiens, M.D. Campbell, E.T. Game, E. Gilman, R.J. Hamilton, C. Heberer, D. Itano, K. Pollock. Electronic monitoring for improved accountability in western Pacific tuna longline fisheries
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TOPIC 8. Tuna Research Plan

- **Task:** SPC updated the *Draft research plan for 'key' tuna species in the WCPO* (SC16-SA-IP-20) with the latest understanding of SC activities to highlight some important research and development areas arising from the most recent stock assessment discussions. SC participants should consider the draft and raise questions or provide comments, inputs and updates as needed.
- **Responsibility:** SPC
- **Related papers:**

SC17-SA-IP-05	SPC-OFP Updated draft research plan for 'key' tuna species in the WCPO
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TOPIC 9. Bomb radiocarbon age validation for bigeye and yellowfin tuna (Project 105)

- **Task:** The objective of Project 105 is to test the validity of age estimates for bigeye and yellowfin tuna from the WCPO using bomb radiocarbon dating. This project continues to August 2022. The SC participants will review the progress report and raise questions or provide comments as needed.
- **Responsibility:** CSIRO
- **Related papers:**

SC17-SA-IP-09	A. Andrews, K. Okamoto, K. Satoh, F. Rouspard, J. Farley. Progress report on bomb radiocarbon age validation for bigeye and yellowfin tunas in the WCPO (Project 105)
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TOPIC 10. Aging of South Pacific albacore (Project 106)

- **Task:** The budget of this project was covered by the unspent fund from Project 81 (\$23K). SC17 will review improvements of ageing South Pacific albacore, focusing on the New Zealand troll fishery, for input into the 2021 stock assessment, and raise questions or provide comments as needed.
- **Responsibility:** CSIRO
- **Related papers:**

SC17-SA-IP-10	J. Farley, K. Krusic-Golub, P. Eveson. Updating age and growth parameters for South Pacific albacore (project 106)
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TOPIC 11. Southwest Pacific striped marlin population biology (Project 99)

- **Task:** The CSIRO and Fish Ageing Services (FAS) of Australia provided a progress report for Project 99 to SC16 relating to assessing age, growth and maturity estimates for Southwest Pacific striped marlin (SC16-SA-IP-21). The aim of the project is to evaluate the suitability of otoliths for providing estimates of age and growth, and to evaluate the histological criteria used to determine maturity status of females. The SC participants will review the final report and raise questions or provide comments as needed.
- **Responsibility:** CSIRO
- **Related papers:**

SC17-SA-IP-11	J. Farley, P. Eveson, K. Krusic-Golub, K. Kopf. Review of southwest Pacific striped marlin population biology (Project 99)
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TOPIC 12. Feasibility of close-kin mark-recapture (CKMR) assessment for South Pacific albacore in the WCPFO (Project 100b)

- **Task:** This project, funded by the SPC, provides an initial examination of its suitability of CKMR for South Pacific albacore in the WCPO for estimation of population size, reproductive potential, mortalities, and connectivity. The SC participants will consider the results of this project and raise questions or provide comments as needed.
- **Responsibility:** CSIRO
- **Related papers:**

SC17-SA-IP-14	M. Bravington, S. Nicol, G. Anderson. Feasibility of Close-Kin Mark-Recapture for albacore in the WCPO (Project 100b)
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TOPIC 13. A compendium of fisheries indicators for target tuna stocks

- **Task:** Indicator papers provide empirical information on recent patterns in fisheries for all 'key' target tuna species (skipjack, bigeye, yellowfin and South Pacific albacore tuna) with explanatory details for the figures and a brief interpretation of the trends. The SC participants will review updates on fisheries indicators and raise questions or provide comments as needed.
- **Responsibility:** SPC
- **Related papers:**

SC17-SA-IP-15	S. Hare et al. A compendium of fisheries indicators for target tuna stocks in the WCPFC Convention Area
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TOPIC 14. Population projections for oceanic whitetip shark (Project 102)

- **Task:** The purpose of this US-funded project is to develop future projections for the 2019 WCPO oceanic whitetip stock assessment to assess the impacts of future fishing mortality on recovery

timelines. The SC participants will review updates on fisheries indicators and raise questions or provide comments as needed.

- **Responsibility:** USA
- **Related papers:**

SC17-SA-IP-21	USA. Population projections for oceanic whitetip shark (Project 102)
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TOPIC 15. Retrospective forecasting of CPUE for South Pacific albacore

- **Task:** The harvest strategy work plan for 2021 is for SC17 to provide advice on the performance of candidate management procedures for South Pacific albacore tuna, with the Commission to adopt a management procedure in 2022. SC participants will review the related document, consider the recommendation to explore alternative empirical and model-based estimation approaches for South Pacific albacore, and raise questions or provide comments as needed.
- **Responsibility:** SPC
- **Related papers:**

SC17-MI-IP-01	N. Yao et al. Retrospective forecasting of CPUE for South Pacific albacore
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TOPIC 16. Acoustic FAD analysis (Project 88)

- **Task:** The objective of the acoustic FAD analysis is to i) identify whether acoustic buoys on drifting FADs could provide new fishery independent data for stock assessments (e.g., indices of abundance), and ii) identify whether limiting sets to only those FADs that have a large biomass beneath them can reduce the levels of small bigeye and yellowfin caught. This project was funded through the EU's voluntary contribution and the WCPFC's 20% matching fund. Duration of the project is 18 months, closing in September 2021. SC participants will review the final report of Project 88 and its recommendations, in particular the need for additional data covering the whole WCPFC Convention Area and encouragement for other industry partners to become involved in the project, and raise questions or provide comments as needed.
- **Responsibility:** SPC
- **Related papers:**

SC17-MI-IP-05	L. Escalle et al. Project 88 final report: FAD acoustics analysis
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TOPIC 17. North Pacific albacore MSE framework

- **Task:** SC participants will note the work undertaken by the ISC on the development of management strategy evaluation for North Pacific albacore tuna. A Youtube presentation is available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eOX4E6CsCds>. SC participants are encouraged to give comments and/or ask clarifications on the ISC reports.
- **Responsibility:** ISC
- **Related papers:**

SC17-MI-IP-08	ISC-Albacore Working Group. Report of the North Pacific Albacore Tuna Management Strategy Evaluation
SC17-GN-IP-03	ISC. Report of the 21st Meeting of the International Scientific Committee for Tuna and Tuna-like Species in the North Pacific Ocean

TOPIC 18. Potential options for managing swordfish taken as bycatch

- **Task:** Australia is providing an update to Information Paper SC16-MI-IP-22 (*A review of potential options for managing swordfish taken as bycatch in longline fisheries*), which was considered under

SC16-ODF, Topic 14. SC participants are encouraged to give comments and/or ask clarifications on this paper.

- **Responsibility:** Australia
- **Related papers:**

SC17-MI-IP-10	Australia. An updated review of potential options for managing swordfish taken as bycatch in longline fisheries
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TOPIC 19. Progress of Shark Research Plan

- **Task:** WCPFC17 adopted the 2021-2025 Shark Research Plan. SC17 will review the progress on the 2021 – 2025 Shark Research Plan and raise questions or provide comments as needed.
- **Responsibility:** WCPFC Secretariat and SPC
- **Related papers:**

SC17-EB-IP-02	WCPFC Secretariat et al. Progress of Shark research plan
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TOPIC 20. Review of non-entangling and biodegradable FAD trials in the WCPO (Project 110)

- **Task:** The Commission endorsed Project 110 funded mainly by the EU and 20% matching fund provided by the USA and ISSF. The project is scheduled to start on 1 February 2021 and complete by 31 July 2023 (30 months). SC participants may consider the progress and future plan of the project and raise questions or provide comments as needed. Attention is drawn to the request that, in light of ongoing COVID-related restrictions on planned fieldwork, the paper seeks a no-cost extension to the project time period of at least a further year.
- **Responsibility:** SPC
- **Related papers:**

SC17-EB-IP-03	L. Escalle, G. Moreno and P. Hamer. Report of Project 110: Non-entangling and biodegradable FAD trial in the Western and Central Pacific Ocean
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TOPIC 21. Guidelines for non-entangling and biodegradable FADs

- **Task:** WCPFC 17 noted the report of the FAD Management Options IWG (WCPFC17-2020-FADMgmtOptions) and accepted its recommendations to continue to engage intersessionally to progress outstanding work. WCPFC17 further noted that FAD Management Options IWG prepared a revised set of guidelines for non-entangling and biodegradable FADs reflected in FADMO-IWG-04-2020/WP-02. As requested by the WCPFC17 in Para 349 of the WCPFC17 Summary Report, SC participants will review the draft guidelines for non-entangling and biodegradable FADs and provide any inputs for consideration by the FAD-IWG. SC17 may review and endorse under Agenda Item 8.1 the compilation of participants’ inputs on the guidelines for the FAD-IWG’s consideration.
- **Responsibility:** FAD Management Options IWG
- **Related papers:**

SC17-EB-IP-07	WCPFC FAD Management Options IWG. Guidelines for Non-entangling and Biodegradable FAD Materials (FADMO-IWG-04-2020-WP-02)
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TOPIC 22. Best handling and release for sharks

- **Task:** SC participants will review the paper on improving the best handling and release practices for sharks in tuna purse seiners using hopper with ramp devices. SC participants are encouraged to give comments and/or ask clarifications on the paper.
- **Responsibility:** Jefferson Murua

- **Related papers:**

SC17-EB-IP-13	Murua, J., Ferarios, J.M., Grande, M., Onandia, I., and Santiago, J. Improving on deck best handling and release practices for sharks in tuna purse seiners using hopper with ramp devices
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TOPIC 23. Seabird mitigation measures on small-scale longline vessels north of 23° North

- **Task:** SC participants will review the seabird mitigation paper and raise questions or provide comments as needed. [The proposed recommendation text will be considered under the SC17 Agenda Item 5.3.1.](#)
- **Responsibility:** Emily Crigler
- **Related papers:**

SC17-EB-IP-15	E. Crigler. Seabird mitigation measures on small-scale longline vessels north of 23° North
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TOPIC 24. Proposal for conducting a scientific survey by Chinese fishery research vessel "Song Hang" in the WCPFC area

- **Task:** China as a member country is planning to conduct a five-year scientific survey program using its fishery research vessel "Song Hang" with longline as main gear in the WCPFC Convention Area. The survey will aim to collect fundamental data and conduct experiments for improving the commission's scientific research relating to support better management advice. Main activities include: i) Collecting fishery-independent data including catch and effort and biological data for common species caught by longline; ii) Sampling for the study of the stock structure of target and bycatch species; iii) Assessing the influence of different types of longline hooks and baits on catch rate and survival rate of bycatch species; iv) Investigating the mechanisms of moving and aggregating of main species by incorporating environmental factors, and v) Conducting tagging and releasing experiments for sharks and other bycatch species when incidentally caught. SC participants will review the seabird mitigation paper and raise questions or provide comments as needed.
- **Responsibility:** Zhe Geng, Cheng Zhou, Xiaojie Dai, Feng Wu, Jiangfeng Zhu
- **Related papers:**

SC17-RP-SS-2021-01	Z. Geng, C. Zhou, X. Dai, F. Wu, J. Zhu. Proposal for conducting a scientific survey by Chinese fishery research vessel "Song Hang" in the WCPFC area
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TOPIC 25. Broadbill swordfish movements and transition rates across stock assessment spatial regions in the western and central Pacific

- **Task:** This information paper details a new approach to modelling transition and movement rates of broadbill swordfish across spatial boundaries included in the stock assessment for the species and explores rates across a scenario of additional boundaries. The method suggests lower transition rates than previously used in assessments. SC members are encouraged to review this new approach and provide comments on its utility for providing transition and movement rates for future stock assessments.
- **Responsibility:** Toby Patterson, Karen Evans and Richard Hillary
- **Related papers:**

SC17-SA-IP-17	T. Patterson, K. Evans, R. Hillary. Broadbill swordfish movements and transition rates across stock assessment spatial regions in the western and central Pacific
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TOPIC 26. Assessing and addressing cetacean bycatch in tuna fisheries – A collaborative project proposed to Common Oceans ABNJ Tuna Phase II

- **Task:** The International Whaling Commission has submitted a proposed project capsule within the framework of the GEF/FAO [Common Oceans ABNJ Tuna II project](#). The objective of the capsule is to improve the understanding of cetacean bycatch in tuna fisheries – and the available solutions for mitigation - in collaboration with RFMOs, national governments, fishing industry and other stakeholders. The proposed project is geographically focused in two regions: the western-central Pacific and the Indian Ocean. A range of activities are proposed to collaboratively identify and fill data and knowledge gaps and build capacity and awareness of both the issue and the solutions for monitoring and mitigation. SC participants are encouraged to give comments and/or ask clarifications on the paper.
- **Responsibility:** IWC Secretariat
- **Related papers:**

SC17-EB-IP-18	IWC Secretariat. Assessing and addressing cetacean bycatch in tuna fisheries – A collaborative project proposed to Common Oceans ABNJ Tuna Phase II
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