



**COMMISSION**  
**Twenty-First Regular Session**  
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Suva, Fiji (Hybrid)

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**Earth Island Institute Position Statement for WCPFC21**

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**WCPFC21-2024-OP03**  
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**Submitted by Earth Island Institute**



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Position Statement for WCPFC21  
Earth Island Institute International Marine Mammal Project (EII IMMP)

## Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC) Annual Meeting, November 28 – December 3, 2024

### Introduction

The Earth Island Institute International Marine Mammal Project (EII IMMP) would like to thank the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC) for the opportunity to attend the 21st Regular Session as an observer. EII IMMP recognizes the important role that WCPFC plays in the oversight of Western and Central Pacific Ocean (WCPO) fisheries.

EII IMMP works with the world's leading tuna fishing companies to comply with Dolphin Safe fishing practices. We maintain a network of more than eight hundred fishing companies, canners, brokers, suppliers, and retailers that require procurement of tuna caught without setting nets on dolphins. Many of these companies also utilize the Dolphin Safe tuna label which requires that tuna is caught in sets that do not result in any killing or serious injury to dolphins.

The WCPFC Conservation and Management Measures for Protection of Cetaceans from Purse Seine Fishing (CMM 2011-03) include a provision for CCM to ensure that potential impacts on the sustainability of cetaceans from accidental mortality through purse seine operations are mitigated.

Since the enactment of this CMM there have been major changes in the WCPFC tuna purse seine tuna fishery. There has been continued increase in tonnage of tuna catches, as well as unprecedented growth in the use of drifting fish aggregating devices (dFads).

EII IMMP calls for members of the WCPFC to address the issues and recommendations raised at SC20.

Below are our 2024 recommendations to WCPFC.

## **Analyses to inform discussions of mitigating purse seine fishery impacts on cetaceans**

### Background:

At the WCPFC SC20 meeting EII IMMP presented a working paper that proposes that WCPFC undertake research analyses to inform discussions of mitigating impacts on cetaceans in the WCPO tuna purse seine tuna fisheries. The paper (WCPFC-SC20-2024/EB-WP-13) can be found here: <https://meetings.wcpfc.int/node/23048>.

Such a study could provide detailed data comparing cetacean impacts during daylight purse-seine sets compared to sets during darkness. This study could determine the relative impacts of sets on logs, anchored Fads, drifting Fads, and free schools.

Ultimately, SC20 did not make a recommendation to move forward with this proposal at the annual meeting. However, we believe that outlined scientific analyses are greatly needed in order to help understand the nature of the impacts on cetaceans from purse seine fisheries. It could also provide a stronger basis for management decisions regarding mitigation of impacts on cetaceans.

### 2024 Ask:

- We recognize that research budgets are stretched and we have offered to seek outside funding to assist such a study. Once a more precise determination is made on the anticipated costs, we are prepared to engage with the SC and the Secretariat to provide the Commission with a funding option, under the assumption that the SC agrees that this analysis is worthy of support.
- We are prepared to work with delegations and the SC Secretariat to put together terms of reference and other necessary elements of a submission for this research. All the data necessary for such analyses already exists within WCPFC observer databases.

## **CMM 2011-03 and Longline Fisheries**

### Background:

As noted by the USA and Korea in their WCPFC SC20 working paper, Proposed Amendments to Conservation and Management Measure for Protection of Cetaceans from Purse Seine and Longline Fishing Operations, [WCPFC-SC20-2024/EB-WP-08](https://meetings.wcpfc.int/node/23048), “the WCPFC Science Service Provider has indicated that current observer coverage levels in the longline fishery are not sufficient enough to provide an understanding of spatial or temporal patterns of cetacean interactions (SC17-ST-IP-10), and that those areas identified as having higher interaction rates generally reflect areas with higher observer coverage (figures 4-8, SC17-ST-IP-10). Conversely, we could assume that those areas identified as having limited or zero interactions could be a

result of lower observer coverage levels. It should also be noted that frequency and extent of cetacean predation in the longline fishery is more than an order of magnitude higher than reported interactions (figure 9, SC17-ST-IP-10), which may give some indication that the opportunity for interaction is much higher than the rate of interactions actually recorded.”

2024 Ask:

- Adopt proposed amendments submitted by the USA and Korea to WCPFC at SC20 for CMM-2011-03 for protection of cetaceans from purse seine and longline fishing operations. The proposed amendments would include longline fisheries under WCPFC’s CMM 2011-03 for the protection of cetaceans.

## **Longline Observer Coverage**

Background:

100% observer coverage on longline vessels is needed in order to effectively manage and monitor WCPO longline fishery activities. WCPFC’s current longline minimum observer coverage rate of 5% is inadequate and does not allow for reliable monitoring and recording of longline bycatch estimates. As a result, the impacts of longline fishing on bycatch species in WCPO are unknown.

2024 Ask:

- Adopt a timeline and plan to increase observer coverage (human or electronic) in longline fisheries to 100%.

## **Electronic Monitoring**

Background:

Other Regional Fishery Management Organizations (RFMO’s) have adopted interim minimum standards for Electronic Monitoring. This includes IOTC, ICCAT, and IATTC.

In 2014 WCPFC established a working group for electronic monitoring and reporting (EMER WG). While this working group has made some progress it still has not developed or adopted interim minimum standards for Electronic Monitoring.

2024 Ask:

- Adopt interim electronic monitoring standards for all gear types and harmonize these standards with standards already adopted by other RFMO’s.

\*For more information please visit [www.DolphinSafe.org](http://www.DolphinSafe.org) or contact Sarah Elzea at [Sarah@earthisland.org](mailto:Sarah@earthisland.org)