



Nuku'alofa, Tonga
13 – 21 August 2025

**Proposed process to review current reporting requirements and mitigation measures
in CMM 2018-04 (Sea Turtles)**

WCPFC-SC21-2025/ST-WP-06

United States of America

At WCPFC20, the Commission recommended that SC20 and TCC20 review the current requirements under the Scientific Data to be provided to the Commission (SciData) to capture sea turtle interaction reporting requirements under CMM 2018-04, paragraphs 5c and 7e ([WCPFC20 Summary Report, Para 753e.](#)). SC20 noted that some CCMs have different interpretations of the requirements to those paragraphs, specifically as to whether the paragraphs require reporting through submission of operational level data or in a summary form, and suggested TCC and the Commission consider clarifying the requirements of these paragraphs to resolve any ambiguity ([Paragraph 75, SC20 Summary Report](#)).

At WCPFC21, the Commission agreed to review and revise conservation and management measure (CMM, 2018-04) for Sea Turtles in 2026, to ensure that the reporting requirements are clearly defined and to consider expanding the scope of the measure to include mitigation measures for deep-set longline fisheries, for consideration by SC22, TCC22 and WCPFC23 ([WCPFC21 Summary Report, Para.204](#)).

The current WCPFC sea turtle mitigation measures are limited to vessels that fish in a shallow-set manner, which represents only a fraction of the total longline effort in the WCPFC convention area. The United States submitted an information paper to the SC20 in 2024 ([SC20-EB-IP-09](#)) highlighting our concern regarding the potential impact of leatherback sea turtle interactions in WCPFC deep-set longline fisheries. The West Pacific leatherback sea turtle (*Dermochelys coriacea*) population continues to decline at alarming rates and fishery bycatch is considered a primary threat, specifically in the Western and Central Pacific Ocean (WCPO). The potential impact of deep-set fisheries on sea turtles is particularly concerning because a majority (~ 79%) of longline fisheries operating in the WCPO are deep-set fisheries that do not have sea-turtle specific required mitigation measures.

The United States is prepared to lead work to review CMM 2018-04 to ensure that the reporting requirements are clearly defined and consistently implemented and to ensure that the current measure is based upon the best available science in its efforts to minimize the impacts of longline fishing on vulnerable sea turtle populations in the WCPO. Mirroring the recent process led by New Zealand in the review of CMM 2018-03 for seabirds, the United States proposes the establishment of an informal intersessional working group to evaluate scientific research on sea turtle interactions and provide advice

to SC22, TCC22 and WCPFC23 regarding potential revisions to CMM 2018-04. We propose the following purpose, process and scope for the review through this informal intersessional working group.

Review Purpose: To consider expanding the scope of CMM 2018-04 to include mitigation measures for deep-set longline fisheries and to ensure that reporting requirements in CMM 2018-04 are clearly defined.

Review Process: The United States would like to lead an informal intersessional working group to review WCPFC CMM 2018-04 with the proposed purpose of reviewing scientific information specific to sea turtle bycatch and bycatch mitigation in longline fisheries. Interested CCMs would be invited to nominate representatives to participate in the working group. The working group would meet in early 2026, to allow time to gather feedback and advice in advance of SC22. We propose that the working group would meet twice, with one meeting occurring in January or February of 2026 and a second meeting in April or May of 2026.

Review Scope: We propose that the informal intersessional working group would be tasked with reviewing information to:

1. Ensure reporting requirements in CMM 2018-04 are clearly defined;
2. Provide an overview of sea turtle population ranges and status within the WCPO, including vertical and horizontal distributions, as well as reproductive behaviors, that render them vulnerable to various threats, including fisheries;
3. Evaluate the scope of sea turtle bycatch in both deep-set and shallow-set fisheries, including relative proportion of effort within the WCPFC Convention Area, with assessments on impacts to sea turtle populations, specifically regarding deep-set fisheries;
4. Consider the operational characteristics of current deep-set longline fisheries in the WCPFC and potential measures to mitigate the impacts of those fisheries on sea turtles

The outcomes from the informal intersessional working group review would be forwarded to SC22, TCC22, and WCPFC23 for further discussion in providing advice and recommendations regarding potential revisions to CMM 2018-04.