



**SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE
TWENTY-FIRST REGULAR SESSION**

Nuku'alofa, Tonga
13 – 21 August 2025

**REPORT OF THE PACIFIC TUNA TAGGING PROGRAMME STEERING COMMITTEE
(PROJECT 42)**

WCPFC-SC21-2025/RP-PTTP-02

PTTP Steering Committee

1. Preliminaries

The 19th meeting of the PTTP Steering Committee was held via [video conference](#) on **29th July 2025** in preparation for the Twenty-One Regular Session of the WCPFC Scientific Committee held in Tonga. Simon Nicol (SPC) chaired the meeting from Australia, and SPC staff Bruno Leroy presented from Noumea, with the support of multiple SPC staff (see list of meeting attendees in Annex 2).

Background

The goal of the Pacific Tuna Tagging Programme is to provide data and knowledge for stock assessment and management of skipjack, yellowfin and bigeye tuna in the Pacific Ocean. The objectives of the PTTP, originally specified in [WCPFC-SC6-2010/GN-IP-04](#), and revised in 2016 ([SC12-RP-PTTP-01: PTTP Steering Committee, 2016](#)), are:

1. To obtain data that will contribute to, and reduce uncertainty in, WCPO tuna stock assessments including estimation of overall and local exploitation rates, extent of mixing and appropriate spatial strata for use in assessments.
2. To obtain information to better understand the interactions between tropical tuna species and major fishing gears to support development of mitigation measures (where appropriate) and better interpret fisheries data (e.g., CPUE).

Under these objectives, information collected includes age-specific rates of movement and mixing, movement between assessment regions and other adjacent regions of the Pacific basin, species-specific vertical habitat utilisation by tunas, and the impacts of FADs on their behaviour.

The PTTP Steering Committee was established by SC2 to provide guidance and oversight in the development of firstly the project document (WCPFC Regional Tagging Project Steering Committee, 2006) and subsequently of operational plans, implementation and analytical work. The current donors to the project are the WCPFC, the Republic of Korea and the Pacific Community (SPC).

Review and adoption of agenda

The agenda was reviewed by those in attendance, with no requested changes or additions, and so adopted from the draft.

This adopted agenda is provided in **Annex 1**.

A list of participants is provided in **Annex 2** of this report.

2. PTTP Progress Report

SPC provided a presentation of PTTP Activities as described in [WCPFC-SC21-2025/RP-PTTP-01](#). The presentation followed the draft agenda sub-headers. A summary of the presentation is as follows.

2.1 2025 CP17 Cruise

- Bruno Leroy began with a summary of the currently underway CP17 tagging cruise. This 45-day cruise departed from Hawaii on the 25th of June with a crew of 8 and 4 scientists (3 SPC and one contractor). The cruise goals are to tag about 6,000 fish in the high seas, and EEZs of Kiribati and the USA. Over 3,500 were already tagged at the date of 28 July with about 2/3 of bigeye and 1/3 of yellowfin tuna. A large tuna and associated species sampling effort is also part of the cruise plan.

- Over 1000 drifting FADs are shared with the scientific team. These FADs came from three separate purse seine fishing groups. To be noted that the sharing agreement is currently limited to the FAD fishing closure period that is now limited to 6 weeks.

2.2 Tag Seeding

Background:

Tag seeding experiments are implemented by Regional Observer Programmes and are of critical importance to support the estimation of reporting rate parameters by fleets within WCPO tuna stock assessments, and in some cases can have a considerable effect on the influence of tagging data to the model.

- The large 2024 tag seeding effort managed to spread large quantities of seeded tags across fleets and region. The introduction of the new non-secretive tag seeding protocol (see previous 2024 PTPP SC report) is part of the success and allowed seeded tags to be newly deployed in Japan and South American PS fleets.
- Data analysis should bring some more accurate estimates of reporting rates across many factors for the first time.

2.3 2023-2024 Tag Recovery process improvements

- The big picture of number of tag releases (~500,000) and recaptures (19.1%) has been exposed.
- From 2024 to date, significant number of ports were visited to improve tag recovery process. These visits, along with face to face and online updated observer and debriefer training courses, greatly improve the capacity for the chain of actors (observers, tag recovery officers, debriefers, trainers) to recover tags and associated fish recapture information.
- The possibility to use Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) tags to improve tag recovery rate and recapture information accuracy has been evaluated in contracting a specialized company. The proposal written by this company will be assessed in late 2025 or early 2026

3. Related Tag Activities

3.1 Tagging Platforms Update

- An agreement has been signed between SPC and NFD/Bolton for the pole and line vessel Soltai105 to be refurbished in New Zealand
- S105 will be available to support a skipjack focused tagging cruise in 2026
- Pacific Research Vessel (named RV PASIFIKA during Heads of Fishery 17) project is going ahead with:
 - The recruitment of GENAVIR as management company
 - A scheduled publication date for the shipyard RFP at the 1st Sep
 - A predicted award date for a shipyard in March 2026
 - A construction duration of about 2 years starting mid-2026

4. Other Regional or Sub-Regional Tagging

- No significant updates for the steering committee except the fact that IATTC have requested funds to undertake some tagging project in 2026

5. Work Plan 2025-2028

5.1 *Tagging Cruises*

- Following the refurbishment of S105 a skipjack tagging cruise will be implemented in 2026
- Discussions with the PS fishing industry for how the sharing of drifting FADs could continue need to be engaged, especially considering the shortening of the FAD-closure period to only 6 weeks.

5.2 *Tag Seeding*

- The support to increase tag seeding deployments will continue in 2025 and into 2026.

5.3 *Tag Recovery and Data Analyses*

- A large global effort has been undertaken in 2024 and 2025 to improve the tag recovery network, the magnitude and spatial coverage of tag seeding and the automation of tag data validation process.
- This will enhance the reporting rate and quality of the data to support stock assessment analysis
- Members of OFP held a workshop in Copenhagen to build a preliminary version of the spatial tagging model used by the IATTC using PTPP data. The potential for the model's role in future WCPO stock assessment is being evaluated.
- SC21-SA-IP 3, 6 and 7 are reporting on the tag data analysis (tagging effect, reporting rates and tag mixing) performed to support the 2025 WCPO skipjack stock assessment.

6. ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 *Administrative matters.*

- in 2023 the first of 3 incremental budget increases was approved by WCPFC, to bring the SSP co-financing contribution to 25% of the total PTPP budget. 2026 would be the final increase required to balance this co-financing."

6.2 *Recommendations to SC21*

Finally, Bruno Leroy presented the recommendations to SC21 as provided in the PTPP Report (SC21-RP-PTPP-01):

- **Note the critical importance of effective tag seeding** for informing stock assessment and support the increased deployment and fleet coverage of tag seeding experiments through regional and national observer programmes.
- **Note the need for member participation and support in tag reporting** as both wild and seeded tags continue to be found throughout the fishery.
- **Note the effort for refurbishment of the Soltai 105** for the purposes of continued skipjack-tagging, critical for stock assessment input
- **Note and support the ongoing regional fisheries research vessel project**
- **Consider and support the PTPP work-plan** for 2025- 2028 (see in Annex 3) and its indicative budget

7. ADOPTION OF REPORT

A draft report of the Steering Committee of the PTPP was provided to members on the xx of August 2025 through email. Steering Committee members were invited to make comment until, and provide endorsement by, the xx of August. These comments were collated into the final report, which was posted to the XXXX.

**PACIFIC TUNA TAGGING PROJECT
STEERING COMMITTEE**

Electronic Meeting

29 July 2025 (from 11:00-11:30 hours Pohnpei time (UTC+11 hours))

ADOPTED AGENDA

WCPFC-SC21-2025

1. PRELIMINARIES

- 1.1 Review and Adoption of Agenda

2. PTPP PROGRESS REPORT

- 2.1 2025 CP17 Cruise
- 2.2 Tag Seeding
- 2.3 2023-2024 Tag Recovery Process Improvements

3. RELATED TAG ACTIVITIES

- 3.1 Tagging Platforms Update

4. OTHER REGIONAL OR SUB-REGIONAL TAGGING

- 4.1 Other tagging projects

5. WORK PLAN 2025-2028

- 5.1 Tagging Cruises
- 5.2 Tag Seeding
- 5.3 Tag Recovery and Data Analyses

6. ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS

- 6.1 Administrative Matters
- 6.2 Recommendations to SC21

7. ADOPTION OF REPORT

Annex 2. Attendee list of the 2025 PTTP Steering Committee

Name	Affiliation	Email
Elaine G. Garvilles (External)	WCPFC	Elaine.Garvilles@wcpfc.int
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Annex 3: Proposed PTPP work-plan for the period 2025-2028.

		2025	2026	2027	2028	Key
Tagging	Skipjack-focused cruise		Skipjack-focused cruise		Pacific Research Vessel Cruise	Planned activity
	Bigeye-focused research cruise	Bigeye-focused cruise		Bigeye-focused cruise		Potential activity
	Tag Seeding through Regional Observer Programmes	Continued upscale in tag seeding effort and coverage	Continued tag seeding			
	Support and development of tag recovery network	Increased engagement from east and south-east Asian canneries				
Tag Recovery	Support and develop tag recovery and validation	Development of automatic validation tools				
		Consolidation of historical tag validation				
	Implementation and revision of tag reward schemes	Implement cannery lotteries to support new engagement				
Data management	Tagging data validation using VMS, logbook, and cannery data	Ongoing				
	Maintain and develop PTPP databases and related tools	Trial decentralized TUFMAN2 data entry by TROs				
Data Analyses	Provide tagging data for inclusion in stock assessment and related analyses	Skipjack tagging data provision	Yellowfin and bigeye data provision	Development of external spatiotemporal tagging models		
	Reduce uncertainty in WCPO stock assessments	Updated tagging effects, reporting rates and mixing analyses	Updated tagging effects, reporting rates			
	Increase understanding of tuna-fishing gear interactions and interpretation of fisheries data	Exploration of archival tagging for external validation of SEAPODYM habitat preferences				