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The Nature Conservancy's Statement to the 22nd Regular Session of the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission

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Submitted by The Nature Conservancy (TNC)

THE NATURE CONSERVANCY'S (TNC) STATEMENT TO THE 22nd REGULAR SESSION OF THE WESTERN AND CENTRAL PACIFIC FISHERIES COMMISSION

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The Nature Conservancy (TNC) thanks the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC) for the opportunity to participate in this meeting as an observer. We look forward to fruitful discussions and progress on key issues this year.

A priority for TNC remains the following:

The lack of sufficient on-the-water monitoring is one of the biggest obstacles to the sustainable management of global tuna and ecosystem resources, protecting and conserving associated marine species, particularly those species of concern, and building transparent and verifiable supply chains that inspire consumer confidence.

TNC recognizes that effective fisheries management requires engagement from all stakeholders, including industry, government, Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities, academia, markets, and civil society. This is why, in 2024, TNC in consultation with its partners, launched the Tuna Transparency Pledge (TTP) which aims to unite key players across the seafood supply chain—including companies and governments—to accelerate the adoption of on-the-water monitoring and aim to achieve 100% monitoring on industrial tuna vessels by 2027. Country signatories to the TTP represent more than 15% of the global tuna catch and include WCPFC Parties such as the Federated States of Micronesia, the Republic of Marshall Islands, Papua New Guinea, Palau, and one cooperating non-member, Panama, along with some of the world's largest retailers and processors including Walmart, Carrefour, Thai Union, and Aramark.

TNC has supported the design of electronic monitoring (EM) programs across the Western and Central Pacific Ocean (WCPO), tailoring solutions to the specific challenges and capacities of countries such as the Federated States of Micronesia, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, Palau, Papua New Guinea, and the Solomon Islands. Working in collaboration with national fisheries authorities and regional partners like the Pacific Islands Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA) and the Parties to the Nauru Agreement (PNA), TNC has provided technical assistance, training, and policy guidance to strengthen EM implementation. This support includes deploying EM systems on longline, purse seine, and transshipment vessels, expanding monitoring coverage where human observers are limited. Through these initiatives, TNC is helping Pacific Island nations advance transparency, compliance, and sustainability in their tuna fisheries.

In addition to its leadership on EM, TNC has also led projects on safe handling and release practices and bycatch mitigation measures for elasmobranchs, verifying social responsibility at sea, and innovative FAD management practices—including a best-in-class FAD Watch Program in Palmyra which has successfully recovered many FADs at-sea originating in the EPO and stranding in the WCPO.



TNC is very interested in working with all stakeholders to support the collective effort in achieving sustainable fisheries management. We appreciate the initiative of proposal proponents to make progress on key issues, and we look forward to engaging in constructive discussions on this topic. To this end, TNC is hopeful that the Commission will achieve:

1. Progress on allowing the use of EM data to monitor and verify fishing activities in the WCPO to support conservation and management measure decisions.
2. An increase in monitoring coverage requirements on industrial longline vessels to 20% in the near term, with a commitment to increase to 100%.
3. The adoption of improved conservation and management measures for seabirds.
4. Progress on improved management for fish aggregating devices (FADs), including enhanced monitoring and data collection, implementation of biodegradable FADs, and supporting progress on tracking and retrieval efforts.
5. The adoption of a strengthened transshipment measure.

RECENT ACHIEVEMENTS AND PARTNERSHIPS

TNC was selected as one of 15 global awardees in the Bezos Earth Fund's AI for Climate and Nature Grand Challenge. The award provides \$2 million to scale our pioneering use of edge AI technology, enabling rapid review of EM footage and advancing sustainable practices in industrial fisheries. This award will support partnering PNA countries with EM implementation through technology innovation.

TNC will be collaborating with, among others, SPC, ISSF, and country and industry partners on an international drifting Fish Aggregating Device (dFAD) workshop slated for February 9-12, 2026, in Tahiti, French Polynesia. The workshop entitled "Mitigation of drifting FAD loss and abandonment in the Pacific: Insights from fishing industry to communities" will bring together a diverse set of stakeholders to tackle the challenge of tracking and intercepting dFADs at-sea before they strand on sensitive habitats in the WCPO. TNC and workshop organizers encourage participation from all stakeholder groups.

Main workshop themes include:

- dFAD loss and abandonment from fishing grounds;
- Fate of dFADs and patterns of dFAD loss and abandonment;
- Strandings, environmental impacts, and potential benefits;
- Solutions: A sustainable dFAD fishery; and
- decreasing dFAD loss and abandonment, increasing recovery.

TNC will participate as an observer at this annual session, and we look forward to hearing your views and connecting to share our expertise, including how EM can be used to improve transparency and support fisheries management decisions. Come meet the TNC team on the ground in Manila.

HELPFUL RESOURCES

To find out more about the TTP, or to join the Pledge, [click here](#).

Contact the [Global Electronic Monitoring Accelerator](#) team to ask about our technical assistance services in EM program design and implementation.

If you're interested in learning more about electronic monitoring and how it can be used to support other fisheries management issues, follow the links below:

- **Near real-time EM footage review:** To find out more about how edge-AI can be used to assist with electronic monitoring footage review, [click here](#).
- **Bycatch:** TNC developed a shark bycatch mitigation decision support tool, to identify EM-enabled, place-based, and fishery-specific shark bycatch mitigation measures that can support transparent decisions that drive more sustainable fisheries management and protect threatened shark populations. To find out more about this tool, [click here](#).
- **Labour standards:** To find out more about how electronic monitoring can be used to verify some elements of labour standards, [click here](#).
- **Bezos Earth Fund:** To learn more about the Bezos Earth Fund AI for Climate and Nature Grand Challenge and how TNC will use the funding, [click here](#).
- **FAD Watch Program:** To learn more about TNC's FAD work in Palmyra, [click here](#).

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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