

TO ALL COMMISSION MEMBERS, COOPERATING NON-MEMBERS,
PARTICIPATING TERRITORIES AND OBSERVERS

Circular No.: 2026/16
Date: 13 February 2026
No. pages: 3

Subject: Notice of 8th ERandEM IWG Virtual Meeting on 2 April 2026, and Progressing the Development of an Electronic Monitoring Audit and Assurance Framework

Dear All,

Happy 2026! As we step into this new year, we do so with fresh energy, renewed purpose, and a shared commitment to our work together. Across countries, cultures, and time zones, we bring diverse perspectives that strengthen our collaboration to advancing the WCPFC EM program.

Purpose

The purpose of this paper is to:

- Advise of availability of a provisional agenda ([ERandEMIWG8-2026-01](#)), for consideration ahead of the **8th ERandEM IWG virtual meeting on 2 April 2026, 10am to 2pm**.
- Provide a summary of actions undertaken since the 7th ERandEM IWG meeting on November 18th, 2025.
- Introduce the audit and assurance framework in [ERandEMIWG8-2026-02](#) (in MSWord format), to be reviewed by the group for feedback. Participants are encouraged to provide feedback by **9 March 2026**, so that key issues and suggestions can be consolidated for discussion during our upcoming virtual meeting. Please send all responses to me (lesley.hawn@noaa.gov) and to WCPFC Deputy Compliance Manager, Eidre Sharp (eidre.sharp@wcpfc.int).
- Seek feedback on the U.S. Consultative Draft CMM for a WCPFC Electronic Monitoring Program (WCPFC EMP) contained in [ERandEMIWG8-2026-03](#), and propose how the IWG may further elaborate on the CMM, as appropriate. Please provide your feedback by **9 March 2026**.

Please note that all papers referred to in this Circular are available on the [WCPFC Meeting page for the ERandEM IWG8](#).

Summary

You will recall that, at WCPFC22, I provided an update on progress made in 2025 and presented a proposed work plan for the coming year. The proposed plan was largely consistent with that of the previous year; however, in the absence of a chair for much of 2025, the plan could not be fully developed. The Commission subsequently adopted the work plan, which is outlined below and included in **Attachment 6** in the [WCPFC22 Provisional Outcomes](#).

“The Commission endorsed the ER and EM IWG workplan and requested the IWG prioritize the audit and assurance framework, review EM data requirements not currently covered by the ROP minimum data fields, and refine the SSPs for onboard EM systems and ensure they align with neighboring RFMOs where appropriate. The Commission also tasked the ER and EM IWG with elaborating a draft CMM for the development of a WCPFC Electronic Monitoring Program in 2026, as appropriate.”

You may also recall that a CCM proposed postponing the January 2026 meeting and instead advancing the IWG’s work through email correspondence. In support of this approach, I have prepared a draft document for your review and feedback.

Audit and Assurance Draft Review

EREMIWG8-2026-02 contains a figure outlining a potential EM audit and assurance framework and a draft Proposed EM Assurance and Audit Process for your review and feedback. In this document there is a draft questionnaire, direct questions, proposed scenarios, and verification tools to guide discussion on how best to validate and verify EM.

Tasking #1

Members are invited to actively participate by providing feedback throughout the document and contributing suggested language to the draft questionnaire. Please provide feedback by **9 March 2026**, so that key issues and suggestions can be consolidated and recirculated to members for discussion during our upcoming virtual meeting. Please send all responses to me and Eidre Sharp at the email addresses above.

Chair’s Thoughts

Following our meeting on 18 November 2025, which focused on the audit model used by the Regional Observer Program (ROP), and subsequent discussions with members and ERandEM IWG participants, it became clear that while the ROP audit model offers useful elements, there are important distinctions between the two programs that call for a tailored framework for EM audit and assurance.

One major distinction is that, when the ROP was established, full-scale national and regional observer programs already existed. Many of these programs had been in place for years and had established audit and assurance processes. By contrast, while some members have domestic EM programs and others are in trial or pilot stages, the implementation of a WCPFC EM program is expected to drive the development of additional programs. This presents a unique opportunity

for the WCPFC EM program to lead in developing and establishing program processes, including a robust audit and assurance framework.

Considering the broader relationship between the ROP, EM, and auditing, a strong connection between Vessel Monitoring Systems (VMS) and EM becomes evident. In particular, the management of VMS data by the WCPFC Secretariat offers approaches that could inform and strengthen the EM audit and assurance framework. Additionally, other Secretariat monitoring tools—such as logbooks, landings data, and high seas boarding inspections—can provide complementary verification and validation mechanisms, ensuring that EM data is accurate, credible, and fully fit-for-purpose for science.

U.S. Consultative Draft CMM for a WCPFC EMP

As outlined in the work plan, the Commission tasked the ERandEM IWG with elaborating a draft CMM for the development of a WCPFC EMP, as appropriate. Some members expressed concern that combining the work of developing the WCPFC EMP framework with drafting a CMM could slow the IWG's progress. However, the work plan language provides sufficient flexibility for the IWG to proceed with developing the EM framework on schedule while providing feedback on a CMM drafted outside the group. Under this approach, the IWG will have substantial input into the CMM through review and feedback, rather than direct drafting. In effect, the processes developed under the EM framework will inform and feed into the CMM.

Tasking #2

The U.S. Consultative Draft CMM for a WCPFC EMP is included in ERandEMIWG8-2026-03 (MS Word format). If you have written comments or feedback, please provide them in tracked changes by **9 March 2026** to lesley.hawn@noaa.gov and eidre.sharp@wcpfc.int. If you have additional comments, there will be time during the virtual meeting on 2 April for further discussion. As work on the CMM progresses, I will provide updates to the IWG and seek additional feedback. Time will also be allocated during future IWG meetings to discuss the CMM, as needed.

Registration for ERandEM IWG8 is now available on the [WCPFC meeting webpage](#) and I encourage interested participants to register soon to receive email alerts of when meeting documentation is available.

May this year be a time of new beginnings, meaningful progress, and productive cooperation as we continue our work together. I look forward to continuing our collective efforts to strengthen the WCPFC EM framework.

Sincerely,



Lesley Hawn
ERandEM IWG Chair