



REGIONAL OBSERVER PROGRAMME INTERSESSIONAL WORKING GROUP

Ninth Meeting

3 June 2026

Electronic Meeting

Amendments to the WCPFC Regional Observer Programme Minimum Standard Data Fields

ROP-IWG09-2026-DP01

29 May 2026

Submitted by the United States of America

Explanatory Note:

In 2016, the WCPFC convened two workshops, funded by the ABNJ (Common Oceans) Tuna project, to analyze the effectiveness of sea turtle mitigation in Pacific longline fisheries with respect to rates of interaction and mortality. The second workshop included recommendations on data collection by fishery observers. The participants of the workshop agreed that one of the best approaches to obtaining high quality data for similar analyses in the future is to ensure that data collection protocols for turtle interactions with fisheries, and those describing the associated fishing effort, are standardized. The workshop final report recommended specific updates to the WCPFC Regional Observer Programme (ROP) Minimum Standard Data Fields (MSDF).

At WCPFC14 the Commission tasked SC14 with considering the workshop-recommended updates to the ROP MSDF, and recommending any modifications for consideration by the ROP coordinator, TCC14, and WCPFC15. Modifications to the ROP MSDF were considered by both SC14 and TCC14. While SC14 was unable to agree on specific recommendations, significant progress was made towards development of modifications to the ROP MSDF. Recognizing the need for improved data collection on sea turtle interactions, TCC14 recommended to WCPFC15 that the Commission consider revisions to the ROP MSDF.

Based on the discussions and recommendations from SC14 and TCC14, the United States submitted a proposal ([WCPFC15-2018-DP07](#)) to WCPFC15 with proposed amendments to the WCPFC ROP MSDF. These proposed amendments would link individual catch events to gear information at a finer scale than is currently being collected, would generally improve data collection on sea turtle interactions, and would serve to address gaps that are currently precluding the Commission's ability to properly assess the effects of mitigation measures for sea turtles. WCPFC15 was unable to come to agreement on these amendments due to concerns by some CCMs over the additional burden that these requirements might impose on observers.

As the WCPFC is currently undertaking a review of CMM 2018-03 on sea turtles, it is timely for the Commission to reconsider revisions to the WCPFC ROP MSDF that could improve data collection on sea turtle interactions. The following table largely reiterates the proposed changes included in [WCPFC15-2018-DP07](#). The majority of the proposed changes are to the instructions and provide greater detail on the information requested for fields that are already being collected in the ROP MSDF. The proposal also includes two additional fields for consideration, one (hook, bait and material) that would be required to only be collected if there was a sea turtle interaction, and one (gear remaining when released) to be collected for all species of special interest interactions. The latter proposed field has been expanded in scope from turtles to all SSI given that paragraph 22 of CMM 2025-06 requires fishing vessels to "use a line cutter to cut the branchline as close to the hook as possible" and information on trailing gear could potentially help with shark assessment analysis.

AMENDMENTS TO THE WCPFC REGIONAL OBSERVER PROGRAMME MINIMUM STANDARD DATA FIELDS

SPECIES OF SPECIAL INTEREST Marine Turtles Reptiles, Marine Mammals, Seab-Birds, and certainDesignated Shark Species ¹			For Information only; not for inclusion in ROP MSDF
GENERAL INFORMATION		#	Already Collected?
Type of Interaction	Indicate what t Type o f i nteraction, i . e . C caught O n L ine - T angled i n N et, S swimming A round O utside O ff N et, E tc., using the species interaction codes (G01-G06) and new codes for 'entangled in purse seine net (G07)' and 'entangled in FAD (G08)	154	Yes (text change only)
Date and Time of interaction	Record S ship's D ate and T ime of i nteraction	155	Yes (text change only)
Latitude and Longitude of interaction	Record g eographic P osition of the i nteraction.	156	Yes (text change only)
Species Code of Marine Turtle Reptile, Marine Mammal, or Seabird.	Use FAO codes for S species.	158	Yes (text change only)
LANDED ON DECK			
Length of Species	Measure length in c Centimetres.	159	Yes (text change only)
Length Measurement code	Measure using the M measuring M ethod determined for that S species.	160	Yes (text change only)
Sex Gender	Determine the Ssex and record using codes 'male', 'female', 'indeterminate' or 'unknown' the Animal if possible.	161	Yes (text change only)
Estimated Shark Fin Weight by species	Weigh each S species' S shark F ins separately if shark has been f inned by crew, if no scales estimate the weight.	162	Yes (text change only)
Estimated Shark Carcass Weight by species	Weigh each C carcass of a finned shark, if no scales available or body is discarded, or if it is too large to handle; estimate the weight.	163	Yes (no change)
Condition when Landed on Deck	Record What is the C condition of the animals when caught u seusing "Species Caught and Release Condition C -codes" (A0-A3, D and U):	165	Yes (text change only)
Condition when Released	Record What is the C condition of the animal when discarded u seusing "Species Caught and Release Condition C Codes" (A0-A3, D	166	Yes (text change only)

¹ SC13 agreed that shark species of special interest include silky shark, oceanic whitetip shark, whale shark and all species of mantas and mobulid (devil rays) (SC13 Summary Report, para 134). WCPFC 14 adopted the SC's recommendation.

	<u>and U</u> ;		
Tag Recovery information	Record as much as information as possible on any <u>T</u> tags recovered	167	Yes (text change only)
Tag Release information	Record as much information as possible on any <u>T</u> tags placed on the <u>animalspecies</u> before being released.	168	Yes (text change only)
<u>Hook, bait and material</u>	<u>For each sea turtle caught record hook type and hook size using the PSC “Terminal Gear Identification Guide”, the branch line material and the bait (if known) that the animal was caught on.</u>		<p>Yes, but collected at the trip or set level, not at the hook level. (Hook type and size and bait type are collected at the set level. Branchline material is collected at the trip level.)</p> <p>Information is required at the hook level because often several types (or “mixed”) are recorded at the trip or set level and this severely limits analysis.</p> <p>To reduce observer workload this data collection would be required for sea turtles only.</p>
<u>Gear remaining when released</u>	<u>If animals are released alive describe whether gear is left attached (yes/no). If yes, describe any gear that is left remaining.</u>		Partially. Whether the hook and/or line is removed is required, but the type and length
INTERACTION WITH VESSEL OR GEAR ONLY			
Vessel’s Activity during interaction	What was the vessel doing when the interaction took place i.e. setting, hauling, etc.	169	Yes (no change)
Condition Observed at start of interaction	Condition of <u>animalspecies</u> at the start of the interaction <u>(use codes A0-A3, D or U).</u>	170	Yes (text change only)
Condition Observed at end of interaction	Condition of <u>animal species</u> at the end of the interaction <u>(use codes A0-A3, D or U)</u>	171	Yes (text change only)
Description of interaction	Indicate interaction, with the vessel gear only - caught on line - tangled in net, etc.	174	Yes (text change only)
Number of Animals Sighted	How many animals are sighted during interaction.	175	Yes (text change only)