



**CONVENTION ON
MIGRATORY
SPECIES**

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FOURTH MEETING OF THE SIGNATORIES TO
THE MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING FOR
THE CONSERVATION OF CETACEANS AND THEIR
HABITATS IN THE PACIFIC ISLANDS REGION

5-6 August 2021, *Online*

**REPORTS FROM COLLABORATING ORGANIZATIONS ON IMPLEMENTATION OF THE MOU:
WORLD WIDE FUND FOR NATURE – PACIFIC**

WWF-Pacific update:

WWF-Pacific in Fiji, SI and PNG had been working in many key areas related the implementation of the Regional Marine Species Action Plan and supporting in-country activities coordinated by the relevant Government Ministries, such as the Ministry of Environment and Ministry of Fisheries.

Turtle:

- Ongoing support to the Community Turtle Monitors (Dau-ni-Vonu) and communities along Fiji's Great Sea Reef Seascape, turtle flipper tagging, facilitating community awareness. Now, communities are the ones leading protection efforts. For example, on Mali Island a guardhouse was erected in 2016 for communities members to monitor their qoliqoli and turtle nesting beach from. Community members watch for outside fishers coming into the area to fish or hunt turtles and are able to prevent them fishing. The community members leading this work are Dau ni Vonu—guardians of turtles—many of which were former turtle hunters who now lead marine protection efforts.
- WWF also facilitated a Turtle Roadshow for Schools in Fiji – targeting boarding schools where school kids come from all over Fiji Group
- WWF also facilitated in partnership with the Minsitry of Fisheries and Ministry of Environment a GSR Survey in 2019 and the data collected is very relevant in informing management plans for communities along the GSR in terms of management and protection of key habitats that are important to marine species
- Qoliqoli Cokovata of the Great Sea Reef is now declared a Ramsar Site for Fiji and this specific are on the great sea reef has a lot of turtle nesting sites and WWF is working in partnership with the traditional owners and the Fiji Government in sustainable management and protection of this site and this will in turn contribute towards the implementation of Regional Marine Species Action Plan as well as the National Plans such as Fiji's NBSAP, National Recovery Plans for Marine Turtles and Cetaceans
- WWF also provided support towards Turtle Island Resort Turtle Breeding Programme through raising awareness on turtle conservation on Turtle Island and assisted them in getting their permit for using turtles as a tourist attraction and collecting data which feeds into the reviews of the national turtle recovery plans
- WWF supported the Ministry of Fisheries and other Government stakeholders in reviewing the 10 year turtle moratorium. This review began in 2018 with consultations in the key Northern and Western divisions including a National consultation to collate what everyone was doing with relevant issues and challenges from the communities, government and tourism sector. The final review was in 2019 in which the revised Fiji Sea Turtle Recovery Plan was then submitted to Government for endorsement. – the moratorium is extended but with clear actions for partners to implement and report back and this included collection of data and information needed to determine status of Marine turtles in Fiji.
- In 2020 and 2021, WWF was able to facilitate some turtle monitoring and collection of data during the breeding season with community turtle monitors including raising awareness. WWF was able to expand the work beyond the GSR Communities. The new national turtle monitoring sites are Serua, Makogai, Mamanuca, Kadavu (Ono), Ringold and Lau (Ono-i-Lau, Tuvuca and Dwarf Reef-CI). WWF-UK covers the nesting population while SPREP covers the turtle use and trade surveys to determine the harvest numbers and areas needing management including monitoring of nesting beach temperature to determine whether our nests are producing what percentage of males and females.
- WWF PNG and WWF SI also do similar work on marine turtles.

Sharks and Rays:

- WWF's Global Sharks and Rays Initiative has been launched. Gulf of PNG has been selected as one of only a few global priority sites the initiative will be investing in in the year ahead. WWF is in the process of developing a proposal that will outline priorities work for the next four years. WWF - Responsible Shark and Ray Tourism - A guide to Best Practices – Some case studies and best practices from Fiji is used as case studies in the toolkit
- Dreketi River Estuary Shark Survey - in partnership with USP IAS – 4 species of sharks and 3 species of rays was collected; 3 species are listed under the IUCN redlist as critically endangered
- which showed that Dreketi River Estuary which is located within the Qoliqoli Cokovata Ramsar Site on the Great Sea Reef is an important shark nursery site
- WWF-PNG recently launched the National Plan of Actions on Sharks- a first for the Pacific (to be confirmed??)

Our bycatch work re. dev of training on bycatch mitigation at FMA, training of students, bycatch guidelines for industry, and the NPOA shark work with MoF would be a few of the things to highlight:

1. Fiji Maritime Academy (FMA)

- Inclusion of a bycatch component in the Academy's training programmes tailored for future seafarers in Fiji's tuna longline fishing industry
- Development of a bycatch training manual (consultant-Mr Alec Woods/NZ in 2019)
- Development of two new training courses; Deckhand Fishing course (newly offered in 2019) and the Offshore Fishing Skipper course (Part A newly offered in 2020 & Part B in 2021)
- NZ Government funded tuition scholarships with half of the recipients/students being females
- M&E through the use of questionnaires were conducted in 2019 & 2020 to gauge the effectiveness of the bycatch training courses and students understanding on bycatch

2. Fiji Fishing Industry Association (FFIA)

- Development of two bycatch guidelines for FFIA; (1) Best Practice for Bycatch Mitigation in Fiji's Tuna Longline Fishery: for Vessel Owners & Operators and (2) Bycatch Best Handling Practices: A Guideline for Skippers and Crew on Longline Fishing Vessels in Fiji
- Partial distribution of bycatch mitigation toolkits to Fiji's national longline fishing vessels (line cutter, bolt cutter, pliers, de-hooker, file for the line cutter)
- Distribution of bycatch posters (turtle handling & safe release (WCPFC), seabird handling & safe release (ACAP), shark ID species-oceanic and coastal (Great Fiji Shark Count)) to FFIA fishing vessels and partial distribution to non-FFIA vessels
- Distribution of marine species ID manuals to FFIA fishing vessels and partial distribution to non-FFIA fishing vessels
- WWF provides stakeholder submission which is tabled to the Conformance Assessment Body (CAB) during the annual audit of Fiji's tuna fishery (Albacore, Yellowfin and Bigeye) under FFIA. This also addresses bycatch issues as required.
- MnE to gauge the effectiveness on the use of these bycatch materials is currently on hold due to the pandemic

3. Ministry of Fisheries

- Draft National Plan of Action for the Conservation and Management on Sharks (2021 - 2024)
- Currently being reviewed and pending approval from the Fiji Ministry of Fisheries

Plastic Pollution

- WWF had been advocating and providing support to PICs in terms of the UNEA process for the development of a global treaty to address marine plastic litter and micro-plastic pollution which threatens these migratory species
- We acknowledge all PICs in endorsing the call for a global treaty and with a mandate to start drafting the treaty at UNEA 5.2

Deep Sea Mining

- Recognizing the transboundary nature of the ocean, and potential ecological impacts of deep sea mining in the Pacific and this includes underwater noise pollution could contribute towards the increasing threats to Migratory Species in the Pacific creating a domino impact
- WWF had been advocating for a moratorium in deep sea mining including the precautionary approach to ensure that all due process is done to reduce impacts on the Pacific Oceans integrity including migratory species such as Cetaceans