IOSEA 25 YEARS

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING ON THE CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT OF MARINE TURTLES AND THEIR HABITATS OF THE INDIAN OCEAN AND SOUTH-EAST ASIA

CMS/IOSEA/AC11/Doc.5.1
3 November 2026

11TH MEETING OF THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Bonn, Germany, 8-11 December 2026
Agenda Item 5.1

POTENTIAL FOR COLLABORATION WITH SIOFA, CCSBT, AND WCPFC

(*Prepared by the Advisory Committee*)

Mandate:

- WP #95: *Review the overlap of the activities managed by the Southern Indian Ocean Fisheries Agreement (SIOFA), the Commission for the Conservation of Southern Bluefin Tuna (CCSBT) and the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC) with turtle populations covered by IOSEA, the data availability, level of information available, nature of the discussions in these fora and potential for collaboration.*

Summary:

- Summary of the mandates and membership of key regional fisheries management organizations (SIOFA, CCSBT and WCPFC) and identification of RFMO measures and documents relevant to IOSEA marine turtle populations
- Latest available information on sea turtle bycatch reported through each RFMO, together with upcoming meetings of potential interest to the Advisory Committee.
- Opportunities for the IOSEA Advisory Committee to support and strengthen sea turtle bycatch monitoring, data collection and reporting across relevant RFMOs.

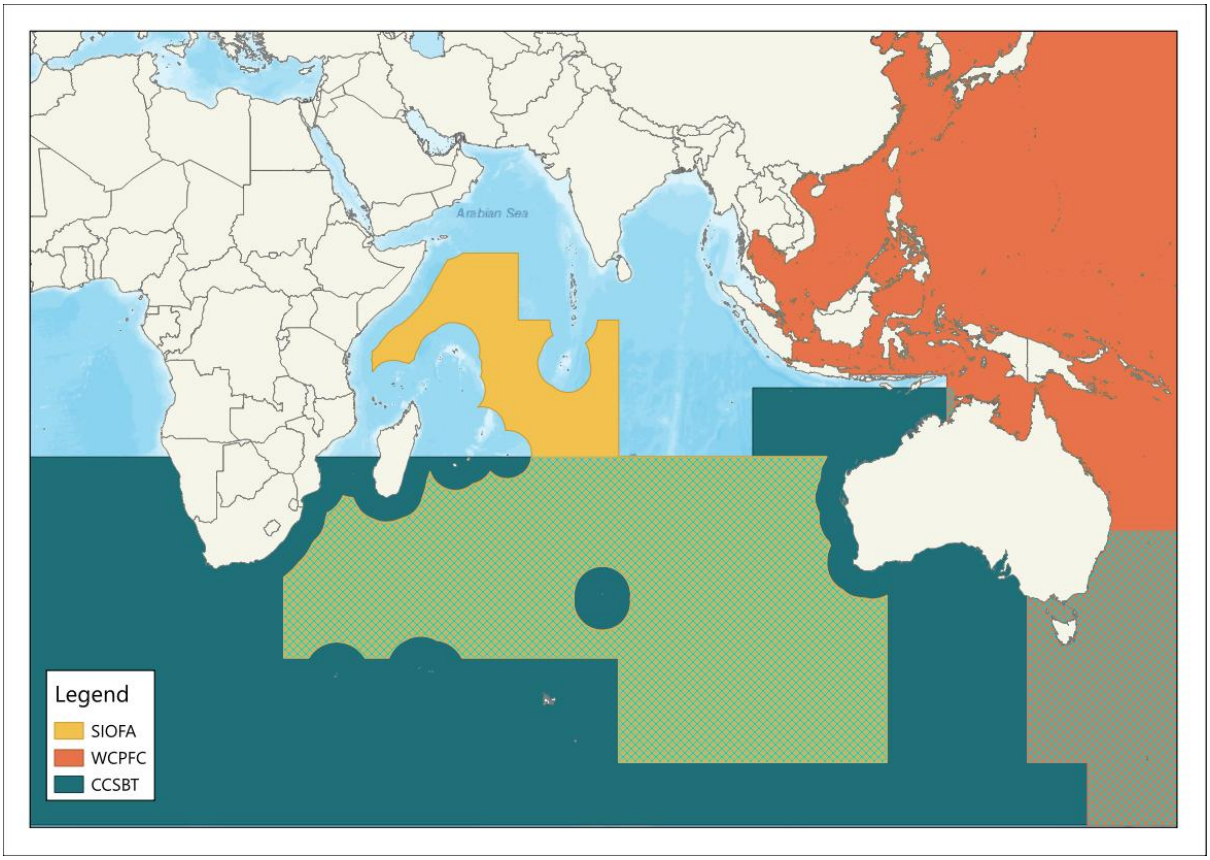
Action requested:

- Review the draft and provide comments
- Provide guidance on next steps

Concept Note on

Potential for IOSEA MoU Collaboration with SIOFA, CCSBT, and WCPFC

for the IOSEA Advisory Committee



Prepared by:

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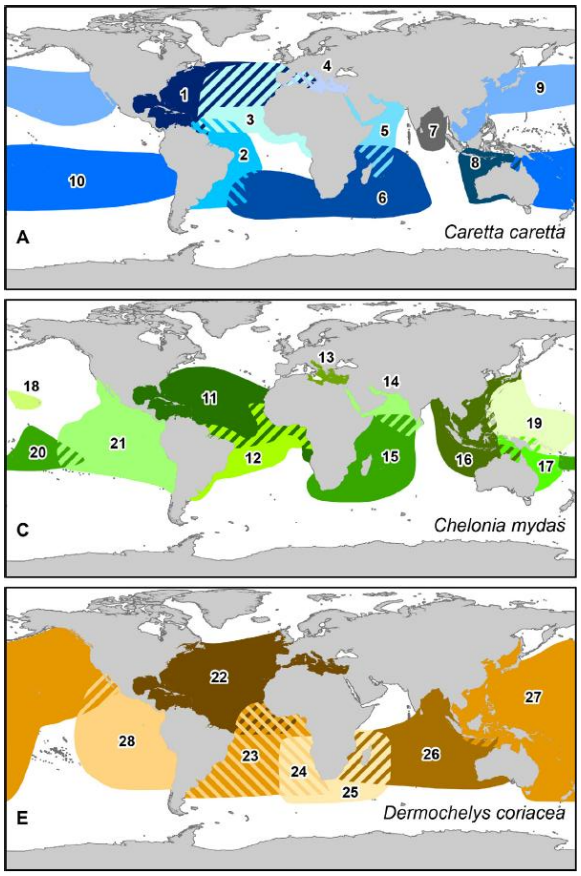
IOSEA Advisory Committee

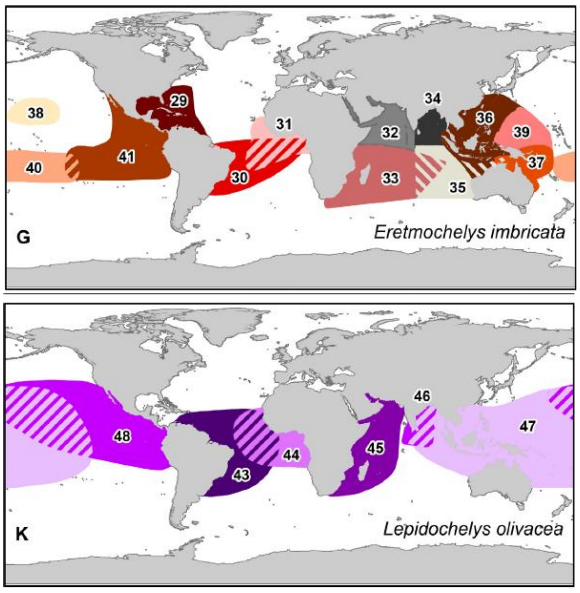
BACKGROUND

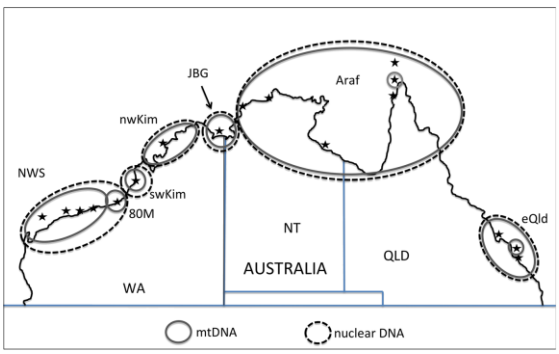
Item #95 of the IOSEA Work Program 2024-2028 is to *Review the overlap of the activities managed by the Southern Indian Ocean Fisheries Agreement (SIOFA), the Commission for the Conservation of Southern Bluefin Tuna (CCSBT) and the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC) with turtle populations covered by the IOSEA MoU, the data availability, level of information available, nature of the discussions in these fora and potential for collaboration.*

This concept note:

- summarises the objectives and signatory parties to SIOFA, CCSBT, and WCPFC activities;
- identifies documents for each regional fishery management organisation (RFMO) relevant to sea turtle populations covered by the IOSEA MoU;
- presents the most recent available data on sea turtle bycatch as reported for each RFMO;
- provides the dates of upcoming meetings that may be of interest to the IOSEA AC; and,
- suggests potential areas in which that the IOSEA AC could contribute to sea turtle bycatch monitoring and reporting by each RMFO.







Regional management units (loggerhead, green, leatherback, hawksbill, olive ridley turtles) (Wallace et al., 2023) and genetic stocks (flatback turtles) (FitzSimmons et al., 2020) of sea turtles covered by the IOSEA MoU.

Southern Indian Ocean Fisheries Agreement (SIOFA)

"*The objectives of this Agreement are to ensure the long-term conservation and sustainable use of the fishery resources in the Area through cooperation among the Contracting Parties, and to promote the sustainable development of fisheries in the Area, taking into account the needs of developing States bordering the Area that are Contracting Parties to this Agreement, and in particular the least developed among them and small-island developing States. This Agreement covers fishery resources including fish, molluscs, crustaceans and other sedentary species within the area, but excluding highly migratory species (Annex I of UNCLOS) and sedentary species subject to the fishery jurisdiction of coastal states (Article 77(4) of UNCLOS)*" (https://siofa.org/).

There are 10 Contracting Parties to SIOFA (Australia, China, Comoros, Cook Islands, the European Union, France on behalf of its Indian Ocean Territories, Japan, the Republic of Korea, Mauritius, Seychelles, Thailand) one Participating Fishing Entity (Chinese Taipei), and two cooperating non-Contracting Parties (Comoros, India). Kenya, Madagascar, Mozambique and New Zealand are also signatories to the Agreement but have not ratified it (https://siofa.org/about-siofa/parties-participants).

SIOFA Documents of Potential Interest

1. Active Conservation and Management Measures of the Southern Indian Ocean Fisheries Agreement Updated October 2026
   https://siofa.org/sites/default/files/documents/cmm/SIOFA-All-Active-CMMs-2026.pdf

Annex B "Observer Data" requires Contracting Parties, CNCPs and PFEs, for all observed trips, to collect and provide to the Secretariat the identification and counts of endangered, threatened or protected species (ETP), seabirds, mammals, reptiles (e.g., turtles), sensitive benthic species and vulnerable species (page 22) and incidental bycatch of ETP species (seabirds, mammals, turtles or 'other species of concern') (page 24).

2. Reporting and Submission Requirements 2026
   https://siofa.org/sites/default/files/files/SIOFA_Reporting_and_Submission_Requirements_2026.pdf

Scientific Observer Data is to be reported to the SIOFA Secretariat by 31st May each year.

3. SIOFA Ecosystem Report 2026 https://siofa.org/sites/default/files/files/SIOFA-Ecosystem-Summary-2026.pdf

Only incidental captures of seabirds, marine mammals, turtles, and sharks considered to be at high risk and/or concern (i.e. included in SIOFA CMM 12) are reported in the SIOFA Scientific Observer database. The Ecosystem Report 2026 (page 22) shows the location of incidental captures of sea turtle species considered to be at high risk and/or concern (species not specified) from 2025-2024 and summarises capture data for an unclear time period (2004-2023 or 2015-2024) (page 33).

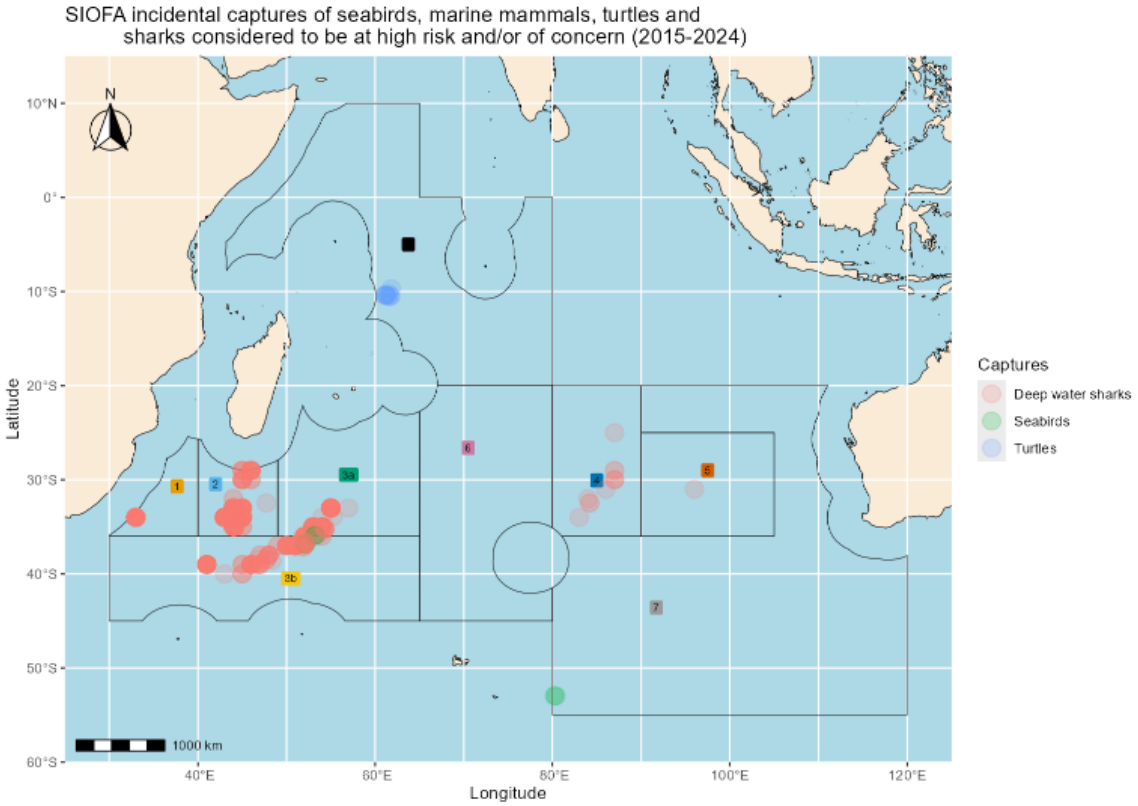


Table 8 - Reported Incidental captures of marine turtles (source: SIOFA Observer database 2004–2023).

Captures of marine turtles in SIOFA fisheries (2015-2024)					
Year	**Common name**	**Scientific name**	**Fishing gear**	**Captures**	**Status at release**
2019	Hawksbill turtle	*Eretmochelys imbricata*	Handlines and hand-operated pole-and-lines	1	Unknown
2020	Leatherback turtle	*Dermochelys coriacea*	Single boat bottom otter trawls	3	Alive
2021	Leatherback turtle	*Dermochelys coriacea*	Single boat bottom otter trawls	1	Alive
2022	Leatherback turtle	*Dermochelys coriacea*	Bottom trawls (nei)	2	Unknown
2022	Leatherback turtle	*Dermochelys coriacea*	Single boat bottom otter trawls	2	Unknown
2023	Leatherback turtle	*Dermochelys coriacea*	Bottom trawls (nei)	1	Unknown
2023	Leatherback turtle	*Dermochelys coriacea*	Single boat bottom otter trawls	1	Alive
2024	Hawksbill turtle	*Eretmochelys imbricata*	Bottom trawls (nei)	2	Unknown
2024	Leatherback turtle	*Dermochelys coriacea*	Bottom trawls (nei)	2	Unknown
2024	Olive ridley turtle	*Lepidochelys olivacea*	Drifting longlines	1	Unknown

Upcoming SIOFA Meetings of Potential Interest

The 12th Annual Meeting of the SIOFA Scientific Committee (SC12) will be held in Mauritius from the 15-24th March, 2027 (https://siofa.org/meetings/SC12).

Commission for the Conservation of Southern Bluefin Tuna (CCSBT)

The Commission for the Conservation of Southern Bluefin Tuna (CCSBT) is an intergovernmental organisation responsible for the management of southern bluefin tuna throughout its distribution. The CCSBT's objective is to ensure, through appropriate management, the conservation and optimum utilisation of southern bluefin tuna (https://www.ccsbt.org/en).

Members of the Extended Commission are: Australia, the European Union, the Fishing Entity of Taiwan, Indonesia, Japan, Republic of Korea, New Zealand and South Africa (https://www.ccsbt.org/en).

CCSBT Documents of Potential Interest

1. Resolution to Align CCSBT's Ecologically Related Species measures with those of other tuna RFMOs Updated October 2026
   https://www.ccsbt.org/sites/default/files/userfiles/file/docs_english/operational_resolutions/Resolution_ERS_Alignment.pdf

This document names the binding Ecological Related Species (ERS) measures for Commission for the Conservation of Southern Bluefin Tuna (CCSBT) Members. Relevant measures are presented below.

2. Resolution 12/04 On the Conservation of Marine Turtles
   https://www.ccsbt.org/sites/default/files/userfiles/file/other_rfmo_measures/iotc/Resolution%2012_04.pdf

Describes the collection and reporting of data on vessels interactions with sea turtles. The data shall include the level of logbook or observer coverage and an estimation of total mortality of marine turtles incidentally caught in their fisheries. Data is to be reported to the IOTC Secretariat by 30th June each year.

The document also includes specifications for the safe recovery, resuscitation and release of bycatch turtles; carrying of bycatch release gear; research on bycatch mitigation. It also encourages CPCs to collaborate with and take into account the IOSEA MoU including the provisions of the Conservation and Management Plan in the implementation of bycatch mitigation measures for sea turtles and encourages the IOTC and IOSEA secretariats to intensify their collaboration and exchange of information on marine turtle issues in accordance with the protocols agreed by the Commission.

Availability of CCSBT Sea Turtle Bycatch Data

Bycatch data for ERSs is available (https://www.ccsbt.org/en/content/sbt-data) and indicates 40 bycatch sea turtles (species not identified) from 2010-2025.

Upcoming CCSBT Meetings of Potential Interest

A technical meeting of the CCSBT Ecologically Related Species Working Group (ERSWG) is scheduled for early 2027 in New Zealand (hybrid) (https://www.ccsbt.org/en/content/meeting-schedule).

Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC)

The Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC) is an international organization dedicated to the long-term conservation and sustainable use of highly migratory fish stocks across the western and central Pacific Ocean (https://www.wcpfc.int/about/who-we-are).

Membership of WCPFC includes Pacific Island nations (coastal states) as well as major distant water fishing nations. The 26 members are Australia, Canada, China, Cook Islands, European Union, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, France, Indonesia, Japan, Kiribati, Republic of Korea, Republic of Marshall Islands, Nauru, New Zealand, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Samoa, Chinese Taipei, Tonga, Tuvalu, USA, and Vanuatu (https://www.wcpfc.int/about/who-we-are).

WCPFC Documents of Potential Interest

1. Scientific Committee 22nd Regular Session, 11-19 August 2026, Apia, Samoa (Hybrid) https://meetings.wcpfc.int/node/33198

> Item 139. SC22 recommended that the TCC and Commission consider options to expand monitoring coverage on longline vessels through human and electronic approaches in the (Western and Central Pacific Ocean (WCPO) to improve reporting and so that SC can provide better estimates of bycatch levels and other metrics from these fleets. SC22 noted that coverage of at least 10% of effort would allow for reasonably good estimates of bycatch for frequently caught species, and that higher levels would be necessary for reasonably good estimates for less frequently caught species, especially sea turtles and cetaceans (page 34).

> 6.4.3 Review of CMM for sea turtles (CMM 2018-04)
>
> Items 562-595 (pages 143-148) describe presentations and subsequent discussion about the documents below.

1.1. WCPFC-SC22-2026-EB-WP06 A Synthesis Review of Sea Turtle Interaction Processes, Mitigation Measures and Its Limitations in Tuna Longline Fisheries https://meetings.wcpfc.int/node/32280

"A total of 32 study cases were compiled for hook comparisons and 14 for bait comparisons, and fisheries were classified as possibly shallow-set or deep-set. Most available studies focused on shallow-set fisheries. In these fisheries, sea turtle bycatch rates were generally higher when J hooks or Japanese tuna hooks were used compared with large circle hooks. Similarly, squid

bait resulted in higher sea turtle bycatch rates or showed no significant difference relative to finfish bait…. findings suggest a trade-off between reducing sea turtle bycatch and increasing shark bycatch. Therefore, although large circle hooks and finfish bait are widely accepted as effective sea turtle mitigation measures in shallow-set fisheries, their effectiveness in deep-set fisheries remains largely unverified. Further research is needed to evaluate these measures in deep-set operation."

1.2. WCPFC-SC22-2026-EB-WP07 Data Limited Issue Toward Implementing Ecological Risk Assessment for Sea Turtles and a Proposal for Future Research Plans
https://meetings.wcpfc.int/node/32281

"*In the context of the proposed revisions to sea turtle interaction data collection requirements under CMM 2018-04, this paper identifies key issues in currently available datasets and proposes improvements for scientifically robust sea turtle bycatch risk assessment. Logbook data carry significant uncertainty arising from species misidentification, underreporting, and inconsistent recording practices across vessels and fleets, limiting their reliability as a primary input to quantitative bycatch estimation and ecological risk assessment frameworks. Observer data coverage alone is not a sufficient determinant of analytical precision; datasets should integrate longline and purse seine records across multiple CCMs and broad spatial areas to improve statistical robustness at scientifically-sounds scale, supported by rigorous species-identification practices such as at-sea photo documentation followed by shore-based expert verification, as already implemented in the Japanese national observer program. Evaluating the efficacy of mitigation techniques such as circle hooks and bait substitution requires controlled, comparable experimental designs—using research vessels and cooperating observer-carrying vessels—rather than reliance on operational data collection alone. Finally, incorporating species-specific ecological information on sea turtle distribution, migration, and population/demographic status, following approaches already applied in seabird ecological risk assessment by other tuna RFMOs and in comparable sea turtle frameworks, can reduce uncertainty stemming from data-limited bycatch records. Building a scientifically defensible data collection framework for sea turtles therefore requires attention to data quality, study design, and ecological data integration, beyond simply expanding the list of reporting requirement.*"

1.3. ROPIWG09-2026-00 Regional Observer Programme Intersessional Working Group
https://meetings.wcpfc.int/node/31165

This document notes possible additional reporting requirements for sea turtles and notes that CMM 2018-04 is presently being reviewed through a separate intersessional process. The Working Group is open to written proposals from CCMs on possible data field enhancements during the informal sea turtles intersessional review process.

1.4. WCPFC-SC22-2026-EB-WP09 Report from the First Informal Intersessional Meeting for the Review of CMM 2018-04 Sea Turtles
https://meetings.wcpfc.int/node/32269

- *A weakness in WCPFC's CMM 2018-04 is the lack of a mandatory training requirement for safe handling and release practices.*

- *Uncertainty exists regarding the true extent of sea turtle bycatch due to limited observer coverage and a bias in distribution of observer placement in relation to fishing effort in the WCPO.*
- *Proposed changes to sea turtle data reporting requirements are expected to improve the understanding of bycatch (eg., environmental drivers), specifically regarding regions and species.*
- *Proposed revisions to SciData include renaming catch reporting sections to include sea turtles and revising language in CMM 2018-04 reporting requirements to ensure consistent interpretation among CCMs.*
- *The majority of participants expressed support for a joint analysis, led by the United States, of WCPFC Regional Observer Programme sea turtle interaction data: participants stressed the importance of transparency regarding the scope (time period and region) and the inclusion of national scientists, and data confidentiality.*
- *Expand Mitigation Scope to Deep-Set Longlines: A key concern is CMM 2018-04's limitation to shallow-set longline gear, despite deep-set longlines accounting for ~ 85% of WCPO longline fishing effort. Strengthening the measure by including deep-set mitigation is suggested to further reduce impacts to sea turtle populations.*
- *Prioritise Data Clarity and Collaborative Analysis: There is a strong need to clarify sea turtle interaction reporting requirements to improve estimates and understanding of bycatch. Participants agreed that a joint analysis, led by the United States, of shared WCPFC Regional Observer Programme (ROP) and national data will be useful to strengthen CMM 2018-04. There was strong support for this type of analysis, with the provision that data confidentiality issues would be clarified and that national scientists would be included in the process.*
- *Investigate Bycatch Hotspots and New Concepts: Future work could include a Spatially Explicit Fisheries Risk Assessment (SEFRA) for sea turtles in the WCPO. Emerging concepts to explore for mitigation include the "Move On" rule (ceasing/shifting fishing activity when encounter thresholds are met) and the "Catch Fish, Not Turtles" strategy (setting gear deeper than 100m).*
- *Focus Research on Leatherback Bycatch: Further research is needed regarding effective bycatch mitigation measures for leatherbacks, as their primary interaction mechanism is entanglement rather than hooking. Better data on interactions would assist in identifying spatial and temporal bycatch hotspots, information that may be useful to refine management strategies.*
- *Mandate Safe Handling and Release Training: WCPFC's CMM lacks a mandatory training provision for safe handling and release, a requirement included in IATTC Resolution C-21-04. Recommendations include completing turtle handling and release training for skippers and crew to improve post-release survival rates.*

1.5. WCPFC-SC22-2026-EB-WP10 Proposal to Amend the Regional Observer Programme Minimum Standard Data Fields and Sci Data to Support Sea Turtle Conservation and Management

https://meetings.wcpfc.int/node/32270

Proposed amendments include hook size and type, interaction codes for sea turtles, discarded/released, sea turtle sex.

2. CMM 2018-04 - Conservation and Management of Sea Turtles

https://cmm.wcpfc.int/measure/cmm-2018-04

Items of this document are under consideration, as described above.

Availability of WCPFC Sea Turtle Bycatch Data

The status of sea turtles in the WCPO and bycatch mitigation actions adopted by the WCPFC are presented at https://www.wcpfc.int/sustainability/bycatch-mitigation/turtles. Public domain bycatch data files from 2013-2025 are also available and indicate 80 flatback, green, hawksbill, leatherback, loggerhead, and olive ridley turtles (plus unidentified species) caught in longlines and 74 flatback, green, hawksbill, leatherback, loggerhead, and olive ridley turtles (plus unidentified species) in purse-seines (https://www.wcpfc.int/public-domain-bycatch-data-files).

Upcoming WCPFC Meetings of Potential Interest

None identified, but future meetings of the Regional Observer Programme Working Group may be of interest (see https://meetings.wcpfc.int/).

Points for IOSEA AC Consideration

- SIOFA does not indicate species identification resources, guidelines and education material for handling and release of sea turtle bycatch, or data codes equivalent to CCSBT and WCPFC.
- SIOFA does not have data available through Bycatch Management Information System (BMIS; https://www.bmis-bycatch.org/).
- CCSBT encourages collaboration with the IOSEA MoU.
- WCPFC is currently reviewing the collection and reporting of bycatch sea turtle data and bycatch mitigation evidence/research.

Acknowledgements

The map of RMFOs in the IOSEA MoU region was created by Nandhini Somasundaram using GEOJSON files downloaded from the Global Fishing Watch Interaction Map (https://globalfishingwatch.org/map/)

References

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