WHALES AND DOLPHINS

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THEMES AND OBJECTIVES

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| **THEMES**  | **OBJECTIVES**  |
| 1. Information, Awareness/ Education and Communication  | ■ Develop communication strategies, training programmes and protocols for key issues within the Whale and Dolphin Action Plan; ■ Increase awareness and understanding of whales and dolphins in the region  |
| 2. Capacity Building  | ■ Increase in-country expertise and capacity.  |
| 3. Threat Reduction  | ■ Minimize the impacts of the major (five) hazards listed below on whale and dolphin populations in the Pacific Islands region: ■ Fisheries interactions. ■ Climate change. ■ Coastal development. ■ Pollution/pathogens. ■ Direct take.  |
| 4. Ecosystem and Habitat Protection  | ■ Support and encourage the designation (establishment) of national whale/ marine sanctuaries, marine park, MPAs in SPREP members ■ Support the management of whale / marine sanctuaries, MPAs and marine parks■ Identify and protect critical habitat and migratory pathways.  |
| 5. Legislation, Policy and Management/ Recovery Plans  | ■ Develop country level legal, policy and institutional framework to support the effective implementation of the whales and dolphins action plan. ■ Develop and support implementation of regional/ national whale and dolphin species management and recovery plans  |
| 6. Cultural Significance and Value  | ■ Document the range of cultural practices, values and knowledge associated with whales and dolphins and encourage a more cohesive approach in policies and legislation. ■ Preserve and protect the traditional knowledge and values associated with whales and dolphins. ■ Ensure appropriate cultural knowledge, practices, and values inform and underpin management measures.  |
| 7. Research and Monitoring  | ■ Support efforts to establish abundance/distribution of all cetaceans in the Pacific Islands region.  ■ Support research and monitoring to identify hazards and develop hazard mitigation strategies.  ■ Improve data collection and database management systems.  ■ Undertake comprehensive habitat mapping.  ■ Improve information received on stranding events in the Pacific Island Region.   |
| 8. Whale and Dolphin-based Tourism  | ■ Ensure the development of whale and dolphin tourism is sustainable throughout the Pacific Islands Region. ■ Ensure best practice management of whales and dolphins tourism in the PIR. ■ Whale and dolphin based tourism watching is conducted responsibly with minimum impact and maximum education and economic values.  |
| 9. National, Regional and International Collaboration and Cooperation  | ■ Promote and enhance national, regional and international coordination, collaboration and partnership for whale and dolphin conservation in the Pacific Islands Region.  |

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| **THEME 1: INFORMATION, AWARENESS/EDUCATION AND COMMUNICATION**  |
| **OBJECTIVE 1: Develop communication tools and strategies to increase awareness of key issues within the Whale and Dolphin Action Plan**  |
| **Actions**  | **Lead**  | **Priority**  |
| 1.1: Develop regionally and nationally-tailored education and awareness tools incorporating scientific and traditional knowledge (regarding known threats, species ID and status, the blue carbon role of whales in climate change mitigation) for use and dissemination by governments, schools, community groups, media agencies, private industry and NGOs.  | All  | High  |
| **INDICATORS**: * Community and school education programmes implemented (eg. presentations on topics related to whales and dolphin in schools and village halls, integration of whales and dolphins into annual festivities).
* Regionally relevant factsheets and guideline brochures (regarding fisheries interaction, cultural practices, regulation, biology, natural history, species ID etc) are produced to inform governments, industries and boaters on key issues.
* Whales and dolphins are profiled through documentaries, interviews and regular spots in local media.
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THEMES, OBJECTIVES AND ACTIONS

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| **THEME 2: CAPACITY BUILDING**  |
| **OBJECTIVE 1: Increase in-country expertise and capacity.**  |
| **Actions**  | **Lead**  | **Priority**  |
| 2.1: Identify and address national and regional training needs and support proposal writing to implement WDAP at country and regional level, using existing processes such as National Capacity Self-Assessment (NCSA).  | Members/ Partners  | High  |
| 2.2: Support the development of training packages on common priorities (e.g. stranding, data recording, legislation, communication, etc.) based on regional priorities and convene workshops based on identified needs.  | SPREP/ Partners  | High  |
| 2.3: Build in-country capacity for research and preparation of relevant regulation, legislation and policy.  | Partners/ SPREP  | High  |
| 2.4: Support national and / or (sub)regional training workshops on necropsy, including collection and storage of tissues, skeletal remains and analysis.  | Partners/ SPREP  | Medium  |
| 2.5: Support development of research and monitoring database complementary to that under the Marine Turtle Action Plan.  | SPREP/ Partners  | High  |
| 2.6: Support development of surveillance and enforcement capacity for implementation of national protection measures including whale and dolphin watching tourism operations.  | Members/ Partners  | High  |
|  | Partners/ SPREP  | Medium  |
| **INDICATORS**: * Support provided for training packages upon request and subject to funding.
* Training programmes carried out in country for key government agencies and identified local community stewards.
* Increased technical capacity to obtain information and assist in conservation of whales and dolphins in the region.
* Improved capacity to develop and implement policies and legislation.
* Whale/dolphin operator training and certification programs are implemented in SPREP nations.
* Number of countries/territories providing information for a research and monitoring database.
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| (iv) Pollution and Pathogens  |
| 3.6: Encourage improved waste management at community and national levels (including fishing operations) to reduce plastics and other debris, including discarded fishing gear, in the marine environment.  | All  | High  |
| 3.7: Reduce impacts of underwater noise pollution from any source that could affect whales and dolphins.  | Members/ Partners  | High  |
| **INDICATORS**: * Information provided to governments on the impacts of plastics and other debris on whales and dolphins.
* Waste management guidelines promoted at all levels.
* Impacts of underwater noise pollution to whales and dolphins considered and mitigated where possible.
 |
| (v) Coastal Development and Tourism  |
| 3.8: Encourage consultation/consideration of impacts of development and tourism on whales and dolphins in national legislative and environmental impact assessment (EIA) processes and encourage proponents to consider impacts on cetaceans through EIA processes.  | Members/ Partners  | High  |
| 3.9: Support member governments in the development of appropriate monitoring and mitigation of significant impacts to whales and dolphins identified by coastal development and tourism activities.  | SPREP/Partners/ Members  | High  |
| **INDICATORS**: * Consideration of impacts on whales and dolphins incorporated into processes such as EIA, and potential impact information made available.
* Monitoring of identified localized populations where appropriate.
* Strategies to reduce impacts on cetaceans from coastal development developed and implemented.
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| **THEME 4: ECOSYSTEM AND HABITAT PROTECTION**  |
| **OBJECTIVE 1: Support and encourage the designation (establishment) and management of national whale/ marine sanctuaries, marine park, MPAs in SPREP member countries and territories**  |
| **Actions**  | **Lead**  | **Priority**  |
| 4.1: Support efforts to declare/establish EEZ wide / national whale / marine sanctuaries, large MPAs and marine parks with technical / policy advice.  | SPREP/ Partners  | High  |
| 4.2: Support the development and implementation of management plans and strategies for sanctuaries/MPAs/Marine Parks.  | SPREP/ Partners  | High  |
| **INDICATORS** ■ Number of formally designated/established national EEZ-wide sanctuaries and other marine protected areas that protect cetaceans by SPREP members. * Number of Management Plans and strategies developed for all established sanctuaries/MPAs/Marine Parks.
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| **OBJECTIVE 3: Identify and protect critical habitat and migratory pathways**  |
| **Actions**  | **Lead**  | **Priority**  |
| 4.3: Support identification and protection of critical cetacean habitat and migratory pathways.  | SPREP/Partners/ Members  | High  |
| 4.4: Link with and utilize existing large scale marine habitat programs regionally and nationally to share information.  | SPREP/Partners/Members  | Medium  |
| **INDICATORS**: ■ Critical habitat and migratory pathways are identified, mapped and protected.  |
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| **THEME 5: LEGISLATION, POLICY AND MANAGEMENT/RECOVERY PLANS**  |
| **OBJECTIVE 1: Develop country level legal, policy and institutional frameworks to support the effective implementation of the whale and dolphin action plan**  |
| **Actions**  | **Lead**  | **Priority**  |
| 5.1: Enforce and/or propose legislative measures for the effective conservation and management of whales and dolphins, including measures to mitigate threats and to ensure habitat protection.  | Members  | High  |
| 5.2: Respond to country / territory legal and policy requirements or requests.  | SPREP/Partners  | High  |
| **INDICATORS**: * Harmonisation of in country/territory policy and legal instruments.
 |
| **OBJECTIVE 2: Develop and support implementation of regional/national whale and dolphin species management and recovery plans**  |
| **Action**  | **Lead**  | **Priority**  |
| 5.3: Where requested, support the development and implementation of national whale and dolphin action plans, based on the outcomes of the 2017 Whales in a Changing Ocean conference and this SPREP regional action plan, to promote and guide national whale and dolphin conservation programmes and initiatives.  | SPREP/Partners/Members | High  |
| 5.4: Support the development of management plans for established/declared marine sanctuaries, MPAs and other ecosystem-based protection mechanisms that include whales and dolphins.  | Members/ SPREP  | High  |
| **INDICATORS**: * Number of national whale and dolphin management/recovery plans developed and implemented.
* Number of management plans developed for marine managed areas (eg. marine sanctuaries, MPAs, marine parks, locally-managed marine areas) that include provisions for the conservation of whales and dolphins.
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| **THEME 6: CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE AND VALUE**  |
| **OBJECTIVE 1: Document the range of cultural practices, values and knowledge associated with whales and dolphins and encourage a more cohesive approach in policies and legislation**  |
| **Actions**  | **Lead**  | **Priority**  |
| 6.1: Support the documentation of traditional knowledge, practices, heritage and values related to the conservation and management of whales and dolphins, including directed takes.  | Members/ Partners  | Medium  |
| 6.2: Promote the adoption and integration of customary practices related to the conservation and management of whales and dolphins, where appropriate.  | Members  | Medium  |
| **INDICATORS**: * TK and other customary practices and values incorporated in national and regional documentation related to whales and dolphins
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| **THEME 7: RESEARCH AND MONITORING This Action Plan promotes only non-lethal techniques for research**  |
| **OBJECTIVE 1: Improve knowledge of abundance/distribution of cetaceans in the Pacific Islands region.** *Prioritization to be given to those species or populations known to be subject to direct or indirect threats, and/ or have a data deficient or unfavourable conservation status.*  |
| **Actions**  | **Lead**  | **Priority**  |
| 7.1: Support the maintenance of Marine Mammal Observers of Oceania by Internet (MObI) whale and dolphin sighting database.  | Partners  | Medium  |
| 7.2: Support dedicated surveys to establish distribution, range and habitat information for PIR cetacean species. | Partners/ Members  | Medium  |
| 7.3: Provide species identification and related information to all PICTs on request.  | SPREP/ Partners  | High  |
| 7.4: Promote use of remote sensing devices, especially acoustic.  | Partners  | Medium  |
| **INDICATORS**: * Revised whale and dolphin species diversity lists for all PICTs.
* Improved estimates of distribution, abundance and habitat for certain PIR whale and dolphin species.
* At least one remote sensing device deployed in the region for at least six months.
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| **THEME 7: RESEARCH AND MONITORING This Action Plan promotes only non-lethal techniques for research**  |
| **OBJECTIVE 2: Undertake research and monitoring to identify hazards and develop hazard mitigation strategies**  |
| **Actions**  | **Lead**  | **Priority**  |
| 7.5: Collate available information on the scale of by-catch and fisheries interaction in order to better assess level of priority and possible mitigation actions.  | Members/ Partners/SPREP | High  |
| 7.6: Promote improved reporting of cetacean related information (sightings, fisheries entanglements or by-catch) from fishing vessels.  | Members/ SPREP/Partners  | High  |
| 7.7: Support assessments of impacts on abundance, population structure, and trends for whale and dolphin species targeted in directed takes. | Members/ Partners/SPREP | High  |
| 7.8: Liaise with relevant organisations and stakeholders to identify key pathways through which pollution (including noise, fishing gear, plastics and pathogens) may be introduced into the PIR marine environment.  | Members/ Partners/SPREP | Medium  |
| 7.9: Collect information on the potential impact of plastics and fishing gear on whales and dolphins, including from stranding networks.  | SPREP/Partners/ Members  | High  |
| 7.10: Assess potential impacts of seabed mining on cetacean populations in the PIR.  | SPREP/Partners/ Members | Medium  |
| 7.11: Encourage reporting of ship-strikes.  | SPREP/Partners/ Members  | Medium  |
| 7.12: Document the number of animals, species, location and date of any take (hunting, captivity purposes, research etc.).  | Members | High  |
| 7.13: Support the assessment of the potential impacts / localized effects from tourism activities, including swim-with activities on whales and dolphins.  | SPREP/Partners/ Members | High |
| **INDICATORS**: * By-catch from fishing operations reported annually in at least one international forum.
* Number of non-lethal research projects carried out in national waters on abundance and/or distribution and/or habitat use of whales and dolphins.
* Improved record-keeping and reporting on cetaceans taken in hunts.
* Information on impacts of plastics and fishing gear collected.
* At least one study on impacts of tourism related activities completed during the lifetime of this plan.
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| **THEME 7: RESEARCH AND MONITORING This Action Plan promotes only non-lethal techniques for research**  |
| **OBJECTIVE 4: Improve data collection and database management systems**  |
| **Actions**  | **Lead**  | **Priority**  |
| 7.14: Promote the development of national stranding networks that are inclusive of all relevant stakeholders, and facilitate the process by which stranding records are reported to the national network.  | All  | High  |
| 7.15: Undertake at least two training sessions and workshops on species identification and stranding prevention and response for relevant stakeholders  | SPREP/Partners/ Members  | Medium  |
| 7.16: Promote electronic reporting and monitoring. | SPREP/ Members  | High  |
| **INDICATORS**: * National networks include all relevant stakeholders and contain relevant reports as well as directed survey information.
* Stranding events are documented on www.apodstrandings.org
* Species identification and responses to stranding events is improved.
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| **Objective 5: Undertake comprehensive habitat mapping** *Prioritization to be given to those species or populations known to be subject to direct or indirect threats, and/or have a data deficient or unfavourable conservation status.*  |
| **Actions**  | **Lead**  | **Priority**  |
| 7.17: Support collation of listing of key habitat characteristics for selected PIR cetacean species.  | Partners/ Members  | High  |
| 7.18: Promote habitat mapping of relevant environmental variables on species identified in Action 7.29.  | Partners/ Members  | High  |
| **INDICATORS**: * Increased understanding of habitat preferences and use by selected PIR cetacean species.
* Maps of cetacean species distribution in the PIR developed, based on habitat and environmental characteristics.
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| **THEME 7: RESEARCH AND MONITORING This Action Plan promotes only non-lethal techniques for research**  |
| **OBJECTIVE 6: Improve information received on stranding events in the Pacific Island Region**  |
| **Actions**  | **Lead**  | **Priority**  |
| 7.19: Encourage as much information as possible to be collected at a stranding event. If possible, full necropsies should be undertaken, including examination for plastic ingestion.  | Members/ Partners/SPREP | High  |
| 7.20: Continue to support a website to improve the documentation of whale and dolphin strandings in the Pacific Islands region (www.apodstrandings.org*).*  | SPREP/ SPWRC  | High  |
| 7.21: Seek funding to produce and distribute a regional stranding booklet / manual with species identification, forms and instructions in English, Pidgin and French.  | SPREP/ Partners  | High  |
| 7.22: Support the provision of basic stranding kits (including for genetic samples) to members.  | SPREP/ Partners  | High  |
| 7.23: Seek funding to deliver stranding workshops in the region.  | SPREP/ Partners/ Members  | High |
| **INDICATORS**: * Stranding Database and network operationally improved.
* Tissue archive and protocols for deposition and access in use.
* Number of kits for genetic sampling distributed and used.
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| **THEME 8: WHALE AND DOLPHIN BASED TOURISM**  |
| **OBJECTIVE 1: Ensure the development of whale and dolphin tourism is sustainable throughout the Pacific Islands Region.**  |
| **Actions**  | **Lead**  | **Priority**  |
| 8.1: Document and share lessons learnt from countries/territories with established whale and dolphin watching industries.  | SPREP/Partners/ Members  | High  |
| 8.2: Promote a regional database to document whale and dolphin tourism.  | Partners/ SPREP  | Medium |
| 8.3: Support research to assess the sustainability of target population of whales and dolphins to manage size of the industry.  | Partners/SPREP/Members  | High  |
| 8.4: Encourage diversification from a single species (e.g. humpback whales) industry, where available, to minimize impacts.  | Members  | Medium  |
| **INDICATORS**: * A regional database is established to monitor development of the industry.
* Industries, governments and stakeholders (NGOs, SPREP) meet at least once during the course of this Action Plan.
* Baseline research on target populations is conducted as a basis for monitoring future growth of the whale watch industry and to promote sustainability.
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| **OBJECTIVE 2: Ensure best practice management of whales and dolphins tourism in the PIR**  |
| **Actions**  | **Lead**  | **Priority**  |
| 8.5: Review and distribute Pacific Islands Regional Guidelines for Whale and Dolphin Watching (PIRGWDW) as necessary.  | Partners/ SPREP  | High  |
| 8.6: Encourage annual stakeholder meetings (Govt, industry, scientists, NGOs) to assess management of the whale watch industry and use as a basis for industry review and reporting.  | Members/ Partners  | High  |
| 8.7: Encourage licensing and limiting of licences or permits as a tool for management.  | Members/ Partners  | High  |
| 8.8: Encourage/support countries as necessary to review/develop national guidelines/regulations in line with the SPREP endorsed guidelines. | SPREP/ Partners  | High  |
| 8.9: Promote national compliance and enforcement training workshops.  | Members/ SPREP  | High  |
| 8.10: Support countries, as appropriate, in development of cetacean watching guidelines.  | Partners/ SPREP  | High  |
| **INDICATORS**: * Stakeholders meetings conducted and reports developed.
* Guidelines reviewed and distributed.
* Number of national guidelines established based on the regional guidelines and developed into national regulations.
* Workshop conducted for national compliance and enforcement of guidelines/regulations.
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| **THEME 8: WHALE AND DOLPHIN BASED TOURISM**  |
| **OBJECTIVE 3: Whale and dolphin based tourism watching is conducted responsibly with minimum impact and maximum education and economic values.**  |
| **Actions**  | **Lead**  | **Priority**  |
| 8.11: Promote a regional programme to conduct national whale watching training for operators and guides/stakeholders.  | Partners  | High  |
| 8.12: Develop whale watching operator reporting programme to collect useable data. | SPREP/Partners/ Members | High  |
| 8.13: Support countries to develop an education kit for onboard operations.  | SPREP/Partners/ Members | High |
| 8.14: Assist studies to explore potential for whale watching tourism in countries.  | SPREP/Partners/ Members | Medium |
| **INDICATORS**: * Regional programme to conduct national whale watching training for operators and guides/stakeholders established.
* Programme for whale watching operators to collect useful data developed and implemented.
* Educational kit available on board approved whale watching boats.
* Number of whale and dolphin watching studies undertaken in additional members.
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| **THEME 9: NATIONAL, REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL COLLABORATION AND COOPERATION**  |
| **OBJECTIVE 1: Promote and enhance national, regional and international coordination, collaboration and partnership for whale and dolphin conservation in the Pacific Islands Region.**  |
| **Actions**  | **Lead**  | **Priority**  |
| 9.1: Promote understanding by facilitating effective information sharing mechanisms (e.g. networks). | SPREP/ Members  | High  |
| 9.2: Encourage and support PICTs to effectively implement the WDAP at the local and national Government levels.  | SPREP/Partners/ Members  | High  |
| 9.3: Facilitate PICTs’ involvement and participation in relevant international and regional meetings and initiatives for whales and dolphins conservation. | SPREP/ Partners/ Members  | Medium  |
| 9.4: Develop linkages and relationships with relevant global and regional organisations, such as RFMOs, IWC, CMS, and CITES (eg. MOUs, information exchange and collaborative projects). | SPREP/ Partners/ Members  | High  |
| 9.5: Develop partnerships/relationships, e.g. through MoUs, with relevant private sector organisations to reduce threats to whales and dolphins such as by-catch, depredation and marine debris (such as fishing and tourism industries, NGOs).  | Members/ SPREP/ Partners  | Medium  |
| 9.6: Ensure integration of whale and dolphin conservation into national, regional and international initiatives including: NBSAPs; National Sustainable Development Strategies; Pacific Islands Regional Oceans Policy; Action Strategy for Nature Conservation, CROP Marine Sector Working Group; RFMOs; NBSAP Working Group). CTI, Micronesian challenge, Oceanscape, Funding opportunities e.g. GEF.  | Members  | High  |
| 9.7: Coordinate and facilitate the compilation of PICTs’ position for relevant international processes and MEAs on whales and dolphins.  | SPREP/ Members/  | Medium  |
| **INDICATORS**: * Number of national, regional and international organisations, processes and frameworks including PIR whale and dolphin conservation needs and supporting the WDAP.
* Number of NBSAPs or equivalent strategies integrating WDAP action.
* Capacity strengthened to draft, manage and enforce legislation and policy in country / territory.
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