**SPREP MARINE SPECIES PROGRAMME 2018-2022**

**DRAFT DUGONG ACTION PLAN**

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| **THEME 1: THREAT REDUCTION** | | |
| **OBJECTIVE 1: Reduce direct and indirect threats to dugong populations, including seagrass habitat loss** | | |
| **Actions** | **Lead** | **Priority** |
| 1.1: Identify, assess and evaluate threats and potential threats to dugong populations at the national and regional level. | SPREP/  Range States/  CMS Dugong MOU Secretariat/  NGOs | High |
| (i) Fisheries Interactions | | |
| 1.2: Identify the key sources of fisheries mortality for dugong and advise governments on ways reduce to the greatest extent practicable the incidental capture and mortality of dugongs in the course of fishing activities (e.g. spatial and temporal closures and gear modification). | SPREP/  Range States/  CMS Secretariat/  NGOs | High |
| 1.3: Prohibit the use of destructive fishing practices and gears (e.g. blasting and gillnets) in known dugong habitat. | Range State Governments | High |
| (ii) Directed Take |  |  |
| 1.4: Promote compliance with legal frameworks prohibiting the take of dugong. | SPREP/ Range State Govts | High |
| 1.5: Prohibit directed take unless research and monitoring have established reliable abundance estimates and evidence that the dugong population is stable or increasing. | Range State Govts | High |
| 1.6: Promote alternative livelihood programmes, such as guide or boat operators in the tourism sector, for fishermen who take dugongs. Ensure that incentives provided effectively promote the desired conservation action. | SPREP/ Range State Govts | Medium |
| (iii) Watercraft Strikes/Interactions | | |
| 1.7: Develop and implement guidelines for responsible watercraft operations. | SPREP/ Range State Govts | High |
| 1.8: Where hotspots for boat strike have been identified, apply mechanisms to reduce dugong/vessel interaction, e.g. promotion and enforcement of regulations to reduce boat speed to safe levels and spatial and temporal marine areas access restriction. | Range State Govts | High |
| (iv) Coastal Development | | |
| 1.9: Protect water quality by promoting sustainable land use practices (including ridge-to-ridge and community-based management) to protect and conserve seagrass meadows. | SPREP/ Range State Govts/  Development partners | High |
| 1.10: Ensure EIAs for any coastal development in dugong habitat take account of and mitigate where necessary any impacts on dugongs and seagrass. | SPREP/  Range State Govts | High |
| (v) Pollution/Debris | | |
| 1.11: Prohibit the discarding of fishing gear, especially nets (ghost nets). Encourage ghost net clearing programmes on beaches/reefs. | Range State Govts/SPREP/  CMS Secretariat | High |
| **INDICATORS**:   * Measures to address identified threats to dugongs implemented. * Measures to protect identified seagrass hotspots (e.g. those identified by the CMS Dugong MOU Standardised Dugong Catch and Bycatch Questionnaire) implemented. | | |

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| THEME 2: RESEARCH AND MONITORING | | |
| OBJECTIVE 1: Improve our understanding of dugong populations and habitats through research and monitoring | | |
| Actions | **Lead** | **Priority** |
| 2.1: Identify and prioritise gaps in dugong and seagrass knowledge. | SPREP/CMS Secretariat/  Partners | High |
| 2.2: Promote the use of the Dugong and Seagrass Research Toolkit[[1]](#footnote-1) to facilitate standardised and comparable research. | SPREP/CMS Secretariat/  Range State Govts/Partners | High |
| 2.3: Develop a national dugong mortality database and require reporting of all dugong mortalities, with high penalties for non-report but no penalties for accidental kill. | Range State Govts | High |
| 2.4 Conduct regular (at least every 5 years), replicable surveys to determine national dugong population status, abundance and distribution. | SPREP/CMS Secretariat/  Range State Govts/Partners | High |
| 2.5: Support use of the CMS Dugong MOU Standardised Dugong Catch and Bycatch Questionnaire and other dugong habitat and vessel interaction mapping tools. Disperse information gathered to relevant parties and target identified conservation hotspots in conservation and research efforts. | SPREP/CMS Secretariat/  Range State Govts/Partners | High |
| 2.6: Conduct necropsies on stranded dugong carcasses in collaboration with laboratories and record information gathered in dugong mortality database. | Range State Govts/Partners | Medium |
| 2.7: Collect and stockpile genetic samples for analysis in the future (including from strandings) following the CMS MoU protocol for collecting samples. | Range State Govts/Partners | Medium |
| INDICATORS:   * Gaps in dugong and seagrass knowledge identified and prioritized * Dugong and Seagrass Research Toolkit is used by all range states * CMS Dugong MOU Standardised Dugong Catch and Bycatch Questionnaire completed in all range states, communicated to relevant stakeholders and incorporated into conservation planning by all range states * Mortality database is established and functional with all range states reporting annually (within two years) * Updated baseline surveys completed for distribution and abundance for all Pacific range states by 2020 * Relevant information on dugong population status distributed, summarized and made widely available * Necropsies of at least 5 dugong carcasses completed * Genetic sampling continued or initiated in all range states | | |

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| **THEME 3: CAPACITY BUILDING AND COLLABORATION** | | |
| **OBJECTIVE 1: Build in-country capacity to strengthen dugong conservation** | | |
| Action | Lead | Priority |
| 3.1: Build national capacity at all levels, including communities, to participate in dugong management, research and monitoring (access to expertise/resources). | SPREP/  Range State Govts/Partners | High |
| **INDICATORS**:   * Training to build national and community capacity in dugong management conducted. * Number of students from Pacific Island range states enrolled in post-graduate studies on dugong. | | |
| **OBJECTIVE 2: Enhance national, regional and international collaboration** | | |
| **Actions** | **Lead** | **Priority** |
| 3.3: Encourage range states to collaborate with other range states in dugong work (e.g. Australia / PNG partnerships, New Caledonia / Vanuatu) | SPREP/CMS  Secretariat/ Range State Govts | High |
| 3.4: Encourage Pacific range states to actively implement the Conservation and Management Plan of the CMS MoU for the Conservation and Management of Dugongs and their Habitats. | SPREP/CMS  Secretariat/  Range State Govts | High |
| 3.5: Strengthen collaboration with range states to combat illegal trade and encourage training to identify dugong parts. | SPREP/CITES  Secretariat/  Range State Govts | Medium |
| INDICATORS:   * Partnerships developed for research and conservation effort among most range states and stakeholders. * Collaboration and partnership (esp. with CITES) enhanced with objective of eliminating illegal international trade of dugong products. | | |

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| **THEME 4: MANAGEMENT** | | |
| **OBJECTIVE 1: Improving protection of dugongs through enforcement and compliance with legal frameworks and national action plans.** | | |
| **Action** | **Lead** | **Priority** |
| 4.1: Encourage adaptation and amendment of this action plan at a national level and ensure that management plans for marine sanctuaries, MPAs and other mechanisms include dugongs whenever possible. | SPREP/  Range State Govts | High |
| 4.2: Strengthen enforcement and penalties; engage local communities in monitoring, surveillance and reporting of illegal activities. | Range State Govts | High |
| 4.3: Establish a mechanism for reporting illegal activities and a clear protocol for the implementing agency. | Range State Govts | High |
| 4.4: Establish, where necessary, and review, where existing, relevant legislation including traditional/customary measures, to incorporate dugong protection and dugong habitat protection. | Range State Govts | Medium |
| 4.5: Develop a consistent practical and legislative framework for appropriate dugong rescue / stranding guidelines based on existing material (e.g. the *Marine Animal Rescue Program Reference Guide* by David Schofield and Cynthia Perry). | SPREP/  Range State Govts | Low |
| INDICATORS   * Community members actively involved in enforcement in at least two Range States * Mechanism for reporting illegal activities and clear protocol established in at least two Range States * Legislation and policies as well as traditional management systems that protect dugongs and their habitats in place in three Pacific Island Range States. * Stranding guidelines developed and communicated to stakeholders in all Range States | | |

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| **OBJECTIVE 2: Recognise the value of traditional knowledge, traditional resource management and customary marine tenure** | | |
| **Action** | Lead | Priority |
| 4.7 Ensure that traditional knowledge is documented, held by the appropriate authority and adequately protected and shared where appropriate / possible. | Range States Govts/Partners | Medium |
| 4.8: Incorporate relevant traditional knowledge, resource management, and customary marine tenure into dugong and associated habitat management. | Range State Govts | Medium |
| * Traditional knowledge in at least two dugong Pacific Island range states documented, maintained and, where appropriate, incorporated into management * Community based management supported in all Range States | | |

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| **THEME 5: INFORMATION, AWARENESS/EDUCATION AND COMMUNICATION** | | |
| **OBJECTIVE 1: Raise awareness and share information about the importance of dugongs and their habitats** | | |
| **Actions** | **Lead** | **Priority** |
| 5.1: Increase community awareness of ecological and biological information on dugongs, the threats they face (including boat strike and gillnet fishing) and the need for their conservation including protection of seagrass habitats. | SPREP/CMS Secretariat/Range State Govts/ Partners | High |
| 5.2: Increase awareness about the ecosystem services of seagrass (e.g. mitigating ocean acidification) to increase funding and support for seagrass conservation. | SPREP/CMS Secretariat | High |
| 5.3: Encourage and support the incorporation of dugong information and conservation issues into school curricula. | Range State Govts | High |
| 5.4: Provide assistance to the Pacific Islands range states to enable them to deliver effective and appropriate educational and awareness programmes to the public and promote sharing of informational materials between stakeholders. | SPREP/CMS Secretariat/  Partners | High |
| 5.6: Facilitate and encourage networking and linkages to relevant community monitoring groups, such as Seagrass Watch (http://www.seagrasswatch.org), and other NGOs, in information exchange. | SPREP/CMS Secretariat | Medium |
| 5.7: Continue to operate the Pacific Islands (PI) Dugong listserv, providing information and opportunities to share experiences. | SPREP | Medium |
| * Educational/awareness programmes delivered to all Pacific Island dugong range states. * Information sheets on threats produced or adapted, translated where necessary, and distributed to communities and all relevant stakeholders in at least two Range States * Dugong and seagrass conservation issues and information included in school programmes in all Pacific range states. * PI Dugong listserv operational. | | |

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| **THEME 6: INTERACTIONS WITH DUGONGS** | | |
| **OBJECTIVE 1: Encourage best international practice related to dugong interactions** | | |
| **Actions** | **Lead** | **Priority** |
| 6.1: Promote sustainable wildlife tourism in consultation with local communities and other stakeholders. | SPREP/CMS Secretariat/Range State Govts/Partners | High |
| 6.2 Monitor the impact of eco-tourism related activities. | Range State Govts/Partners | Medium |
| 6.4: Encourage development of a permitting system to regulate dugong watching operations and other related activities. | SPREP/Range State Govts | High |
| 6.3: Implement best international practice guidelines for responsible dugong watching and other related activities. | SPREP/Range State Govts | High |
| **INDICATORS**:   * Policy/legislation in place for issuance of permits to regulate dugong watching operations and other related activities on at least one Range State * Guidelines for responsible dugong watching and other related activities disseminated and effectively implemented in at least one Range State | | |

1. <http://www.conservation.tools> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)