



SPREP
Secretariat of the Pacific Regional
Environment Programme

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The Pacific environment, sustaining our livelihoods and natural heritage in harmony with our cultures.

CIRCULAR

File: AP 2/2/21/2 To: SPREP National Focal Points
Date: 25 August 2015
Circular No.: 15/55
Subject: **YEAR OF THE WHALE IN THE PACIFIC ISLANDS 2016/17 BACKGROUND INFORMATION AND PROPOSAL FOR WORKSHOP**

Dear National Focal Points,

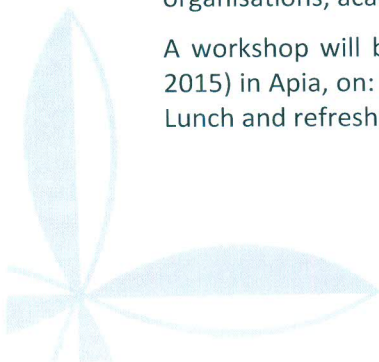
INTRODUCTION

The Secretariat for the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP) is the Inter-Governmental Organisation responsible for the protection and sustainable management of the environment of the Pacific Islands region, including threatened and migratory species. SPREP's Marine Species Action Plan (2103-2017) sets out a comprehensive framework for the conservation management of cetaceans across the region, and has been endorsed by all 16 Pacific Island members and 5 metropolitan members. This action plan also forms the basis for the Action Plan for the MoU for the Protection of Pacific Islands Cetaceans, negotiated under the Convention on Migratory Species.

Every two years, SPREP members designate a key theme to focus their activities and those of its supporters (e.g. 2014/15 is the Year of Natural Solutions), and at the SPREP Annual Meeting in September 2014, it was agreed that 2016/17 would be The Year of the Whale. Members also agreed that a work programme should be drawn up during 2015, for endorsement by the 2015 Annual Meeting, to be held in Apia, Samoa in September. The governments of Australia, France, New Caledonia, Tonga, and the USA volunteered to be represented on a working group to develop such a work programme, and invited SPREP to seek the advice and support of other appropriate agencies and organisations to assist with the development of a suitable work programme and to identify possible sources of funding.

Additionally, staff of the International Whaling Commission Secretariat, the Convention on Migratory Species, the International Fund for Animal Welfare and members of the South Pacific Whale Research Consortium have also indicated their interest and potential willingness to have an involvement in planning and implementing the Year of the Whale. Various other international organisations, academic institutions and NGOs have also indicated a willingness to collaborate.

A workshop will be held immediately prior to the 26th SPREP Annual Meeting (21-15 September 2015) in Apia, on: **Saturday 19 September : 0900-1700 at the SPREP Campus, Vailima, Apia, Samoa.** Lunch and refreshments will be provided.



Please reply to Mike Donoghue (michaeld@sprep.org) and Domitille Le Huede (domitillel.ext@sprep.org) to indicate your availability, and with any suggestions and recommendations for the draft work programme on the following pages.

All SPREP member countries and territories with an interest in whales and dolphins are strongly encouraged to attend. A provisional agenda is attached - we would greatly appreciate any constructive comments and additions. I look forward to your attendance at the workshop.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D Sheppard', written in a cursive style. The signature is positioned above the printed name and title.

David Sheppard
Director General

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