



SPREP

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

CIRCULAR

FILE: AP 5/4/1

TO: SPREP National Focal Points

DATE: 29 November 2017

CIRCULAR: 17/55

SUBJECT: Experts Workshop to Define Bioregions for the South Western Pacific Ocean

Dear Focal Points,

SPREP and CSIRO, Australia will convene the first regional workshop to develop a bioregionalisation for the South Western Pacific Ocean, to take place at Nadi, Fiji from the 27th to 29th March, 2018. The purpose of the workshop is to establish preliminary bioregional boundaries and descriptions for the Western South Pacific Ocean. National level experts and other thematic experts on regional data and information will collaborate to develop preliminary bioregional boundaries and descriptions for each part of the region. Recommendations and outputs from this workshop will be used to further refine these preliminary bioregions. We will then hold a 2nd workshop in late 2018 with the same participants to finalise the bioregional boundaries and descriptions. Further background is provided in **Annex 1**.

The South West Pacific Marine Bioregionalisations will provide important information towards national and regional marine spatial planning and management. They will also contribute to the integrated ocean management objectives of the *Framework for a Pacific Oceanscape*.

All airfare and per diem expenses will be covered by the project for a limited number of participants.

During the workshop, participants will:

1. Develop an understanding of the (biological, physical and chemical) coastal and marine data and analyses available for the Western South Pacific Ocean,
2. Integrate this information to develop benthic, meso-pelagic and pelagic bioregions, covering coastal and offshore waters.
3. Identify additional sources of information and data that can be used to inform the 2nd Final workshop.
4. Outputs of the Bioregionalisation project for the Western South Pacific will be released in digital format. This will include a report on the data and analyses used in the process plus the final bioregionalisation boundaries and descriptions. This will be provided to all participants, to national CBD focal points and as Documents to CBD meetings.

We invite you to recommend a national expert on marine ecosystems to attend the Bioregionalisation Workshop. Only limited travel support is available and it will be assigned by the organising committee on a case-by-case basis. Please respond before January 26th by email to: Ms Mathilde Kraft: mathildek.ext@sprep.org.

A draft agenda will be sent to participants closer to the event.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'CP' with a stylized flourish.

Clark Peteru
Officer-in-Charge

CP/WLL/ma

ANNEX 1: Project background, scope and approach

Background

This program will develop sub-regional bioregionalisations for the western-south Pacific Ocean and the Indian Ocean. This will transfer approaches CSIRO developed in Australia, used in the Bay of Bengal (in collaboration with BOBLME) and applied in selected Pacific countries. The project will develop an expert derived bioregionalisation in the Indian and Pacific Oceans through expert workshops.

New bioregionalisations for the western-south Pacific and Indian oceans will incorporate understanding of shallow, deep and pelagic species, ecosystems, physical environments and their likely boundaries based on current information. The expert-based bioregionalisations will be supported by development of statistical analysis of datasets of selected species groups to identify bioregions specific for each taxon, with data from the Biologically Significant Marine Areas (EBSA) process and additional regional biogeographies based on new invertebrate and fish collections from CSIRO, University of Tasmania and Museum Victoria and other regional partners. This will allow a broad scale understanding of the biogeographic provinces of both ocean basins and importantly incorporate new and extensive biological that has previously not been available. Similar approaches are currently being trailed in Australia and around the Antarctic margins and will be based on established techniques.

The information used in the EBSA and the bioregionalisations processes will be strengthened through the inclusion of local and traditional knowledge. The project will draw on experience in CSIRO, GOBI partners, and other collaborators to identify the most appropriate approaches and will collaborate with regional and national stakeholders to ensure a consistent approach. The project will provide examples of how this information could be included and suggest approaches that can be taken in future EBSA workshops.

Proposed Approach

Physical and biological data for the South Pacific, produced in collaboration with regional partners, will be analyzed to produce pelagic, mesopelagic and benthic bioregions. The statistical biogeographies, physical and biological data, will be used as inputs into Expert workshops in the Indian and South Pacific. In each region, two workshops will be held.

For each region, a preliminary workshop will be held first, where the experts will work to review the current outputs, identify additional data, and produce a series of draft bioregions that can be further modified and analysed. Over a period of about 9 months, additional work will be carried out by CSIRO to allow for the aggregation of additional data sets, analysis and refinement of the preliminary workshop outputs.

A finalisation workshop will be held in late 2018/ early 2019 to consider the results of the analysis and provide an opportunity for regional experts to refine their understanding. These workshops will produce a final version of the biogeography for the South Pacific, and a report on the data and spatial models used. The bioregion descriptions and report will be available to all participants of the workshops and bioregionalisation development process, plus relevant stakeholders. The map of bioregions and their descriptions will be most important for multi-sectoral marine spatial planning, to help maintain ecological health and connectivity of the different bioregions.

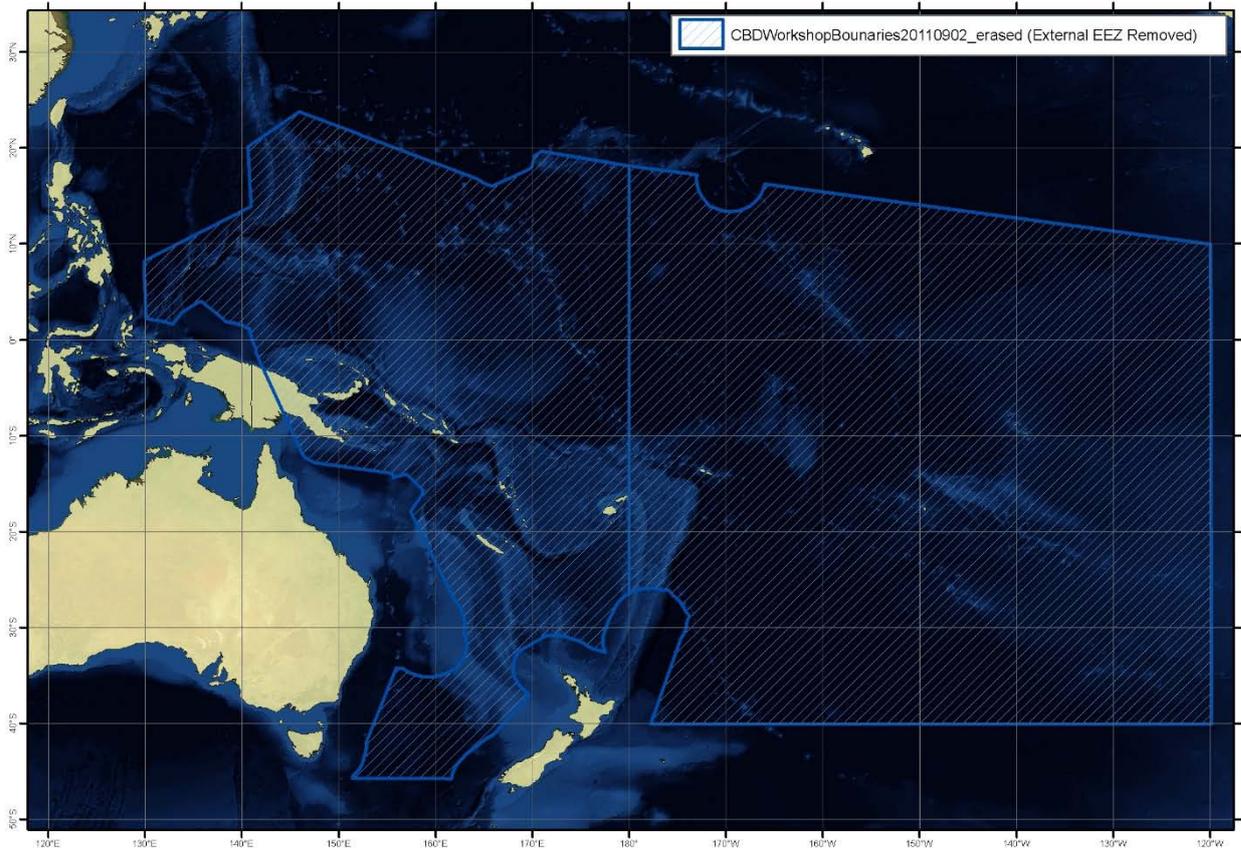


Figure 1 Proposed Area to be considered by the workshop

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