

CIRCULAR

FILE: AP 2/17/3
DATE: 15 August 2025
CIRCULAR: 25/73

TO: SPREP National Focal Points

SUBJECT: Western Pacific Blue Corridors and By-catch Workshops

Dear National Focal Points,

SPREP is partnering with WWF and the International Whaling Commission to host a series of workshops connecting traditional knowledge, science and policy opportunities to conserve whales and dolphins in Oceania. We plan to bring together indigenous and community leaders, fisheries representatives, researchers, government representatives, technical experts and conservationists to engage in cross-cultural sharing and technical knowledge exchange on cetaceans in the Western Pacific.

SPREP and IWC are being supported through the GEF-FAO Common Oceans Tuna Project and are collaborating with WWF on hosting these workshops. The workshops will be held in Nadi from 23rd -28th February 2026 with three optional components. Participants can decide to attend all three or just one or two.

- 1) 2.5-day Blue Corridors workshop (WWF led)
- 2) 1.5-day training workshop on cetacean bycatch training (IWC/SPREP led)
- 3) 2–3-day technical workshop focused on species status assessment of South Pacific cetaceans (IWC/SPREP led).

Blue Corridors Workshop:

WWF Blue Corridors refers to the global initiative by WWF to map and protect the migration routes of cetaceans, often referred to as "superhighways" or "lifelines" for these animals. Within this framework, the workshops aim to elevate traditional Indigenous knowledge, highlight regional threats, identify and map conservation opportunities and solutions and co-produce a knowledge product/s (e.g. report, knowledge brief, call to action for governments) that highlights the workshop outcomes with focused recommendations for research, education, training and management goals. More information can be found in the attached flyer.

Cetacean Bycatch Training Workshop:

The second workshop contributes specifically to the GEF-FAO Common Oceans Tuna Project objectives of national training workshops (mitigation, monitoring, safe handling and release) for fishers and fisheries managers. By the end of the 1.5-day training workshop, participants will be able to:

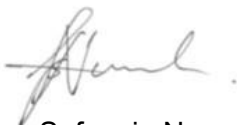
- 1) Understand the framework used in bycatch risk assessment at national and regional scales.
- 2) Identify and understand current monitoring techniques used to assess bycatch in their fisheries and understand how these inform risk levels.
- 3) Analyse mitigation and management options for reducing bycatch (i.e. gear modifications, spatial/temporal closures, and regulatory measures) via case studies to practice risk assessment methods, mitigation measures and discuss their applicability to participants own contexts/countries.

Species Status Assessment Technical Workshop:

The third workshop contributes to the GEF-FAO Common Oceans Tuna Project objectives of cetacean bycatch gap analysis and spatial risk assessments and responds to recommendations from the IWC Scientific Committee (69B) ([SC24120](#)). This is a technical workshop (2-3 days, TBC) and will build on the outcomes of the review of small cetaceans of the south Pacific Islands held in 2024 (IWC/SPREP) with a focus on species status assessments.

We would like to invite one representative from each Pacific Island Country and Territory (PICT) who have specific interests in this area. Note that IWC will also be inviting PICT IWC Commissioners to nominate a participant. Please use the attached nomination form with government stamp and forward to karenb@sprep.org. Travel arrangements will be made through IWC.

Yours sincerely,



Sefanaia Nawadra
Director General

Enc.

SN/KB/ma