



**CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT MEASURE FOR THE PROTECTION OF CETACEANS
FROM PURSE SEINE AND LONGLINE FISHING OPERATIONS**

Conservation and Management Measure 2024-07

The Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission;

In accordance with the Convention on the Conservation and Management of Highly Migratory Fish Stocks in the Western and Central Pacific Ocean (the Convention);

Recognising the ecological and cultural significance of cetaceans in the Western and Central Pacific Ocean (WCPO);

Further recognizing that certain cetacean species and populations in the WCPFC Convention Area are threatened or critically endangered;

Considering the adverse effects of fishing for highly migratory fish stocks on some populations of cetaceans in the WCPO through capture, injury and mortality;

Mindful that cetaceans are particularly vulnerable to being encircled by purse seine nets, due to the propensity of tuna to form schools around them, or for toothed cetaceans to be attracted to the same prey as tuna;

Aware that longline fishing grounds overlap with the distributions of certain cetacean species and that cetacean interactions with longline fisheries are known to occur in the Convention Area;

Aware that SC19 noted the value of improving the understanding of interaction rates, particularly species-specific rates, of cetaceans in the WCPO fisheries;

Committed to ensuring that potential impacts on the sustainability of cetaceans from mortality through purse seine and longline operations are mitigated;

Required, by Articles 5(d) and (e) of the Convention, to adopt management arrangements for cetaceans as non-target and associated or dependent species, as they are incidentally caught by purse-seine and longline fisheries in the WCPO;

Further Required, by Articles 5 (e) and (f) of the Convention, to adopt measures to minimize catch of non-target species, both fish and non-fish species, and to protect biodiversity in the marine environment;

Acknowledging that the conservation of these species depends on co-operative and coordinated activity at the international level, and that Regional Fisheries Management Organisations play an integral role in mitigating the impacts of fishing on these species;

Alarmed by observer reports on fishing activities by vessels flagged to Members, Co-operating Non-Members, and Participating Territories that indicate a number of instances of interactions with these species, and instances of misreporting of such interactions in logbooks;

Adopts the following Conservation and Management Measure in accordance with Article 10 of the Convention:

1. CCMs shall prohibit their flagged vessels from setting a purse seine net on a school of tuna associated with a cetacean in the high seas and exclusive economic zones of the Convention Area, if the animal is sighted prior to commencement of the set.
2. CCMs shall require that, in the event that a cetacean is unintentionally encircled in the purse seine net, the master of the vessel shall:
 - (a) ensure that all reasonable steps are taken to ensure its safe release. This shall include stopping the net roll and not recommencing fishing operation until the animal has been released and is no longer at risk of recapture; and
 - (b) through the logsheet or any other means, report the incident to the relevant authority of the flag CCM, including details of the species (if known) and number of individuals, location and date of such encirclement, steps taken to ensure safe release, and an assessment of the life status of the animal on release (including, if possible, whether the animal was released alive but subsequently died).
3. CCMs shall prohibit all longline and purse seine vessels flying their flag, including vessels fishing under charter arrangements, from harvesting, retaining onboard, transshipping, or landing any cetacean, in whole or any part thereof, in the Convention Area.
4. CCMs shall require all longline vessels flying their flag, including those fishing under charter arrangements, to release, taking into account the safety of the crew, any cetacean that is caught or entangled by its fishing gear in the Convention Area as soon as possible and in a manner that results in as little harm to the cetacean as possible and utilizing the Best Practices for the Safe Handling and Release of Cetaceans (suppl_CMM 2011-03-01), if possible.
5. In taking steps to ensure the safe release of the cetacean as required under paragraphs 2(a) and 4, CCMs shall require the master of the vessel to follow any guidelines adopted by the Commission for the purpose of this measure.
6. In applying steps under paragraphs 2(a), 4 and 5, the safety of the crew shall remain paramount.
7. CCMs shall provide their purse seine and longline operators with information on the Best Practices for the Safe Handling and Release of Cetaceans.
8. The Secretariat shall report on the implementation of this conservation and management measure on the basis of observer reports, as part of the Annual Report on the Regional Observer Programme and any other reports as appropriate.
9. This Conservation and Management Measure shall enter into force on July 1, 2025.