

Pacific Islands Regional Marine Species Programme 2022-2026



Updated Vision:

A healthy Pacific Ocean with thriving populations of whales, dolphins, marine turtles, dugongs, sharks and rays, and seabirds and the associated ecosystems on which they depend, which assures the aspirations of Pacific island peoples and protects their natural and cultural heritage.

- Introduction
- Cultural importance
- Conservation challenges: wide range of threats including from fisheries, marine pollution, poor land management affecting coastal habitats, climate change and emerging threats such as the potential impacts from deep sea mining.
- Pressure from subsistence hunting of dolphins, dugong and turtles is also contributing to population declines already threatening some species.
- Pacific Islands countries and territories have a shared responsibility to ensure recovery of depleted populations and restoration of habitats



**SPREP
PROE**



Pacific Islands Regional Marine Species Programme 2022-2026



Conservation Challenges:

- Lack of data and information, including basic population parameters, migration routes and long-term data sets.
- Lack of identification and quantification of the threats facing marine species.
- Absence and lack of ongoing and long-term research, survey and monitoring programmes.
- Limited public awareness and education programmes.
- Limited in-country capacity to provide leadership in marine species research and conservation management.
- Limited national prioritisation and management mechanisms to protect marine animals and their habitats.
- Lack of resources, including accessing sustained funding.
- Limited information exchange, linkages and collaboration at the national and regional levels.
- Lack of Monitoring, Control and Surveillance (MCS) capacity.

Pacific Islands Regional Marine Species Programme 2022-2026



Roles and responsibilities:

- Collective responsibility of SPREP member states, SPREP Secretariat, partner NGOs and IGOs and private sector
- Our members rely on technical and financial support from partners, funding agencies and individual experts. SPREP hopes to forge new partnerships to help our members implement these plans over the next 5 years.
- SPREP will seek to facilitate funding opportunities and facilitate coordination of the Marine Species Programme through the Threatened and Migratory Species Team

Pacific Islands Regional Marine Species Programme 2022-2026



Knowledge Resource

- SPREP will set up knowledge resources through our virtual library for each species group with easy access to resources and links to global resources.
- Build a strengthen networks between SPREP members and partners, IGOS, NGOS, donor partners technical exerts and others.
- SPREP will also support the creation of a network to focus on ocean cultural connectivity.

Pacific Islands Regional Marine Species Programme 2022-2026

Multi-Species Action Plan

- General actions for protecting marine species and their habitats
- Should be read in conjunction with the species-specific plans
- Same 9 themes as species specific plans.
- New theme on climate change recognising the increasing and cross-cutting nature of this threat and it's potential for synergistic impacts especially for migratory species.
- The MSP includes: the need to address gaps in knowledge, establish stranding protocols and repositories for samples; increase resilience to climate change especially through ecosystem-based adaption and marine protection.
- We need to understand more about the priority threats to marine species so that we can focus funding and resources where it will have the most impact.
- We need to be much more aware of the impacts of development on marine species and avoid those impacts as much as possible, for example by identifying MPA's or through effective EIA processes. Environmental issues must not take a back seat if we are to prevent more biodiversity loss.



Pacific Islands Regional Marine Species Programme 2022-2026



Multi-Species Action Plan

- By-catch and entanglement of all marine species covered by this plan is an ongoing problem both in industrial tuna fisheries and in some cases in local and artisanal fisheries. Low observer coverage in longline fisheries and lack of knowledge on marine species populations sizes and trends in many cases, means it is almost impossible to understand the true impact to marine species.
- Our approaches to creating and implementing solutions to threats to marine species must incorporate cultural governance and stewardship.
- Legislation and policy have important roles to play in protecting marine species and reviewing and strengthening these based on appropriate advice would be highly beneficial

Pacific Islands Regional Marine Species Programme 2022-2026



Multi-Species Action Plan

- Ecotourism can generate significant economic benefits but also help generate public understanding and sympathy for marine species. SPREP will collaborate with the Pacific Tourism Organisation to develop Regional Marine Tourism Guidelines, including best practice for interacting with marine species.
- The Capacity Building theme considers training and education for example a need for post graduate degrees in the field of marine conservation including the human environment relationship.
- A new collaboration between USP and the University of Bergen will be announced soon which will provide scholarships for up to 24 post graduate researchers in the marine space. There is also the Lui Bell scholarship and more recently the Sue Taei Ocean Fellowship.
- Finally Education Awareness and Communication is the final theme.

Pacific Islands Regional Marine Species Programme 2022-2026

Dugong Action Plan.



- Ongoing threats to dugongs include harvesting, incidental bycatch and their vulnerability to habitat loss and disturbance.
- Climate change impacts to seagrass is an increasing concern especially the scale and frequency of storm events which may threatened the persistence of seagrass in some places.
- Assessing which sites are at risk and the impact on seagrass and dugong will be needed to help guide building resilience in dugong populations across the region.

Pacific Islands Regional Marine Species Programme 2022-2026



Dugong Action Plan.

- Plan has specific actions under all 9 themes with a focus on continuing to increase protection for dugongs in the region but also as we have heard from Dr Cleguer the need to have a better understanding of populations sizes and trends.
- Reducing risks from all threats will give dugongs and the habitats on which they depend the best chance of survival in the face of climate change impacts.
- SPREP is currently working with the Dugong Secretariat to develop a regional funding proposal through the Kiwa Initiative around safeguarding seagrass and building climate change adaption and mitigation in coastal communities. We will work with partners in each Dugong range state.