



# 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 – sets us apart in the Pacific
- 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



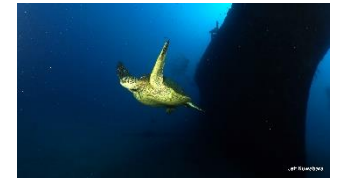
# Pacific Islands Regional Marine Species Programme 2022-2026



## 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 Adviser

# Pacific Islands Regional Marine Species Programme 2022-2026

## Knowledge Resource

- SPREP will set up a 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 are 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.
- The deployment of over 30,000 FADs annually into the WCPO while supporting our Pacific countries economically is a threat to the marine environment and efforts to adequately address this issue is a priority.
- 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 and 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 the 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

## Marine Turtle Action Plan.

- All marine turtles in the Pacific are threatened with extinction, particularly hawksbill and leatherback turtles.
- Although concerted efforts have been ongoing on the region for many years, conservation efforts will need to be significantly scaled up to prevent extinctions.
- We have heard about the extinction risk analysis being undertaken by Nic Pilcher for SPREP, but it is likely that greater effort will be needed across all threats to turtles including efforts to combat the effects of climate change for example using new methods to combat feminisation.
- Climate change will affect every aspect of the life history of marine turtles, from loss of nesting beaches to impacts to coral reefs and seagrass beds where turtles forage.
- Identifying resilient locations and ensuring the greatest protection levels possible will be an important strategy for the region.





# Pacific Islands Regional Marine Species Programme 2022-2026

## Marine Turtle Action Plan.

- Following SPREPs upgrading of TREDs, SPREP intends to further expand on work being done through PEUMP we heard about today, with new funding expected from the EU. This will support a range of actions such as
  - Developing a regional tagging and monitoring protocol and monitoring manual
  - training support for more rangers and turtle monitors, particularly to support monitoring of nesting beaches.
  - Support for countries to update or implement National Action Plans for prioritised threats identified through the turtle extinction risk analysis being undertaken now
  - Support for public awareness and development of best practice guidelines for tourism.

# Pacific Islands Regional Marine Species Programme 2022-2026

## Marine Turtle Action Plan.

- Another key area of work will be in implementing CITES turtle decisions and resolutions and increasing monitoring, compliance and surveillance
- SPREP is supporting upskilling in the area of genetic profiling of turtle nesting sites and we have heard more about that from Christine Hoff from WWF.
- SPREP is committed to rolling our eCITES permitting process with our CITES parties and we have some funding to assist with this.



## Breakout Group Questions

1. Are there any significant gaps or changes you would like to see in the Marine Turtle Action Plan?
2. What do you believe are the two greatest threats to marine turtles in your country and what actions would you recommend to address these and within what time frame?
3. What are your greatest needs in terms of technical and capacity to increase protection of marine turtles in your country? Or what expertise can you or your organisation provide? How would you go about addressing these needs, for example are there opportunities for regional collaboration of expertise?

