



# 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 as marine animals are a fundamental element of Pacific Island culture and heritage.
- 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.



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## Roles and responsibilities:

- Most of these species have distribution and migratory pathways that extend across the Pacific. We have a collective responsibility as 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

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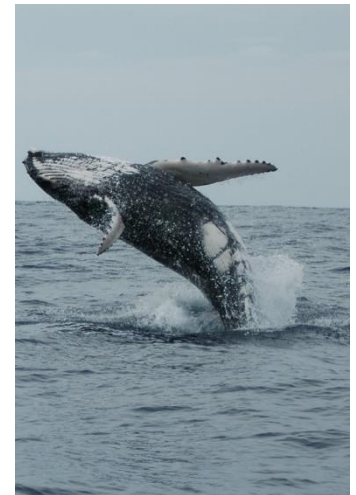
➤ Overall Actions relating to:

- resources and commitments
- Implementation and coordination
- Networking, reporting and information management

➤ **Multispecies Action plan** – all 9 themes – Applies to all species

➤ Must be read in conjunction with each individual action plan to be complete.

➤ Often these actions will provide benefits across ecosystems such as managing pollution and coastal development and climate change.





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## Knowledge Resource

- SPREP will set up a knowledge resource 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. There is also a proposal for a new Working Group in our Pacific Island Round Table on *Nature and Culture*

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## 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, including new threats such as from DSM 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 cannot take a back seat if we are to prevent more biodiversity loss.

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## 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 gill net 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 60-80,000 FADs annually into the WCPO while supporting our Pacific countries economically is an unquantified 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



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## 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. Need for jobs in PICT Environment to follow.
- 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.



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## Whale and Dolphin Action Plan.

- The Pacific Island Region is home to half the world's species of whales and dolphins.
- Large migratory species moving between their breeding grounds and feeding grounds in Antarctica are increasingly threatened by climate change
- Smaller whales and dolphins move between EEZs and high seas across the Pacific or are more resident.
- Distribution and abundance of some species is poorly known e.g. beaked whales
- Lack of knowledge on spp diversity highlights the importance of collecting data from stranded animals.
- Different life histories - subjected to different threats
- No commercial hunting anymore, but some local drive hunts continue, although impact to populations needs further work
- Bycatch has been identified as the highest risk for cetaceans in the Pacific and our lack of knowledge of species differentiation for some highly bycaught species needs investigation



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Whale and Dolphin Action Plan.

- Map of protected areas – check!

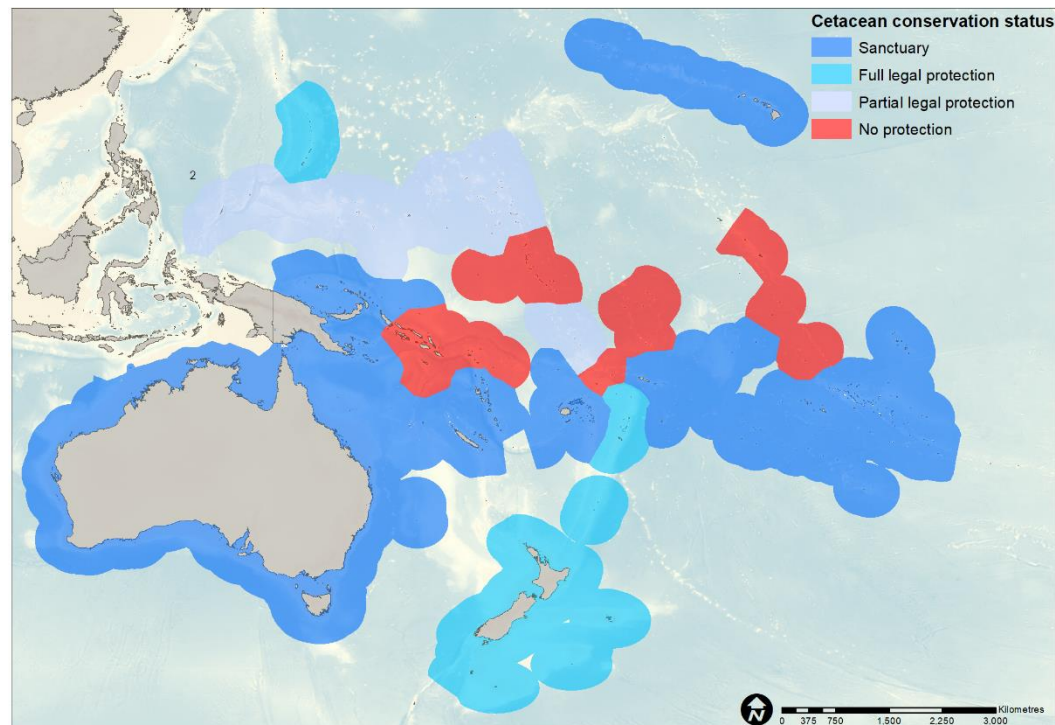


Figure 2. Map of whale and dolphin protected areas and sanctuaries. **Note: this is to be updated based on new information before finalisation of document.**

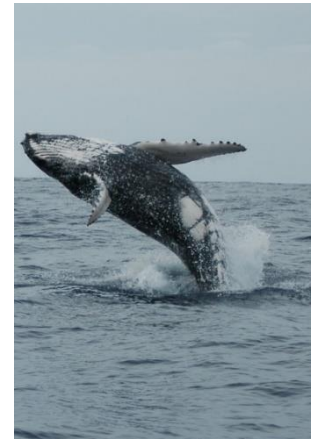
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## Whale and Dolphin Action Plan.

- New table of species diversity in PICT –

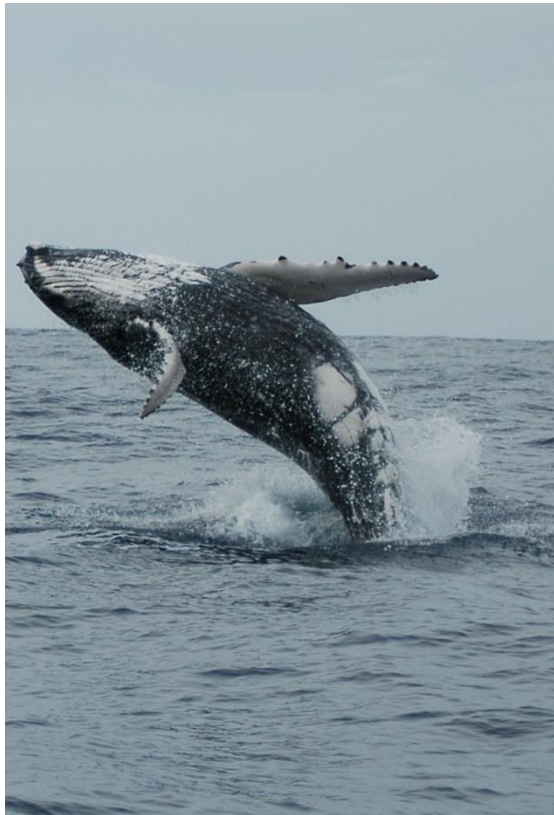
Cara Miller – waiting confirmation from some parties

- Traditional harvesting e.g. in Malaita needs a careful, tradition and culture centred approach to develop a shared understanding towards any solutions (not unique for whales and dolphins - applies across all the species groups) and much more guidance is needed on these approaches.
- WDAP specific actions need to be read in conjunction with the MSP.



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## Whale and Dolphin Action Plan.



THEMES	OBJECTIVES
1. Research and Monitoring	1. Data are collected, centralised, accessible and maintained.  2. Improve knowledge of abundance and distribution of cetaceans.  3. Understand critical habitat and migratory pathways.  4. Understand impact of threats to populations of whales and dolphins.
2. Climate Change	1. Identify vulnerability of whales and dolphins to climate change.
3. Ecosystems and Habitat Protection	1. Critical habitat and migratory pathways for whales and dolphins are protected.
4. Threat Reduction	1. Reduce direct and indirect threats to whale and dolphin populations.
5. Cultural Significance and Value	1. Recognise the value of traditional knowledge, customs and marine tenure and ensure it is incorporated into management.
6. Legislation, Policy and Management	1. Review legal, policy and institutional frameworks relating to the protection of whales and dolphins.
7. Ecotourism and Livelihoods	1. Ensure the development of whale and dolphin tourism is sustainable and conducted responsibly, with minimum impact and maximum education and economic returns.
8. Capacity Building and Collaboration	1. Increase in-country expertise and capacity for the conservation and sustainable management of cetaceans.  2. Increase national, regional and international collaboration and partnership for whale and dolphin conservation and management.
9. Education, Awareness, and Communication	1. Improve awareness and understanding about the importance of whales and dolphins and relevant conservation issues.