



SOLOMON ISLANDS NATIONAL PLAN OF ACTION FOR MARINE TURTLES 2023 - 2027





Prepared by: Solomon Islands Marine Turtle Working Committee

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**SOLOMON ISLANDS
NATIONAL PLAN OF ACTION FOR
MARINE TURTLES
2023 - 2027**



Acronyms

ACMCA	Arnavon Community Marine Conservation Area
ACMP	Arnavon Community Marine Park
AG	Attorney-General
CITES	Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora
EEZ	Exclusive Economic Zone
FAD	Fish Aggregating Device
IUCN	International Union for the Conservation of Nature
LALSU	Land Advisory and Legal Support Unit
MAL	Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock
MCT	Ministry of Culture and Tourism
MECDM	Ministry of Environment, Climate Change, Disaster Management and Meteorology
MEHRD	Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development
MFMR	Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resources
MPGIS	Ministry of Provincial Government and Institutional Strengthening
MRF	Marine Research Foundation
MTGPEA	Ministry of Traditional Governance, Peace, and Ecclesiastical Affairs
MSC	Marine Stewardship Council
MWYCF	Ministry of Women, Youth, Children and Family Affairs
NPOA	National Plan of Action
ODPP	Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions
PIT	Passive Integrated Transponder
PNG	Papua New Guinea
PSO	Public Solicitor's Office
RMU	Regional Management Units
RSIPF	Royal Solomon Islands Police Force
SICCP	Solomon Islands Community Conservation Partnership
SIELA	Solomon Islands Environmental Law Association
SINU	Solomon Islands National University
SIMTWC	Solomon Islands Marine Turtle Working Committee
SIRA	Solomon Islands Ranger Association
SPREP	Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme
SSF	Small Scale Fisheries
TNC	The Nature Conservancy
TDA	Tetepare Descendants Association
TREDS	Turtle Research and Monitoring Database System
WCPFC	Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission
WCS	Wildlife Conservation Society
WWF	World Wide Fund for Nature

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- *MECDM (Josef Hurutarau, Veira Pulekera, Trevor Maeda, Agnetha Vave-Karamui, Geoffrey Mauriasi)*
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- *WCS (Alec Hughes, Robert Howard)*
- *WWF (Shannon Seeto, Henry Kaniki)*
- *WFC (Janet Oeta)*
- *SICCP (Mandus Boselalu)*
- *TDA (Rangers)*
- *Wai Hau (Felix Naitoro)*
- *Marine Scientist (Peter Ramohia)*

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The Solomon Islands Government thanks the European Union and the Government of Sweden for their financial support through the PEUMP Programme's BIEM Initiative, and SPREP for its commitment and support to assist Solomon Islands Government fulfil its obligations on marine turtle conservation both at the national, regional and international level.

Foreword

The review of the National Marine Turtle Strategic Action Plan (MTSAP) 2008-2012, demonstrates Government's commitment to ensure policies and plans remains relevant to address emerging and existing issues at the national level.

It is through ministerial leadership with relevant stakeholders and partners' collaboration that produces and finalizes the Solomon Islands National Plan of Action for Marine Turtles (NPOA) 2023-2027. This has gone through important strategic consultative process, which embraces strong collaborations with both the international and regional partners in response to national calls for sustainable management of marine turtles in Solomon Islands and the Pacific region.

The NPOA envisions the need to protect, manage and sustainably utilize marine turtles in Solomon Islands for the benefit of Solomon Islanders. This further demonstrates the Solomon Islands Government's commitment to fulfill regional and international obligations under relevant conventions relating to the conservation of marine turtles.

It also anticipates the need to continue building capacity within MFMR and MECDM to deliver and implement activities through building partnership and empowering of local stakeholders & communities to fully engage in the sustainable management and conservation of marine turtle species and population in Solomon Islands.

In addition, the plan envisaged support from partners programs and projects for marine turtle conservation and management measures to be implemented and monitored.

With the National Plan of Action in place, as responsible Ministers we encourage Solomon Islanders to take ownership and responsibility to ensure social and environmental threats to marine turtles are managed. On this note, we wish to extend our sincere gratitude to the European Union and the Government of Sweden through its Pacific-European Union Marine Partnership (PEUMP) Programme, and SPREP for their ongoing support to the Solomon Islands Government.

We acknowledge and thank all relevant Government Ministries, local and international Non-Government Organisations and our local communities who have contributed in many ways towards the review of this NPOA. This includes, Solomon Islands Turtle Technical Working Committee and WCS for leading the review including marine turtle experts, scientists from International and local Non-Governmental Conservation Organizations (TNC, WWF, WorldFish Centre, Community Based Organizations- TDA, ACMCA and Waihu Conservation Foundation).

Finally, we commend you all for your support and present the Solomon Islands National Plan of Action for Marine Turtles 2023-2027 for its implementation.



Hon. Stanley Sofu

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a stylized 'S' followed by a horizontal line and a vertical stroke.

.....
**Minister for Ministry of Environment,
Climate Change, Disaster
Management and Meteorology**



Hon. Nestor Giro

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of several overlapping loops and a horizontal line.

.....
**Minister for Ministry of Fisheries &
Marine Resources**

Vision

A healthy and viable marine turtle population that continues to provide ecological, socio-cultural and economic benefits for the people of Solomon Islands and the region, now and in the future.



Goal

To ensure steady recovery and maintenance of marine turtle populations, through appropriate management and conservation measures for their ecological services and socio-cultural and economic values for the people of Solomon Islands and the region.

Marine Turtles, an important species to the people of Solomon Islands, both culturally and for their livelihoods, are threatened with extinction and need a national conservation effort to save these species.

Photo: Gregory Piper © WCS



Background



Critically endangered leatherback turtle
Photo: Emilie Ledwidge / Ocean Image Bank

Marine turtles play a vital role in keeping ocean ecosystems healthy and functioning. They help to maintain coral reefs and seagrass, transport and cycle nutrients from the water to the beaches, balance food webs and provide habitat and food for other marine species (Bjorndal 1980; Meylan 1988; Gyuris 1994; Bouchard and Bjorndal 2000; Wilson et al. 2010).

Like many other species however, their populations have historically suffered steep declines because of by-catch, hunting for meat or the curio trade, harvesting of eggs and climate change (Wallace et al. 2011; Mazaris et al. 2017; Vuto et al. 2019; Jino et al. 2018; Pilcher 2021).

Conservation efforts have been ongoing since the 1950s, with a number of regional management units (RMUs) showing positive trends in abundance following protection of eggs and nesting females (Mazaris et al. 2017). This includes in Solomon Islands, where critically endangered¹ hawksbill turtles (*Eretmochelys imbricata*) have shown signs of recovery. This is the result of

routine beach monitoring and the establishment of a community led Marine Protected Area in the Arnavon Islands (Hamilton et al. 2015), in addition to protection of their foraging grounds in Australia (Bell and Jensen 2018).

However, Hamilton et al. (2015) notes, while the hawksbill numbers have increased, they are still under threat from rising levels of harvesting in inter-nesting habitat, as well as poaching within the Marine Park.

In addition to hawksbill turtles, Solomon Islands is also a key foraging and nesting site for the endangered green turtle (*Chelonia mydas*), the critically endangered population of leatherback turtles (*Dermochelys coriacea*), the endangered subpopulation of loggerhead turtles (*Caretta caretta*), and vulnerable olive ridley turtle (*Lepidochelys olivacea*)². These species of marine turtles are important culturally, economically, and nutritionally in Melanesia. In Solomon Islands, conservation, and protection of all five species has been ongoing since the 1970s (Mckeon 1977; Wilson et al. 2004). While there have

¹As per the IUCN Red List for threatened www.iucnredlist.org.

²Only one record of flatback turtle (*Natator depressus*) exists for Solomon Islands, caught on a longline vessel (location unknown) (Morison et al. 2016). As such, a review of the species is not given here. For more on the species in the region see Pilcher (2021).



Critically endangered hawksbill turtle Photo: Cinzia Osele Bismarck / Ocean Image Bank

been some positive results, notably for hawksbills, this is not the same for all species. Leatherback populations for example, have declined by 80% since the 1980s in the Pacific Ocean (NOAA, 2021). In Solomon Islands the inundation of nests from storm events is having devastating impact on the species chance of recovery.

In addition, despite a ban on trade in marine turtles in 1992, turtle products are still being sold. There is an estimated 9,473 turtles harvested each year in Solomon Islands, mainly by spear fishers (Vuto 2019).

To address the threats noted above and to better coordinate conservation efforts, this National Plan of Action (NPOA): Marine Turtles (2023–2027) has been developed.

The plan builds on the Solomon Islands Turtle Strategic Action Plan 2008–2012. It was developed through a culmination of inputs from the Solomon Islands Marine

Turtle Working Committee (SIMTWC)³, Community Rangers, individual Solomon Islands experts and international researchers from partner organisations.

As shown in the section on Species, marine turtles can migrate thousands of kilometres each year and their life histories may overlap with several countries e.g., hawksbill nest in Solomon Islands while foraging on Australia's Great Barrier Reef (Hamilton et al. 2021). While the 5-year National Plan of Action – Marine Turtles, 2023–2027 will need to take this into consideration, it is expected that the Pacific Islands Regional Marine Species Programme 2023–2027, which includes marine turtles, and other similar regional collaborations will help address the more regional work.

³ For details on the role of the committee and the participating organisations see Appendix 1.

Geographical context and habitats

Solomon Islands is situated northwest of Vanuatu and to the east of Papua New Guinea (PNG) within the eastern edge of the Coral Triangle, and is made up of nearly 1,000 islands and cays spread across approximately 1,700 km (Carlton et al. 2020; Jupiter et al. 2019) (Figure 1 and Figure 2).

The exclusive economic zone (EEZ) covers 1,589,477 km², 98% of which is ocean (Jupiter et al. 2019). The inshore areas possess a rich diversity of habitats, including coral reefs, seagrass beds, long black and white sandy

beaches, mangrove forests and mudflats. Its offshore marine areas are likewise very diverse including deep sea trenches, hydrothermal vents, seamounts and canyons (Ceccarelli et al. 2018).

This variety and Solomon Islands' tropical location makes it an ideal area for marine turtles. The country provides suitable nesting beaches and foraging habitat for all species, including the leatherbacks known to dive well over 1,000 m to feed (Hays et al. 2004).

Legislation

Solomon Islands is party to several international conventions and agreements as well as national laws, regulations and regional management plans, which address marine turtles, their key habitats for nesting, foraging and migration. A more detailed description of these can be found in Howard (2022), however the main pieces of Solomon Islands legislation are summarised below.

While the legislation does provide general protections for turtles, the SIMTWC members believe further regulations and ordinances that are species specific are needed, both at the national and provincial level. These should also take into account key habitats which are important for nesting and breeding sites for these species.

- **Fisheries Act (2015)**

The purpose of the Act is to ensure the long-term conservation and sustainable use of Solomon Islands fisheries resources. While the Act does not specifically address marine turtles (this is in the regulations, below), it does stipulate that "biodiversity in the fisheries waters shall be protected".

- **Fisheries Management (Prohibited Activities) Regulations 2018**

Through the Fisheries Act (2015) these regulations stipulate those fisheries activities that are prohibited. This includes a specific reference to marine turtles, which states that people cannot fish for and retain, or be in the possession of, sell, buy or export nesting marine turtle or any leatherback turtle (which was first initiated in 1993 with the Fisheries Regulation LN43/1993). It is also prohibited to destroy marine turtle nests or eggs, a turtle with a tag attached or the tag attached to the turtle. Hunting turtles for

subsistence purposes is however, allowed, except for leatherbacks.

- **Fisheries Management Regulations 2017**

Through the Fisheries Act (2015), these regulations stipulate the obligations of certain fishing vessels in minimising by-catch of marine turtles. Section 8 instructs that, where practicable, vessels must "avoid encirclement of marine turtles", safely release a turtle if entangled and to carry dip nets and line cutters on board to rescue caught turtles.

- **Wildlife Protection and Management Act (1998)**

The objectives of this Act are to ensure the protection, conservation and management of wildlife through regulating their export and import. This Act prohibits the export of all five species of turtles found in Solomon Islands, except for scientific purposes (Section 11 [1] of the Act).

- **Protected Areas Act 2010**

The Protected Areas Act 2010 (PA Act) provides the legal framework to establish and manage a protected area in Solomon Islands. The Act aims to protect biological diversity as well as the habitats of fauna and flora which are of national or international importance. For example, the Arnavon Community Marine Park (ACMP), gazetted under the Act provides critical protection to the nesting habitat of hawksbill marine turtles for the region. This Act therefore provides an important tool in protecting both the species and associated ecological systems which marine turtles depend on for their survival.

Figure 1. Map of Solomon Islands sites listed throughout document.

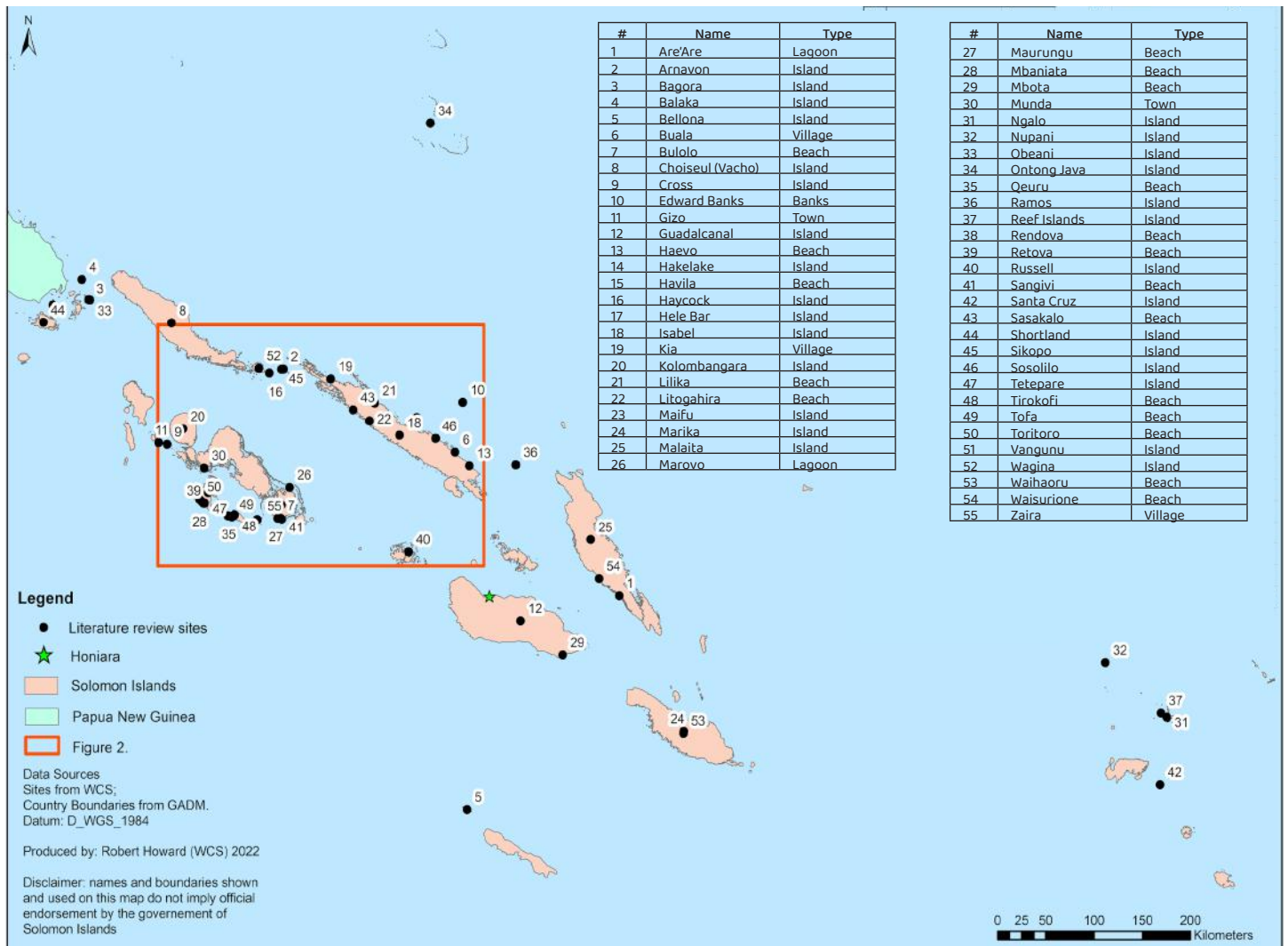


Figure 2. Map insert from Figure 1, sites listed throughout document.



Species: distribution, nesting, foraging sites & status



Hawksbill turtle (*Eretmochelys imbricata*)

Within Solomon Islands, the Arnavon Islands is the most important site for hawksbill turtles, being the largest rookery in the oceanic south Pacific (Hamilton et al. 2021). However, hawksbills are found to nest and/or forage in several sites within the country.

Although not to the extent of the Arnavons, their protection is warranted given the critically endangered status of this species (as long as the effort invested has a tangible benefit to the population). A list of historical and current hawksbill sites can be found in Table 1.

Hawksbill turtles are listed as critically endangered under the International Union for the Conservation of Nature's (IUCN) Red List and listed in Appendix I of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES).

Most population estimates for hawksbills, as with all turtles in Solomon Islands, are derived from the number of nests per year (i.e. excluding number of juveniles and males, and not always taking into account re-nesting) (Table 1).

Hamilton et al. (2015) have shown that despite the near collapse of the population in the 1990s, from 150 years of commercial harvest, figures from the Arnavons from the early 1990s to 2012 show a doubling of nests laid since the establishment of the AMCP (see section Research and Management Initiatives).

Table 1. Hawksbill turtle historical and current nesting and foraging sites and estimated numbers in Solomon Islands (see Figure 1 for locations)

Site/Island	Nesting/ foraging	Estimated numbers of nests or foragers/year	Source
Arnavon Islands	Nesting	1,000-1,500	Hamilton et al. (2015); Madden Hof et al. (2022)
Shortland Islands	Nesting	400-500 nests	Vaughan (1981)
		Bagora/Obeani Is.: 50-100 nests	Wilson et.al (2004)
Ramos Islands	Nesting	50-100 nests (combined with green turtles)	Vaughan (1981)
Choiseul Islands	Nesting	230-450 nests (mostly on Haycock and Wagina Islands)	Vaughan (1981)
Tetepare Island	Foraging	12 tagged while foraging in 2004-2008 5 nested between 2005-2007	Tetepare Descendants Association (TDA), unpublished data
Makira	Nesting	~50-100 nests (combined with green turtles)	Vaughan (1981)
Russell Islands	Nesting	50-100 nests	Wilson et. al (2004)
Hele Bar islands (Marovo)	Nesting	50 nests	Wilson et. al (2004)
Santa Cruz	Nesting	50-200 nests	Wilson et. al (2004)
Kolombangara	Foraging	105 juveniles tagged in 2013-14	Esbach et al. (2014)
Ngalo Island	Nesting	No data ⁴	Ceccarelli (2018)
Ontong Java Island	-	No data	Ceccarelli (2018)
Cross Island (Gizo)	Nesting	No data	Vaughan (1981)

⁴No data means that only presence information was mentioned.



Leatherback turtle. Photo: Alec Hughes © WCS

Leatherback turtle (*Dermochelys coriacea*)

While juvenile leatherbacks have not been recorded in Solomon Islands, adult females do nest on a number of beaches throughout the country (Anon. 2009) (Table 2). The Solomon Islands is considered one of the main nesting sites for the western Pacific Ocean population of leatherbacks (NOAA 2016).

While islands such as Isabel and Rendova are likely to have the most nesting females, all sites are worthy of protection given the critically endangered status of this species.

The global population of leatherback turtles is listed as vulnerable under the IUCN Red List, while the western and eastern Pacific populations are classified as critically endangered (Wallace et al. 2013a, 2013b; Tiwari et al. 2013). All leatherbacks are listed in Appendix I of the CITES convention.

Since the 1980s there has been an 80% decrease in the western Pacific populations (NOAA 2021) because of threats such as nest predation (Hitipeuw et al. 2007), harvesting of eggs and meat (Tapilatu et al. 2007), by-catch (NOAA 2021) and flooding of nests (Masakolo et al. 2022; Jino et al. 2018; NMFS and USFWS 2020).

In Solomon Islands, as noted, Rendova and Isabel Islands host the greatest number of nesting leatherbacks. On Rendova, an average of 165 nests were recorded from 2019 to 2021, and on Isabel, the most productive beaches, Haveo and Sasakalo recorded 97 and 80 nests, respectively in 2020/2021 (Table 2).

Table 2. Leatherback turtle historical and current nesting and foraging sites and estimated numbers in Solomon Islands (see Figure 1 and Figure 2 for locations)

Site/Island	Nesting/ foraging	Estimated numbers of nests or foragers/year	Source
Isabel Island • Haevo • Sasakalo • Sosoilo • Litoghahira • Lilika	Nesting/ foraging	Av. 115 nesting events*, 97 nestings across 2020/21 & 2021/22 seasons (Haevo) 87 nesting events, 80 nestings, 2021/22 (Sasakalo) Av. 16 nesting events, 12 nestings across 2020/21 & 2021/22 seasons (Sosoilo) 650 (2007), 315 nests (2011) (Sasakolo and Litoghahira combined) 150 nest (Lilika) <i>*Nesting event can include nesting or false crawls.</i>	Dr Peter Waldie (pers. comm) NMFS and USFWS (2020) Mast et al. (2006)
Tetepare Island • Qeuru • Tirokofi • Tofa	Nesting	Av. 28 nests (2002-2021) Av. 21 nests (2019-2021) (beaches combined)	Tetepare Descendants Association (TDA), unpublished data
Rendova Island • Mbaniata • Havila • Retavo • Toritoro	Nesting	Av. 95 nests (2002-2021) Av. 165 nests (2019-2021) (beaches combined)	Tetepare Descendants Association (TDA), unpublished data
Vangunu Island (Zaira beach)	Nesting	50 nest (up until late '80s) 23 nests (2011) 12 nests (2018-2021)	Jino et al. (2018) Zaira community unpublished Data
Malaita Island (Waisurione Beach)	Nesting	7 nests (2015)	Marine Research Foundation (2015)
Guadalcanal Island (Mбота Community)	Nesting	32 nests (2017-2018)	Aram et al. (2021)
Choiseul Islands (Vacho)	Nesting	50 nests (2004)	NMFS and USFWS (2020)
Marovo Lagoon	Nesting	No data	Ceccarelli (2018)
Makira (San Cristobel) Island	Nesting	No data	Anon (2009)
Ontong Java	Nesting	No data	Ceccarelli (2018)



Green turtle. Photo: Robert Howard © WCS

Green turtle (*Chelonia mydas*)

The IUCN's Marine Turtle Specialist Group uses 32 index sites to assess the global status of green turtles (Seminoff 2004); absent from the list is Solomon Islands. Although they are frequently observed in the country, it is likely that they use the area mainly for foraging.

McKeown (1977) observed that no green turtle rookeries (nesting in aggregations) were found in Solomon Islands, but notes many places with occasional nesting. Within Solomon Islands, greens have been recorded nesting and/or foraging across the archipelago as detailed in Table 3.

Green turtles are listed as endangered under the IUCN Red List and listed in Appendix I of the CITES convention. Data for green turtles in Solomon Islands is quite limited; most is historical and can often be intermixed with hawksbill data.

Nonetheless, it provides a useful baseline, even if just as estimates. Mortimer (2002) stated that green turtle nesting in Solomon Islands in the three decades prior to 2002 had been low but was unable to deduce if this was due to centuries of harvest or not.

Broderick (1998) stated that Solomon Islands was important for juvenile green turtles as developmental habitat but that most were being harvested.

Table 3. Green turtle historical and current nesting and foraging sites and estimated numbers in Solomon Islands (see Figure 1 and Figure 2 for locations)

Site/Island	Nesting/ foraging	Estimated numbers of nests or foragers/year	Source
Isabel Province (not including the Arnavons)	Nest	Estimated 259-438 nests (1989)	Leary and Laumani (1989)
Arnavon Islands	Nest/forage	45 nests 165 captured foraging in 1994-1996	Vaughan (1981) Argument et al. (2009)
Hakelake Island	Nest	15-20 nests	Vaughan (1981)
Shortlands Islands • Ausilala* • Maifu • Balaka	Nest	100 nests in Ausilala and Maifu each (no data for Balaka)	Vaughan (1981)
Ramos Islands	Nest	50-100 nests (intermixed with hawksbills)	Wilson et al. (2004)
Tetepare Island	Nest	Av. 5.3 nests (2019-2021) 240 tagged while foraging in 2004-2008	Tetepare Descendants Association (TDA), unpublished data
Wagina Island	Nest	10-15 nests	Vaughan (1981)
Hele Bar Islands	Nest/forage	Approx. 50 nests harvested in 2021	Dr Alec Hughes (pers. comm)
Kolombangara Island	Nest/forage	No data	Work et al. (2020)
Marovo Lagoon	Nest/forage	No data	Work et al. (2020)
Edward Banks	Forage	No data	Vuto et al. (2019)
Reef Islands	Nest	No data	Ceccarelli et al. (2018)
Russell Islands	Nest/forage	No data	Ceccarelli et al. (2018)

* Absent from Figure 1, Vaughan (1981) states it is two small islands on the border with PNG.



Loggerhead turtle. © Gregory Piper

Loggerhead turtle (*Caretta caretta*)

In Solomon Islands, the number of nesting or foraging sites for loggerheads appears small, if any, in the case of nesting.

Loggerheads have been reported on Ontong Java (Crean 1977), but it is unknown if this was foraging or nesting. McKeown (1977) reported two individuals caught off Wagina Island, and that villagers noted that they find loggerheads foraging on deep reefs, but do not nest. McKeown (1977) also reported them to be found in the Nupani islands.

The global population of loggerhead turtles is listed as vulnerable under the IUCN Red List, while the

south Pacific subpopulation is classified as critically endangered (Limpus and Casale 2015; Casale and Tucker 2015).

All loggerheads are listed in Appendix I of CITES. Casale and Tucker (2015) note that while the abundance of the south Pacific subpopulation is yet to be assessed, the number of females nesting annually is less than 700 for the Pacific Islands.

As for Solomon Islands, outside the number of records mentioned above, the status in the country is unknown.



Olive ridley turtle. © JHVE Photo via Getty Images

Olive ridley turtle (*Lepidochelys olivacea*)

Solomon Islands and greater Melanesia does not appear to be a principal foraging or nesting site for this species.

In Solomon Islands, olive ridleys have been recorded on Guadalcanal (near Honiara), on Wagina and Makira Islands, where hatchlings were photographed on Waihaoru beach (McKeown 1977; Vuto et al. 2019) and hatchlings were also observed on Malaita Island by the Wai-Hau Rangers (Namo et al. 2018). Olive ridley turtles are listed as vulnerable under the

IUCN Red List (Abreu-Grobois and Plotkin 2008) and listed in Appendix I of CITES.

Given the paucity of observations of this species in Solomon Islands their status or estimated number remains unknown.

Traditional Values



Photo: Björn Svensson © WCS

For centuries, marine turtles have played an important role in the lives of people from Solomon Islands; in their oral traditions and ethno-zoological knowledge.

Bones of turtles have even been found in the oldest archaeological digs in Solomon Islands, dating back 3,000 years (McKeown 1977). Marine turtles can be seen in carvings and other forms of artwork of coastal communities and there are numerous legends and myths about turtles that 'paint colorful stories in the history of Solomon Islands' (Masolo and Ramohia 2016).

Given the number of tribes in Solomon Islands there are over 20 different names just for 'turtle' and around 50 names when describing the species (see McKeown 1977).

Masolo and Ramohia (2016) describe how turtle meat and eggs are considered delicacies and used for special occasions, with the shell and oil having other cultural uses.

For example, in South Malaita, in Are' Are, the shell of the turtle is used as money in addition to traditional jewellery such as earrings, bangles and rings (although this has led to the overexploitation of marine turtles, namely the hawksbill, to supply growing markets in Asia).

Through their hunting of marine turtles however, Solomon Islanders have amassed a wealth of knowledge on their ecology, such as their foraging and nesting sites, and which are the fattest turtles (Anon 2009), and this knowledge is now being used in the conservation of the species.

Research and Management Initiatives

Arnavon Islands (Arnavons)

The earliest reports of marine turtle research and management in Solomon Islands comes from McElroy and Alexander's work between 1973 and 1974 in the Arnavons (McElroy and Alexander 1979). In 1991, The Nature Conservancy (TNC) worked with local communities and the provincial governments of Choiseul and Isabel, undertaking marine turtle monitoring, protection and research on nesting hawksbills (Hamilton et al. 2015).

In 2017, the area was established as Solomon Islands' first national park and renamed the Arnavon Community Marine Park (ACMP). The work in ACMP is also supported by the KAWAKI women's group that was set up in 2015, which helps to raise awareness on the park while also being actively involved in turtle conservation (Boso et al. 2018; James 2021).

Isabel Island

Work on marine turtles also started on Isabel Island, the main island to the east of the Arnavons in the 1970s (McKeown 1977; Vaughan 1981). Specific work on leatherbacks, which the island is known for, commenced in 1989 by Tanya Leary who brought together stakeholders to monitor leatherbacks (Pita and Broderick 2005).

There are currently four active sites where TNC supports communities on conservation activities, funded through the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). These are in Sasakolo, Litoghahira, Haevo and Sosoilo, and work includes tagging and satellite tracking (Kaukau 2021).

Tetepare/Rendova

In 2002 the Tetepare Descendants Association (TDA) was formed, originally to stop illegal logging on the island, but has since included marine conservation activities including protection of nesting leatherback turtles (UNDP 2013). Activities expanded to the nearby island of Rendova, where

Mbaniata and Havila communities also took an interest in turtle conservation. Since that time TDA Rangers have worked in shifts to protect nests of leatherback and green turtles, tagging turtles and relocating nests to higher ground or into hatcheries (to protect from flooding or poaching), or installing predator exclusion devices (UNDP 2013; Masakolo et al. 2022).

Rangers on Tetepare also undertake ad hoc 'rodeo surveys' of foraging green turtles. The work on Tetepare and Rendova has also been supported by the local NGO Solomon Islands Community Conservation Partnership (SICCP), who have provided mentoring and coaching for TDA management and since 2019, by the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS).

Vangunu

Jino et al. (2018) describes that in the 1990s, community members from Zaira Village on Vangunu Island noticed that the number of nesting leatherbacks seen each year was decreasing and so in 1999 placed a full ban on harvesting the species. A hatchery programme was established in 2011 to increase the hatching success, which, at last official record in 2014, was 66.8%.

With support from the University of Queensland and SICCP, villagers also undertook Passive Integrated Transponders (PIT) tagging, temperature surveys of nests, as well as satellite tracking of three female leatherbacks. WCS has been providing support to the Community Rangers at Zaira to monitor the leatherbacks since 2019.

Wai Hau

On Malaita Island, in West Are' Are, the local community-based organisation, Wai Hau Conservation Foundation, was established in 2010 to protect leatherback turtles from poaching, beach erosion and crocodile predation (Boso et al. 2018). The Marine Research Foundation (MRF) trained Rangers in collecting data on turtles, including PIT tagging, tissue sampling for DNA analysis, and



Photo: Björn Svensson © WCS

relocating eggs that may be threatened. Along with nesting leatherbacks, the Rangers have also protected an olive ridley turtle nest and observed the hatchlings entering the ocean (Namo 2018).

Mbota Community

On the south-eastern tip of Guadalcanal is the Mbota Community Leatherback (Raro) Turtle Conservation area. Conservation of leatherbacks in the area was first implemented by the Visunaoru community in 2016, and they have since been joined by Chukunaleilei, Chaunamate and Kololauvi communities (Aram et al. 2021).

The communities have developed a management plan for the area, which includes penalties for turtle harvesting. The Mbota Community are currently receiving support from MFMR, the Coral Triangle Initiative (CTI-CFF) and Conservation International.

Other Sites and Research

A number of other sites have had or currently have some level of turtle monitoring and/or research since the 1970s, including on Choiseul, Makira (San Cristobel), Shortland, Russel, Santa Cruz and Kolombangara Islands, including tagging and nest monitoring (McKeown 1977; Vaughan 1981; Wilson 2004; Esbach et al. 2014).

TREDS

Turtle Research and Monitoring Database System (TREDS)⁵ is the platform established by SPREP for Pacific Island countries and territories to manage their turtle data. Data from Solomon Islands was entered in the database up until 2009. As the platform was an old Access database system and was clunky and difficult to use, it fell into disuse.

TREDS has now been upgraded to a web-based platform with additional offline data entry options and other features. Training in its use is available to all Pacific Island countries and territories.

The database has a record of the tag series distributed by SPREP and other agencies. Given how widely marine turtles can migrate, having data for the region stored centrally may be useful to coordinate conservation planning and potentially could be adopted as the platform for all Solomon Islands marine turtle data.

⁵<https://www.sprep.org/thetreds>

Threats to marine turtles in Solomon Islands

All species of marine turtle which inhabit the waters of Solomon Islands are listed as either vulnerable, endangered or critically endangered.

This is due to a range of mostly anthropogenic impacts threatening their survival. Below is an overview of the main threats facing marine turtles in Solomon Islands with quantitative information provided where available.

Fisheries by-catch

In Solomon Islands, quantitative data on marine turtle by-catch is limited to the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) certification assessment of two of the main fisheries in Solomon Islands and the Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resources (MFMR) annual reports to the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC).

The skipjack and yellowfin purse seine anchored Fish Aggregating Device (FAD) and pole and line fisheries received MSC certification in 2016 (MSC-F-30002). The Longline Tuna Fisheries received MSC in 2019 (MSC-F-31452). MSC requires the fishery to use gear that reduce by-catch of turtles, such as large circle hooks in the long-line vessels (Morison et al. 2019). Assessments of these fisheries have stated that the “fishery does not hinder the recovery of marine turtles, given the small numbers and the low rate” (Trumble and Stocker 2016).

Absent from the literature for Solomon Islands is information on by-catch from small scale fisheries (SSF) or even data on the number of vessels operating in this space. Marine turtles are considered susceptible to by-catch in SSF due to overlapping use of coastal waters (Peckham et al. 2007). In addition, there is no data available on by-catch of marine turtles in non-certified commercial fisheries, especially for non-certified fisheries boats illegally fishing in the exclusive economic zone (EEZ) of Solomon Islands. This amounts to a large knowledge gap in the impact of this threat on marine turtles in Solomon Islands, especially reproductive females.

Community Consumption

Vuto et al. (2019) undertook a comprehensive assessment of marine turtle harvest in Solomon Islands and found that approximately 9,473 turtles are harvested annually. The highest catches were recorded in Kia community in Isabel Province and on Wagina Island in Choiseul Province (Figure 1).

Most of the catch was for subsistence purposes, with 88.2% for greens being consumed by the fisher’s family and 81.6% for hawksbills (with the majority of the remainder sold). The study did not record take of turtle eggs. Argument (2009) noted that harvesting of eggs in the Hele Bar Islands was impacting the nesting success of green turtles, but no quantitative figures were given. Mackay (2005) reported that before the 2002 project on Tetepare Island, to protect leatherback nests, almost all eggs (and at least 10 adult turtles per year) were consumed.

Wildlife trade

While turtle trade in Solomon Islands was banned in 1993 by the MFMR, subsistence harvesting of turtle meat is allowed for all species except leatherbacks (see Fisheries Management [Prohibited Activities] Regulations 2018 above).

Despite the ban however, marine turtle products are still being sold, with thousands of turtles harvested each year in Solomon Islands. While most of the catches reported in Vuto et al. (2019) were for subsistence, 24.2% of hawksbills were sold for their shell, nearly all of which were from Wagina community. Recent mitochondrial DNA profiling of hawksbill products in markets in PNG in Rabual, Kavieng and Port Moresby shows these originated from Solomon Islands stock (LaCasella 2021). The same study also found hawksbill shell jewellery for sale in Honiara, in the Central Market, Ladies Market and Mendana. In Western Province, in the more urban locales such as Munda and Gizo, marine turtles are commonly harvested for sale to locals and Asian businesses (Dr Alec Hughes, pers. comm).

Climate Change

Like most species and ecosystems, climate change will have and is having direct and indirect impacts on marine turtles through increased temperature, rise in sea levels and more intense and frequent cyclones (Fuentes et al. 2011; NOAA 2021; Patrício et al. 2021).

Increased temperatures in the nest can impact on embryo development, leading to reduced fitness of hatchlings or death; and, as the sex of marine turtles is temperature dependent, a warming climate can feminise the population (Howard et al. 2014) and reduce fertility rates (Hamann et al. 2010). Rising sea-levels is leading to loss of nesting beaches through beach erosion. Nest areas are becoming inundated with sea water because of flooding, which is being compounded by more frequent storms (Varela et al. 2019).

A study of shoreline loss from 1947 to 2014 in Solomon Islands found 11 islands in the north had totally disappeared or were suffering severe erosion (Albert et al. 2016). On Vangunu Island in Western Province, Community Rangers report that traditional nesting sites have been compromised by coastal erosion that is steeping the backshore (Jino et al. 2018). The same is being reported in Arnavons, Rendova, Tetepare, Malaita and Hele Bar Islands (Albert et al. 2016; Eddie 2021, Foale et al. 2017; Marine Research Foundation 2015).

The impact of temperatures on the nests is yet to be quantified, however annual maximum temperatures in Honiara have increased 0.15°C per decade since 1951 (Anon 2011). While a 1°C increase since 1951 may not be lethal to developing hatchlings it may feminise the population.

Predation

From embryo to adult, marine turtles are preyed upon by a range of birds, reptiles, insects, crustaceans, fish and mammals, some of which are native species while others are introduced predators (Heithaus 2013).

It should be noted however, that marine turtles are a natural part of the food chain and for some native species are an important source of food; which is another reason for supporting recovery of marine turtle populations as they are part of the wider ecosystem.

In Solomon Islands, predators on nests, include monitor lizards, ghost crabs, purple swamphen, hermit crabs, rats, dogs and pigs (Mackay, 2005; Mortimer, 2002; Jino et al. 2018). On hatchlings, birds, rats, crabs and black-tip reef sharks were seen feeding on turtles near shore (Vaughan 1981; Mortimer 2002). On adults, several individuals were observed with predator damage, such as missing flippers from sharks or crocodiles.

Other threats

Several other threats are known to negatively impact marine turtles in the Pacific, including light pollution, plastic pollution, ghost nets, unsustainable coastal development, Fish Attracting Devices (FADs), boat strikes and fibropapilloma disease (Kennett et al. 1997; Wilson et al. 2004; Vuto et al. 2019; Work et al. 2020; NOAA 2021; Pilcher 2021).

However, there appears to be no quantitative or qualitative reporting on the impact any of these threats are having on marine turtles within Solomon Islands.

Themes and Objectives

In pursuit of our collective commitment to the conservation and sustainable management of marine turtle populations, the Turtle Working Committee has developed the below themes and objectives that will guide our National Plan of Action (NPOA) for marine turtles species in Solomon Islands.

Table 4. Under Theme, links to the Turtle Action Plan in the Pacific Islands Regional Marine Species Programme 2023-2027 are included.

Theme	Objective
1. LEGISLATION & ENFORCEMENT (Theme 6 "Legislation, policy and management" and Theme 3 "Ecosystem and habitat protection" of the regional plan)	Solomon Islands has adequate legislation at the national and provincial levels for conservation and management of marine turtles, incorporating traditional management practices to enable effective enforcement efforts.
2. EDUCATION & AWARENESS (Theme 9 "Education, awareness, and communication" of the regional plan)	Fishers and market vendors, along with the general public have improved access to information on marine turtle management and protection, through the effective and accurate dissemination of education and awareness programmes.
3. RESEARCH & MONITORING (Theme 1 "Research and Monitoring" and Theme 5 "Cultural significance and value" of the regional plan)	Marine turtle practitioners (management authorities, Community Rangers, NGOs, CBOs etc.) in Solomon Islands have adequate information on the status of turtles and their habitats to make informed management decisions.
4. CAPACITY BUILDING (Theme 8 "Capacity building and collaboration" of the regional plan)	Marine turtle practitioners have the required skills and are undertaking turtle protection, management, population research and monitoring.
5. THREATS (Theme 2 "Climate change", Theme 4 "Threat reduction" and Theme 5 "Cultural significance and value" of the regional plan)	Key threats to marine turtles in Solomon Islands are quantified and prevention and/or mitigation strategies in place to reduce the threats whose impacts are measurable.
6. NATIONAL TURTLE DATABASE (Theme 1 "Research and Monitoring" of the regional plan)	Turtle research and monitoring data is stored on a central database to ensure management decisions are based on up-to-date information and sound science.
7. SUSTAINABLE FINANCING (Objective A of the regional plan)	Turtle protection, management, population research and monitoring are occurring at key sites in Solomon Islands as a result of sufficient funding.
8. COLLABORATION & PARTNERSHIP (Theme 8 "Capacity building and collaboration" of the regional plan)	Management and protection of marine turtles in Solomon Islands is being coordinated through the Solomon Islands Marine Turtle Working Committee (a partnership between national government, provinces, NGOs, CBO's and local communities).

National Plan of Action for Marine Turtles

Below is a comprehensive table outlining the key activities outlined in the National Plan of Action (NPOA) dedicated to the conservation and management of marine turtle species in Solomon Islands.

Table 5. National Plan of Action for Marine Turtles in Solomon Islands

THEME 1: LEGISLATION & ENFORCEMENT								
Objective: Solomon Islands has adequate legislation at the national and provincial levels for conservation and management of marine turtles, incorporating traditional management practices to enable effective enforcement efforts.								
#	Action	Indicators for 2023–2027	Year					Implementing partners
			1	2	3	4	5	
1.1	Review and/or develop national and sectoral laws/regulations, to ensure they adequately address conservation requirements for each marine turtle species.	Legislation adequately addresses conservation requirements for each species.						Attorney General (AG), Provincial Governments
1.2	Enforcement of legislation and ordinances through trainings, workshops, outreach programmes etc. to support and strengthen government enforcement agencies, inspectors, rangers and authorised officers.	National trainings/workshops/programme conducted per year.						SIELA, AG, NGOs/CBOs, PSO/LALSU, ODP, RSIPF, SIRA
1.3	Train, support and empower traditional and community-based leaders/groups to enforce national and provincial legislation, ensuring ownership and responsibility by the community.	One course on legislation (National and Provincial) and enforcement for traditional leaders and community groups per year. Significant increase in number of community-based harvest/management plans compared to year 1 of plan. Community by-laws in place.						SIELA, AG, NGOs, CBOs, PSO/LALSU, RSIPF, ODP, Provincial Governments, MPGIS, MTGEA, SIRA

#	Action	Indicators for 2023–2027	Year					Implementing partners
			1	2	3	4	5	
1.4	Review, and amend existing Provincial ordinances and develop new conservation ordinances that include marine turtle protection where required (including making reference to turtle conservation sites).	At least half of Provincial ordinances have provisions for turtle conservation. Inclusions of common traditional and customary practices related to management and protection in Provincial ordinances.						MPGIS legal advisors, Provincial Governments, NGOs/CBOs
1.5	Support community groups with the formal recognition and gazettal of Community Fisheries Management Plans (CFMP) and other Community-based resource management (CBRM) plans (e.g. PAs, MPA, LMMAs).	Formally recognised and gazetted CFMPs and recognised CBRM Management plans include turtle conservation. (Inclusions of traditional and customary practices related to management and protection in CFMP)						CBRM sites, NGO/CBOs, Provincial Governments, SIRA, SIELA, MPGIS, AG, LALSU
1.6	Prioritise protection of important coral reef and seagrass habitats for foraging turtles including through MPAs, locally managed marine areas (LMMAs), and other effective area-based conservation measures (OECMs).	Coral reefs and seagrass habitats important for turtles are represented in MPAs, LMMAs, and OECMs.						MFMR/MECDM, CBOs

THEME 2 • EDUCATION & AWARENESS

Objective: Fishers and market vendors, along with the general public have improved access to information on marine turtle management and protection, through the effective and accurate dissemination of education and awareness programmes.

#	Action	Indicators for 2023–2027	Year					Implementing partners
			1	2	3	4	5	
2.1	Collate and review all existing education and awareness materials and where needed develop new materials.	Education packages/kits available for awareness events.						NGOs, CBOs (engage cChange), SINU, MCT, MEHRD,
2.2	Provide relevant education and awareness materials/kits to schools, local communities, youth, women's group and others who actively participate in education and awareness. (e.g. apps, videos, plays, games etc.).	Education packages disseminated at key turtle sites on at least Rendova, Isabel, Malaita and Makira. Number of communities, schools, groups etc receiving targeted awareness and educational campaigns.						NGOs, CBOs (engage cChange), Media, MEHRD, MCT, MWYFCA
2.3	Work with Ministry of Education and Human Resources (Curriculum Development Centre) to integrate marine turtle information (including training teachers on how to include in lessons).	Key marine turtle information integrated and captured within school curricula (biology, status, threats, distribution, management).						NGOs, CBOs, MEHRD, School Authorities, Provinces, SINU
2.4	Undertake targeted awareness and education campaign for those fishers and market traders that target turtles and turtle products (use Vuto et al. [2019] as a guide to develop specific campaign).	Reduction in illegal turtle harvest compared to Vuto et al. [2019]. At least 50% of communities (focusing on fishers and traders) identified in Vuto et al. [2019] receive targeted campaigns.						NGOs, CBOs, city councils, media (engage communications organisation, cChange)



THEME 3: RESEARCH & MONITORING

Objective: Marine turtle practitioners (management authorities, Community Rangers, NGOs, CBOs etc.) in Solomon Islands have adequate information on the status of turtles and their habitats to make informed management decisions

#	Action	Indicators for 2023–2027	Year					Implementing partners
			1	2	3	4	5	
3.1	Undertake and strengthen long term turtle monitoring programmes (including tagging, track counts, nest success etc) at key turtle nesting beaches with the goal of maximizing hatchling output.	Improved hatchling success (in-situ and in hatcheries), increased number of turtles tagged, increased number of nights surveyed. Increased number of monitoring programmes established since 2023.						NGO, SINU, academics, SPREP, CBO, researchers
3.2	Where data gaps exist, undertake satellite tracking of marine turtles to identify migration routes and foraging grounds that can be targeted for conservation.	Satellite tracking conducted for at least 3 marine turtle species. Migratory routes/ foraging grounds mapped and reported.						NGO, SINU, academics, CBO, researchers
3.3	Undertake field surveys to identify key foraging sites and update current distribution maps of turtles to include known foraging grounds and migratory routes.	Updated map in 2024 and in 2027.						NGO, CBO, Researchers and Academic Institutions
3.4	Establish index foraging area sites for comprehensive capture-mark-recapture studies for adults and/or juveniles.	In water surveys of greens and hawksbills, at least one site each completed per year.						NGO, SINU, academics, CBO, researchers, Provincial Governments, MPGIS

THEME 3: RESEARCH & MONITORING

Objective: Marine turtle practitioners (Management Authorities, Community Rangers, NGOs, CBOs etc.) in Solomon Islands have adequate information on the status of turtles and their habitats to make informed management decisions.

#	Action	Indicators for 2023–2027	Year					Implementing partners
			1	2	3	4	5	
3.5	Encourage and promote national and regional scientific and genetic studies on marine turtles. Results disseminated back to monitoring teams.	Number of national and regional population and genetic studies included in publications and submitted to TREDIS database. Formal partnerships with lab facilities and partners established. Results (video, poster, factsheet, reports) disseminated to monitoring communities and responsible authorities.						NGO, SINU, academics, CBO, researchers, Provincial Governments, MPGIS
3.6	Undertake surveys of historically known nesting beaches to elucidate their status and to find out if there are new/unreported sites. Establish monitoring programmes if healthy populations found.	Information collected on status of nesting sites that were identified in the Marine turtle status report for Solomon Islands 2022.						NGO, SINU, academics, CBO, researchers
3.7	Carry out national survey on harvest levels from 2018 baseline (Follow-up to include sites missed in the 2018 surveys).	Change in harvest levels from the 2018 study known.						NGO, SINU, academics, CBO, researchers
3.8	Promote documentation (e.g. videos, story-telling) of cultural knowledge on marine turtles in Solomon Islands.	At least one video and one publication on Solomon Islands cultural knowledge of marine turtles.						NGO, CBO, researchers, academic institutions, (engage cChange)
3.9	Publish the results of turtle research and monitoring work in Solomon Islands (with a focus on Solomon Islands needs). Papers to be a collaborative output between Community Rangers, government and researchers. Publications should also include formats suitable for community audiences.	At least one published paper per year (with authorship and acknowledgment of community members).						NGO, SINU, academics, CBO, researchers

THEME 4: CAPACITY BUILDING

Objective: Marine turtle practitioners have the required skills and are undertaking turtle protection, management, population research and monitoring.

#	Action	Indicators for 2023–2027	Year					Implementing partners
			1	2	3	4	5	
4.1	Identify turtle monitors/practitioners (at national, provincial and community level), and address their skills/knowledge required and training needs for turtle management and protection.	Training needs assessment report. Identified training and learning platforms – online, print and face-face.						NGO/CBOs, researchers, academics, provincial governments
4.2	Undertake turtle nesting beach monitoring / survey training workshops, including survey methodologies, turtle tagging, foraging surveys, best handling practices and genetic sampling. Include exchange visits between sites.	Standardised training manuals/guidelines/protocols in place. At least one training event per year.						MECDM/MFMR, NGO
4.3	Provide training in the use of TREDIS and in data analysis and technical report writing skills.	One training event per year for database users.						MECDM/MFMR
4.4	Support local Solomon Islands tertiary students to undertake research on marine turtles in Solomon Islands, such as working with Community Rangers on specific questions.	One local Solomon Islands tertiary student per year undertaking study on marine turtles in Solomon Islands.						MECDM/MFMR, NGO
4.5	Encourage professional and academic training opportunities which are in line with marine turtle protection and management in Solomon Islands.	By 2027, at least five scholarships provided. One local Solomon Islands tertiary student per year undertaking study on marine turtles in Solomon Islands.						NGO, CBOs, researchers, academics, provincial governments, MCT, MAL,

THEME 4: CAPACITY BUILDING

Objective: Marine turtle practitioners have the required skills and are undertaking turtle protection, management, population research and monitoring.

#	Action	Indicators for 2023–2027	Year					Implementing partners
			1	2	3	4	5	
4.6	Organise monitoring and surveillance workshop for law enforcers (e.g. police) and other groups (e.g. community crime prevention committee, Community Rangers).	At least one monitoring and surveillance workshop.						MECDM/MFMR
4.7	Provide appropriate trainings to turtle management CBOs on operational, project management and administration skills.	At least one training per year on book-keeping, basic financial management, etc.						NGO, CBOs, researchers, academics, provincial governments,

THEME 5: THREATS

Objective: Key threats to marine turtles in Solomon Islands are quantified and prevention and/or mitigation strategies in place to reduce the threats whose impacts are measurable.

#	Action	Indicators for 2023–2027	Year					Implementing partners
			1	2	3	4	5	
5.1	Address recommendations put forward in the Vuto et al. (2019) report on turtle harvesting in Solomon Islands.	More than 50% of recommendations addressed by 2027.						MECDM/MFMR, NGO
5.2	Establish a pilot project to quantify turtle by-catch in commercial fisheries, beyond MSC certified vessels and collaborate with fishing industries and regional fisheries management organisation and NGOs to monitor and reduce turtle by-catch.	A better understanding of the by-catch of non-MSC vessels in-country.						MECDM/MFMR, NGO
5.3	Surveys through questionnaires in Small Scale Fisheries (artisanal) communities to gauge number of boats, gear types and level of interaction with marine turtles.	Estimate of SSF boats and types of gears known. By-catch in SSF estimated.						MECDM/MFMR, NGO

THEME 5: THREATS

Objective: Key threats to marine turtles in Solomon Islands are quantified and prevention and/or mitigation strategies in place to reduce the threats whose impacts are measurable.

#	Action	Indicators for 2023–2027	Year					Implementing partners
			1	2	3	4	5	
5.4	Surveys through questionnaires of market vendors to gauge trade (both domestic and international) of marine turtles and sea turtle products (link to activity see 3.7).	Change in harvest levels from the 2018 study known (include primary and secondary communities).						NGO, SINU, academics, CBO, researchers
5.5	Surveys through questionnaires in communities to gauge economic and cultural impact from potential bans on subsistence harvest (link to activity see 3.7).	At least 10 fishers interviewed at key harvest sites identified by Vuto et al. (2019).						NGO, SINU, academics, CBO, researchers
5.6	Quantify predators and predation levels at key nesting beaches and identify and implement mitigation measures (e.g. nest protectors).	Reduction in predation levels at key nesting beaches by introduced species. Increased hatching success.						NGO, SINU, academics, CBO, researchers
5.7	Regular records of sand temperature readings of natural sand, in situ nest chambers and nest chambers in hatcheries, linked with hatching success data. Trial mitigation measures if required.	Nest temperatures and estimates of sex ratios known for at least 10 hawksbills, 10 greens and 10 leatherbacks individuals at Tetepare, Rendova, Isabel and Arnavon Islands						NGO, SINU, academics, CBO, researchers
5.8	Quantify the impact of climate change on nesting beaches in terms of beach erosion and flooding and establish long-term monitoring programmes. Include vulnerability assessments due to sea level rise and storm intensity. Identify, promote, and adopt adaptation and mitigation measures where required.	Beach erosion and flooding monitoring programme established at key nesting beaches.						NGO, SINU, academics, CBO, researchers
5.9	Quantify other forms of threats that may be impacting marine turtles in Solomon Islands (e.g. light pollution, plastic pollution, ghost nets, unsustainable coastal development, FADs, boat strikes and Fibropapilloma disease).	Site level reports on lesser-known threats to marine turtles in Solomon Islands.						NGO, SINU, academics, CBO, researchers

THEME 6: NATIONAL TURTLE DATABASE

Objective: Key threats to marine turtles in Solomon Islands are quantified and prevention and/or mitigation strategies in place to reduce the threats whose impacts are measurable.

#	Action	Indicators for 2023–2027	Year					Implementing partners
			1	2	3	4	5	
6.1	MECDM/MFMR to develop a national central turtle database linked to TREDIS.	Central database launched.						MECDM/MFMR, NGO
6.2	Develop information and data sharing policy and protocol for use of a central database.	Government endorsed policy.						MECDM/MFMR, NGO
6.3	SIMTWC to standardise turtle research methodologies and disseminate them to all marine turtle management practitioners in Solomon Islands.	All turtle monitors in Solomon Islands using standardised datasheets that are comparable and repeatable.						MECDM/MFMR, NGO
6.4	Train national officers in Solomon Islands central database and SPREP's TREDIS database system (link to activity 4.3).	One training per year.						MECDM/MFMR, NGO
6.5	Members of turtle network to submit their data quarterly to the central database.	Quarterly nesting and foraging data at all monitoring sites entered into the central database. Annual turtle reports, from the central database to be produced and disseminated throughout collaborating partners and community groups.						MECDM/MFMR
6.6	Source and distribute sampling equipment (e.g. tags, applicators, genetic kits) to marine turtle management practitioners in Solomon Islands working on turtle research and monitoring.	All monitoring sites report sufficient sampling equipment.						MECDM/MFMR, NGO
6.7	Explore creation of specific Solomon Islands tags.	Report on Solomon Islands turtle tags submitted to SIMTWC in 2024.						MECDM/MFMR, NGO
6.8	Add existing historical and current data to central database and TREDIS.	Turtle managers and policy makers have access to all turtle data collected in Solomon Islands.						MECDM/MFMR

#	Action	Indicators for 2023–2027	Year					Implementing partners
			1	2	3	4	5	
6.9	Use turtle database information to develop future NPOAs and inform relevant policy development.	Turtle managers and policy makers have access to all turtle data collected in Solomon Islands.						MECDM/MFMR

THEME 7: SUSTAINABLE FINANCING

Objective: Turtle protection, management, population research and monitoring is occurring at key sites in Solomon Islands as a result of sufficient funding

#	Action	Indicators for 2023–2027	Year					Implementing partners
			1	2	3	4	5	
7.1	Organise proposal writing workshops for Government staff and local NGOs/CBOs.	At least one proposal writing workshop.						MECDM/MFMR, NGO
7.2	Government, in collaboration with development partners support local NGOs/CBOs in seeking funding for turtle conservation.	At least three of the key monitoring sites are receiving funding obtained by Government or local NGOs/CBOs.						MECDM/MFMR, NGO
7.3	Explore opportunities for sustainable financing mechanisms to support turtle conservation.	Report on Solomon Islands sustainable financing mechanisms for marine turtle conservation submitted to SIMTWC in 2025						MECDM/MFMR, NGO
7.4	Collaborate and implement livelihood initiatives with other sectors (tourism, fisheries, agriculture) to support community marine turtle programmes.	At least one community development initiative per year integrating marine turtle protection and management, developed and implemented with respective sectors.						NGO, CBOs, researchers, academics, provincial governments, MCT, MAL, MFMR

THEME 8: COLLABORATION & PARTNERSHIP

Objective: Management and protection of marine turtles in Solomon Islands is being coordinated through the Solomon Islands Marine Turtle Working Committee (a partnership between national government, provinces, NGOs, CBOs and local communities).

#	Action	Indicators for 2023–2027	Year					Implementing partners
			1	2	3	4	5	
8.1	Formalise the Solomon Islands Marine Turtles Network (SIMTN) and develop mechanisms for sharing of information.	SIMTN established.						

THEME 8: COLLABORATION & PARTNERSHIP

Objective: Management and protection of marine turtles in Solomon Islands is being coordinated through the Solomon Islands Marine Turtle Working Committee (a partnership between national government, provinces, NGOs, CBOs and local communities).

#	Action	Indicators for 2023–2027	Year					Implementing partners
			1	2	3	4	5	
8.2	Review and update existing partnership MoU's and facilitate new MoU's for marine turtle conservation.	Up-to-date MOUs submitted to SIMTWC by 2024.						MECDM/MFMR
8.3	Annual meeting of the SIMTWC to monitor the implementation progress of the NPOA's activities.	One meeting per year, turtle conservation and research being coordinated by SIMTWC.						MECDM/MFMR
8.4	Hold a Solomon Islands marine turtle symposium in 2027	Report on Solomon Islands marine turtle symposium in 2027 submitted to Ministers of MECDM and MFMR.						MECDM/MFMR, NGO
8.5	SIMTWC to build partnerships with organisations or individuals outside of Solomon Islands given the migratory behaviour of marine turtles.	At least 4 formal partnerships with overseas organisations or individuals.						MECDM/MFMR, NGO, SPREP



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Appendix 1

Solomon Islands Marine Turtle Working Committee

The Solomon Islands Turtle Technical Working Committee (the TWC), was first established in 2008 to provide guidance to the Marine Turtle work in the Solomon Islands. The TWC worked under the guidance of MECDM and its partner Ministry, MFMR with the support of partner NGOs and CBOs working on turtle projects and conservation activities throughout Solomon Islands. The committee reformed in 2022, as the Solomon Islands Marine Turtle Working Committee (SIMTWC) to review the 2012 plan and develop the National Plan of Action (NPOA): Marine Turtles (2023–2027).

Their role will be to oversee the implementation of the plan, specifically:

- Annually review the NPOA to monitor its progress.
- Support development and/or review of pieces of legislation designed to conserve marine turtles and their habitats.
- Support implementing partners in developing education and awareness materials on marine turtle conservation.
- Assist the government to coordinate research and monitoring between the various implementing partners and help to collate, share results and develop publications and that seek to promote education and awareness.
- Advise the government on significant information relating to turtle stocks, trends, threats and their ecology through appropriate management and conservation measures.
- Assist in the coordination of national training programs on marine turtle research and conservation, especially for community groups.
- Assist the government in coordinating the use of TREDIS to store and analyse data collected on marine turtles.
- Coordinate the standardisation of turtle research methodologies and disseminate them to all marine turtle management practitioners in Solomon Islands.
- Assist community-based organisations in seeking funds to conduct marine turtle conservation.
- Coordinate the hosting of a Solomon Islands marine turtle symposium in 2027.
- Perform other duties as needed where necessary.

Committee Members:

- Ministry of Environment, Climate Change, Disaster Management and Meteorology
- Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resources
- Arnavon Community Marine Park
- Solomon Islands Community Conservation Partnership
- Tetepare Descendants Association
- Solomon Islands Ranger Association
- Wildlife Conservation Society
- The Nature Conservancy
- WWF Pacific
- Western Provincial Government
- Isabel Provincial Government
- Wai Hau Conservation Foundation
- Mbo- ta Community Leatherback (Raro) Turtle Conservation Area

Appendix 2

Consultation process for the NPOA- Marine Turtles

April 2022

- Solomon Island Marine Turtle Working Committee Meeting review of 2008-2012 plan.
- Further comments received on 2008-2012 plan via email.
- First Draft of 2023-2027 plan developed for wider consultations.

June 2022

- Consultations with ACMP rangers.

July 2022

- Consultations with TDA rangers.

August 2022

- Consultations with Haevo and Sosoilo rangers.
- Development of 2nd draft of NPOA for review.
- Solomon Island Marine Turtle Working Committee Meeting to review 2nd NPOA Draft.
- 2nd NPOA Draft reviewed by Karen Baird (SPREP) and Agnetha Vave-Karamui (MECDM).
- Compilation of additional comments from Felix Naitor (Wai Hau), Ivory Akao (MFMR), Henry Kaniki (WWF), Chris Madden Hof (WWF), Manjula Tiwari (NOAA).

November 2022

- Solomon Island Marine Turtle Working Committee Meeting to review 2nd Draft

December 2022

- 3rd Draft developed for review.

March 2023

- Review of 3rd draft completed by Agnetha Vave-Karamui (MECDM), Josef Hurutarau (MECDM), Veira Talilotu (MECDM).

April 2023

- Solomon Islands NPOA Marine Turtles completed.



