

Protecting Migratory Species in the Pacific islands with CMS and SPREP

**Their Future is Our Future:
The Convention on the Conservation of
Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS)
in the Pacific islands, with the Secretariat
of the Pacific Regional Environment
Programme (SPREP)**



ACP MEAs 2

An initiative of the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States funded by the European Union



SPREP
Secretariat of the Pacific Regional
Environment Programme



ABOUT SPREP

The Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP) is the region's premiere inter-governmental organisation for environment and sustainable development. SPREP promotes cooperation in the Pacific Region and provides assistance to protect and improve the environment and to ensure sustainable development for present and future generations.

SPREP works with 21 Pacific island Members and 5 metropolitan Members to help achieve the vision of *a resilient Pacific environment sustaining our livelihoods and natural heritage in harmony with our cultures*.

It works in the key areas of environmental governance, climate change resilience, ecosystem and biodiversity protection as well as waste management and pollution control, helping to enhance Pacific island resilience.

The SPREP region covers 30,413,800 sq km – over 10% of the planet's ocean surface, home to approximately 30,000 islands of varied shape and size. Ninety-seven percent of this vast realm is within the Exclusive Economic Zones of SPREP Members.

Based in Apia, Samoa, the SPREP Membership comprises American Samoa, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Guam, Kiribati, Republic of the Marshall Islands, Nauru, New Caledonia, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tokelau, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu and Wallis and Futuna. SPREP's Metropolitan Members are Australia, France, New Zealand, United Kingdom and the United States of America.

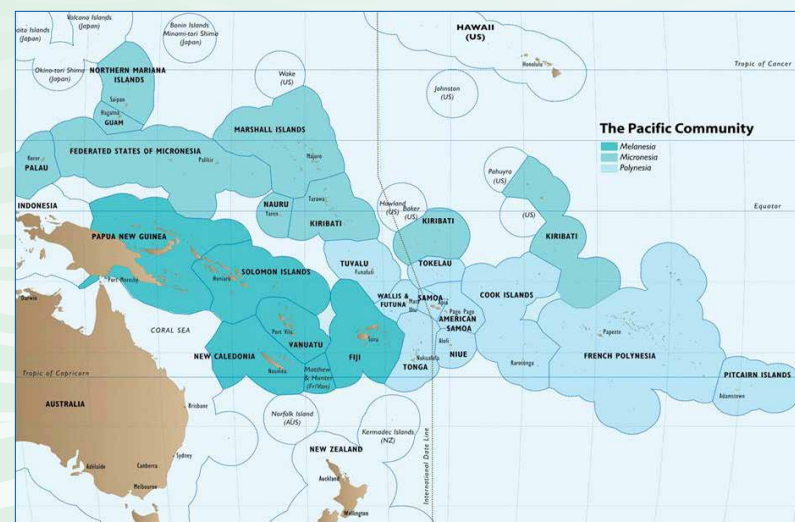


Figure 1: The SPREP region

SPREP AND MIGRATORY SPECIES

Some of the world's best-known migratory marine species are found in the Pacific islands region, and many of them, such as turtles, whales and sharks, are central features of Pacific culture, including art and oral histories. Many of these species have been severely reduced in numbers through hunting, and now face emerging threats such as climate change, marine pollution and fishing. Their conservation and contribution to sustainable development for our Members has always been one of SPREP's most important areas of work.

SPREP is not primarily focused on research, and effective partnerships are vital for the organisation to achieve its mandate. SPREP works closely with national governments and agencies – for example, the New Zealand Government recently funded a community-based programme to monitor turtle nesting sites in Fiji, Kiribati and Solomon Islands.

SPREP also works with various NGO partners for the conservation of migratory species – for example, the Pew Charitable Trusts supports a Shark and Ray Conservation Officer based at SPREP; the International Fund for Animal Welfare has supported whale research in the region; and WWF has provided significant assistance in developing guidelines for shark-based tourist activities and has partnered with SPREP and others in the development of a hawksbill turtle conservation plan.

The partnerships between SPREP and several NGOs have been very successful in providing the technical support, assistance and capacity needs to SPREP members to ensure that they are able to implement their commitments and obligations to protect migratory species at the national level.

PROTECTION OF MIGRATORY SPECIES (Sanctuaries and Important Marine Mammal Areas)

The long-term sustainability of Pacific ecotourism, livelihoods, and species depends on coordinated commitments to conservation and integrated ocean management. Migratory species link and support land and marine ecosystem services. Integrated effects require integrated management.

Several species of pelagic sharks have been seriously depleted by the fleets of Distant Water Fishing Nations, including those fishing in Pacific islands waters. In 2016, four species of sharks and nine species of mobula rays were listed on CITES Appendix II following key interventions by Pacific island nations.

Networks of managed areas are critical for species diversity, particularly for migratory species. The Pacific leads the world in the establishment of large sanctuaries for sharks and whales, covering millions of square kilometres of SPREP Members' EEZs as well as protection of critical habitats through marine protected areas. SPREP hosted a workshop in March 2017 to identify Important Marine Mammal Areas (IMMAs) in the Pacific islands region, and it is anticipated that the outcomes of this workshop will inform the conservation priorities for Pacific islands governments in considering the establishment of sanctuaries/MPAs/Marine Parks and other area-based conservation measures.

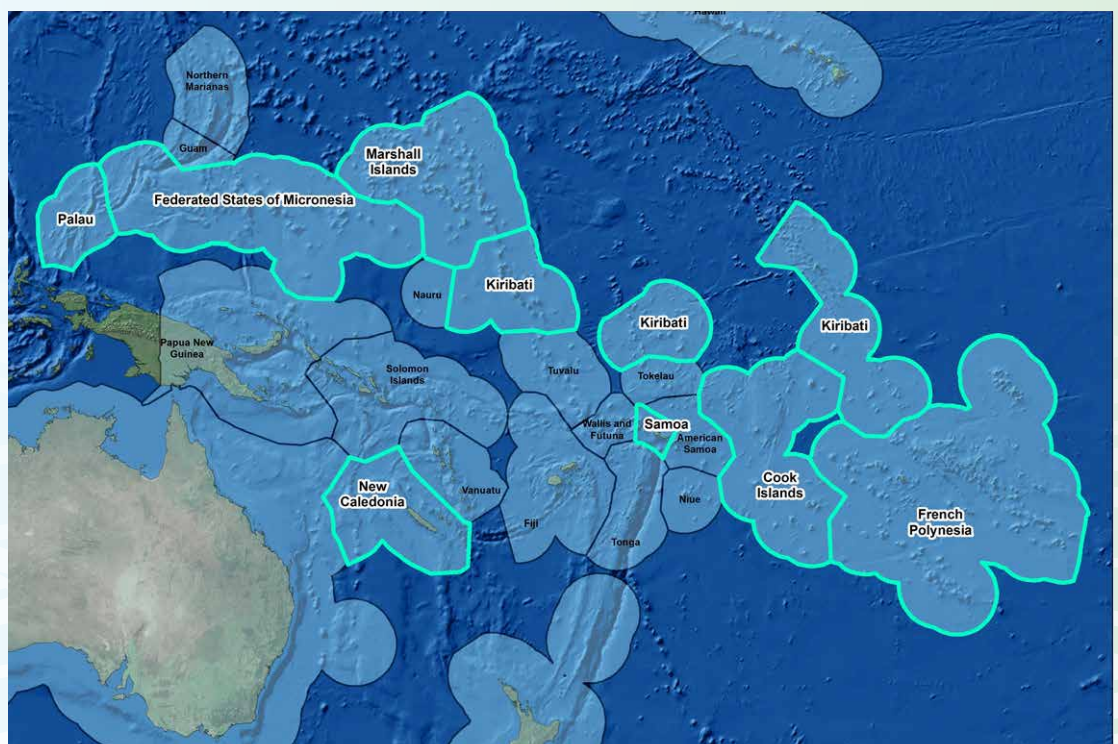


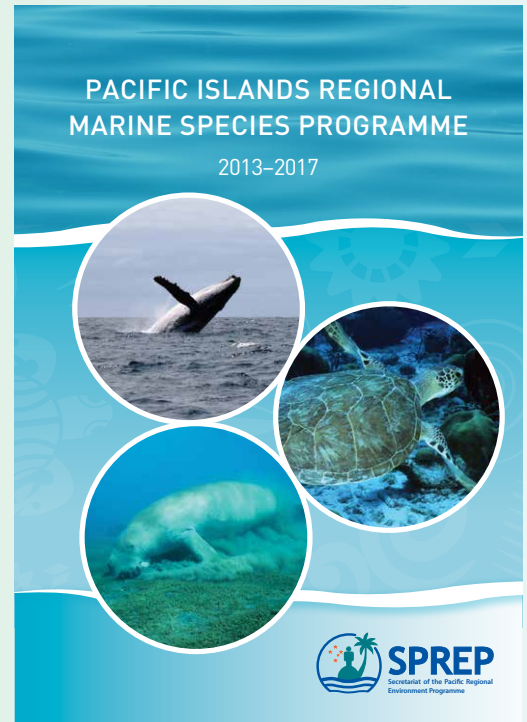
Figure 2: Shark sanctuaries in the Pacific region.

SPREP'S RELATIONSHIP WITH THE CMS

SPREP has had a long and close relationship with CMS, including the location of a CMS Pacific Officer at SPREP for several years until 2016. Over the past three years, SPREP has been collaborating with the CMS Dugong Secretariat on a dugong/seagrass conservation programme in Solomon Islands and Vanuatu.

SPREP provides technical support to its Members who are CMS Parties – for example, assistance was given to Fiji in preparing the proposal to list nine species of mobula rays on Appendix II and for their inclusion in the MoU on Migratory Sharks. Support has also been provided to Samoa to prepare their proposal at COP 12 to list blue sharks on Appendix II.

SPREP's Marine Species Programme contains Action Plans to guide its members in the development and implementation of strategies for the conservation of threatened migratory species. These plans are developed for a 5-year period and have traditionally covered Whales and Dolphins, Dugong and Turtles. For the period 2018–2022, a new Action Plan will be added for Sharks and Rays.



ALIGNMENT WITH THE CMS MEMORANDA OF UNDERSTANDING

SPREP's Marine Species Programme is closely aligned with various CMS MoUs, namely:

Memorandum of Understanding for the Conservation of Cetaceans and Their Habitats in the Pacific Islands Region

Signed by 14 SPREP Members

Memorandum of Understanding on the Conservation and Management of Dugongs (Dugong dugon) and their Habitats throughout their Range

Signed by all 6 SPREP Range States

Memorandum of Understanding on the Conservation of Migratory Sharks

Signed by 10 SPREP Members

Memorandum of Understanding on the Conservation and Management of Marine Turtles and their Habitats of the Indian Ocean and South-East Asia

Signed by 5 SPREP Members

SPREP and the CMS Secretariat attempt to align the Action Plans of the SPREP Marine Species Programme with the Action Plans of these MoUs wherever possible. Because many species listed on these plans migrate thousands of kilometres across the jurisdictions of several countries as well as through international waters, for conservation measures to be successful it is vital that all Range States adopt a similar approach and share conservation strategies.



SPREP PRIORITIES FOR CMS COP 12

SPREP's priorities for COP 12 have been shaped by the interests of our Members and recent events, including the UN Ocean Conference and the events around the Year of the Whale in the Pacific islands. SPREP will take a particular interest in discussions and resolutions that involve the iconic species in our marine species programme 2018-2022, namely cetaceans, dugong, turtles, sharks and rays. We will also seek to collaborate with the CMS Secretariat, stakeholders and supporters who may wish to work with us to enhance the conservation of these species in the Pacific islands region.

SPREP will engage positively and present a Pacific perspective in discussions, especially on the following agenda items:

- the management of marine debris
- underwater noise and its impact on cetaceans and other marine wildlife
- boat-based wildlife-watching and in-water interaction with aquatic mammals
- the role of ecological networks in the conservation of migratory species
- conservation of critical coastal habitat for migratory species
- proposal for the inclusion of species on Appendix I and/or II
- bycatch
- aquatic wild meat
- live captures of cetaceans
- climate change and migratory species
- sustainable tourism and migratory species
- community participation and livelihoods

Several of these issues were incorporated in the Voluntary Commitments made by SPREP and various Members to the UN Ocean Conference in June 2017.

SPREP will also host two side events on the evening of Tuesday 24 October in Room 4, to celebrate the **Year of the Whale in the Pacific islands** and the evening of Thursday 26 October in Room 5 on **Our Ocean, Our Sharks, Our Future** – please join us!

For more information please contact sprep@sprep.org

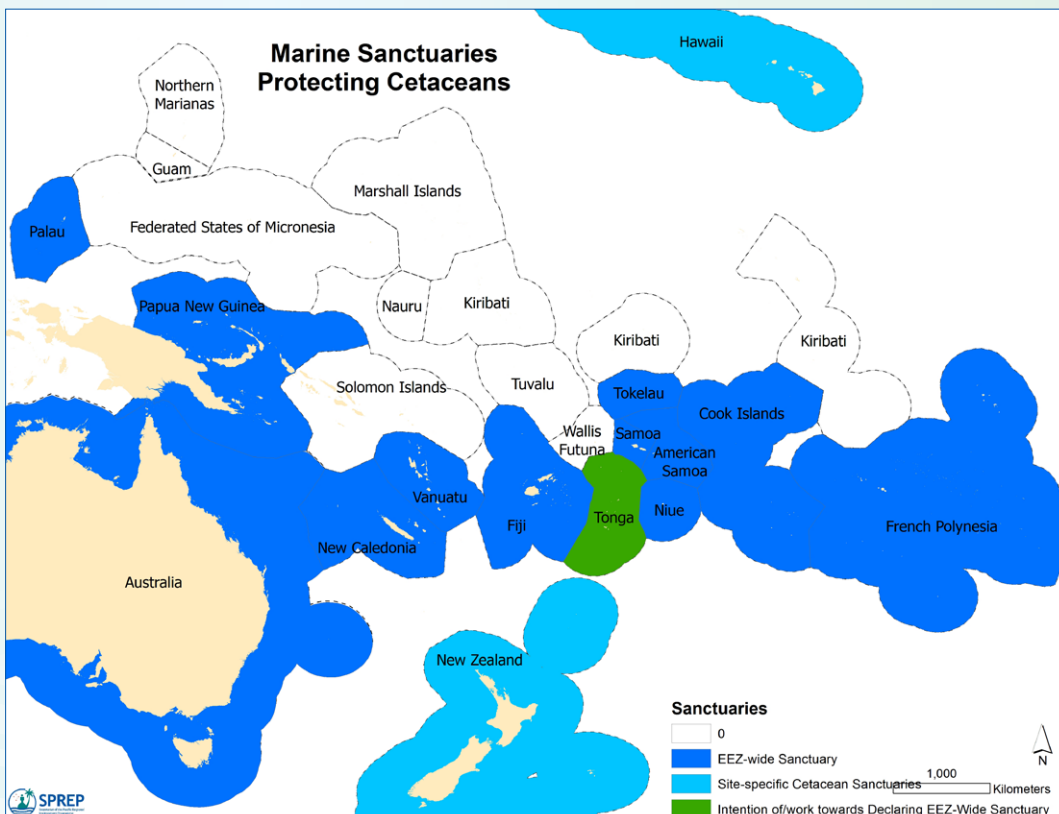


Figure 3: Whale sanctuaries in the Pacific region.



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