



**Convention on Migratory Species  
Memorandum of Understanding for the  
Conservation of Cetaceans and their  
Habitats in the Pacific Islands Region**

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SECOND MEETING OF THE SIGNATORIES  
Auckland, New Zealand, 28-29 July 2009

**OPENING STATEMENTS OF COLLABORATING ORGANIZATIONS**

**a) Whale and Dolphin Conservation Society**

## WDCS Position Statement and Report to 2<sup>nd</sup> MoP for the CMS MoU for the Conservation of Cetaceans and their Habitats in the Pacific Islands Region

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1. WDCS, Whale and Dolphin Conservation Society, is an international non-governmental organization with cetacean protection activities spanning more than 25 countries around the world. WDCS expertise crosses the spectrum from conservation science and field research, to the development of habitat protection models and policy implementation.
  2. WDCS believes that CMS is the only international implementing treaty that provides a flexible platform to develop measures that can be tailored to particular conservation needs, and has the mechanisms to implement on-ground conservation activities, attributes that offer a great potential for multiple threat mitigation and the protection of endangered species. The growth of Parties to CMS in the past triennium indicates that Governments agree with this position. The CMS Strategic Plan 2006-2011, and the Scientific Council's associated Implementation Plan demonstrate the breadth of work that is to make a significant contribution to the conservation of migratory species and biodiversity in the aquatic and terrestrial environments. No other convention has this mandate or capacity.
  3. WDCS has a formal *Partnership Agreement* with CMS, and maintains a *Joint Programme of Work* designed to directly support the CMS Strategic Plan (as directed by the Governments that are Parties to CMS in 1999, 2002 and again in 2005 and 2008). The *Partnership Agreement* commits WDCS and CMS to working in Partnership towards the achievement of the 2010 target and cetacean conservation at the international level, including continuing to work with ACCOBAMS, ASCOBANS, the Pacific Cetaceans MoU, the Western African Aquatic Mammals MoU and future CMS cetacean related agreements and MoUs in their development, resourcing, on-ground implementation and promotion. A recent report of this Joint Work Programme was formally submitted to CMS CoP9 (UNEP/CMS/Inf 9.23.2).
  4. Following the endorsement received during CoP8, WDCS established the *Cetacean Liaison Group* which supports the scientific work of CMS and assists the development, and where possible implementation, of a forward strategy of key science and political work that needs to be undertaken in each triennium to progress the cetacean related priorities of CMS CoP decisions, to provide advice and recommendations to CMS on cetacean issues, and to support existing relevant CMS processes such as the taxonomic working group on marine mammals within the Scientific Council.
  5. WDCS has been present at every meeting associated with the development, negotiation and now implementation of the MoU, and has established a programme in the Pacific Islands Region with the specific and direct intent of supporting the MoU's ongoing development and long-term in-country Signatory implementation capacity.
- I. Key notes during the 2<sup>nd</sup> MoP for the Pacific Cetaceans MoU
6. WDCS has a number of information documents and resources for this 2<sup>nd</sup> MoP for the Pacific Cetaceans MoU and we would be pleased to provide these to delegates and discuss with you any of the information contained within these materials.
  7. It's important to recognize that on limited resources a number of progressive, beneficial and positive activities, initiatives and research studies have been implemented by Signatories and collaborating organizations.

A detailed list of WDCS activities is included later in this document.

8. To assist in monitoring of Pacific Cetaceans MoU progress it would be useful to adopt a systematic and efficient way of documenting this regional work to assist in international reporting of the Pacific Cetaceans MoU, identifying areas of strength and weakness for the region, collating resource and capacity requirements, and noting species, habitats and threats of greatest concern and vulnerability. We commend the Federated States of Micronesia for their proactive use of the draft CMS reporting format and consider their experience a useful basis for discussion and consideration to address these objectives.

9. WDCS has produced a revised and updated digital copy of the regional cetacean report entitled, “*Current State of Knowledge of Cetacean Threats, Diversity and Habitats in the Pacific Islands Region, Revision 2009*” (UNEP/CMS/PIC2/Inf.6-01). Notable additions to this version include observations from some of the first dedicated cetacean surveys in the Northern Marianas Islands, Guam, Niue and the Pitcairn Islands. WDCS would also like to indicate that this report will continue to be updated and revised for each Pacific Cetaceans MoU MoP in order to provide a current reference document to Signatories and to assist in the implementation of the Pacific Cetaceans MoU. In addition, WDCS has provided an ‘*Emerging Issues*’ information document that collates relevant news stories and popular articles that actively or potentially have bearing on cetaceans and their habitats as an additional resource document for assessing priorities, locations of concern and focus.

10. WDCS strongly supports the formation of a *Open-ended Technical Advisory Group* for the Pacific Cetaceans MoU and will be willing to coordinate this group if our proposal is agreeable to the Signatories. Such a group will require agreement and discussion of the Terms of Reference by Signatories. However, from other CMS agreements the function of a Technical Advisory Group could be beneficial to Signatories by (i) responding to specific requests for technical and scientific advice from the MoP, (ii) Reviewing available scientific, technical and other information on cetaceans in the Pacific Islands Region (PIR) as a basis to keep their conservation status under review to support the decision making of the MoP, (iii) Provide regular technical support to MoU Signatories, by: Reviewing and contributing to CMS species listing proposals, reviewing and contributing to conservation status reports developed by the CMS Scientific Council, reviewing the scientific and technical implications of CMS Conference of the Parties resolutions and recommendations for the PIR, and reviewing and contributing to the implementation of the CMS Scientific Council Implementation Plan (2006-2011) (UNEP/CMS/PIC2/Inf.6-02).

11. WDCS is pleased to inform the Signatories of the launch of the Pacific Cetaceans MoU website ([www.pacificcetaceans.org](http://www.pacificcetaceans.org)). This site has been developed as part of the Partnership Agreement between CMS and WDCS, and has been formally handed to CMS for their control. The aim of this site is to serve as a web-based portal for all relevant documents, resources and information relating to the Pacific Cetaceans MoU. Future plans for this site include inclusion of a database of cetacean sightings.

**12. WDCS maintains our existing commitment to making our professional staff available as a resource for in-country work in implementing the Pacific Cetaceans MoU. Through a programme of short-term placement of our staff within interested Government agencies we pledge to support and assist national departments and stakeholders to build national technical capacity. WDCS also continues to commit organisational resource to supporting and assisting with national reporting requirements, into CMS processes and beyond, and to providing support in ongoing research, training, species identification and other priorities as identified by national officials.**

## II. Regional work of the new WDCS Pacific Cetaceans MoU Programme to support the implementation of the Pacific Cetaceans MoU

13. WDCS has had a permanent Pacific Cetaceans MoU Programme presence in the Pacific Islands Region since July 2008.

14. A MoU with the University of the South Pacific (USP) houses the Programme Lead, Dr. Cara Miller. This arrangement provides an enhanced ability for WDCS to become better engaged, networked and integrated within the PIR. In addition, this collaboration has seen WDCS providing the facilitation of (i) initiation and development of in-country and regional cetacean research undertaken with regional staff and students, (ii) development of a hub of cetacean research for the PIR, (iii) delivery of cetacean-related lectures within marine science, biology, survey methodology and quantitative ecology classes, (iv) supervision of post-grad and Master’s students in marine conservation research, (v) assistance to graduate students in experimental design and statistical analysis, and (vi) organization and facilitation of short-term workshops for students, regional government, NGO staff and researchers.

15. WDCS collaborated with the Governments of Papua New Guinea and Australia, and SPREP in delivering the 1<sup>st</sup> Melanesian workshop on Cetacean Research Training and Capacity Building workshop in Papua New

Guinea from 12<sup>th</sup> – 23<sup>rd</sup> November, 2007. About 40 participants representing 15 of the 18 PNG provinces, various PNG government departments and several local and regional NGO's attended. The over-arching objective of the workshop was to strengthen and develop the cetacean conservation expertise and skill of those that are directly involved and responsible for protecting and managing the impacts to cetaceans and the PNG marine environment. In addition, we worked towards providing participants with the appropriate tools for cetacean research projects, educational awareness and community programs. The workshop also included 6 days worth of field surveys. Since the workshop WDCS has provided funding for 3 locally-led cetacean projects in PNG which are currently being conducted. In addition, a shared objective of these projects was to develop Pacific-focused cetacean education and awareness materials. These posters on general cetacean biology, behaviour, threats, stranding events and species identification were prepared in consultation with PNG researchers. Digital copies of this work are on the WDCS resource CD and are free for use by all PICTs. The full report of the workshop has been submitted by Papua New Guinea (UNEP/CMS/PIC2/Inf.5-04). It is hoped that sufficient funding will be found to hold the 2<sup>nd</sup> Melanesian workshop within the next 6-12 months.

16. WDCS undertook a 3-week in-country visit (March 2008) to the Federated States of Micronesia to assist this Signatory in the implementation of the Pacific Cetaceans MoU. Some of the outcomes achieved during this visit were: running a short workshop on cetacean species identification for the National Fisheries Observer Program, briefing the Secretary of Foreign Affairs on IWC and CMS issues, collation of pertinent information for national reporting of cetacean issues and work, identifying priority areas of research and resources, examining the current MPA focused initiatives under the "Micronesian Challenge" for synergies with cetacean conservation, working towards developing a national cetacean by-catch and entanglement database, and investigation of in-country whaling records to better understand historical cetacean distribution, diversity and status in Micronesia. In addition, a forward plan for future collaborative work between FSM and WDCS was developed.

17. Since establishing a Programme presence in Fiji in July 2008 WDCS has been working to initiate some on-ground work. One project that has been initiated is the investigation of spinner dolphin site fidelity, behaviour and critical habitat at Moon Reef, Viti Levu. Initial results indicate that this reef serves as a critical resting habitat for a resident pod of dolphins and therefore is an area of importance for Fiji. This work is being done in collaboration with a local dolphin watch operator and the Fiji Fisheries Department. More detailed analysis of spinner dolphin resting habitat and distribution of odontocetes (with focus on short-finned pilot whales and sperm whales) are scheduled to begin before the end of the year. Support is also being given to the Fisheries Department to continue land-based sighting surveys of humpback whales during their peak migration time. In addition, WDCS has been consulted for national research centre plans, development of national marine conservation targets, USP research programs and directions, and provision of relevant briefings to the government as requested. Finally, WDCS is also supporting national initiatives by the Fiji Fisheries Department including the development of a national cetacean sighting network and database, and progress of the Fiji Cetacean National management plan.

18. Technical support has also been provided to Pacific cetacean researchers in terms of informal guidance on survey design, technical reporting and proposal writing. In addition, a regular mentoring e-mail specifically for those regional researchers and staff engaged in Pacific cetacean research has recently been initiated. List members include researchers from Vanuatu, Tuvalu, Marshall Islands, Fiji, Samoa, Tonga, Papua New Guinea, and the Solomon Islands.

19. In addition, regional issues and activities in relation to cetaceans are provided on a regular basis to government contacts in Vanuatu, Cook Islands, Marshall Islands, Kiribati, Fiji, Solomon Islands, Samoa, Federated States of Micronesia, and Papua New Guinea.

20. As a member of the IUCN Cetacean Specialist Group, Dr. Cara Miller was invited to attend and participate in the IUCN workshop focusing on the scientific and technical issues relating to the conservation and assessment of small cetacean populations around islands, especially those of the Indo-Pacific bottlenose dolphin, *Tursiops aduncus*. This meeting resulted from discussions at this year's CITES meeting regarding non-detriment findings with particular reference to the recent dolphin exports from the Solomon Islands. This workshop was held in Apia, Samoa from August 21-23<sup>rd</sup> 2008 and included scientists with expertise in bottlenose dolphins, population and survey techniques, and relevant experience from the Pacific Islands Region.

21. Some additional highlights of WDCS activities relevant to the Pacific Cetaceans MoU yet not specifically listed above include:

- Drew attention to the extent of suffering caused by entanglement in fishing nets, with vital new research and media coverage documenting injuries incurred to cetaceans and likely times to death.
- Project support has been given for cetacean diversity and humpback whale surveys to be conducted in the waters of Vanuatu.

- Supervision of two USP post-graduate research projects on bycatch in Fijian waters and the effectiveness of MPA areas in protecting biodiversity.
- Published guidance on reducing noise impacts through protected areas, as well as technical guidance for use on seismic ships.
- Conducted successful field surveys to better understand whale and dolphin habitat use to investigate potential impacts from military sonar use around the islands of Hawaii.
- Launched the Global Campaign for Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) with the five-year goal of establishing 12 large highly protected MPAs for whales and dolphins by 2012.

### III. Report on the WDCS/CMS Partnership and progress against the Joint Programme of Work

22. The *WDCS/CMS Partnership Agreement* commits WDCS and CMS to working in Partnership towards the achievement of the 2010 target and cetacean conservation at the international level, including continuing to work with ACCOBAMS, ASCOBANS, the Pacific Cetaceans MoU, the Western African Aquatic Mammals MoU and future CMS cetacean related agreements and MoUs in their development, resourcing, on-ground implementation and promotion.

23. Between 2005 and 2008 WDCS has committed itself to fulfilling commitments made under the *Joint Programme of Work*, and in the process has contributed over €1 million worth of support to the work of CMS.

24. In addition to providing the Secretariat with regular technical and advisory support, specific highlights of the WDCS commitment include:

- 24.1 Investing in *Year of the Dolphin*, as a Founding Partner, providing two years of technical support, developing and distributing education resources and providing extensive media support and coverage.
- 24.2 Continuing to underpin and support CMS cetacean related agreements – ACCOBAMS, ASCOBANS, the Pacific Cetaceans MoU and the newly formed Western Africa Aquatic Mammals MoU – through financial and in-kind assistance, advisory and technical support and field research programmes.
- 24.3 Funding and coordinating conservation research of the Pacific Cetaceans MoU as well as providing in-country technical support to Signatory Governments.
- 24.4 Establishing an expert group – the Cetacean Liaison Group – to support the cetacean related work of the CMS Scientific Council and the Appointed Councillor for Marine Mammals. This group works with the formal objectives of assisting the development, and where possible implementation, of a forward strategy of key science and political work that needs to be undertaken in each triennium to progress the cetacean related priorities of CMS CoP decisions, to provide advice and recommendations to CMS on cetacean issues, and to support existing relevant CMS processes such as the taxonomic working group on marine mammals within the Scientific Council.
- 24.5 Promoting the role of CMS during international meetings and workshops including:
  - a. Climate Change and Migratory Species, CMS CoP, Kenya
  - b. Watching Wildlife, CBD CoP, Brazil
  - c. Pacific Regional Environment Programme, three regional meetings, Samoa
  - d. Special fundraising meeting “CMS on the Move to 2010: Priorities in Implementing the Programme of Work 2007-2008”, CMS, Germany
  - e. Migratory Species: Working Together towards a Vision for 2020, Smithsonian Institution, USA
  - f. CMS-CITES Synergies Event, CITES CoP, Netherlands
  - g. Providing professional staff capacity to the Secretariat directed to fulfilling work exclusively for the CMS Secretariat