



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

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Agenda Item 5.2

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

**COLLABORATING ORGANIZATION REPORTS ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF
THE PACIFIC CETACEANS MOU**

a) Whale and Dolphin Conservation Society

WDCS Implementation Support of the CMS MoU for the Conservation of Cetaceans and their Habitats in the Pacific Islands Region

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Theme 1: National, regional and international collaboration and cooperation

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1. Active engagement in CMS Secretariat, associated CMS meetings and CMS CoP9 and continuing commitment to the CMS/WDCS Partnership and associated work programme, including:
 - a. Informal representation of Pacific Cetaceans MoU progress and issues at CMS Standing Committee and fundraising meetings (1.1)
 - b. Support to the CMS Secretariat on reporting Pacific Cetaceans MoU progress to various international fora (1.1)
 - c. Support to the CMS Secretariat Pacific Cetaceans MoU MoP1 meeting report and MoP2 meeting preparation (1.1)
2. WDCS remains a strong champion of strengthening the CMS Family, by establishing a formalised linkage between CMS, ACCOBAMS, ASCOBANS, the Pacific Cetaceans MoU and the Western African Aquatic Mammals MoU, and any future cetacean related instruments by establishing a 'cetacean expert body' to help coordinate and institutionalize the connection between agreement scientific bodies and the CMS Scientific Council, to share technical resources such as species related scientific meetings and organizing agreement or initiative meetings in common. (1.1)
3. Facilitated attendance of a Pacific Islander to attend the International Conference on Marine Mammal Protected Areas in Hawai'i. Wrote a grant proposal to directly fund 6 participants to attend (1.2)
4. Participation by the WDCS team at the CMS CoP 9, IUCN Solomon Islands dolphin workshop, abstract submission to the Pacific Science Congress (1.3)
5. WDCS Pacific Island Programme leader is currently placed at the University of the South Pacific. WDCS and USP have an MoU regarding student engagement in cetacean projects, support of cetacean research, delivery of lectures to undergraduate students and advising post-graduate students (1.4)
6. Engagement with dive operators in Fiji to provide information on cetacean species identification, behaviour, threats, and regional WW guidelines (1.5)
7. Collaboration with the only dolphin watch operator in Fiji to facilitate research projects and ensure best practice (1.5)
8. Working with FSM, Fijian and PNG governments to provide support for inclusion of the priorities and objectives of the Pacific Cetaceans MoU (and associated action plan) within national cetacean action plans and marine environment initiatives. (1.6)

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Theme 2: Threat reduction

1. Support of PNG researchers' work to contact fishing companies with cetacean-related information. (2.2)
2. Informal support to a USP Master's students' analysis of level and occurrence of depredation in Fijian waters. (2.3)
3. Post-graduate supervisor to a USP student's analysis of bycatch data collecting through his work in the Fiji Observer Program. It is hoped that this student might continue this topic through a Master's degree. This analysis was done in collaboration with Fiji Fisheries Department. (2.3, 2.5)
4. Inclusion of appropriate IUU records in the WDCS PIR cetacean report. (2.4)
5. Interactions between fisheries and cetaceans (including depredation, bycatch and competition) were discussed during training workshops held in PNG, Fiji, and FSM (see *Theme 4: Capacity Building* for more

- information). (2.6)
6. Promotion of reporting of all cetacean species in regional workshops. Support for development of national databases for collection of important information. (2.7)
 7. Documentation of regional cetacean diversity through the WDCS PIR cetacean report. (2.7)
 8. Support of Fiji Fisheries to initiate a land-based sighting project for humpbacks from Makogai. Continued support of sightings from historical land-point of Levuka has also been provided. (2.7)
 9. Technical support to the Solomon Islands Fisheries Department who are initiating a project documenting drive hunt activity in Malaita. (2.8, 2.9)
 10. Participation in the IUCN CSG 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*. Apia, Samoa. Presentations were given on traditional drive hunt practices and level of take. (2.9)
 11. Participation by the WDCS team in the NDF CITES workshop. Cancun, Mexico (2.9, 2.10)
 12. Attendance by the WDCS team at the CITES Animal Committee. (2.10)
 13. Review of research proposals for the Solomon Islands government. (2.8)
 14. Initial discussion of climate change impacts on Pacific cetaceans is given within the WDCS PIR cetaceans report. (2.11)
 15. Draft outline of regional review regarding climate change impacts on Pacific cetaceans has been developed between USP and WDCS International researchers. (2.11)
 16. Threats including plastics and debris have been discussed at regional training workshops. (2.12)
 17. Support of national sighting and stranding networks has also included the documentation of any unusual circumstances or issues of concern. (2.12, 2.14)
 18. A regular marine debris collection has begun with the dolphin watch operator in Viti Levu, Fiji. (2.12, 2.13)
 19. Recent research conducted in Viti Levu, Fiji has been undertaken in collaboration with the only dolphin watch operator in Fiji. This project is working towards establishing baseline information on a pod of spinner dolphins that regularly rest within a coastal reef complex. Initial project aims are to document relative residency of pod members, estimate population size, and to quantify the activity budget of these animals. This research will assist in assessing ecotourism impacts on these animals and be useful for local and national management plans. (2.16, 2.17, 2.18)
 20. 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". 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 MoP for the Pacific Cetaceans MoU in order to provide a current reference document to Signatories and to assist in the implementation of the Pacific Cetaceans MoU. (2.4., 2.5, 2.6, 2.11, 2.16, 2.18, 2.19, 2.20, 2.21, 2.22)
 21. As mentioned above WDCS has begun monitoring 'emerging issues' to increase awareness on regional threats and issues that are of growing or potential concern to cetaceans and their habitats in the Pacific Islands Region. This collation of regional information includes EIA, noise, and coastal developments. (2.18, 2.19, 2.20)
 22. Furthermore, support of national sighting and stranding networks has also included the documentation of any unusual circumstances or issues of concern. (2.19)
 23. Support of national sighting and stranding networks has also included the documentation of any unusual circumstances or issues of concern. (2.21)
 24. WDCS has been noting with concern seismic surveys and potential for acoustic harassment within the PIR. A joint submission was made by WDCS in relation to recent seismic surveys conducted in the Marianas Islands region. (2.22)
 25. The WDCS team has recently published numerous peer-reviewed articles relating to reducing noise impacts through protected areas, as well as technical guidance for use on seismic ships. (2.22)
 26. The WDCS team 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. (2.22)

Theme 3: Ecosystem/Habitat protection

1. Support of national efforts to declare EEZ whale sanctuaries and develop associated management plans in PNG and Fiji. (3.1, 3.4)
2. Initial phases of predictive habitat modelling for key cetacean species is being undertaken by WDCS in collaboration with PhD students from Flinders University, Australia. (3.2)
3. WDCS was a key sponsor and facilitator of the International Conference on Marine Mammal Protected Areas held in Hawai'i in March 2009. (3.4)

Theme 4: Capacity Building

1. WDCS has facilitated and participated in three regional workshops in the last two years. These workshops have developed as a request from the countries themselves for assistance in building capacity relating to subjects including species identification, behaviour, habitat description, cetacean threats, research survey methodology, proposal writing, data collection, national management plans and global cetacean conservation initiatives. (workshops: 4.1, 4.2, 4.4)
 - a. Workshop 1: WDCS collaborated with the Governments of Papua New Guinea and Australia, and SPREP in delivering the 1st Melanesian workshop on Cetacean Research Training and Capacity Building workshop in Papua New Guinea from 12th – 23rd November, 2007 (UNEP/CMS/PIC2/Inf.5-04). About 40 participants representing 15 of the 18 PNG provinces, several local NGO's, various PNG government departments, and representatives from Vanuatu and the Solomon Islands 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 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, strandings and species ID were prepared in consultation with the PNG researchers and WDCS. Digital copies of this work are on the WDCS resource CD and free for use by all PICTs. It is hoped that sufficient funding will be found to hold the 2nd Melanesian workshop within the next 6-12 months.
 - b. Workshop 2: WDCS worked with FSM Division of Resource Management and Development staff to organize a training workshop for national Fisheries Observers and other environment-related staff in March 2008. Training sessions were delivered on species identification skills, understanding whale and dolphin behaviour, systematic data collection, regional cetacean conservation initiatives, and FSM cetacean diversity records to date. FSM and WDCS intend to follow-up and continue this work in the future.
 - c. Workshop 3: A 2-day Cetacean Research and Capacity Building workshop was conducted from in Suva, Fiji from September 26-27th 2007. This workshop was convened and funded by WDCS, WWF, Fiji Ministry of Fisheries and SPREP. Approximately 35 participants including NGO's, academic staff, environment and fisheries departments, SPREP, dive operators, other governmental officials, and representatives from Tuvalu and Tonga attended. Some of the outcomes of this workshop included: the initiation of monitoring projects within remote communities and villages, establishment of a national sightings network and coordinating group, and progress on the Fiji Whale Sanctuary Bill action plan. Work on the Fiji Whale Sanctuary Bill has been ongoing since this time.
2. WDCS' regional legislative review will work towards providing Signatories with a useful tool and guidance for needed in-country legislative work. In addition, during all national workshops involving WDCS legislative considerations were discussed. (4.4)
3. Cetacean identification training has been undertaken in Fiji, PNG and FSM with additional participants from Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, Tonga and Tuvalu. A national database has been established in Fiji. (4.6)
4. A national workshop on population assessment is currently under proposal with WDCS as one of the partners. (4.7)

Theme 5: Education and awareness

1. WDCS responds to numerous requests for technical support and capacity building from PICTs with a focus on assisting Pacific Cetacean MoU Signatories. Several workshops have been convened with numerous others proposed for future delivery. The primary focus of these national workshops was to assist in capacity building for in-country researchers, students and government staff who are involved with national marine conservation initiatives. (5.1, 5.3)
2. In addition, resources in terms of species identification handbooks, educational materials and awareness information were provided for workshop participants. (5.3)
3. One of WDCS' PNG projects is specifically using radio sessions to deliver information across the country regarding cetacean conservation and issues. A second PNG project is using community education days as an avenue of discussing whales and dolphins. (5.2, 5.4, 5.5)
4. Educational materials (posters on cetacean biology, strandings, behaviour, threats and species identification) were developed by WDCS in consultation with in-country researchers in PNG to ensure they were appropriate for the intended audience (largely including community members). These educational resources were developed so as to be applicable across the PIR and are freely available for any PICT to use. (5.2, 5.3)

5. 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. (5.3)
6. WDCS supported work in Vanuatu, PNG and Fiji involves active networks with community members and various stakeholders. (5.4)
7. Recently, WDCS was included in a short Fijian documentary filmed focusing not only on the spinner dolphin research presently being undertaken at Moon Reef yet also the cultural connections of local villages and associated legends. This program has been aired several times on national TV in Fiji and there are a limited number of copies available for distribution to delegates. (5.7)

Theme 6: Cultural significance and value

1. Proposed USP post-graduate projects (with WDCS serving as an advisor) include: an assessment of the cultural significance, use and history of sperm whale teeth in Fiji, and, review of Solomon Islands drive hunts and customs. (6.1, 6.6, 6.9)
2. Recently, WDCS was included in a short Fijian documentary filmed focusing not only on the spinner dolphin research presently being undertaken at Moon Reef yet also the cultural connections of local villages and associated legends. (6.2)
3. WDCS attended 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*. The objectives of this meeting included a discussion of the best method to assess the sustainability of traditional dolphin drive hunts in the Solomon Islands. (6.9)

Theme 7: Legislative and policy

1. Regional legislative review is currently being undertaken by the WDCS team. This document will include recommendations for future work to assist the legislative implementation of the Pacific Cetaceans MoU. (7.1, 7.3)

Theme 8: Research and monitoring

2. As part of the Partnership Agreement with CMS, WDCS has developed and donated www.pacificcetaceans.org which will work towards providing a portal of official information related to the Pacific Cetaceans MoU and in time a facility to directly upload sighting and stranding information. (8.1)
3. Community records and local knowledge have been obtained for inclusion within the WDCS PIR Cetaceans report, as well as during regional training workshops in Fiji, PNG, and FSM – including information submitted from Vanuatu, Solomon Island, Tuvalu and Tongan participants also in attendance. (8.2)
4. Proformas of sightings forms have been developed in English based on feedback from Fiji, PNG, Vanuatu, FSM, Solomon Islands and Tuvalu. (8.2)
5. WDCS provided funding for the IUCN Solomon Islands dolphin workshop held in Samoa. (8.6)
6. As part of the Partnership Agreement with CMS, WDCS continues working towards the development of a web accessible sightings database on www.pacificcetaceans.org. (8.7)
7. One of the key objectives of the WDCS PIR Cetaceans report is to provide species inventory lists for each PICT. This document is the first to provide regional country/territory information and forms a baseline document that will continue to be updated at each MoP for the Pacific Cetaceans MoU. (8.8)
8. Dedicated surveys looking at spinner dolphins in Viti Levu, Fiji are working towards estimating site-fidelity, population size and critical habitat assessments for this species. Proposed support for humpback whale surveys in Fijian waters will also provide information related to trends in abundance. (8.8, 8.9)
9. WDCS support for cetacean research in Vanuatu and PNG is also providing useful baseline information. (8.8, 8.9)
10. A regional species identification poster has just been completed and is available in digital form for all PICTs to use. Cetacean identification was also provided within the regional training workshops that WDCS has been involved in. (8.10)
11. Training of Fisheries Observer staff in FSM was intended to increase reporting of cetaceans observed during this program. (8.8, 8.11)
12. Passive acoustic monitoring of odontocetes (with a focus on short-finned pilot whales and sperm whales) in Fijian waters is scheduled to begin in September 2009. (8.8, 8.9, 8.12)

Theme 9: Whale and dolphin-based tourism

1. Recent research conducted in Viti Levu, Fiji has been undertaken in collaboration with the only dolphin

watch operator in Fiji. This project is working towards establishing baseline information on a pod of spinner dolphins that regularly rest within a coastal reef complex. Initial project aims are to document relative residency of pod members, estimate population size, and to quantify the activity budget of these animals. This research will assist in assessing ecotourism impacts on these animals and be useful for local and national management plans. (9.9)

2. This partnership has also allowed the exchange of information regarding WW best practice and progress of national management plans, use of the vessel as a research platform, development (by WDCS) of onboard educational materials, and inclusion of the operator in ecotourism lectures held at USP. (9.3, 9.4, 9.7, 9.9, 9.10)

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.