

The logo features a blue background with a pattern of fish swimming in the water. The text "South Pacific Regional Fisheries Management Organisation" is written in white, bold, sans-serif font across the top of the image.

South Pacific Regional Fisheries Management Organisation

2nd Meeting of the Scientific Committee

Honolulu, Hawaii, USA

1-7 October 2014

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ABNJ Deep-seas project update for SPRFMO

FAO

Sustainable Fisheries Management and Biodiversity Conservation of Deep Sea Living Resources in Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction

(ABNJ Deep-seas project)

UPDATE ON STATUS AND ACTIVITIES FOR 2014/2015

South Pacific Regional Fisheries Management Organisation

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BACKGROUND AND PROJECT STATUS

This report includes information on current status and upcoming activities under the newly approved project “Sustainable Fisheries Management and Biodiversity Conservation of Deep Sea Living Resources in Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction (ABNJ Deep-seas project)”.

The ABNJ Deep-seas project was endorsed by the Global Environment Fund (GEF) in June of this year. SPRFMO is one of the RFMO partners to this project. It is one of four projects under the ABNJ Programme.

Components 1, 2, and 3 are led by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), and Component 4 is led by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) through the World Conservation and Monitoring Centre (UNEP-WCMC).

The project is moving into implementation starting with the recruitment of project staff (including the Project Coordinator/ Deep Sea Fisheries Specialist (FAO), and the Area-Based Planner (UNEP) and the organisation of an inception meeting.

Progress on activities in 2014 is summarized in the project newsletter. The newsletter and further information on the ABNJ Programme and the ABNJ Deep-seas Project can be found at: <http://www.commonoceans.org/>, along with the Project Document which details the project work and overall workplan.

UPCOMING ACTIVITIES

Upcoming activities that may be of interest to SPRFMO and its members, or for which we would like to seek SPRFMOs inputs are listed below.

In addition, there are a range of other activities are included in the project that promote collaboration and sharing of experiences on deep-sea fisheries and associated biodiversity as well as specific activities on capacity building for developing countries. These will be planned in more detail once the Project team is onboard.

PROJECT COORDINATION/PLANNING

- **Project inception meeting:** In late 2014/early 2015, once the project manager is hired there will be a project inception meeting for the ABNJ Deep-seas project with partners. We would be pleased to invite SPRFMO or a SPRFMO member to participate.

GENERAL DEEP-SEA FISHERIES

- **The review of the South Pacific chapter in the 2nd edition of the *Worldwide Review of Bottom Fisheries in the High Seas (WWR)*** (November 2014 to February 2015): Working with RFMO/As and other stakeholders, the *Worldwide Review of Bottom Fisheries in the High Seas* (FAO, 2009) will be updated and expanded. The last review covered deep-sea fisheries for the period 2003-2006 using information acquired from a questionnaire circulated to some 40 countries and regional bodies. The updated review will address information gaps identified in the last review and will take into account progress made on monitoring of data-poor deep-sea stocks, and benefit from updated stock assessment for key species and new advances in assessment technologies. The review will be organized in close collaboration with the relevant regional bodies. As in the first edition, there will be a dedicated chapter on the SPRFMO region which will be shared with SPRFMO for review.
- **Encounter protocols workshop:** This workshop is planned for May 2015 in Norway. It will be organised by FAO in collaboration with the Institute of Marine Research (IMR). The overall objective of the workshop will be to facilitate sharing of best practices and effective solutions across regions on VME encounter protocols among RFMOs and CCAMLR, the fishing industry, and others. The expected outputs include a technical document containing a global review of current experience and practice with regards to encounter protocols as well a technical guidance for further adaption.
- **Industry symposium 2015:** This symposium will be organised back-to-back with the Conference for the 20th Anniversary of Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries (CCRF) in Vigo, Spain in September 2015. This symposium will provide a forum to discuss industry best practices in deep-sea fisheries and to consolidate issues to be brought forward during the industry-focused day of the Conference for the 20th Anniversary of CCRF.

- **Global reviews and best practices on assessment and management of key deep-sea species:** Following up on the Alfonsino Workshop and global review, another review is expected on other species groups that will be organised towards the end of 2015, and will likely focus on orange roughy.

VULNERABLE MARINE ECOSYSTEMS

- **VME Portal:** The VME portal will provide general information on VMEs including sections on relevant publications, relevant international instruments, links to VME-related tools and terminology. Both the VME portal and database will be released in October 2014.
- **VME Database:** The VME Database will also be released in October 2014 and will contain comprehensive information on VME-related measures in ABNJ for each regional fisheries body. This database and website will serve as a tool for those involved in RFMOs and also as an informational and awareness building tool for the general public. The information in the VME Database is currently being reviewed by each RFMO and other relevant multi-lateral bodies. FAO would appreciate SPRFMOs comments to the database.
- **Workshop and Publication on Current practices for identification and management of VMEs** (tentatively February 2015, Swakopmund, Namibia): A review of current practices on the identification of VMEs for each region will be developed as well as a summary of “best practices” that will result from the review of each region’s work in relation to VMEs. The UNGA Resolutions 61/105, as well as subsequent resolutions, and the Deep-sea Fisheries Guidelines, provide recommendations or guidance on how to identify and conserve VMEs, but the application and operationalization of this guidance has posed challenges. This has produced a variety of practices within and among the regions. Scientific progress for the identification of VMEs – including the interpretations of the criteria, selection of indicators and thresholds, ensuring a sound knowledge base and incorporation of new data collection methodologies e.g. through underwater ROV surveys and towed cameras, and in delineating areas containing VMEs – have produced a wide range of best practices which need to be capitalized upon. Therefore, an international workshop will be held to document regional processes and discuss and select the “best practices” in use for different data and information scenarios. The report on best practices will be produced and made available after peer-reviewing by an appropriate group of experts including members of deep-sea RFMO/As and other competent regional organizations. It will include a chapter on the South Pacific and participants from SPRFMO will be invited to review and clear the draft chapter as well as participate in the workshop.

MONITORING OF FISHERIES AND ECOSYSTEMS AND ASSOCIATED CAPACITY DEVELOPEMENT

- **Species identification guides for vulnerable deep-sea species:** FAO has a program on the development of identification tools for deep-sea species for those regions that do not yet have their own guide. The main objective of these guides is to assist in the implementation of fisheries management (e.g. by-catch requirements, recording of catches, inspection, etc.) by providing user-friendly guides for use on board vessels by observers, scientists and non-scientific personnel, and to enhance scientific assessment. The first series covered deep-sea cartilaginous fishes of the Indian Ocean and the South East Atlantic. FAO has published information on Deep-sea Cartilaginous fishes of the Indian Ocean (Volume 1 accessed here: <http://www.fao.org/docrep/019/i3477e/i3477e.pdf>), Volume 2 accessed here: <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i3888e.pdf>), as well as a species identification guide on: Deep-sea cartilaginous fishes of the Indian Ocean (<http://www.fao.org/3/a-i3486e.pdf>). Work has been initiated in preparation for developing similar guides for the South Pacific.

An online working group on sponges of the Atlantic has been established to discuss the development of tools and capacity development activities.

- **A manual on collection of data on deep-sea species** is also being produced and will be published by January 2015. This will supplement existing observer manuals and those vessels operating in areas without RFMO technical support on data collection to meet new data collection requirements. The manual is aimed at non-scientists.
- **Training workshops** for the use of the FAO deep-sea species guides are also underway. The first workshop was held in June 2014 on identifying deep-sea cartilaginous fishes of the Indian Ocean.

- FAO is also developing an **application for the identification of shark fins** by using photographs in collaboration with CITES, and a **Biodiversity application** is foreseen under the project. The apps can be used along with the species ID guides and data collection manuals explained above.

COMMUNICATION ON DEEP-SEA FISHERIES

- **DGroups information sharing:** an online discussions forum for fisheries and marine professionals exists to facilitate the sharing of news and information. SPRFMO members are invited to participate and share relevant information on deep-sea fisheries events, publications or other information. Access to the groups can be requested via <https://dgroups.org/fao/dgroups-deepsea-fisheries-in-the-high-seas>.
- **Common Oceans website** - <http://www.commonoceans.org/>: Information along with the Project Document which details the project work and timing is available on this website. SPRFMO is invited to share news or press releases with the communications officer of the ABNJ Programme for posting on this website.

The FAO Deep-sea team would be happy to provide additional information or answer questions as needed.

Table 1: Upcoming 2014/2015 Activities

	2014			2015					
	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	2nd Q	3rd Q	4th Q
VME database and portal review and launch									
Inception meeting for the ABNJ Deep Seas Project									
VME practices document development									
VME practices workshop									
WWR Chapter development									
Encounter protocols workshop									
Industry Symposium (Vigo)									
Deep-sea Species Review / Methodologies workshop									

Appendix 1: SPRFMO and the ABNJ Deep-seas project

SPRFMO Activities – ABNJ Deep Seas Project	
Component 2.: Reducing adverse impacts on VMEs and enhancing conservation of components of EBSAs	
Output 2.1.1.	
Activity 2.1.1.1.	Contribute to the collation and consolidation of existing biological and ecological information on Deep Sea Fisheries and biodiversity in support of management processes.
Activity 2.1.1.4.	Contribute to updating the South Pacific chapter of the “Worldwide Review of Bottom Fisheries in the High Seas”.
Activity 2.1.1.5.	Participate in and assist with the development of a report on best practices for identification of VMEs, including discussions on VME indicators. Contribute information for the VME database and provide ideas for the potential development of additional functionalities of the VME database.
Output 2.1.3.	
Activity 2.1.3.3.	Participate in the development of and training for taxonomic ID guides, fishery data collection manuals, and observer/crew training material.
Output 2.1.4.	
Activity 2.1.4.2.	Contribute to a review of regional fisheries management measures on biodiversity conservation, and the development of tools for recording biodiversity.
Activity 2.1.4.3.	Participate in the testing of new techniques for mitigating adverse impacts from Deep Sea Fisheries on ecosystems (including VME issues).
Output 2.2.1.	
Activity 2.2.1.2.	Participate in the “twinning” programs (i.e. institutional exchanges or collaboration) for deep sea scientists and carry out customized training workshops on data collection and the application of VME criteria. Contribute scientific input to relevant project material at conferences and in publications.
Component 3.: Improved planning and adaptive management for DSF in the ABNJ	
Output 3.1.1.	
Activity 3.1.1.1.	Participate in the development of a toolbox/operational manual for the management of deep-sea fisheries, encounter protocols, use of VME criteria and greater collaboration with industry, and with a workshop on ecosystem impact assessments.
Activity 3.1.1.2.	Contribute to improving knowledge on key deep-sea species and on applied and new methodologies and technologies for studying and assessing these species. Collaborate with partner agencies to develop data systems and observer protocols for use in deep-sea fisheries, as appropriate.
Output 3.1.5.	
Activity 3.1.5.1.	Experimental testing in selected pilot areas of improved management measures, indicators, and thresholds and the trial implementation of successful results from the testing within an adaptive management process (linked to activities on testing new techniques for mitigating adverse impacts from Deep Sea Fisheries under Component 2).