



## International Consultations on the Establishment of the South Pacific Regional Fisheries Management Organisation

### Discussion paper regarding the Interim Secretariat's VME (including seamounts) data capture and display capabilities

*Interim Secretariat*

#### Introduction

There is a requirement for the Interim Secretariat to store data about Vulnerable Marine Ecosystems (VMEs) identified within the SPRFMO area. VMEs have not yet been defined within the context of deepwater fisheries, however they are referred to in the UN General Assembly Resolution 61/105 as “*vulnerable marine ecosystems, including seamounts, hydrothermal vents and cold water corals*”. The SPRFMO interim measures expand on this to recognise that VMEs “*include seamounts, hydrothermal vents, cold water corals and sponge fields*.”

To date, the Interim Secretariat has received one specialised VME data set - the Allain *et al.*, 2008 seamount reference data set (refer SPRFMO-V-SWG-05). This data set contains a list of 1504 underwater features cross-checked and validated in the SPRFMO area, together with additional information and reference sources. Annex 1 lists the data fields included in the Allain *et al.* seamount data set.

Providing information on detection of fishing in association with VMEs is also part of the agreed Observer Data Standard. Therefore, in future, the Interim Secretariat would also expect to receive information about potential/ actual VMEs by way of Observer data submissions.

#### Discussion

The Interim Secretariat would like some guidance from participants as to the format in which they envisage being able to use/ display VME data on the SPRFMO database in the future including:

- 1) Confirmation that VME positions should be able to be displayed (excluding any confidential data) on the database *e.g.* by using a GIS/ mapping tool; this item was already referred to in the Report of the Science Working Group at the Fifth international meeting
- 2) Discussion as to whether any geographical display of VMEs should include the display of other characteristics such as VME name, type, associated vulnerable species, etc?

---

3) For VME (sensitive benthic species) associated data received by the Secretariat as part of Observer fishing activity records:

i) Is it envisaged that positions associated with these sensitive benthic species data should be made available to participants on the SPRFMO database as 'VME' geographical/positional data sets, and

If so:

ii) Are there associated confidentiality issues to be considered?

ii) How is it envisaged that the geographical boundaries associated with VMEs (defined by the presence of sensitive benthic species) should be delineated *e.g.* by a centre-point position of a standard sized rectangle, as four corners of a variable-sized rectangle, etc?

iii) Do VME data sets also need to be downloadable *e.g.* by an export facility?

---

**Annex 1****Allain *et al.* Seamount Data Set: Data Fields**

Allain <i>et al.</i> reference	(reference source)
KL04 reference	(reference source)
Longitude	
Latitude	
Position Source	(reference source)
Summit depth (m)	
Summit depth source	(reference source)
Elevation (m)	
Elevation source	(reference source)
Name	
Feature Type	
Primary reference	(reference source)
Cross-checking/ validation	