

GREENPEACE

Making Sure Our Tuna Will Always Be There

Scientific evidence on the status of Western and Central Pacific Ocean (WCPO) tuna stocks suggests that big-eye and yellow fin tuna are now overfished. This means unless WCPO nations take urgent remedial measures to control fishing in their waters, we could lose this most cherished of resources. That is why Greenpeace has compiled a scientific report on possible measures to reduce catches to help sustain the declining tuna stocks in the WCPO. This report clearly outlines the various uncertainties inherent in the data, information and models used to carry out the tuna fishery assessments in the WCPO. Important elements which have high levels of uncertainty include basic fish population data, fishing effort (sizes and types of fishing boats) and the reported catch sizes. In addition, there is the problem of Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing, otherwise known as pirate fishing, the scale and extent of which is unknown in the WCPO. Based on the management models used in the region, Greenpeace is proposing the introduction of a number of restrictions based on fishing effort and catch as a bare minimum. In addition, Greenpeace is also suggesting the establishment of marine reserves in the WCPO as a useful tool in the conservation and regeneration of the tuna stocks in the WCPO.

Over 20 island nations and coastal states are located in the WCPO. It also supports the world's largest tuna fishery, currently accounting for around 50 % of the global production of main market species of tuna with annual catches around 1.6-million tonnes until the end of the 1990s. Since then catches have risen to a record high of over 2 million tonnes in 2004, a rise of over 50%.^{1,2} While the skipjack tuna stocks which make up 65% of this catch are still thought to be in relatively good condition, increasing concerns have been voiced about stocks of yellowfin and bigeye tuna which are now thought to be overfished. These are the most valuable fish and comprise around a third of the landings but almost half the value. Unsurprisingly, there are now concerns about levels of pirate fishing in the region targeting these high value species.

The current problems with WCPO tuna fisheries must be placed in the context of the global fisheries crisis. With around three quarters of the world fish thought to be fully exploit-

ed, overexploited, depleted or recovering from depletion, the responsible management of fish stocks worldwide has become critically important. The collapse of the North Atlantic cod fishery, the world's oldest fishery, in 1992, is a well-known example of the consequences of failing address over-fishing. The Canadian Government ignored scientific warnings and stood by as catches fell from 233,000 tonnes to zero in the space of two years. Many fisheries in the North Sea and elsewhere are on the brink of collapse.

Unregulated growth in the number of large-scale, high technology fishing vessels in the world's fishing fleet is a major cause of over-fishing and the current crisis. Industrial scale fishing fleets account for only 1% of fishing vessels worldwide, but they take more than half the global catch of 80-90 million tonnes per year. The rapid growth of this fleet has led to dramatic declines in many of the world's traditional fishing areas. This has served to help undermine global food security also.

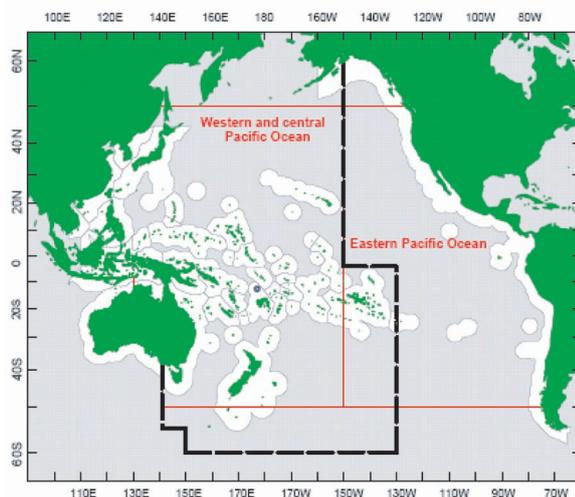


Figure 1: The Western and Central Pacific Ocean (WCPO), with the Eastern Pacific Ocean (EPO) and the WCPFC Convention Area (WCP-CA) in dashed lines.

Source: Williams, P. and Reid (2005) Overview of tuna fisheries in the WCPO, including economic conditions - 2004. WCPFC-SC1, GN - WP1



Too Many Boats Chasing Too Few Fish in the Pacific



Pacific peoples have fished the ocean for thousands of years, for the most part managing their traditional fishing grounds sustainably. Now the future of this ocean as a bountiful food source is at the mercy of an unscrupulous fishing industry which serves a growing global appetite for tuna. Worldwide, consumption of tuna is increasing, with producers diversifying products and adding value locally through processing operations. Today, a regional purse-seine fleet of locally-based vessels, owned by both foreign and local companies, catch about 200,000 tonnes (or roughly 10 per cent of the total catch) of tuna a year.

By contrast, industrial distant water fishing boats account for some 2 million tonnes, and they are thought to be moving into the region in increasing numbers. Instead of reducing their fishing effort and the number of boats in their fleets as their own resources become depleted, countries like China, Korea, Taiwan, Japan, the United States of America, and the EU simply move on to the next fishing ground – in this case, the Pacific tuna fisheries. The result is unfair and exploitative – the financial return from access fees and licenses to the region is a mere 5 % of the US\$2 billion value of the fish they take. The returns to the Pacific Island States from pirate fishing are, of course, non-existent – pirate fishing boats do not comply with any rules and only contribute to the accelerating decline of fisheries resources in the region.

Tuna Stocks

The Standing Committee on Tuna and Billfish, which has long provided consensus scientific information on the status of tuna stocks in the WCPO region came to the conclusion in the 2005 assessment that yellowfin and bigeye tuna are now being overfished. Despite these concerns, the WCPO fishery, unlike tuna fisheries in other ocean areas, has until recently been unregulated, lacking a Regional Fisheries Management Organization (RFMO).

With the entry into force of the WCPF Convention on June 19th, 2004, and the first meeting of the WCPF Commission held in December 2004, there now exists a framework for the conservation and management of the stocks (tuna and other species). The adoption of appropriate and precautionary conservation and management measures to ensure the sustainability of WCPO stocks, seen to be at some risk, is now timely, and is required with some urgency.

Precaution and Environmental Protection

Formulation and implementation of a precautionary approach to environmental protection demand that:

- Serious or irreversible damage to ecosystems must be avoided in advance, both by preventing harm and avoiding the potential for harm.
- High quality scientific research is

employed as a key mechanism for the early detection of actual or potential impacts

- Action to protect ecosystems is necessary (rather than only possible) even in the presence of uncertainty, ignorance and irreducible indeterminacy
- All future technical, social and economic developments must implement a progressive reduction in environmental burden as compared to contemporary baselines.

The commission theoretically gives Pacific states a greater say in the protection and management of their fisheries. Pacific Island states are equal members, alongside distant water fishing states such as China, Japan, Korea, Taiwan, the United States of America and the European Union.

Forum Fisheries Agency

Pacific Island states Australia and New Zealand created the Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA) in 1979 to oversee the Western and Central Pacific tuna fisheries.

The Forum Fisheries Agency has developed innovative management measures, particularly for monitoring, control and surveillance.

This includes the harmonized minimum terms and conditions (MTCs) for foreign fishing vessel access. Central to these is a properly functioning Vessel Monitoring System, which provides all Pacific states with up to date information on the activities of fishing vessels, and can be used to identify renegade ships.



Greenpeace Solutions and Vision

In order to conserve, rebuild and protect tuna resources in the WCPO Greenpeace calls on the WCPFC and the Pacific Island Nations to adopt a management strategy based upon the following demands:

- (1) The immediate establishment of a marine reserve in an enclosed high seas area bound by Palau, FSM, PNG and Indonesia, and a commitment to establishing a second fully-protected marine reserve to the east in the future.
- (2) Establishment of management objectives of the WCPO fishery, based initially on Annex 2 of the UN Fish Stocks Agreement.
- (3) An immediate moratorium on the construction of new large Purse Seine (Super Seiner & Super Super Seiner) and large Longline vessels intended to fish in the WCPO, and controls on the relocation/deployment of such vessels from other areas.
- (4) The WCPFC undertakes a study of the capacity of large Purse Seine and Longline vessels active in the WCPO, leading in the short term to the introduction of overall limits on vessel numbers. Also, development of a suitable measure of capacity (Purse Seine and Longline) to facilitate the orderly management of fleet capacity in the WCPO, including clear definition of vessel categories e.g. "large scale". From a conventional fisheries perspective, this study is critical to determining the level of capacity available in the region and more importantly what "capacity" the region's fish stocks can sustain. From Greenpeace's perspective, however, we take the view that Super Super Seinners should not be allowed to operate in the region given their huge capacity.
- (5) Large uncertainties are inherent in the models used to produce assessments and forecasts for tuna fisheries in the WCPO. These relate to input data quality together with substantial indeterminacies in data relating to effort, catch and IUU fishing, as well as to factors such as recruitment and the influence of climate change. Greenpeace believes that basing management upon MSY target reference points is not sufficiently precautionary. Accordingly, Greenpeace regards the 20% effort reduction figure suggested from modeling as an absolute bare minimum requirement. To assure future sustainability of fisheries in the region this figure should be set at 50%.
- (6) The WCPFC should apply a Longline Total Allowable Catch (TAC) for Bigeye, based on lower catch levels from an earlier time period, with allocations/quotas for countries or entities taking a large amount of catch (e.g. more than 3,000t). The restriction of catches by other nations to catches at that earlier time should also be enforced. This measure should be introduced in conjunction with a trade certification/verification system for Bigeye, as used by other Regional Fisheries Management Organisations (RFMOs).
- (7) Immediate prohibition of at-sea transshipment, with such transshipment to occur only at designated ports, as provided for in the Convention and to be implemented by the Commission.
- (8) Implementation of the following series of measures to reduce IUU fishing in the WCPO, as proposed by Greenpeace: ratify and implement the Compliance and Fish Stocks Agreements; exert control over port access and marketing of tuna products (trade verification); strengthen the WCPFC capacity to take action (regional and global vessel registries, IUU vessel blacklist, reduce size of vessels covered by Monitoring, Control and Surveillance (MCS) regulation, boarding and inspection regulations, prohibition of at-sea transshipment); practice good governance at national level (comprehensive management plans, appropriate legislation enforced); inspect and arrest IUU stateless vessels (national-level action).
- (9) That the Commission commence work on the development of criteria for the allocation of TAC and Total Allowable Effort (TAE), as provided for by the Convention.
- (10) Additional research must be carried out to reduce uncertainty and indeterminacy attached to key parameters/assumptions and model structure of the present MULTIFAN-CL models.



Rationale and Conclusions

If the measures proposed by Greenpeace are implemented then they will contribute markedly to establishing sustainability in the WCPO tuna fisheries. Reducing effort levels by 50% will help the tuna populations to regenerate, while restrictions on the operation of large purse seine and longlining vessels will reinforce this regeneration while at the same time placing the fisheries resources more in the hands of, and under control of, their rightful owners. Similarly, prohibiting at sea trans-shipments will on the one hand impose constraints upon the efficiency of the fishery which will act effectively as effort controls and on the other hand allow greater oversight and management of both the fishery and the market it serves. The introduction of transparency into this aspect of legitimate fishery operations will also serve to help control IUU fishing.

The important question of IUU fishing must be resolved. The scale and extent of such operations in the WCPO needs to be fully characterized and controlled. Hence:

- Ports must refuse to launder pirate fish or service pirate fishing boats – if they can't land their catch or service their boats then the whole dirty business falls apart.
- All supermarkets, fish markets and fishmongers need to be able to prove they are not handling stolen goods, by being able to trace the history of the fish they sell.

Suppliers who can't should not be allowed to sell the fish on to consumers.

- Fishing boats should be controlled through electronic surveillance and governments must take responsibility for the activities of their boats. The authorities must immediately share information to stop pirate catches getting into the market.
- Often illegal boats never come into port and instead trans-ship their fish at sea – if this practice was made illegal it would be harder for pirates to move their illegal catches around the globe.
- Some boats and companies are caught time and again breaking the rules. These boats should be named on a single, publicly available list so all nations are able to refuse them services or prevent them from landing their catches.
- International aid and assistance should be given to Pacific waters to protect their rich fishing grounds from pirate fleets. As fishing grounds in the Northern Hemisphere have been fished out, fishing boats have moved further South, into the waters of poorer countries that are not equipped to fully protect their fisheries.

If the sustainability of the WCPO fisheries is to be ensured, then it is vital that the ecosystem approach is im-

plemented. To achieve this it will be necessary to establishing a network of large-scale fully protected marine reserves in the WCPO covering 40% of each marine habitat. As a first step the designation of the enclosed high seas area bounded by Palau, FSM, PNG and Indonesia as a marine reserve would both help to eliminate IUU fishing from the area and provide key data to scientists and policy makers.

What you can do

- 1) Get engaged.** Go to fisheries management consultative meetings and learn about the issues. Support strong fisheries management and good governance.
- 2) Work together.** Discuss fisheries management with other stakeholders and the media throughout the region. Share skills, resources and information.
- 3) Talk to your government.** Find out how you can participate in fisheries management decision-making. Let them know that you are concerned about fisheries management and good governance. Encourage your government to take care in issuing and monitoring of its fishing licenses to foreign industrial fishers, to ensure there is enough fish for our future.
- 4) Kick out pirates from the Pacific and banish them from ports.** By organising meetings, writing letters and talking to the media, encourage your government to implement national and regional regulations that ban access to ports by pirate vessels.

GREENPEACE

www.greenpeace.org.au

SYDNEY

Level 4,
39 Liverpool Street,
Sydney, NSW, 2000
Phone: 612 9261 4666

greenpeace.australia@au.greenpeace.org

SUVA

Level 1,
Old Town Hall,
Victoria Parade, Suva, Fiji
Phone: +679 3312861

greenpeace@connect.com.fj

PORT MORESBY

Section 22, Lot 8-10, Flat 5
Chalmers St, Paga Hill
Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea
Phone: +675 3215954

HONIARA

Level 1,
PO Box 1542
Honiara, Solomon Islands
Phone: +677 20805

Oceans Campaigner - Lagi Toribau
Oceans Team Leader - Nilesh Goundar
Media Advisor - Josephine Prasad