



North Pacific Fisheries Commission

NPFC-2022-SC07-OP04

Deep-sea Fisheries Project – Update

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Deep-sea Fisheries under the Ecosystem Approach (DSF) project (2022-2027)

Sustainable Fisheries Management and Biodiversity Conservation of Deep-sea Living Marine Resources and Ecosystems in the Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction

PART OF THE COMMON OCEANS II PROGRAM

<https://www.fao.org/in-action/commonoceans/en/>

1 Introduction/Purpose

The purpose of this paper is to provide an update on the Deep-sea Fisheries under the Ecosystem Approach (DSF) project that is one of four projects within the Common Oceans II program.

The DSF Project is funded by the Global Environmental Facility (GEF), implemented by FAO, and executed by the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM). The DSF project document¹ was approved by GEF in April 2022. The DSF Project development workshop was held on 24 and 26 August 2020² and the validation workshop was held on 7-8 September 2021³.

The DSF project sits within the Common Oceans II program which includes three other projects dealing with tuna fisheries, the Sargasso Sea, and cross-sectoral cooperation. One additional project, the Global Coordination Project covers the overall coordination and it operates at the program level. The project execution started in October 2022 with a duration of 5 years.

The project's objective is:

To ensure that DSF in the ABNJ are managed under an ecosystem approach that maintains demersal fish stocks at levels capable of maximizing their sustainable yields and minimizing impacts on biodiversity, with a focus on data-limited stocks, deepwater sharks and vulnerable marine ecosystems.

The project's Theory of Change summarizes the activities, outputs and outcomes that underpin the project (Annex 1). The successful achievement of the project's objective will require inputs and support from project partners, in particular the participating RFMOs and industry. The International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES) will take the lead role in supporting the project in the work on data-limited stocks.

The project will build upon the successes of the first phase and work with partners globally to promote sustainable fisheries and reducing impacts on biodiversity in the ABNJ. The project will support the work of managers, scientists and compliance officers to achieve this. The project will have greater opportunities to work with other projects under the programmatic framework, particularly with the tuna project and global coordination project. These project's work will be executed through activities funded by the project and through partner in-kind contributions. In addition to the technical aspects, the project will work with partners to better communicate on-going activities by RFMOs and industry that strive towards sustainably and environmentally-friendly fishing activities. This will include work on cross-sectoral cooperation and support for the BBNJ process.

2 Previous discussions with NPFC

The DSF Project provided an update on the development of the second phase (NPFC-2020-SC05-OP05) summarising the structure of the new project and a summary of the outputs from the phase I Deep-seas Project. The NPFC Secretariat presented document NPFC-2021-COM06-WP03 to the 6th Annual Meeting of the Commission in February 2021 noting that SC05 recommended that NPFC become partners to the DSF Project. The Commission, due to time constraints imposed by the covid pandemic, agreed to discuss cooperation with other organizations intersessionally. Approval was granted inter-sessionally and NPFC sent a co-financing commitment letter to FAO on 30 September 2021.

¹ https://publicpartnershipdata.azureedge.net/gef/GEFProjectVersions/04af037f-61b1-ea11-a812-000d3a337c9e_CEOEndorsement.pdf

² <http://www.fao.org/3/cb2909en/cb2909en.pdf>

³ <http://www.fao.org/3/cc0554en/cc0554en.pdf>

3 Project partners

The project partners are:

RFMOs:	General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM) Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization (NAFO) North East Atlantic Fisheries Commission (NEAFC) North Pacific Fisheries Commission (NPFC) South East Atlantic Fisheries Organisation (SEAFO) Southern Indian Ocean Fisheries Agreement (SIOFA) South Pacific Regional Fisheries Management Organisation (SPRFMO)
Advisory bodies:	International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES)
Government agency:	National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)
Private sector:	Southern Indian Ocean Deepsea Fishers Association (SIODFA) International Coalition of Fisheries Associations (ICFA)

4 Project components, outcomes, outputs and activities

The work of the project falls under four main components, each of which is divided into outcomes, outputs and activities (Annex 2).

Work with partners to execute the activities is currently underway. Inputs and suggestions to the work plan from partners are welcome. Some initial activities, that were in part intended to be undertaken during the first phase but delayed due to restrictions resulting from the covid pandemic, are currently being undertaken. These include:

- Development of e-learning package for the *Step-wise guide for the implementation of international legal and policy instruments related to deep-sea fisheries and biodiversity conservation in the areas beyond national jurisdiction*⁴
- Review of the implementation of the Deep-sea Fisheries Guidelines - zero draft completed and review meeting in London 29 November – 2 December 2022.
- Rapid assessment for stock status, to assist FAO in monitoring stock status for SDG 14.4. This activity involved partners sharing their recent assessment data with the DSF Project. The stocks of interest in NPFC are given in Table 1.
- Preparation for a symposium on ecosystem production models and the prevention of ecosystem overfish with RFMO partners. This is at an early planning stage with the symposium potentially planned for 2024.

5 Inception workshop

The DSF project will hold an inception workshop in virtual format in January 2023. This will introduce a draft work plan following the project document as far as possible and is reasonable given that circumstances have changed a little since the project document was written. This will then be developed with partners in a participatory fashion.

An overarching theme for the early years of the project will be improved data collection by on board observers for compliance and scientific purposes. This will focus on data-limited stocks (retained and discarded catch), deepwater sharks, and VME indicator species.

⁴ <https://www.fao.org/documents/card/en/c/ca5628en>

6 Request to NPFC Scientific Committee

We wish to express our support for NPFC and request that the NPFC Scientific Committee consider this document and interact with the DSF Project, either through the Executive Secretary or directly, to identify areas of common interest and cooperation.

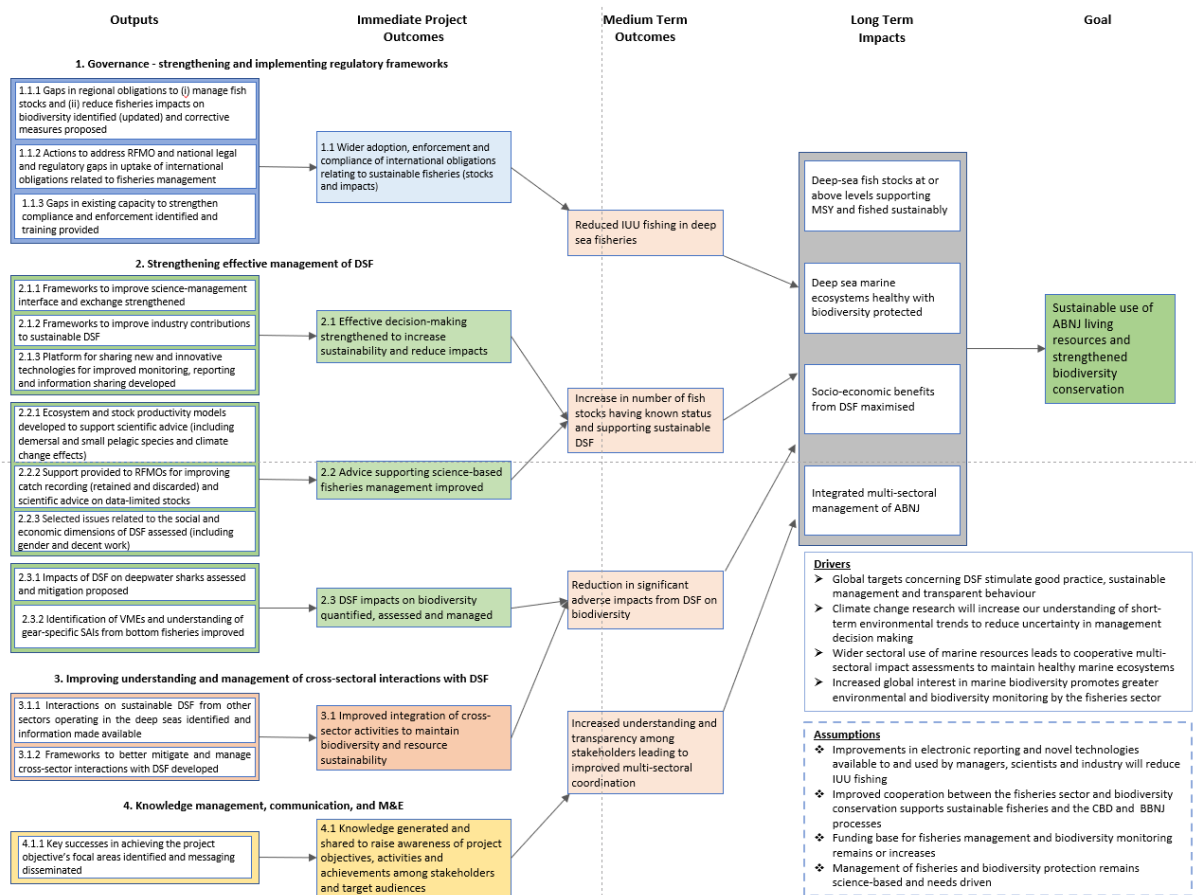
Table 1. Demersal stocks fished in the NPFC Convention Area.

Species	Reference points	Current TAC (2022)	Most recent catch/yr (2021)	RFMO Stock B	RFMO Stock F	Unofficial Stock status (S, U, ?)*
North Pacific armorhead	Not accomplished, Not established	500t, 200t or 10,000t, 2,000t for Japan, Korea**	25t (decreasing rapidly)	unknown	Intermediate	Unsustainably fished
Splendid alfonsino	Not accomplished, Not established	None	713t (decreasing)	unknown	Intermediate	Unsustainable fished
Sablefish	Unknown, but known for EEZ stocks.	204t	150t	~Bmsy	Sustainable - low	Sustainably fished

* This is an expert judgement, but it is very difficult to assess. The criteria follow the FAO SOFIA publication with sustainably fished meaning B is > 0.8 Bmsy.

** The NPFC Commission encourages limiting catches to 500t and 200t when strong recruitment is not detected, and limiting catches to 10,000t and 2,000t when strong recruitment is detected, for Japan and Korea respectively. (CMM 2021-05: paragraphs M and N).

ANNEX 1. DSF PROJECT THEORY OF CHANGE



ANNEX 2. DSF PROJECT WORKPLAN AND ACTIVITIES OF RELEVANCE

Component 1: Governance -strengthening and implementing regulatory frameworks

Outcome 1.1 – Wider adoption, enforcement and compliance of international obligations relating to sustainable fisheries (stocks and impacts)

Project Outputs	Project Activity
1.1.1 - Gaps in regional obligations to (i) manage fish stocks and (ii) reduce fisheries impacts on biodiversity identified (updated) and corrective measures developed.	Scoping study on international obligations, with focus on data-limited and bycatch species with workshop Capacity Building - RFMO/As Members' Forum and self-assessment tools for PMA and other FAO binding and voluntary instruments with workshop (same as above workshop) Coordinated by Project consultant Run by Project consultant
1.1.2 - Measures to address national legal and regulatory gaps in international obligations related to fisheries management piloted in selected countries.	Focus on GEF-eligible countries following on from GEF-5 project Aligning national legislation with RFMO measures and reporting requirements Run by Project consultant
1.1.3 - Gaps in existing capacity to strengthen compliance and enforcement identified and filled.	Focus on GEF-eligible countries following on from GEF-5 project Observer training (compliance and scientific) Port inspection training Deepwater shark catch monitoring and bycatch reduction (support to output 2.3.1) VMS and mapping of DSF by gear type (support to output 2.3.2) Run by Project consultant

Component 2: Strengthening effective management of DSF

Outcome 2.1 – *Effective decision making strengthened to increase sustainability and reduce impacts*

Project Outputs	Project Activity
2.1.1 - Frameworks to improve science-management interface and exchange strengthened following an ecosystem and precautionary approach	Desk top study on how dsRFMO committees communicate internally (e.g. by requests for advice, joint groups, etc) and to trail new ways if appropriate. Further development of PA and EAF frameworks by dsRFMOs. Run by Project consultant
2.1.2 - Frameworks to improve industry contributions to sustainable DSF	Desk top study on how industry works with dsRFMOs and to trail new ways if appropriate applicable to the management, compliance, and scientific committees. Including better identification of communication and data sharing strategies. Conclusions discussed at workshop and frameworks developed as appropriate. Run by Project consultant
2.1.3 – Uptake of new and innovative approaches and technologies for improved monitoring, reporting and information sharing piloted and introduced	Development of web-area (under Common Oceans Programme?) for sharing information from researchers and developers with a wider audience (such as dsRFMOs) of new and innovation technologies that support sustainable fisheries. Run by Project consultant

2.2 - Improved advice supporting science-based fisheries management

Project Outputs	Project Activity
2.2.1 - Stock productivity models developed and advice generated and tested (including demersal and small pelagic species and climate change effects)	Organise symposium on Application to fisheries management of ecosystem and stock productivity models under changing conditions – short, medium and long term implications”. Promote relevant work undertaken by dsRFMOs, including CC work. Draft publication on current work and its use in sustainable fisheries. Run by Project consultant
2.2.2 - Low-yield and data-limited stocks assessed and managed	(Focus fisheries are alfoncino and armourhead) Review and support appropriate and coordinated data-collection programmes. Identify and support current RFMO assessment methods. As appropriate, coordinate training workshops, possibly with ICES. Assist in evaluation of stock status for data limited stocks. Run by Project consultant
2.2. 3 – Socio-economic considerations of DSF assessed and information disseminated	Undertake value chain analysis of 1-4 fisheries that supports the sustainable management of deep-sea fisheries and EAF. Perform gender and decent employment analyses as part of the value chain work. Examine relevance of value chains to work of RFMOs. Run by Project consultant.

2.3 - DSF impacts on biodiversity quantified, assessed and managed

Project Outputs	Project Activity
2.3.1 - Impacts of DSF on deepwater sharks assessed and mitigated	Collate and assess data collection programmes and data collected among dsRFMOs. Providing support, training and testing of future data collection programs including new technologies to aid identification. Promotion of risk assessment methodologies involving shark distribution, fishing effort distribution (by gear), and catch susceptibility. Reviews of impact assessment methodologies and comparison of results from high seas regions through workshop or symposium as appropriate. Methods to review effectiveness of mitigation options. Run by Project consultant.
2.3.2 – Knowledge of impacts of fishing activities on VMEs improved and mitigation measures developed and adopted	Review of current methods used to identify VMEs in ABNJ, including those used in exploratory fisheries, and produce publication entitled “VME identification methodology”. Review implementation of FAO DSF Guidelines (follow-up of Busan meeting in 2010) Methods to monitor the health of VMEs in closed areas to see if they are changing, either negatively through non-fisheries impacts or positively through recovery. Improved monitoring and analysis of fishing effort by gear type (essential fundamental requirement to monitoring of fisheries and impacts). Run by Project consultant.

Component 3. Improving understanding and management of cross-sectoral impacts on DSF

Outcome 3.1 - Improved integration of cross-sector activities to maintain biodiversity and resource sustainability

Project Outputs	Project Activity
3.1.1 - Interactions between fisheries and other sectors operating in the deep seas identified and information made available.	Scoping study to identify possible interactions with DSF (including overlap with current spatial extent of fishing by stock and gear). Methodologies identified to identify significance of threats (including where identified in similar cases for EEZ fisheries). Guidance developed on consequences of threats (fisheries production, ecological, social, economic). Run by Project consultant.
3.1.2 - Mechanisms to better mitigate and manage cross-sector impacts on DSF developed.	Project consultant to draft report on current and planned multi-sectoral marine use (to include all spatial aspects of fisheries including distribution of fishing effort and biodiversity protection measures). To inform RFMOs on developments in international instruments affecting the use of the ABNJ. As appropriate, any follow-up work necessary to mitigate the negative effects of interactions with DSF. Run by Project consultant.

Component 4. Knowledge management, communication and M&E

Outcome 4.1 Knowledge generated and shared to raise awareness of project objectives, activities and achievements among stakeholders and target audiences

Project Outputs	Project Activity
4.1.1: Key successes in achieving the project objective's focal areas identified and messaging disseminated (inc. IW:Learn at 1%).	Review and support to RFMO websites with an emphasis on sharing information with a wider multi-sectoral audience to better display the remit of RFMOs and the work they undertake with fisheries and environmental monitoring. Run by Project consultant.
	Programme level messaging via Global Coordination Project
4.1.2: An operational project M&E system implemented	Project monitoring and evaluation undertaken by Project Management Unit