



North Pacific Fisheries Commission

NPFC-2026-TCC09-IP04

SMALL WORKING GROUP ON OPERATIONS

SUMMARY REPORT FOR 2025-2026 PERIOD

Abstract:

The following summary was compiled by the Small Working Group on Operations Lead and reflects the progress this group made on key work plan elements throughout the intersessional period. It also includes a summary of Member's monitoring, control, and surveillance (MCS) activities throughout the reporting year where provided. Where Members did not submit a report for inclusion, the Lead attempted to compile monthly MCS reports that were provided verbally during the HSBI update section of SWG Ops meetings.

Finally, this report will endeavour to identify and recommend future priorities that could be added to the group's workplan.

Members are invited to review the summary of SWG Ops work contained within this report.

Subject: Small Working Group for Operations (SWG OPS) Annual Summary for 2025-2026

Background: The purpose of Small Working Group on Operations is to support Commission coordination and oversight by providing a dedicated forum for the monitoring and implementation of compliance and enforcement measures and tools. This group is also expected to provide compliance related advice to the Technical Compliance Committee.

Summary of SWG Operations for 2025-2026:

The following lists the priorities that SWG Ops members worked on throughout the intersessional period for 2025-2026:

TCC WORK PLAN 2025-2026

| Issue | Action/Timeline | Status |
|---|--|--|
| Vessel Registry amendment to reflect accepted vessel marking practices. | SWG Ops recommends a minor amendment to Vessel Registry CMM 2023-01 Annex 2, paragraph 4 to allow the vessel’s name, IRCS, identification mark, and port of call to be displayed by changing “or” to “and”. | Complete with recommendation to TCC to adopt proposed amendment in Tab 1. NPFC-2026-TCC09-WP07 |
| Update of HSBI Plan | Provide feedback and oversight to reconfigured “MCS” page which would become a living version of the HSBI Implementation Plan in place of the current HSBI page. The plan would become an archived tab within the updated page which will house a newly added aerial surveillance portal to share patrol information among other compliance related information and resources. | <p>Work has been ongoing with Secretariat and service provider. As these changes won’t impact adopted CMMs, SWG Ops will support continued work of website modernization.</p> <p>A small technical WG was struck to assess the HSBI events portal to identify improvements for inspectors. This effort resulted in some recommendations but future engagement with Member’s enforcement specialists is recommended.</p> <p>Secretariat updates will be reported on during Compliance Manager report.</p> |
| Historic Existing Level | <p>From TCC 08 Recommendations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Continue working on this issue in consideration of options discussed at TCC b) Compile in one document when each CMM mentioning historical level was first adopted, | <p>Historical Existing Level for NW Bottom Fishing shall be limited to the number of authorized vessels in 2007.</p> <p>Extensive discussion has been distilled down to two distinct positions for remaining species measures:</p> |

| | | |
|---------------------------|---|---|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> c) Seek clarity on data sources from members regarding populated table, d) Work to reconcile Member data with Secretariat records, e) Consider amending CMMs that reference historical fishing level to provide greater clarity; and f) Further consider criteria proposed by Members...including <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) a period from CMM adoption year minus 1 through minus 3, ii) a 3-yr period from CMM adoption yr going back 3 yrs, iii) a timeline reflecting the development of the fishery, or iv) other appropriate timeframes from one to multiple years | <p>1) Majority views favoured using the maximum number of authorized vessels found between 2015 and the year members were to refrain from expansion for each individual species measure, and</p> <p>2) a minority view preferring to use one point from the year prior to CMM adoption.</p> <p>SWG Ops recommends TCC consider both approaches and select the most appropriate to ensure member compliance with prohibition on expansion can be adequately assessed.</p> <p>*See notes below on this item for more detailed information.</p> |
| <p>Serious Violations</p> | <p>Following the work made on this tasking in the previous intersessional period (analysis of all vessel-based compliance requirements that could be deemed a serious violation), the SWG Ops group developed an “Inspector’s Guide” to support inspectors as they assess compliance. This tool will be voluntarily used and will require updates following any new CMMs or amendments to CMMs.</p> <p>In addition, members were asked to consider leading work on further defining or operationalizing Article 17, paragraph 4 that describes member responsibilities when it has been established that a flagged vessel has committed a serious violation. Members expressed views that the Convention adequately describes expected flag state action and as no member agreed to lead this work, the tasking was considered addressed.</p> | <p>Inspector’s Guide for voluntary use: complete (Tab 2. NPFC Inspector’s Guide to Vessel-Based Compliance Requirements)</p> <p>Convention Article 17, paragraph 4 – describes Flag State responsibilities where it has been established that a flagged vessel has committed a serious violation. The member shall order the vessel to cease operations and where appropriate, order the fishing vessel to leave the Convention Area immediately and not resume activities in the CA until all imposed sanctions have been complied with.</p> <p>As these are member obligations, these would be addressed during the CMS/CMR process.</p> |

***Notes on Historical Existing Level:** This matter was discussed extensively throughout each session with members considering the most appropriate approach to identify the historical existing level for all conservation and management measures that prohibit members from expanding beyond a specific effort level . The factors considered in conjunction with TCC recommendations include: the year the CMM was adopted, the year members were prohibited from expansion, and whether the use of averages versus maximum number of authorized vessels within a selected date range was more appropriate.

Members were unable to reach consensus on a single approach but most indicated a preference to accept the maximum number of vessels between 2015 and the year when expansion was prohibited (excluding the NW bottom fishing measure that explicitly refers to 2007).

An opposing view was heard, citing concerns with authorized vessel data and suggested that SWG Ops group should instead use a single point in time to align more closely with the TCC recommendations from 2025.

SWG Ops created a table to visualize the year ranges referred to in TCC recommendations and pulled from member discussions. The date ranges refer to the year the species CMM was adopted and the year expansion was prohibited. Although this table was discussed with the average number of authorized vessels in mind, the majority of views expressed preference for using the maximum number of vessels within the identified date range:

| Species/ CMM adoption/ YPE | Pacific Saury /2015/2017 | Chub Mackerel /2016/2017 | Japanese Sardine /2019/2019 | Neon Flying Squid /2021/2021 | Japanese Flying Squid /2019/2019 | Sablefish /2019/2019 | NW Bottom Fishery/2016) |
|----------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------|-------------------------|
| TREATMENT | | | | | | | |
| CMM adoption -1yrs through -3yrs | 2014 -2012 | 2015 - 2013 | 2018 - 2016 | 2020 - 2018 | 2018 - 2016 | 2018 - 2016 | n/a |
| CMM Adoption through to - 3 yrs | 2015 - 2013 | 2016 - 2014 | 2019 - 2017 | 2021 - 2019 | 2019 - 2017 | 2019 - 2017 | n/a |
| CMM adoption -1 yr | 2014 | 2015 | 2018 | 2020 | 2018 | 2018 | n/a |
| YPE -1 yr through -3 yrs | 2016 - 2014 | 2016 - 2014 | 2018 - 2016 | 2020 - 2018 | 2018 - 2016 | 2018 - 2016 | n/a |
| YPE through -3 yrs | 2017 - 2015 | 2017 - 2015 | 2019 - 2017 | 2021 - 2019 | 2019 - 2017 | 2019 - 2017 | n/a |

Ultimately it was noted that the Commission must move forward with a reasonable approach to identifying HEL and that the options being debated were do not yield significantly different results. A decision is necessary to ensure Member compliance can be assessed when considering whether expansion has occurred.

SWG Ops recommends TCC consider both majority and minority views and recommend a preferred approach to identify HEL. Alternatively, TCC could consider the year classes identified in the table above and select one to define HEL.

Summary of Member MCS Operations:

This section provides a general summary of patrol and inspection efforts by members as reported during SWG Ops meetings:

| MEMBER | HSBI (Surface Asset) | HSBI (Shipriders) | Air Surveillance |
|--------------------|----------------------|-------------------|------------------|
| Canada | X | | X |
| China | X | | |
| Chinese Taipei | | | |
| European Union | | | |
| Japan | X | X | X |
| Republic of Korea | X | X | |
| Russian Federation | | | |
| Vanuatu | | | |
| United States | | X | |

*More detailed inspection results are available in Member annual reports.

MCS Issues raised but not resolved:

Some SWG Ops members requested that an information sharing element be considered under the MCS webpage updates. Members noted that with an increasing HSBI presence, it would be beneficial to know which fishing vessels had been inspected during the fishing season. This would ensure repeat inspections could be avoided but it would not preclude members from reinspecting a vessel if deemed necessary.

Other members noted that sharing this information is not explicitly mentioned in the HSBI measure and instead, members are encouraged to establish networks to share such information informally (paragraph 47, CMM 2024-09).

The SWG Ops lead sees value in exploring the addition of an NPFC MCS link that would allow those members who wish to share inspected vessel information with other members to upload or make this information visible through the HSBI Events page. This would allow the HSBI program to operate more efficiently but would not be mandatory for those members who do not want to provide/review information on this established network. This approach would be in line with the intent of paragraph 47. Further direction from TCC on this item is requested.

Conclusion:

SWG Ops members are to be commended for their thoughtful contributions to the challenging tasks we worked on this year. Progress was made on several items and decision points were identified for TCC's consideration.

This year the SWG Ops group held a technical session focused on improving inspector tools and supporting HSBI efforts at the operational level. The SWG Ops lead sees value in pursuing more operationally focused meetings where Member's enforcement leads participate to share compliance and conservation concerns detected during inspection activities. This would provide an opportunity to identify gaps in existing CMMs and any areas that are currently unregulated.

This will ensure the NPFC's inspection program remains responsive to new or conservation issues and that effective compliance and monitoring solutions are developed.

Tab 1 - (For full proposal, please see [NPFC - 2026-TCC09-WP07 SWG OPs Vessel Registry.pdf](#)) on the TCC09 meeting site

Tab 2 – NPFC inspector's Guide to Vessel based Compliance Requirements- Attached

2025 High Seas Boarding and Inspection Guide

This guide has been developed to support inspectors as they assess compliance with applicable vessel requirements in the NPFC. It does not replace or supersede the conservation and management measures (CMMs). Where there is any inconsistency with a CMM, the CMM supersedes this guide. Please refer to the applicable CMM for full text.

| Measure | Key elements for vessel inspections (but not limited to): <i>Refer to CMM for details</i> | Inspectors Comments | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|--|--|---------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------|----|---------------------|------|-------------------|------|---------------------|------|-------------------|------|----------|------|--|
| CMM 2023-01 On Information Requirements for Vessel Registration | <input type="checkbox"/> Vessel is registered in NPFC Vessel Registry. <input type="checkbox"/> Information in Vessel Registry accurately describes vessel. <input type="checkbox"/> Vessel is authorized to fish during period inspected and is fishing for and retaining species authorized to catch. | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| CMM 2023-01 Specifications for the Marking and Identification of Fishing Vessels | <input type="checkbox"/> Vessel is marked on both sides of hull and deck with IRCS. <input type="checkbox"/> Vessel markings meet specifications and are visible and unobstructed by gear or fouling. <input type="checkbox"/> Vessel markings are white on black/dark background or black on white/light background to ensure visibility. <input type="checkbox"/> Other boats/skiffs/craft used to support fishing operations bear the same markings as primary vessel. <input type="checkbox"/> Specifications for size of markings: <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Vessel Length</th> <th>Height of Letters (not less than)</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>25m and over</td> <td>1m</td> </tr> <tr> <td>20m – less than 25m</td> <td>0.8m</td> </tr> <tr> <td>15m-less than 20m</td> <td>0.6m</td> </tr> <tr> <td>12m – less than 15m</td> <td>0.4m</td> </tr> <tr> <td>5m- less than 12m</td> <td>0.3m</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Under 5m</td> <td>0.1m</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> | Vessel Length | Height of Letters (not less than) | 25m and over | 1m | 20m – less than 25m | 0.8m | 15m-less than 20m | 0.6m | 12m – less than 15m | 0.4m | 5m- less than 12m | 0.3m | Under 5m | 0.1m | |
| Vessel Length | Height of Letters (not less than) | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 25m and over | 1m | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 20m – less than 25m | 0.8m | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 15m-less than 20m | 0.6m | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 12m – less than 15m | 0.4m | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 5m- less than 12m | 0.3m | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Under 5m | 0.1m | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| CMM 2025-03 On Transshipments | <input type="checkbox"/> Both offloading and receiving vessel must be authorized and on the registry before engaging in TS or OTA. <input type="checkbox"/> Vessel cannot offload and receive fisheries resources in same trip. <input type="checkbox"/> Vessels engaging in TS outside the CA must have prior authorization from coastal/port state. <input type="checkbox"/> Receiving vessels must have an observer on board and Observer must be able and available to monitor and report on all transshipment activities. <input type="checkbox"/> Observer can only monitor one transshipment event at a time. <input type="checkbox"/> Observer is provided full, unobstructed, and safe access to each fishing vessel involved in a TS, including access to crew, gear, equipment, records, electronic means of communication, and fish holds. <input type="checkbox"/> Observer is provided adequate and appropriate space to work. TS REPORTING: | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

| Measure | Key elements for vessel inspections (but not limited to): <i>Refer to CMM for details</i> | Inspectors Comments |
|---|--|---------------------|
| | <input type="checkbox"/> All TS reporting must include ALL species transshipped, including bycatch, using FAO species codes. All required information in AN and TD annexes must be complete and accurate. <input type="checkbox"/> Vessels must maintain and produce for inspection, a Record of Transshipment to document all TS and OTA activities during a trip. This includes logbook entries to document daily activities and all TS Declarations. <input type="checkbox"/> At least 24hrs prior to conducting a TS or OTA, both offloading and receiving vessels must submit Advanced Notification. <input type="checkbox"/> If TS or OTA does not occur within 72hrs of 50NM of AN or gets cancelled, both vessels must submit a modified AN or cancellation respectively and document this in the TS Record. <input type="checkbox"/> Receiving vessels shall ensure that catch from different offloading vessels is stored separately, is readily identifiable, and shall produce a stowage plan upon inspector's request. <input type="checkbox"/> A vessel must not engage in TS unless an Observer is available to monitor and report on activity. <input type="checkbox"/> After TS, both vessels must complete a TD as soon as possible and submit to authorities, no later than 10 days after the event and retain all as part of Transshipment Record. | |
| CMM 2016-04 On Vessels without Nationality | <input type="checkbox"/> Vessel is flying one and only one flag <input type="checkbox"/> Vessel's nationality indicators are consistent with registration (IRCS and flag) | |
| CMM 2025-05 For Bottom Fisheries And Protection of VMEs in NW Pacific Ocean | <input type="checkbox"/> No directed fishing for coral and other VME indicator species. <input type="checkbox"/> Bottom fishing is limited to seamounts south of 45 degrees north and areas less than 1,500m deep unless conducted under approved exploratory fishing protocols. <input type="checkbox"/> Should more than 50kg sponges or 350kg corals be encountered in one gear retrieval, the vessel must relocate a minimum of 1NM from encounter. <input type="checkbox"/> Vessels shall not fish in C-H Seamount, the Southeast portion of Koko Seamount (refer to CMM for geographical coordinates). <input type="checkbox"/> When using a gillnet, the distance between the foot rope and sea floor must be greater than 70cm. <input type="checkbox"/> Bottom fishing is closed from November to January. <input type="checkbox"/> Bottom fishing vessels shall use trawl nets with a mesh size greater than or equal to 130mm of stretched mesh (under 5kg tension) in codend when targeting North Pacific Armourhead or Splendid Alfonsino. <input type="checkbox"/> Vessels are prohibited from allowing their gear to touch the sea floor in 4 defined VME areas (refer to CMM for geographic coordinates). <input type="checkbox"/> Vessels must be eqpped with an operational VMS. <input type="checkbox"/> All vessels participating in bottom fisheries in the NW area of the CA must have a qualified observer on board. | |
| CMM 2025-06 For Bottom Fisheries And | <input type="checkbox"/> No directed fishing for coral and other VME indicator species. <input type="checkbox"/> If using pot gear and encounter 2kg of corals or 5kg of sponges in one gear retrieval, cease fishing operations and must relocate at least 1NM from encounter. <input type="checkbox"/> If using any other gear type and encounter 50kg or more of | |

| Measure | Key elements for vessel inspections (but not limited to): <i>Refer to CMM for details</i> | Inspectors Comments |
|---|---|---------------------|
| Protection of VMEs in NE Pacific Ocean | <p>corals or 350kg or more of sponges in one gear retrieval, cease fishing operations and must relocate at least 1NM from encounter.</p> <input type="checkbox"/> Bottom fishing vessels are prohibited from fishing in the Northwestern Cobb Seamount and the Northeastern Cobb Seamount. | |
| CMM 2025-07 For Chub Mackerel | <input type="checkbox"/> Vessel is not over 10,000 gross tonnage <input type="checkbox"/> Vessel must record their catch, including incidental catch of other NPFC species and any discards, and report them to authorities. | |
| CMM 2025-08 For Pacific Saury | <input type="checkbox"/> Vessel must record their catch, including incidental catch of other NPFC species and any discards, and report them to authorities. <input type="checkbox"/> Vessel must retain all Pacific Saury catch on board and are prohibited from discarding any catch. <input type="checkbox"/> Vessels are prohibited from fishing for Pacific Saury east of 170° E from June through July. | |
| 2024-09 For High Seas Boarding and Inspection Procedures For the NPFC | <input type="checkbox"/> Vessel master must accept and facilitate safe and prompt boarding and disembarkation for inspectors. <input type="checkbox"/> Vessel master must provide a safe boarding ladder. <input type="checkbox"/> Vessel master must cooperate and assist with inspection. <input type="checkbox"/> Vessel master must not assault, resist, intimidate, interfere with, or unduly obstruct or delay inspectors in performance of duties. <input type="checkbox"/> Vessel master must allow inspectors to communicate with crew and authorities, and must provide access to reasonable facilities where required. | |
| CMM 2019-10 For Sablefish in the Northeastern Pacific Ocean | <input type="checkbox"/> Vessels must have 100% Observer coverage. <input type="checkbox"/> Vessels must have operational VMS that is activated at all times. | |
| CMM 225-11 For Japanese Sardine, Neon Flying Squid, and Japanese Flying Squid | <input type="checkbox"/> Vessels must have operational VMS that is activated at all times. <input type="checkbox"/> Vessel must record their catch, including incidental catch of other NPFC species and any discards, and report them to authorities. | |
| CMM 2025-12 On the Vessel Monitoring System | <input type="checkbox"/> Vessel Monitoring System (VMS) is on board, transmitting accurate vessel identification and in tamper-proof housing. <input type="checkbox"/> VMS is operational/activated and transmitting position information every hour to the FMC or directly to the Secretariat. <input type="checkbox"/> Position is accurate <input type="checkbox"/> Vessel is only transmitting VMS data from one MTU | |
| CMM 2023-14 On Sharks | <input type="checkbox"/> Vessel has not engaged in shark finning <input type="checkbox"/> Any incidentally caught shark that is retained, transhipped, or landed, has fins naturally attached or are identifiable and reconcilable to original carcass using approved exemptions. <input type="checkbox"/> Vessel master has maintained a record of any shark catch. | |
| CMM 2024-15 On the Prevention, Reduction, And | <input type="checkbox"/> Vessel has not discarded/abandoned fishing gear. <input type="checkbox"/> Vessel has not released plastics, including synthetic ropes, fishing nets, garbage bags, or incinerator ashes from plastic waste at sea. <input type="checkbox"/> Vessel has not released oil, fuel products, oily residue, sewage, or | |

| Measure | Key elements for vessel inspections (but not limited to): <i>Refer to CMM for details</i> | Inspectors Comments |
|---------------------------------|---|----------------------------|
| Elimination of Marine Pollution | garbage. Vessel should be equipped with waste storage/containment facilities. | |
| CMM 2024-16 On Anadromous Fish | <input type="checkbox"/> Vessel has not engaged in directed or targeted fishing for anadromous fish species. <input type="checkbox"/> Vessel has not retained any anadromous species on board. <input type="checkbox"/> Any incidentally caught anadromous species are released, without delay, in a manner causing the least harm. <input type="checkbox"/> Vessel masters must maintain a record of any incidentally caught and released anadromous species. | |

ACRONYMS:

CMM: Conservation and Management Measure

NPFC: North Pacific Fisheries Commission

IRCS: International Telecommunications Radio Call Sign

TS: Transshipment

OTA: Other Transfer Activity

CA: Convention Area

FAO: Food, Agriculture, Organization of the United Nations

AN: Advanced Notification

TD: Transshipment Declaration

VME: Vulnerable Marine Ecosystems

VMS: Vessel Monitoring System

MTU: Mobile Transmitting Unit

Relevant Measures Inspected

2023-01 On Information Requirements For Vessel Registration

Relevant Measures Inspected

2024-02 To Establish A List Of Vessels Presumed To Have Carried Out Illegal, Unreported And Unregulated Fishing Activities In The Convention Area Of The North Pacific Fisheries Commission.

2025-03 On Transshipments

2016-04 On Vessels Without Nationality

2025-05 For Bottom Fisheries And Protection Of Vulnerable Marine Ecosystems In The Northwestern Pacific Ocean

2025-06 For Bottom Fisheries And Protection Of Vulnerable Marine Ecosystems In The Northeastern Pacific Ocean

2025-07 For Chub Mackerel

2025-08 For Pacific Saury

2024-09 For High Seas Boarding And Inspection Procedures For The North Pacific Fisheries Commission

2019-10 For Sablefish In The Northeastern Pacific Ocean

2025-11 For Japanese Sardine, Neon Flying Squid And Japanese Flying Squid

2025-12 On The Vessel Monitoring System (VMS)

2023-14 On Sharks

2024-15 On The Prevention, Reduction, And Elimination Of Marine Pollution

2024-16 On Anadromous Fish