



Ministry of Natural Resources,  
Environment & Tourism  
of the Republic of Palau

# Tuna Fisheries Strategic Plan 2017–2021





## Foreword

This document has been prepared to identify the vision and goals for Palau's tuna fisheries and lay out detailed actions needed to prepare the Ministry to fully implement the Palau National Marine Sanctuary by 2020

This strategic plan for Palau's tuna fisheries identifies strategies to consult industry and all stakeholders involved, develop policy, improving institutional capacity, supporting the creation of locally-based tuna operations and development of a national monitoring control and surveillance plan. I believe that the effective implementation of these strategies and associated actions will set the course for Palau to begin moving forward towards its vision of a fishery that is ecologically sustainable providing seafood for local and tourist markets, opportunities for high end recreational fishing and positive economic returns through local employment, local processing and a profitable domestic fleet.

Palau has had a long history of conserving its resources, now moving toward integration of conservation and sustainable use for the benefit of the people through its traditional prohibition ethic and most recently, the Protected Areas Network (PAN). The creation of the Sanctuary and the domestication of the tuna industry is another step for Palau to protect the environment and ensure that its residence and visitors continue to enjoy the benefits that the ocean can provide.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "F. Umiich Sengebau". The signature is stylized and cursive.

*F. Umiich Sengebau*

*Minister*

*Ministry of Natural Resources, Environment, and Tourism*

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Photo: Jonne Roriz

# Vision

Ecologically sustainable fishery providing seafood for local and tourist markets, opportunities for high end recreational fishing and positive economic returns through local employment, local processing and a profitable domestic fleet.

# Objective

The objective of this plan is to develop institutional capacity and establish a fishery management framework for Palau's fisheries that ensures:

Commercially important fish species in Palau's waters are utilised in a way that conserves fish stocks at ecologically sustainable levels into perpetuity to provide food, viable commercial and recreational fisheries and sustainable economic growth and opportunities for all Palauans.

# Outcomes and Performance Indicators

## Outcome 1 – Bycatch and Mortality

- Consolidated legal framework, national policy statement and integrated management plan on fisheries management that defines management targets and limits for commercially important species and bycatch
- Bycatch of sharks, rays, turtles and cetaceans is significantly reduced

## Outcome 2 – National food security supported through sustainable and regular tuna supply available for all Palauans and the tourist industry

- Total tuna catch landed into Palau
- Volume of locally caught tuna available for sale in the domestic market each week
- Increased per capita tuna consumption
- Reduce pressure on coastal reef

## Outcome 3 – Positive social and economic returns for the people of Palau

- Number of Palauans working in each sector of the fishing industry
- Proportion of Palauan ownership in fishing ventures
- Resource rent/access fees received by Government of Palau
- Net economic return (measures profitability across all boats)

Each of these performance indicators is measurable and will need to be collected routinely over the life of this strategy. Current baseline data will need to be established along with data collection processes.

# Strategy

To pursue the objective, the strategic plan seeks to:

1. Ensure that the tuna management framework is implemented that is compatible with Palau's conservation and sustainable fishery objectives in the marine sanctuary planning process and national fisheries policy.
2. Strengthen institutional capacity within Palau fisheries management with a clear legislative framework to effectively pursue fishery management objectives and support decision making.
3. Develop a Palau Fisheries management plan to meet fishery objectives (defined in regional harvest strategy), support locally based fleets, enhance recreational fishing opportunities and minimise bycatch of non-commercial species.
4. Support the development of locally based tuna and tuna like species fishing operations with local participation in fishing, port unloading, processing and sale of fish established.
5. Develop a national monitoring control and surveillance strategy that includes the Palau National Marine Sanctuary and the fisheries sector.

## Actions and Implementation

### 1 – Tuna management framework compatible with Palau's conservation and sustainable fishery objectives in the marine sanctuary planning process, fishing laws and existing policy position

Currently Palau has pelagic longline vessels operating across the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), however, pursuant to the newly enacted Palau National Marine Sanctuary (PNMS) Act of 2015, full implementation of the Domestic Fishing Zone will limit commercial fishing of tuna to 20 % of the EEZ by 2020.

#### *Action 1: Define and implement interim VDS management for the longline and purse seine sector 2017-2020.*

Management of the longline sector is adopting the vessel day scheme approach that limits the number of days that can be fished to a regionally determined level. Currently exports are permitted but this could be removed post 2020 in favour of a scaled down longline sector that supplies the domestic market only. This plan sets out the development of a fisheries management plan as a key deliverable that would apply from 2020. However, to achieve this existing fisheries management, commitments need to be supported through to 2020. Purse seine vessels are not currently fishing in Palau and Palau sells its allocation of days under the Purse Seine VDS to other countries. There is a need for clarity around the purse seine policy and a key action under this plan is the proposal to develop a national fisheries policy over the next two years. This will be discussed more under action 3 and will help guide the development of a fishery management plan for post 2020.

#### *Action 2: Review Palau's fisheries legislative framework*

Palau's legislative framework and implementing regulation for national fisheries management needs to be collectively reviewed and re-assessed to identify the most efficient and effective legislative structure. This could involve streamlining existing laws under one fisheries Act.

## 2 – Develop institutional capacity within the Ministry of Natural Resources, Environment & Tourism with a clear legislative framework

The Ministry of Natural Resources, Environment and Tourism has been through many changes over the years as policy and focus changes over different Administrations. There is immediate need for an institutional mechanism to strengthen implementation of the current and additional regulatory and management functions of the Ministry in regards to fisheries and marine resources.

Palau's fisheries laws exist in various laws, regulations and executive orders which could be simplified through the implementation of one coherent fisheries Act. Palau's legislative framework and implementing regulation for national fisheries management needs to be collectively reviewed, re-assessed and refined into one comprehensive law defining clear policy, development, regulation, and management goals.

To enable development of institutional capacity within the fisheries management and support a clear legislative framework, there are four key actions:

### *Action 1: Organizational Restructuring & Operational Management*

Review and revision of EO381 is urgently required to further clarify the role of the Bureau and its Divisions in line with the current fisheries framework and the broader Palau fisheries, international and regional standard for national fisheries authorities. Develop operations manuals for all the established processes and services to the public for better governance, greater transparency to decision making and for information sharing. Develop reporting process and template where necessary to meet the national, regional and international reporting requirements.

### *Action 2: Assess current staffing and capacity needs, recruit and train*

Immediate need to hire Division Chief to manage the daily operations and management of the Division. Conduct a review of the organisational structure of the Bureau and immediately fill the current vacant positions required to support the management of the Division and the interim implementation of the Palau National Marine Sanctuary. Develop a training plan for 2020 and beyond to ensure continued program enhancing staff knowledge and skills and ensure staff are fully equipped to carry out their duties and functions.

### *Action 3: Define current funding needs and seek funding for fisheries management*

Identify ongoing funding for fisheries management. Secure funding for fisheries management cost most especially core positions required and office consumables and office equipment upgrade. Assessment of existing commercial offshore fishing tax, licensing, penalties and fine systems and consider potential increase that can be allocated to fisheries management.

### 3 – Develop a tuna fishery management plan to meet fishery objectives (defined in regional harvest strategy), support locally based fleets, enhance recreational fishing opportunities and minimise bycatch of non-commercial species

With the existing commitment for the implementation of the Palau National Marine Sanctuary from 2020, current management measures will continue under interim arrangements that are addressed under strategy 1 (above). The actions outlined here are intended to support the development of a fisheries management plan to be implemented from 2020.

This is aligned with the current planned implementation of the marine sanctuary. Currently tuna longline is allowed throughout Palau and is managed through limited entry. From 2020 it is envisaged that all commercial fishing within Palau's EEZ and outside of 12 nautical miles will be constrained to an area equivalent to 20% of Palau's EEZ. This is intended as a conservation and management measure to protect the marine resources with Palau's pelagic marine environment.

To enable the development of a fisheries management plan, post 2020, there are three key actions.

#### *Action 1: Conduct a biological and economic assessment of tuna fishery options for Palau post 2020.*

This would consider the available area, harvestable biomass, market opportunities, employment and costs to determine what models would be viable and meet the fisheries and conservation objectives for Palau. This does not need to be limited to commercial only but could include recreational charter fishing and other sustainable uses of the tuna resource.

#### *Action 2: Develop a national fisheries and marine resource policy*

Based on the outcomes of the review, a national fisheries and marine resource policy needs to be developed that sets out binding objectives, measures and reference points to support the conservation and management vision. This policy should ideally encompass the full marine sector and seek to harmonise management of the marine environment and resources.

#### *Action 3: Develop and implement a Palau Fisheries and Marine Resources Management Plan for post 2020.*

Guided by the national marine sector policy, a Palau Fisheries Management Plan will be developed. This would ideally cover both coastal and offshore fisheries. The management plan would include fishery management objectives, procedures for granting fishing rights and licences, management measures for restricting catch and effort to target levels within parameters agreed in the national fisheries and marine resource policy.



#### 4 – Support the development of locally based fishing operations with local participation fishing, port unloading, processing and sale of fish.

##### *Actions 1: Develop a national policy on fisheries development as part of an overall national fisheries policy to address:*

- Development and advancement of options for domesticating Palau's tuna fishery – costal fishers targeting nearshore anchored FADs, testing innovative gears and vessels, joint venture with traditional longline vessels, value added tuna products export, small-scale canning & smoking options, dockside infrastructure and operations
- Development options for the domestic fishery, including the type of vessels to be utilised licensing policy, licensing fees and marketing options.
- Infrastructure support requirements particularly the need for a wharf with a space for fish storage.
- Financial support, including financing to enable Palauans to participate in the commercial fishing industry.
- Taxation including what taxation incentives might apply to assist Palauans develop the fishery.
- Ownership and equity in fishing operations including deciding what role, if any, foreign investors might have in developing the commercial fishery
- Recreational fishing including the extent to which this fishery is regulated and licensed.
- FAD Assessment to determine potential expansion or creation of FAD network to support alternative livelihood for costal fishers

##### *Action 2: Consult with industry on options on what is viable and how to fish the area open to commercial fishery*

- Prepare a development plan based on the outcome of the market survey, the SPC study on the productivity and expected catches from the 20% area and an economic analysis of the viability of the fishery.
- Assess the impact on the viability for the domestic industry if export of high grade fish is permitted. As it stands exports of fish from the commercial fishery will be prohibited post 2020. However, it is uncertain whether the domestic market can absorb all the catch from the commercial fishery. In addition, it is uncertain whether the domestic price for fish would match the price that could be obtained on export markets.
- Assess the impact on the viability of the industry if Palau domestic vessels are permitted to fish in neighbouring EEZs and/or high seas with only 20% of the EEZ open to commercial fishing

## 5 - Develop a national Monitoring Control and Surveillance strategy that includes the Palau National Marine Sanctuary and the fisheries sector

The current MCS strategy for the Palau National Marine Sanctuary comprehensively sets out how the marine sanctuary can be monitored but does not include the tools on board and available within the fisheries sector.

*Action 1: Develop fishery monitoring, compliance and enforcement program for the interim period and post 2020 and ensure it is aligned with existing MCS objectives for the marine sanctuary*

Given the high costs involved in monitoring such large areas of water, there is an opportunity for greater efficiency if a national monitoring and enforcement program is developed to incorporate both marine parks, fisheries and all marine sector activity.

*Action 2: Improve the efficiency, reliability of monitoring systems and data collection*

Both electronic monitoring (EM) and electronic reporting (ER) are emerging tools that can improve the efficiency and reliability of monitoring fishing vessels. They are actively being trialled with good progress. The optimal approach for the longer term is to ensure that all longline vessels have ER and EM systems installed.

- All longline vessels to have full e-reporting from late 2018
- All longline vessels to have mandatory e-monitoring with the commencement of the proposed tuna management plan in 2020.
- Biological data needs will be met through the use of human observers and port samplers.

## Capacity and Resources

Steps within each action including staffing resources and financial considerations are set out in Appendix 1.

# Appendix 1

## Implementation Workplan

### Strategy 1: Tuna management framework is compatible with Palau's conservation and sustainable fishery objectives in the Marine Sanctuary planning process, fishing laws and existing policy position

No	Actions	Priority and status	Timeframe	Lead role	Comment
<i>Action 1: Define and implement interim VDS management for the longline and purse seine sector 2017-2020</i>					
1	Implement PNMS Interim Fisheries Regulation until 2020	In Place until Dec 2019	Expires in 2019	MNRET	Implementation of actions covered in components below
2	Define and publish LLVDS Regulation to enter force after the Interim Regulation	Medium priority, draft has been completed - needs to be revisited and submitted to OEK	Consider by 2020 or sooner	MNRET	
<i>Action 2: Review Palau's fisheries legislative framework</i>					
1	Review existing fisheries and related laws to ensure compatibility with the PNMS Act and its implementing interim regulation and recommend potential amendments	High priority, has not started	2018	MNRET	Build on existing FAO work
2	Review Palau's fisheries legislative framework needs to be collectively reviewed and re-assessed to identify the most efficient and effective legislative structure. This could involve streamlining existing laws under one fisheries Act.	High priority, has not started	2018	MNRET	Build on existing FAO/FFA work



Photo: Jonne Roriz

## Strategy 2: Develop Institutional Capacity within the Ministry of Natural Resource, Environment & Tourism with clear legislative framework

No	Actions	Priority and status	Timeframe	Lead role	Comment
<i>Action 1: Organizational Restructuring &amp; Operational Management</i>					
1	Review and revise of EO381 to clarify the role of the Bureau and its Divisions in line with the current fisheries framework and the broader Palau fisheries, international and regional standard for national fisheries authorities.	High	Dec-17	MNRET	Build on existing FAO/FFA work
2	Communicate the organizational structure to all staff to ensure they become familiar with the structure and flow of work.	High	Dec-17	MNRET	
3	Develop operations manuals for all the established processes and services to the public for better governance, greater transparency to decision making and for information sharing.	High	Dec-17	DOFM	
4	Develop reporting process and template to meet the national, regional and international reporting requirements	High	Dec-17	DOFM	
<i>Action 2: Assess current staffing and capacity needs, recruit and train</i>					
1	As soon as possible, hire Division Chief to manage the daily operations and management of the Division.	High	ASAP 3–6 months	MNRET	Build from last FFA Institutional Capacity Assessment
2	Fill the current vacant positions required to support the management of Division and the interim implementation of the Palau National Marine Sanctuary.	High	ASAP 3–6 months	MNRET	Build from last FFA Institutional Capacity Assessment
3	Develop a training plan to ensure enhancing staff knowledge and skills and ensure staff are fully equipped to carry out their duties and functions that includes but not limited to the following:	Medium	Dec-17	MNRET	Build from last FFA Institutional Capacity Assessment
<i>Action 3: Define current funding needs and seek funding for fisheries management</i>					
1	Identify potential source of funding to support implementation of the interim PNMS Act regulation, fisheries management cost (core positions, office consumables, equipment upgrade)	High	ASAP 3–6 months	MNRET	
2	Conduct feasibility study for cost recovery from licences and trading of vessel day post 2020, fisheries related taxes, fisheries related penalties, fines and fees.	Medium	2018	MNRET	

### Strategy 3: Develop a tuna management plan to meet fishery objectives (defined in regional harvest strategy), support locally based fleets, enhance recreational fishing opportunities and minimise bycatch of non-commercial species

No	Actions	Priority and status	Timeframe	Lead role	Comment
<i>Action 1: Conduct a biological and economic assessment of tuna fishery options for Palau post 2020</i>					
1	FFA economics and development team and SPC scientists to conduct economic assessment of various fisheries management options	High	Mid 2017	FFA/SPC/ TNC	
<i>Action 2: Develop a national fisheries and marine resources policy</i>					
1	Seek Ministerial advice on scope and terms of reference	High	ASAP 3–6 months	MNRET	
2	Organize a stakeholder meeting/workshop to identify policy goals, outcomes and development approach	High	Second half 2017	MNRET	
3	Task a policy development team to liaise with stakeholders and develop draft policy	Medium	Late 2017–2018	MNRET	
4	Seek Ministerial review; amend and implement policy	Medium	2018	MNRET	
<i>Action 3: Develop and implement Palau Fisheries and Marine Resources Management Plan for post 2020</i>					
1	Consider outcomes of economic review and objectives of National fisheries policy to define Fisheries Management Plan Scope and objectives	Medium	2018	MNRET	
2	Organize stakeholder meetings to refine objectives and scope of management plan	Medium	2018	MNRET	
3	Task fishery managers and legal team to develop draft management plan for consideration by the Minister	Medium	2018	MNRET	
4	Seek Ministerial review; amend and implement management plan	Medium	2018	MNRET	
5	Continue to implement best practices mitigation measures for protected species in accordance with WCPFC CMM as well as the best available scientific advice	High	2017 on	MNRET	

## Strategy 4: Support the development of locally based fishing operations with local participation in fishing, port unloading, processing and sale of fish

No	Actions	Priority and status	Timeframe	Lead role	Comment
<i>Action 1: Develop a national policy on fisheries development as part of an overall national fisheries policy to address</i>					
1	Develop and advance options for domesticating Palau's tuna fishery – costal fishers targeting nearshore anchored FADs, testing innovative gears and vessels, joint venture with traditional longline vessels, value added tuna products export, small-scale canning & smoking options, dockside infrastructure and operations	High	2018–2019	MNRET/ TNC	
2	Identify development options for the domestic fishery, including the type of vessels to be utilised licensing policy, licensing fees and marketing options.	High	Mid 2018– 2018	MNRET	
3	Assess infrastructure support requirements particularly the need for a wharf with a space for fish storage	Medium	Mid 2018– 2018	MNRET	
4	Consider recreational fishing opportunities including the extent to which this fishery is regulated and licensed	High	ASAP 3–6 months	MNRET	
5	Consider financial support and/or taxation incentives to assist Palauan's develop the fishery	Medium	2018	MNRET	
<i>Action 2: Consult with industry on options on what is viable and how to fish the area open to commercial fishery</i>					
1	Seek views of broad fisheries stakeholders through survey	High, start after FFA economic survey	second half 2017		
2	Prepare a development plan based on the outcome of the market survey, the SPC study on the productivity and expected catches from the 20% area and an economic analysis of the viability of the fishery	Medium/High	2017/ early 2018	MNRET	
3	Assess the impact on the viability for the domestic industry if export of high grade fish is/is not permitted and if they are allowed to fish in neighbouring EEZs and/or the high seas.	Medium/High	2017/ early 2018		

## Strategy 5: Develop a national Monitoring Control Surveillance strategy that includes the Palau National Marine Sanctuary and the fisheries sector

No	Actions	Priority and status	Timeframe	Lead role	Comment
<i>Action 1: Develop fishery monitoring, compliance and enforcement program for the interim period and post 2020 and ensure it is aligned with existing MCS objectives for the marine parks</i>					
1	Seek Ministerial direction on developing a monitoring and surveillance strategy that applies across all of Palau's waters	High	ASAP 3–6 months	MNRET	
2	Organize meetings and consultation with stakeholders to define objectives, strategies, actions and resources	High	Second half 2017		
3	Cross agency drafting team to produce and implement a national MCS strategy and enforcement program	Medium	2018	MNRET	
<i>Action 2: Improve the efficiency, reliability of monitoring systems and data collection</i>					
1	TNC and MNRET continue ER and EM trials	Underway, High	2017	MNRET	
2	Support mandatory use of ER on all longline fishing boats from 2018	High	2017–2018	MNRET	
3	Support EM so it is phased in across all longline fishing boats by 2020	Medium	2017–2019	MNRET	



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