

# Conservation & Management of Marine Mammals in the Pacific Islands Region



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# Conservation & Management of Marine Mammals in the Pacific Islands Region

## Overview



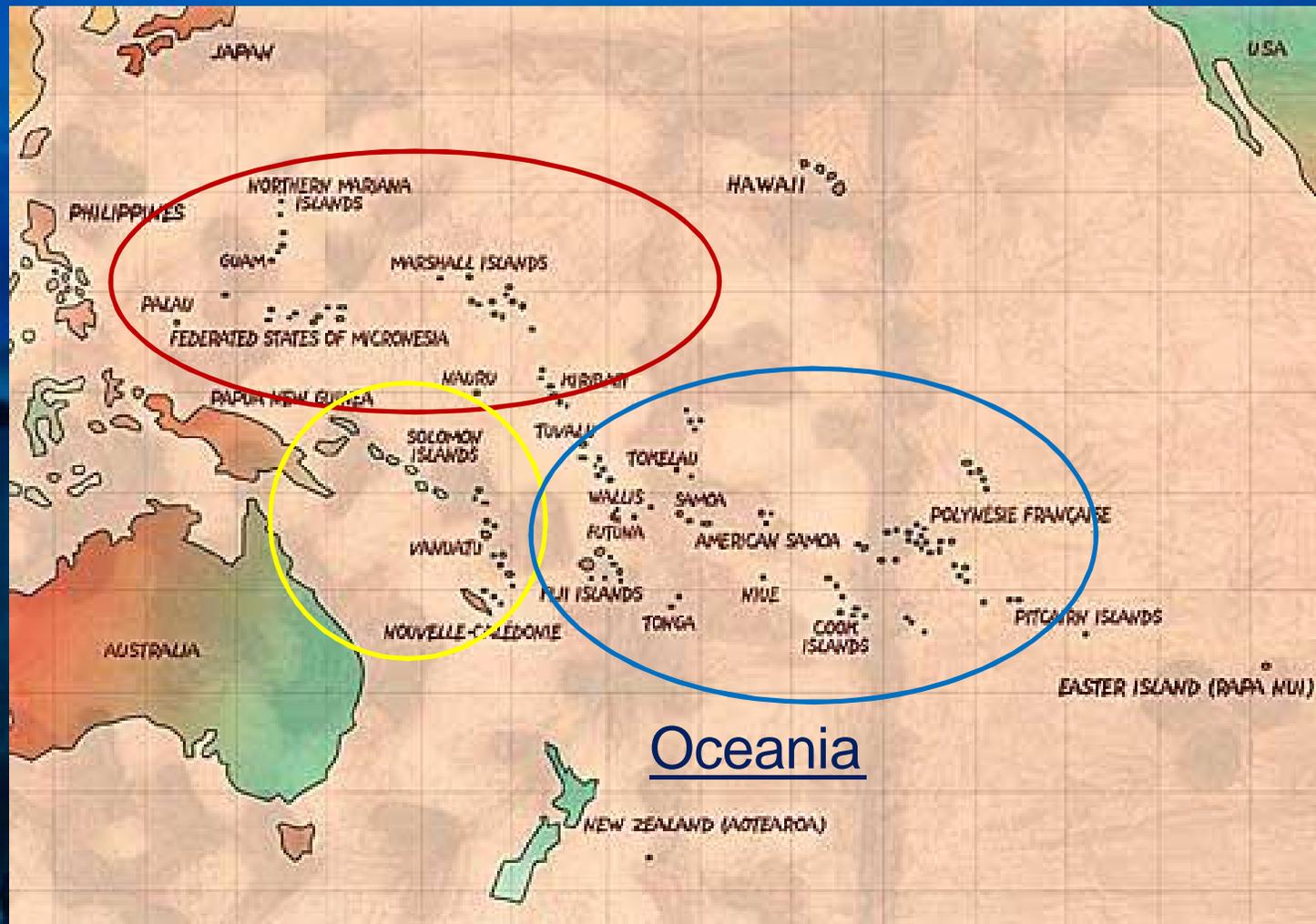
- “ Pacific Cultural and geopolitical context
- “ Status of key species - SPWRC
- “ Regional action plans . SPREP WDAP/CMS
- “ National Sanctuaries and their management
- “ Whale watching in the Pacific
- “ Regional whale & dolphin watching guidelines.
- “ Pacific Partnerships
- “ Lessons learned

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Micronesia

Melanesia

Polynesia



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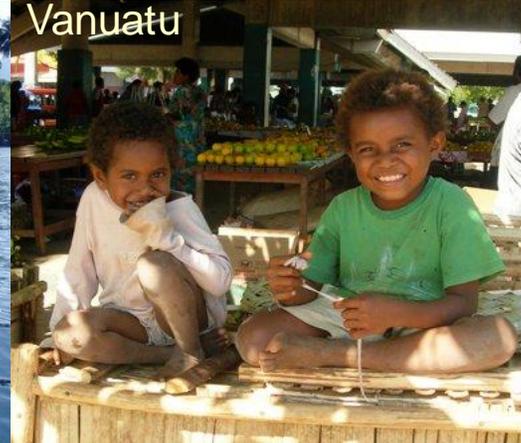
Samoa



Papua New Guinea



Vanuatu



Tonga



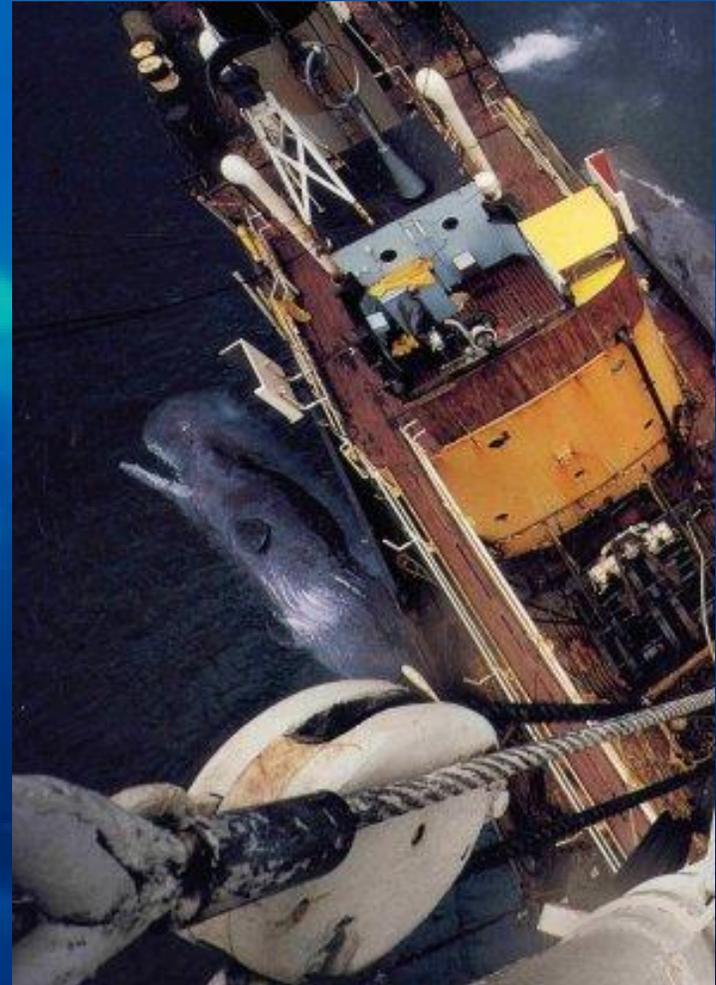
## Geo-political context

- “ Very diverse cultural values of marine mammals across the region
- “ IWC membership in the region is 6 Pacific Island countries (Kiribati, Nauru, Palau, Tuvalu, Solomon Is, Marshall Is) + Australia, New Zealand
- “ However across the region whales mostly  $\neq$  apuq
- “ 10 national whale sanctuaries = 18 million km<sup>2</sup>

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## Whaling in Oceania

- “ 1788 . 1978
- “ Concentrated on humpback and sperm whales
- “ 60,000 humpbacks killed in the South Pacific
- “ Massive illegal whaling campaign by Soviets
- “ Humpbacks reduced to a few hundred animals by 1964
- “ Now estimated 13,000 across Oceania
- “ 10,000 East coast of Australia
- “ 3,000 throughout Pacific Islands



*Sperm whales,  
Australia, 1970's*

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## Other Threats



- “ Boat traffic;
  - . shipping,
  - . unregulated tourism,
  - . seismic operations
- “ Fisheries interactions
  - . Entanglement,
  - . depredation,
  - . by-catch
- “ Live capture
- “ Pollution

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## South Pacific Whale Research Consortium

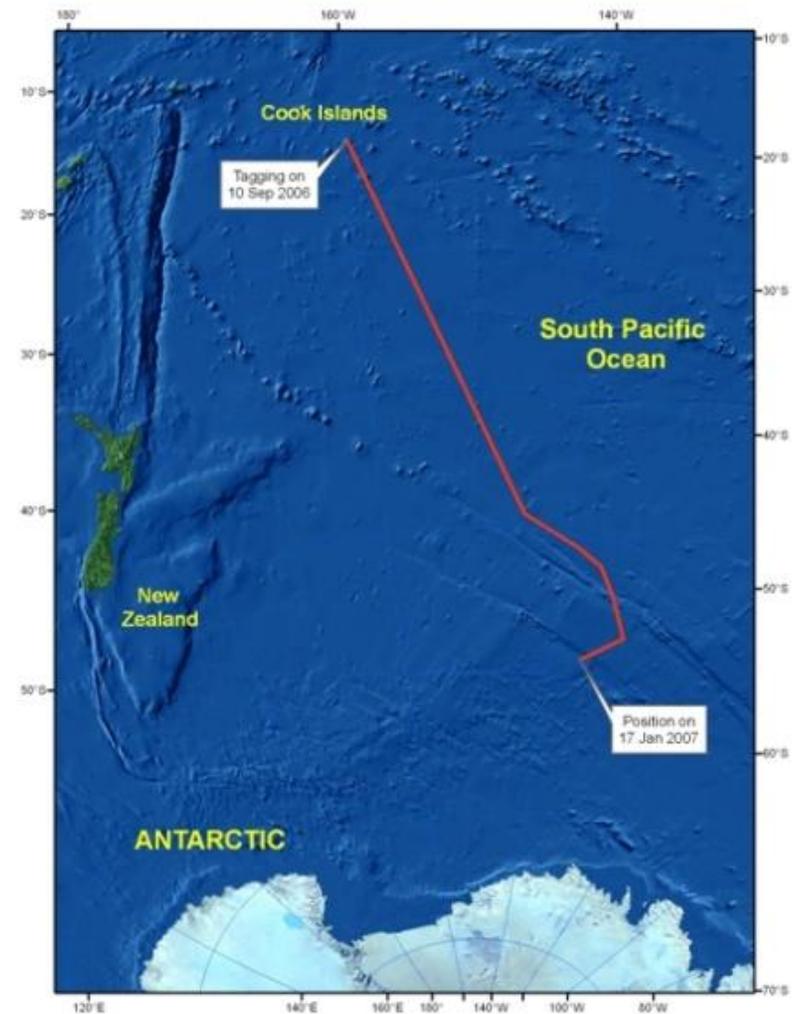


- “ 10 years researching marine mammals across 14 PI countries
- “ Conservation and science working groups
- “ Underpin regional action plans and CMS agreements
- “ Comprehensive assessment of humpback whales in Oceania
- “ National whale sanctuaries
- “ Capacity building

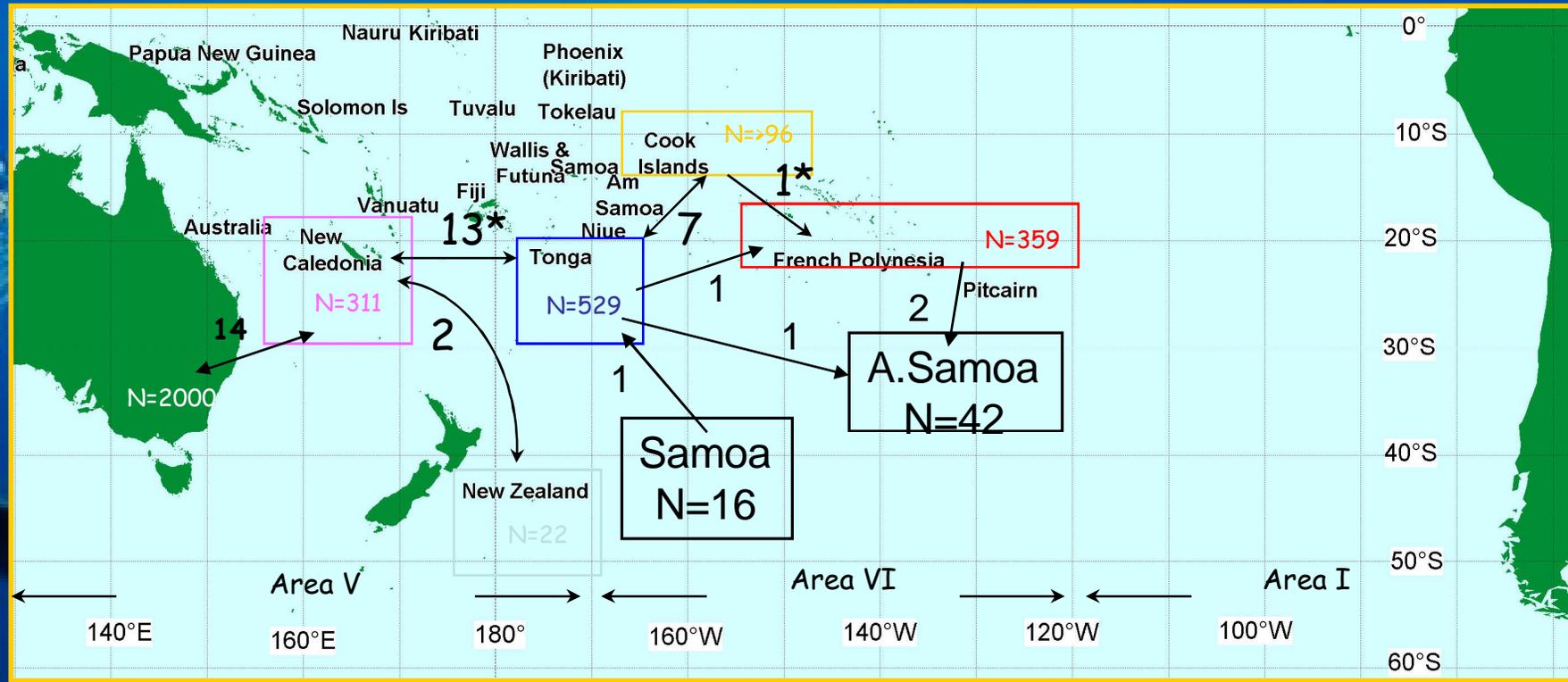


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## South Pacific Whale Research Consortium



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Movements of humpback whales in Oceania

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## Oceania Humpbacks

- “ 2008 IUCN Red List Endangered status (work of SPWRC)
- “ Marine tourism focus and economic life line of many Pacific Islands
- “ Trans-boundary migration and little known about population status = difficult to manage
- “ Dedicated funding??
- “ SPWRC & SPREP with support from the Australian Govt, PEW and IFAW are developing a recovery plan for Oceania humpbacks in April 2010



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- ” 32 million km<sup>2</sup>***
- ” 30 species***
- ” Status of most species unknown!***



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## Regional Frameworks for Marine Mammal Management & Conservation

1. SPREP Whale and Dolphin Action Plan (2008 . 2012)
2. CMS MoU for the Conservation of Marine Mammals and their Habitats in the Pacific Islands Region
3. South Pacific Whale Research Consortium (Conservation Committee & Sci Committee)

” Supported and partnered by NGO ☪



# Conservation & Management of Marine Mammals in the Pacific Islands Region

## 1. SPREP . Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Program

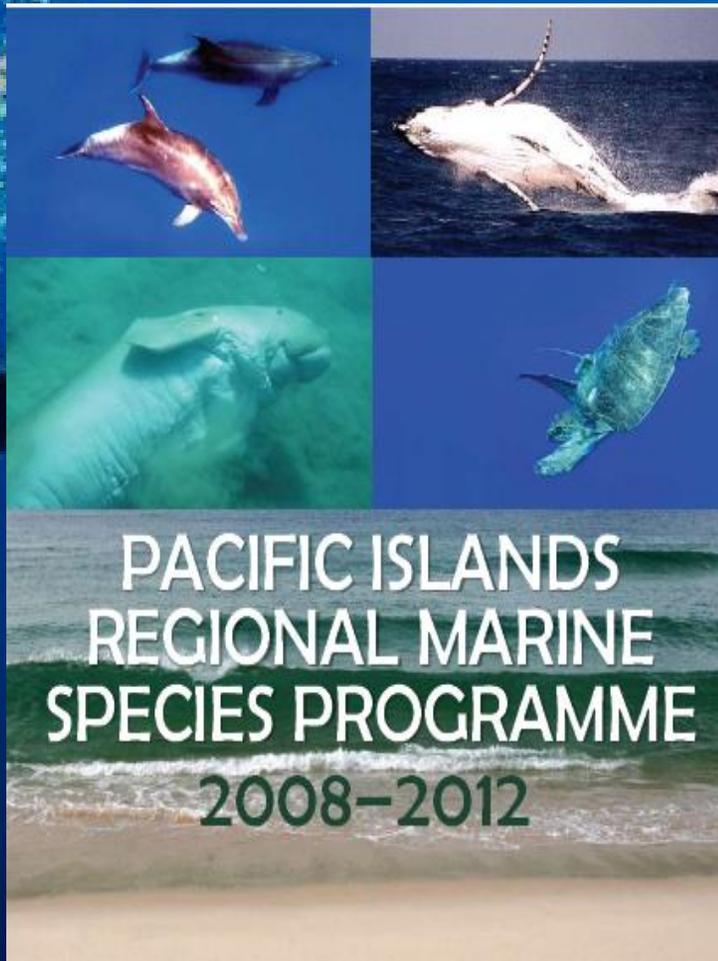


- “ Pacific Islands region covers 32 million sq km, only 2% is land covered
- “ 25 member IGO
- “ Protection of the natural heritage of the Pacific islands region through conservation and sustainable management



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## SPREP Regional Marine Species Programme 2008-2012



### Regional Action Plans for:

- “ Dugongs
- “ Marine Turtles
- “ Whales & Dolphins
- “ Sharks (in development)
- “ Developed by Govt Members & NGO Partners
- “ Endorsed by Council
- “ Implementation collective responsibility member states, SPREP, partner NGOs and IGOs, and private sector

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## Whale & Dolphin Action Plan 2008-2012

### Themes, Objectives & Actions

#### Themes (9):

- 1: National, Regional and International Collaboration and Cooperation;
  - 2: Threat Reduction;
  - 3: Ecosystem / Habitat Protection;
  - 4: Capacity Building;
  - 5: Education and Awareness;
  - 6: Cultural Significance and Value;
  - 7: Legislation and Policy;
  - 8: Research and Monitoring;
  - 9: Whale and Dolphin-based Tourism
- 
- A photograph of two dolphins swimming underwater. The dolphins are dark in color, possibly a species of pilot whale or similar, and are captured in a side profile view. They are swimming towards the right of the frame. The background is a deep blue, suggesting an underwater environment. The lighting is somewhat dim, highlighting the sleek bodies of the dolphins.

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## 2. CMS Mou For The Conservation Of Cetaceans And Their Habitats In The Pacific Islands Region



2<sup>nd</sup> Meeting of parties, Auckland 09



Tuqqa Samoa Director Environment

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## CMS Pacific Cetacean MoU

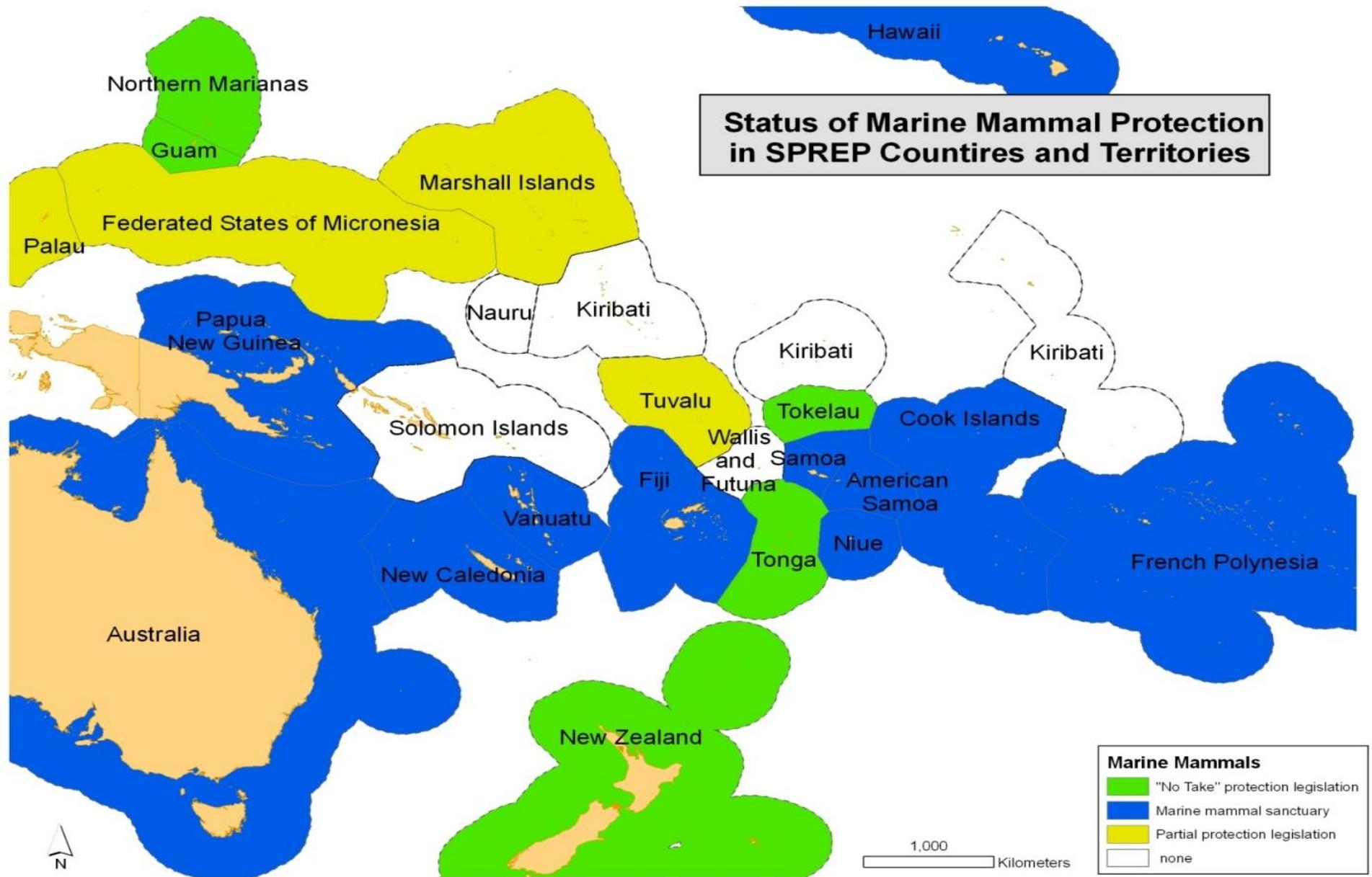
- “ Negotiations started in 2004, involved 3 regional meetings
- “ Opened for signing in 2006
- “ 10 SPREP member countries & 6 collaborating organizations have signed
- “ Legally non-binding
- “ Covers all species of Cetaceans
- “ MoU Action Plan is the SPREP regional W DAP

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A photograph of a tropical island with lush green vegetation and turquoise water. The island is covered in dense green trees and shrubs, with a small white sandy beach visible at the base. The water is a vibrant turquoise color, and the sky is blue with scattered white clouds.

**National Whale Sanctuaries**

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## Sanctuary Management:

- “ Based on local needs, capacity , situation
- “ Involvement of communities, traditional owners, and different stakeholders in the planning and management process
- “ Sanctuary Plan of Management . Niue, Samoa, Fiji

Niue



Samoa



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## Whale Watching in the Pacific Islands



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## Opportunities

“ The growth potential and economic benefits of cetacean-based tourism has proved an effective argument against the killing of whales



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## Pacific Whale Watching Report



- “ Growth **45%** a year 1998 - 2005
- “ Experiencing strong annual growth far in excess of annual regional tourism growth of 7.3%.
- “ Estimated value of industry **USD \$21 million per year**



Pacific Islands  
Whale Watch Tourism  
A Region Wide Review of Activity

An IFAW Report

April 2008



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## Countries Involved and Level of Development



Established industry: Tonga, New Caledonia, French Polynesia, Guam

Developing: Niue, Cook Islands, Fiji,

Mainly opportunistic: Samoa, Vanuatu, PNG, and American Samoa.

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## Swim with Programs

- “ Tonga, Niue, French Polynesia
- Most operators involved in other seasonal activities eg Fishing, diving, kayaking
- Regulations variable

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## Compliance is better than enforcement



New Caledonia

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## Issues relating to growth of the whale watching industry

Impact on cetacean populations

Demand for responsible tourism

Legislation of regulations and sanctuaries

Need for scientific research

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## Issues for Consideration

- “ The growth of whale watching in the PIR has continued rapidly.
- “ The management of the industry (and its related reputation) will be critical for the long term future of cetacean-based tourism in the PIR
- “ There is a growing demand from whale watch tourists that tour operators behave ethically and provide a high level of education
- “ Support for research into impacts of the industry and resulting management responses are an essential tool in management process.

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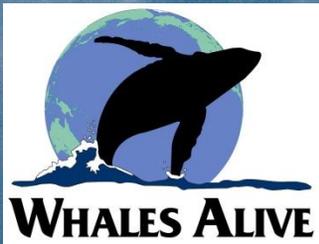
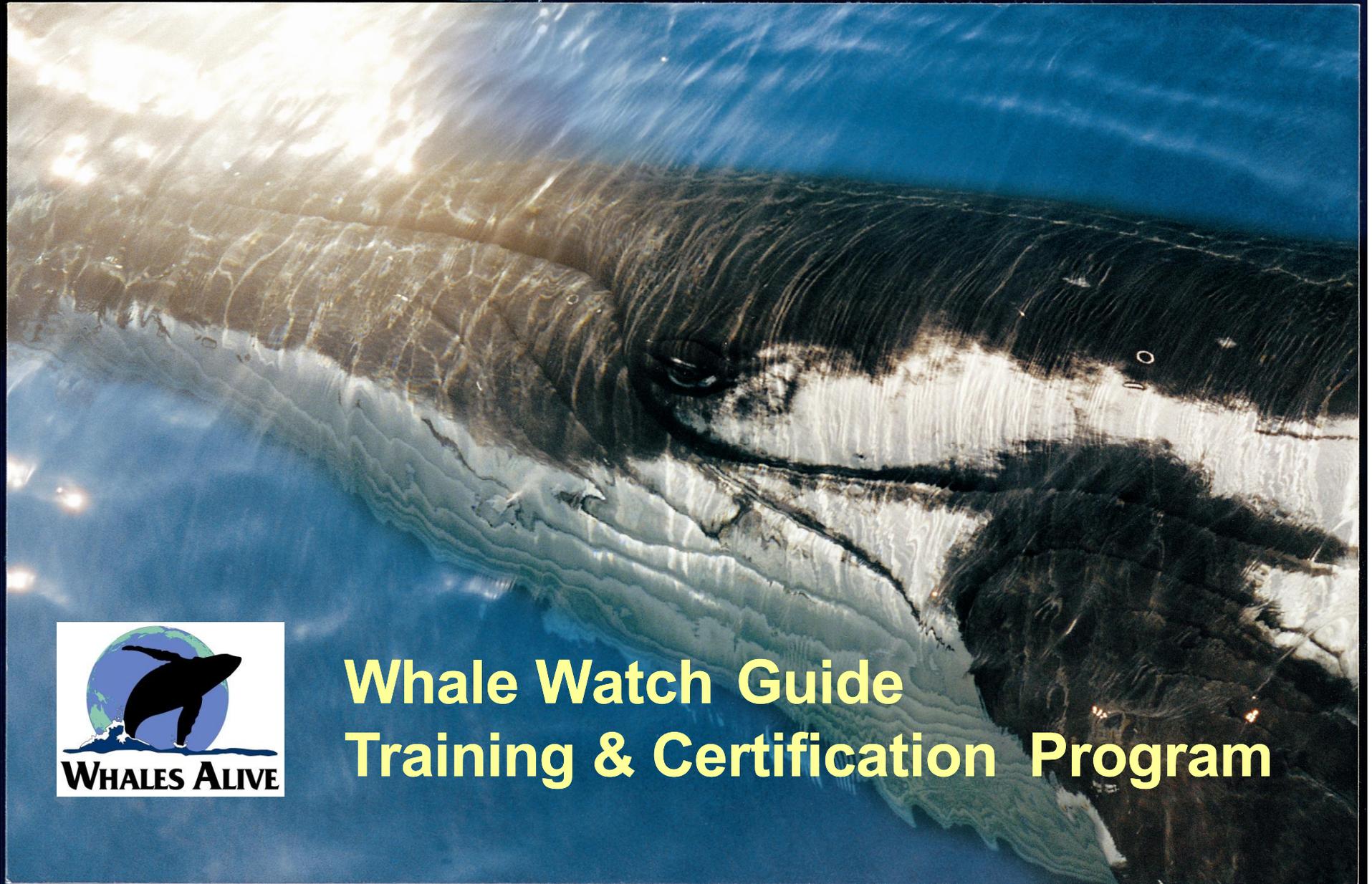
## Special Individuals

- “ Minister of Environment - Special approach distances or regulations may apply
- “ State and federal waters - different jurisdiction
- “ Media frenzy, boats, helicopters ÷ .



Migaloo

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## Whale Watch Guide Training & Certification Program

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## Whale watch guide certification program

- “ Internationally, guidelines promote the practice of education on whale watching vessels and the training and accreditation of guides;
- “ In some whale watching countries, such as Tonga (Vavaʻu) & Australia, it is a license requirement of whale watching operators and their guides to undergo specific whale watch guide training such as the one developed by Whale Alive
- “ The program is consistent with best practice and meets the skill needs of whale watch operators and guides.
- “ The program also involves training for the Govt managers of the industry to aid enforcement

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## Sessions in classroom and on the Water



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## Operator Training



Australia



Dominica



Vanuatu



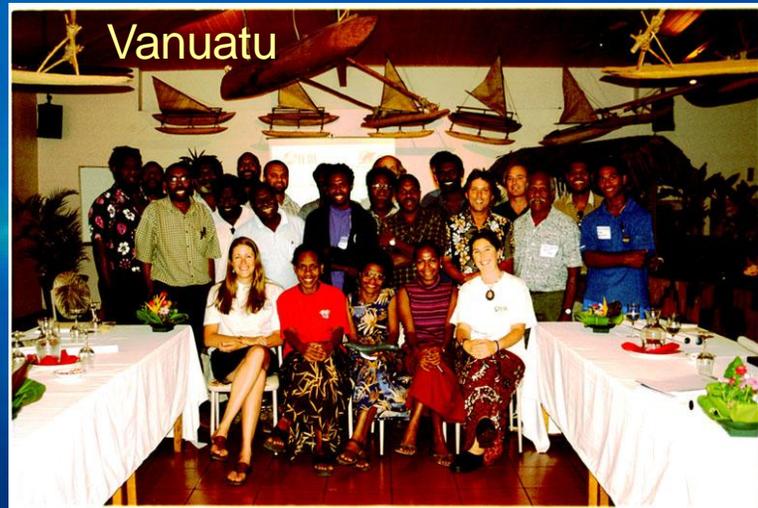
New Caledonia



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## National Marine Mammal Workshops

Samoa



Tonga



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## Pacific Whale & Dolphin Watching Working Group

- Auckland, New Zealand, April 08
- Attended by 35 delegates from 13 countries & territories



IFAW  
www.ifaw.org



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## Pacific Whale & Dolphin Watching Working Group

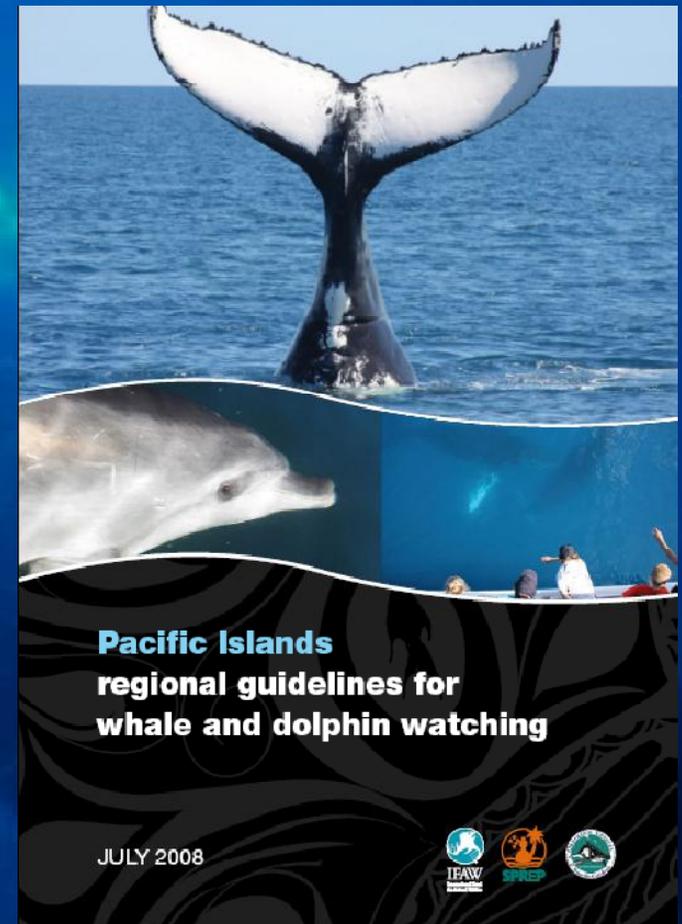
- 2 days of presentations and working groups
- 1 day on the water
- Developed Pacific Islands Regional Guidelines for Whale & Dolphin Watching



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## Pacific Islands Regional Guidelines for Whale & Dolphin Watching

- “ Draft guidelines circulated to all stakeholders 1 month before working group
- “ Based on harmonization of global best practice and regional examples
- “ Designed to be a template for Govt allowing for adaptation for local conditions and industry framework
- “ 2 Sections:
  - . Management considerations
  - . Guidelines for interaction

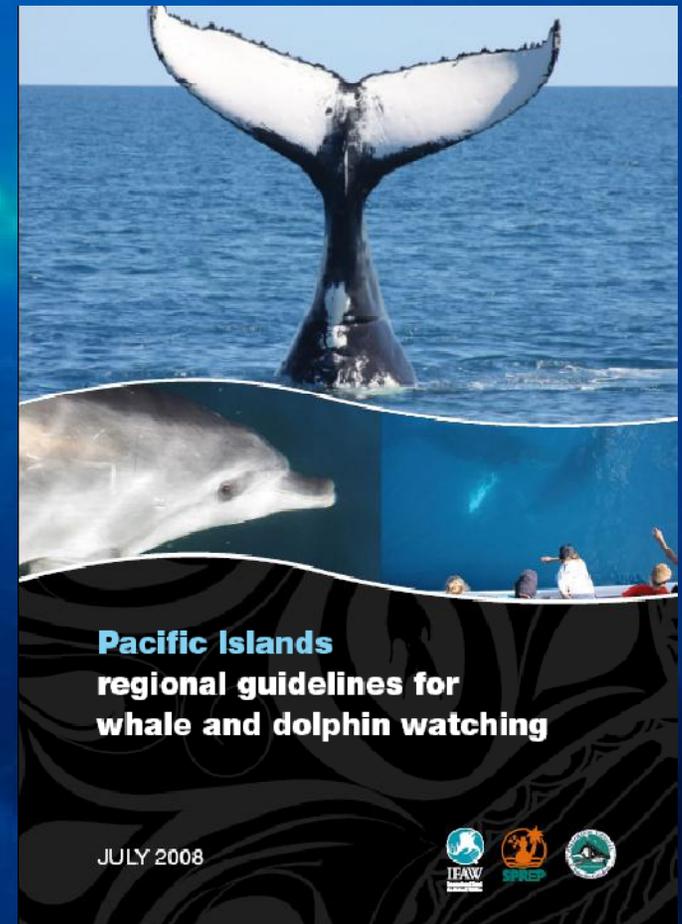


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## Pacific Islands Regional Guidelines for Whale & Dolphin Watching

### Overarching Principles:

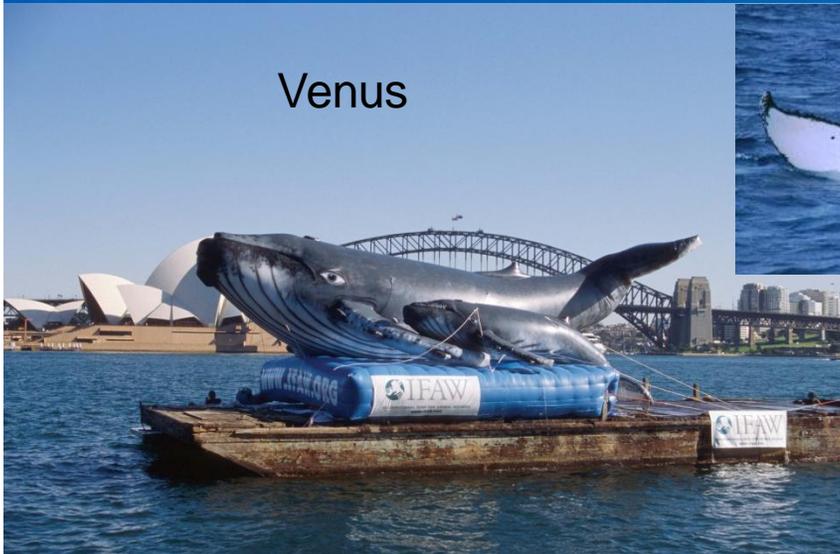
- “ Ensuring the conservation of cetaceans and their habitats in the Pacific Islands region.
- “ Ensuring a precautionary approach to the development and management of whale watching in the region.
- “ Minimizing the impact of whale watching activities in the region.
- “ Promoting and respecting cultural values of whales, dolphins and the marine environment to Pacific Island peoples.
- “ Providing long-term economic benefits and opportunities to local communities.



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## Outreach & education

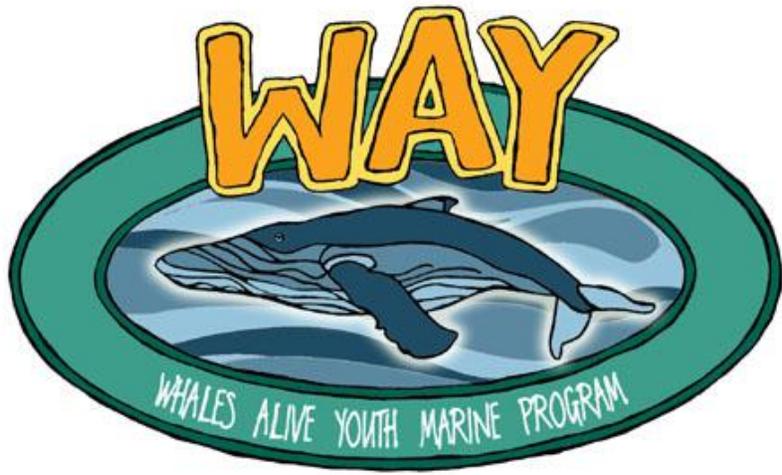
Venus



Tonga



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## Pacific Partnerships

- " IGO\$, NGO\$ researchers, Governments
- " SPREP
- " SPWRC
- " IFAW
- " Whales Alive
- " PEW
- " WDCCS
- " WWF



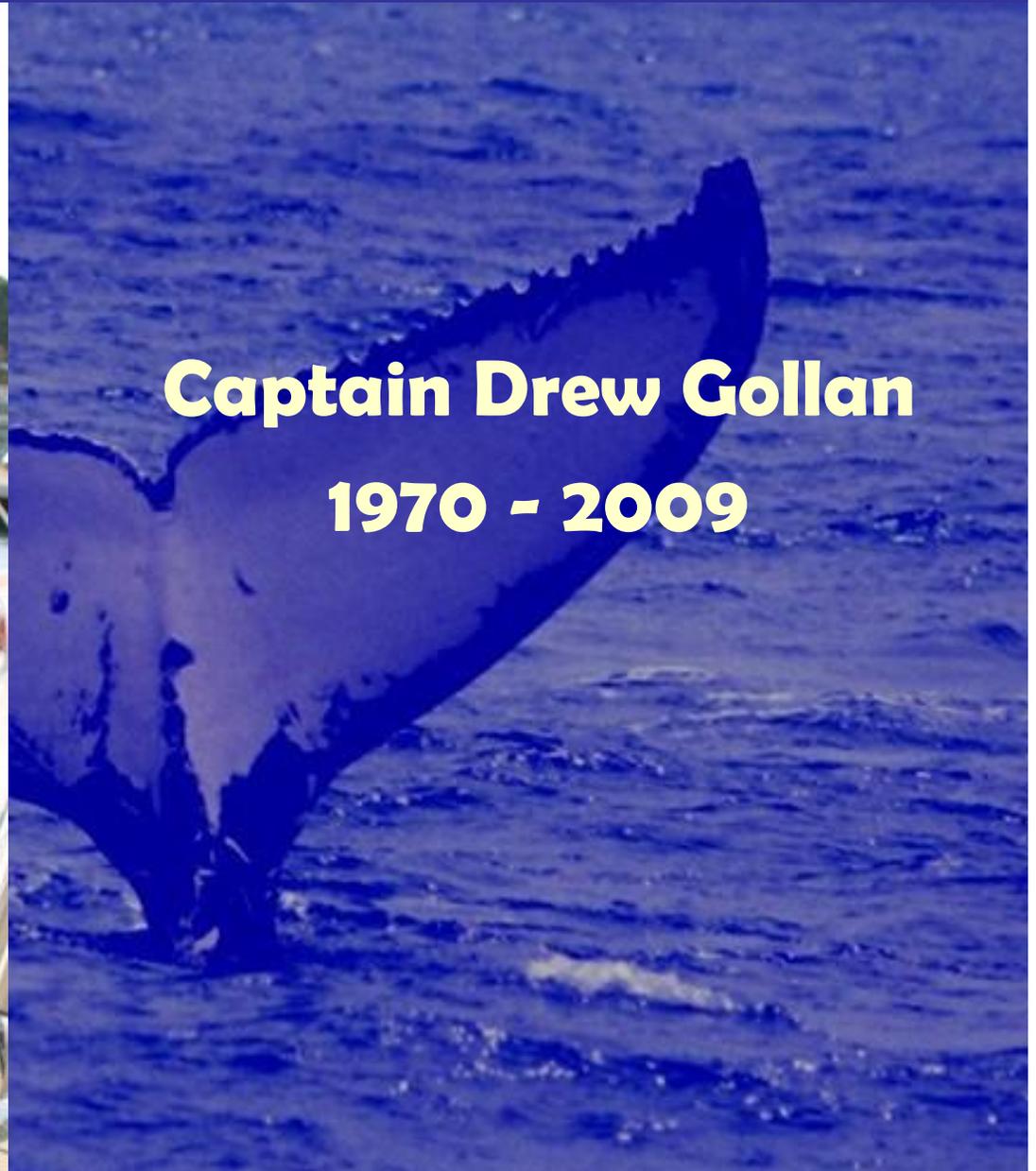
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## Some Lessons learned

- “ PIR has all the tools available to be an example in the management of marine mammal conservation and tourism . however often 1 step forward, 2 steps back
- “ Taking a regional approach to management provides many benefits when there is lack of funds and capacity
- “ Challenge: to implement at a national level
- “ Role of IGOs and NGOs critical in supporting Gov t and community to implement regional and national Action Plans

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**Captain Drew Gollan**  
**1970 - 2009**

Conservation & Management of Marine Mammals in the  
Pacific Islands Region

# Malo Aupito Lahi

