



CCSBT-EC/2510/15

Draft Ecologically Related Species and Bycatch Action Plan (EC Agenda item 9.3)

1. Introduction

In June 2024, following the Action Plan of the CCSBT Strategic Plan for 2023 – 2028, the 15th meeting of the Ecologically Related Species Working Group (ERSWG 15) considered the draft ERS and Bycatch Action Plan, which focus on Ecologically Related Species (ERS) other than seabirds.

ERSWG 15 agreed to:

- (1) As a part of ERSWG Workplan, consider and develop a list of non-target shark species to be covered by this plan at the ERS Tech 2025 meeting; and
- (2) Recommend that CCSBT 32 in 2025 adopt the draft ERS and Bycatch Action Plan.

In October 2024, the Extended Commission (EC) agreed to endorse the report of ERSWG 15 including the ERSWG workplan and recommendations.

2. Recommended list of non-target shark species by ERS Tech 2025

The ERS Tech 2025 meeting was held from 7 – 11 April 2025, in Wellington, New Zealand, as a hybrid meeting.

In advance of the meeting, Members were requested to provide their responses on a proposed “List of non-target shark species” to be covered by the ERS and Bycatch Action Plan. Both New Zealand and Australia provided proposals.

At the ERS Tech 2025, Members agreed that the best approach for CCSBT would be to engage more closely with other tuna RFMOs that are already collating the necessary information and conducting stock assessments and other appraisals on shark species. However, as the ERS Tech 2025 did not make recommendations on the list of non-target shark species itself, the initial list in the ERS and Bycatch Action Plan will be based on the existing list included in the current ERSWG Data Exchange requirement, as shown in **Table 1** below.

Table 1. Non-target shark species list (specified in the current ERSWG Data Exchange requirement).

Species
<i>Prionace glauca</i> (Blue shark)
<i>Isurus oxyrinchus</i> (Shortfin mako shark)
<i>Lamna nasus</i> (Porbeagle shark)

3. Action required for EC

The draft ERS and Bycatch Action Plan, recommended by ERSWG 15 that now includes a list of non-target shark species, is provided in **Attachment A** for the EC's consideration.

The EC is expected to consider and adopt this ERS and Bycatch Action Plan at this meeting. If necessary, the EC may provide specific direction to the ERSWG 16 in 2026, which could include expanding the list of non-target shark species, taking into account that the ERS Tech noted that Members will facilitate closer engagement between CCSBT and other tuna RFMOs, especially by ensuring analyses and assessments from other tuna RFMOs are available for discussion by ERSWG.

Should the EC adopt the ERS and Bycatch Action Plan, Members, the Secretariat, and ERSWG will take actions for 2026 as outlined in the "Actions to achieve the specific objectives".

Prepared by the Secretariat

Ecologically Related Species Bycatch Strategy

1. Introduction

CCSBT adopted the “[Strategic Plan for the Commission for the Conservation of Southern Bluefin Tuna 2023 – 2028](#)” (hereinafter “Strategic Plan”), which includes an implementation plan of recommendations from the [2021 CCSBT Performance Review](#).

The Strategic Plan specifies “*Addressing the impact of SBT fisheries on non-target species that belong to the same ecosystem, in particular seabirds*” as one of the key challenges of CCSBT, and also specifies “*strategies concerning stock rebuilding, allocation and ecologically related species*” as one of the items under “Management of SBT” that is a part of the Vision and Goals of the Strategic Plan.

The Strategic Plan, in its Action Plan, also specifies that “*Noting the Multi-year Seabird Strategy adopted at ERSWG 14, develop an **Ecologically Related Species and Bycatch Action Plan** based on the recommendations from the Performance Review.*”

2. Current Monitoring and Reporting of ERS (non-seabird)

The main ERS data that Members are required to provide to the CCSBT are the data specified in the annual [ERSWG Data Exchange](#) (EDE), which must be provided by 31 July each year. Compliance with EDE requirements is monitored and reported on annually as part of the Secretariat paper to the Compliance Committee on *Members’ implementation of ERS measures and performance with respect to ERS*¹. The Secretariat paper also includes a raised mortality estimate for each of the species groups defined in the EDE broken down by individual Member.

Members’ annual reports to the Compliance Committee and the Extended Commission (Annual CC/EC Report) are also required to include information on:

Whether the IPOA-seabirds², IPOA-sharks³ and the FAO Guidelines to reduce sea turtle mortality have been implemented;

- Whether all current binding and recommendatory measures of ICCAT, IOTC and WCPFC aimed at the protection of ERS from fishing are being complied with;
- Whether data is being collected and reported on ERS in accordance with the requirements of ICCAT, IOTC and WCPFC; and
- The methods used to monitor compliance with bycatch mitigation measures, including the level of coverage and the type of information collected.

The Secretariat also reports on whether Members have provided this information as part of its *Members’ implementation of ERS measures and performance with respect to ERS* paper to the Compliance Committee.

¹ The latest available report is [CCSBT-CC/2310/05](#).

² International Plan of Action for Reducing Incidental Catches of Seabirds in Longline Fisheries.

³ International Plan of Action for the Conservation and Management of Sharks.

3. Current Measures Relating to ERS (Non-Seabird)

Binding Measures

At its 25th Annual Meeting in October 2018, the CCSBT adopted the “[Resolution to Align CCSBT Ecologically Related Species measures with those of other tuna RFMOs](#)” (the “ERS Resolution”). In accordance paragraph 2 of the ERS Resolution, each Member and Cooperating Non-Member shall ensure that such vessels flying its flag and fishing for SBT in IOTC⁴, WCPFC⁵ and ICCAT⁶’s Area of Competence comply with all ERS Measures in force in that Area of Competence (whether or not the Member or Cooperating Non-Member is a Member of the tuna RFMO in which the ERS Measures were adopted).

To ensure SBT vessels comply with the latest ERS measures, paragraph 6 of the ERS Resolution tasks the Secretariat to annually update the list of ERS Measures contained in Annex I of the Resolution before the annual EC meeting according to any decisions taken on ERS at the annual meetings of the ICCAT, IOTC, and WCPFC.

Voluntary Measures

In accordance with CCSBT’s [Recommendation to Mitigate the Impact on Ecologically Related Species of Fishing for Southern Bluefin Tuna](#), Members will, to the extent possible, implement the International Plan of Action for Reducing Incidental Catches of Seabirds in Longline Fisheries (IPOA-Seabirds), the International Plan of Action for the Conservation and Management of Sharks (IPOA-Sharks), and the FAO Guidelines to reduce sea turtle mortality in fishing operations (FAO-Sea turtles), if they have not already done so.

This recommendation also states that the EC and/or its subsidiary bodies as appropriate will undertake an assessment of the risks to ERS posed by fishing for SBT. The EC will consider how these risks are mitigated by the adoption of the “*Resolution to Align CCSBT Ecologically Related Species measures with those of other tuna RFMOs*”, and will consider whether any additional measures to mitigate risk are required. The Seabird Strategy includes a component to assess the risk to seabirds, however, there is no planned review to look at non-seabird ERS risks.

4. Current Status of (Non-Seabird) ERS

ERS catch information collected as part of the EDE represents only a subset of the total captures of those species and therefore cannot be used in isolation to determine the overall status of the stock or species. CCSBT’s ERS bycatch information can potentially highlight year to year trends from individual Member fleets but even this level of analysis is problematic given the recent gaps in observer data that arose during the pandemic.

CCSBT typically relies on the stock status assessments of third parties (e.g. other tuna RFMOs, ACAP, ABNJ, etc) for ERS. This approach is not unique to CCSBT. For example, the IOTC provides its Members with the IUCN threat status for marine turtles given that it has not undertaken its own assessment.

⁴ Indian Ocean Tuna Commission

⁵ Convention on the Conservation and Management of Highly Migratory Fish Stocks in the Western and Central Pacific Ocean

⁶ International Convention for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas

Scope:

The Bycatch Action Plan applies to sea turtles, marine mammals and non-target shark species. The non-target shark species to which the Bycatch Action Plan applies are listed in **Table 1...[to be developed]**. The Bycatch Action Plan does not apply to other shark species. The Bycatch Action Plan does not apply to seabirds, which are covered under the complementary Multi-Year Seabird Strategy.

Table 1. List of non-target shark species

<u>Species</u>
<u><i>Prionace glauca</i> (Blue shark)</u>
<u><i>Isurus oxyrinchus</i> (Shortfin mako shark)</u>
<u><i>Lamna nasus</i> (Porbeagle shark)</u>

The Bycatch Action Plan will be implemented in collaboration with other tuna Regional Fisheries Management Organisations and other relevant organisations and institutions.

Overall objective

This Bycatch Action Plan's overall objective is to reduce or eliminate bycatch of ERS including sea turtles, marine mammals, and non-target sharks, such that SBT fisheries do not impose a significant adverse impact on these species.

Specific objectives

To achieve the overall objective, the following specific objectives have been developed:

Objective 1: Information objective

CCSBT's assessment of the impacts of SBT fisheries on ERS is based on the best available information, includes assessment of uncertainty, and highlights information gaps.

Objective 2: Governance objective

CCSBT's governance arrangements ensure it effectively manages the impacts of SBT fisheries on ERS.

Objective 3: Effectiveness objective

To provide advice, developed in collaboration with industry and other relevant organisations and institutions, on bycatch mitigation technologies and techniques, which are practical, cost-effective and safe.

Objective 4: Education & Outreach

To enhance education and outreach programs highlighting the importance of mitigating ERS interactions while fishing, and advocating effective implementation of mitigation measures.

Actions to achieve the specific objectives

The following actions will be undertaken against each of the specific objectives.

Actions to Achieve the Specific Objectives of the Plan

		Responsibility	Short Term		Medium Term		Long Term
			2024	2025	2026	2027	2028++
(A) Information Objective							
1 Data Collection and Information Sharing							
i.	Confirm species/species groups relevant to Southern Bluefin Tuna (SBT) fisheries to be covered by this Bycatch Action Plan.	ERSWG	●	●			
ii.	Continue and improve ERSWG Data Exchange reporting.	Members	Ongoing				
iii.	Secretariat continues to submit its annual report on Members’ implementation of ERS measures and performance with respect to ERS	Secretariat	Ongoing				
iv.	Secretariat to provide recent assessments of relevant bycatch species as information papers at future ERSWG meetings.	Secretariat			●		●
v.	Have a standing agenda item at ERSWG on Climate Change.	ERSWG			●		●
2 Collaboration							
i	Collaborate with other RFMOs on their activities related to the forecasting of the likely impacts of climate change on tuna ecosystems, SBT, ERS, and their productivity, distribution, and resilience. (PR2021-06)	Secretariat	Ongoing				
ii	Secretariat to share the Summary of Key Points from ERSWG meetings with other tRFMOs following on the agreed template (PR2021-06)	Secretariat	●		●		●

		Responsibility	Short Term	Medium Term	Long Term
(B) Governance Objective					
3 Commission Instruments					
i	Periodic review of this Action Plan to ensure effectiveness. (PR2021-20)	ERSWG			●
ii	Assess whether Convention should be amended to clarify the role and mandate of CCSBT with regards to non-target species. (PR2021-03)	EC			●
(C) Effectiveness Objective					
4 Review of Existing Measures					
i	Advocate for strengthened CMMs on ERS at IOTC, ICCAT, and WCPFC. (PR2021-04)	Members	Ongoing		
ii.	ERSWG to consider whether the risks to ERS are sufficiently mitigated by the adoption of the “Resolution to Align CCSBT Ecologically Related Species measures with those of other tuna RFMOs”, and provide advice to EC on whether any additional actions are required.	ERSWG	●	●	●
5 Implementation					
i	Explore the potential for an incentivised mechanism to combat an increase in bycatch and address the impact of fisheries on living marine resources and the ecosystem. (PR2021-27)	ERSWG			●