Commission for the Conservation of
Southern Bluefin Tuna

みなみまぐろ保存委員会

CCSBT-ESC/2608/05

Report on Progress Against Strategic Plan

(ESC Agenda Item 6.1)

Background

At CCSBT 30 in 2023, Members adopted a revised Strategic Plan[1] that outlines a common vision for how the CCSBT will operate in order to meet the overall objective of the Convention. The Strategic Plan also provides the following vision and set of goals in support of the overall objective.

Vision and goals

Management of SBT

The Commission agrees the SBT tuna stock is to be managed at a biomass level that supports the maximum sustainable yield, and the risks related to fishing for SBT and impacts from fishing for SBT on ecologically related species are mitigated.

- This includes strategies concerning stock rebuilding, allocation and ecologically related species.
- This also includes consideration and review of all other risks including, but not limited to, marine pollution and human safety.

Operation/Administration of the Commission and Secretariat

It was agreed the Commission should operate effectively and efficiently, to responsibly manage fishing for SBT.

- This includes strategies for effective and efficient operation of Commission, its subsidiary bodies and Secretariat, including harmonisation with other RFMOs.

Participation and implementation by Members, including Compliance.

Members are actively participating in management of SBT through the Commission and implementing its decisions.

- This includes strategies concerning MCS, sanctions and assistance to developing countries.

[1] www.ccsbt.org/sites/default/files/userfiles/file/docs_english/operational_resolutions/CCSBT_Strategic_Plan.pdf

Strategic Plan Items of Relevance to ESC

The Strategy also includes several actions that are to be carried out by the Commission's various subsidiary bodies. The following elements of the Action Plan and Ongoing Work Plan have been identified as relevant to the work of the ESC.

Action Plan

- **PR2021-02**: Explore the need for additional measures (such as protected areas and area closures) to support spawning and recruitment.
- Further increase efforts, including analysis on the application of electronic monitoring, to improve and supplement observer coverage in accordance with Scientific Observer Program Standard (SOPS).
- Prioritise the establishment and ongoing review of long-term research strategic planning in the ESC.

Ongoing Work Plan

- **PR2021-24**: CCSBT should continue to implement CMMs based on ESC and ERSWG advice for both target and non-target species.
- **PR2021-01**: Members continue to support the MP, by remaining within their allocation limits, and eliminating areas of uncertainty such as Non-Member catches that could undermine its performance.
- **PR2021-26**: Continue monitoring to ensure the effectiveness of the rebuilding strategy for SBT
- **PR2021-12**: Continue to develop and embed innovative methods such as gene-tagging and close kin mark-recapture to improve scientific processes.
- **PR2021-55**: ESC to improve accessibility of reports to non-technical readers.
- Ensure members are submitting high quality, clear, consistent and completed reporting.
- **PR2021-16**: Continue to study the spatial aspects of the SBT stock structure and movements, and the fleets that exploit SBT.

Monitoring and Implementation

To ensure that the objectives of the Strategic Plan are met, the plan outlines a process that commits to annual monitoring and reporting against the actions agreed under the plan. The Extend Commission (EC) will review the progress made with the Secretariat holding responsibility for compiling the information necessary for the EC to conduct its annual monitoring review.

The Strategic Plan states that "Subsidiary bodies holding responsibility for particular action items are expected to report back on the progress of those activities as part of their respective meeting reports". The ESC needs to complete this assessment and report to the EC in accordance with this requirement.

Next Steps

Members are asked to update the assessment of progress against those activities assigned to the ESC, by updating the previously agreed table in **Attachment A**.

In **Attachment A**, the Secretariat has provided some preliminary updates as tracked changes. Yellow-highlighted sections must be updated following ESC discussion.

The Secretariat recommends that:

1) As part of the pre-meeting discussion process, Members provide their suggested changes and additions to **Attachment A**, in tracked mode, by 10 August 2026 (two weeks before the ESC meeting starts).
2) The Secretariat will, in consultation with the ESC Chair, submit the initial edited version to the ESC as a Working Paper by 17 August 2026 (one week before the ESC meeting starts).
3) During the ESC meeting, the ESC will convene a small group to discuss the Working Paper. The Small Group will meet outside of the plenary meeting time or communicate through email to reflect outcomes from ESC 31 and finalise the draft progress report.
4) The Small Group submits a draft revised progress report as a new Working Paper for the ESC's plenary discussion.
5) ESC includes the agreed report as an Attachment to its meeting report.

Prepared by the Secretariat

Attachment A

Report from CCSBT Subsidiary Bodies on Progress Against Strategic Plan

Subsidiary Body: ESC	**Year**: 2026~~2025~~

Vision and Goals

	Comments from Subsidiary Body
Management of SBT The Commission agrees the SBT tuna stock is to be managed at a biomass level that supports the maximum sustainable yield, and the risks related to fishing for SBT and impacts from fishing for SBT on ecologically related species are mitigated. • This includes strategies concerning stock rebuilding, allocation and ecologically related species. • This also includes consideration and review of all other risks including, but not limited to, marine pollution and human safety.	ESC supports the vision as described here. ESC has contributed to SBT stock rebuilding and management advice based on scientific evidence. The ESC considers that the SBT tuna stock is being rebuilt towards a biomass level that will support the MSY. [The most recent stock assessment indicates that the stock is rebuilding at approximately 5% per year and is currently estimated to be at 23% of TRO_0.] The ESC notes that demonstrating progress towards stock rebuilding has and will continue to rely on the substantial investment in innovative science including in genetic studies that has allowed a robust estimate of population size to support decision making on TACs, monitoring stock recovery and demonstrating progress towards the rebuilding targets. The current MP is based on sound science and processes which are unique in their approach to tuna fisheries management relative to approaches in other related RFMOs. The ESC provides advice on TACs based on a fully tested management procedure (MP). The ESC also applies an annual metarule framework to the MP that includes an annual review of indicators and a process to assess whether or not exceptional circumstances have occurred. The ESC notes advice from the ERSWG to the EC on ecologically related species, including seabirds. While not the responsibility of ESC, marine pollution and human safety is an important issue.
Operation/Administration of the Commission and Secretariat It was agreed the Commission should operate effectively and efficiently, to responsibly manage fishing for SBT.	ESC supports the strategic goals on the operation/administration of the Commission and Secretariat, and considers that opportunities for harmonising with other RFMOs should continue to be pursued, including for developing electronic monitoring (EM) standards. The ESC has regularly reviewed and updated the Scientific Research Program as well as the associated schedule and budget implications. The Commission and Secretariat should be aware of any implications that arise from the BBNJ agreement.

• This includes strategies for effective and efficient operation of Commission, its subsidiary bodies and Secretariat, including harmonisation with other RFMOs.	
Participation and implementation by Members, including Compliance Members are actively participating in management of SBT through the Commission and implementing its decisions. • This includes strategies concerning MCS, sanctions and assistance to developing countries.	The ESC also considers there has been progress with participation in ESC meetings and will continue to work toward the goal of maximising participation by all Members. The ESC notes that a robust monitoring, control and surveillance (MCS) program is critical to the assessment of the SBT and its recovery. The ESC also notes the importance of adequate observer coverage. The ESC has encouraged timely data collection and submission, and there has been some improvement recently. The ESC notes the importance of identifying any non-compliance, and the reasons for that non-compliance.

Action Plan

Action	Progress since previous report	Planned work
PR2021-02: Explore the need for additional measures (such as protected areas and area closures) to support spawning and recruitment.	As noted in the ESC28 Report, the ESC considers that there is no need for protected areas or area closures to protect the SBT spawning grounds.	Nil for ESC.
Further increase efforts, including analysis on the application of electronic monitoring, to improve and supplement observer coverage in accordance with Scientific Observer Program Standard (SOPS).	The ESC recently undertook a review of the potential impacts of EM on the collection of the data currently required under the existing SOPS. Members agreed to include an agenda item to address issues relating to EM/S in future meetings of the ESC. Since~~At~~ ESC 29, Members with operational EM programs have~~agreed to~~ work~~ed~~ together intersessionally ~~and to present to ESC 30~~ regarding how information is collected by EM and how this meets the requirements of the SOPS, and presented~~. Intersessional work is ongoing and Members intend to present~~ this at ESC 31.	The ESC considers that there is merit in ensuring the development of the CCSBT EM standards is aligned with other relevant RFMOs. ~~The ESC notes that the work planned is taking place as part of the Seabird Project to support capacity development in the area of electronic monitoring.~~

	The ESC noted that capacity development work in EM had taken place as part of the Seabird Project.	
Prioritise the establishment and ongoing review of long-term research strategic planning in the ESC.	Each ESC includes this as a standing item on the Scientific Research Program, including a procedure for evaluating new research proposals.	Continue current annual process.
Ongoing Work Plan		
Action	**Changes since previous report**	**Planned work**
PR2021-01: Members continue to support the MP, by remaining within their allocation limits, and eliminating areas of uncertainty such as Non-Member catches that could undermine its performance.	ESC Members actively participated in the MP development and implementation through their research activities. This also includes assessing whether there have been exceptional circumstances. [ESC30 concluded there are exceptional circumstances due to the changes in the gene tagging program resulting from the budget reduction. This has the potential to undermine the MP. The ESC recommends that this be addressed immediately by reinstating the budget for the 2026 gene tagging program.] The ESC considered non-member catches in the 2026~~2023~~ stock assessment and recommended a TAC to CCSBT based on an estimated level of unaccounted mortality.	The ESC notes the importance of a strong compliance framework to ensure that catch limits are maintained. Consider further analysis of markets to better understand possible non-member catch. Non-member catch estimation was conducted in~~is planned for~~ 2026 as part of CCSBT's SRP project.
PR2021-26: Continue monitoring to ensure the effectiveness of the rebuilding strategy for SBT	The ESC supports this action and notes that this has been made possible through the implementation of the Close-Kin, Gene Tagging and efforts to improve the standardisation of CPUE projects. The ESC strongly recommends establishing a long-term funding arrangement for the Gene Tagging program and other monitoring programs that provide input data to the MP.	ESC recommends continued support for and implementation of science projects to meet this action under the CCSBT Strategic Plan. Funding priority should be given to the monitoring programs that provide input data to the MP and implementation of the MP, to ensure that robust advice is given to the Commission to meet the objectives

	The ESC has monitored and discussed the national reports and results, and progress of the research activities. Ongoing work around development of EM standards for CCSBT.	of conservation and optimal utilisation of the stock.
PR2021-12: Continue to develop and embed innovative methods such as gene-tagging and close kin mark-recapture to improve scientific processes.	Updates to the Operating Model have been completed and used for the stock assessment in 2026~~progressed~~. ESC has discussed and reviewed the progress and results of gene-tagging and Close-Kin regularly. ~~As described above in PR2021-01, the ESC recommends t~~The gene tagging budget was~~be~~ reinstated for 2026~~-~~.	~~Finalise upgrades to the operating model which will be used for the stock assessment in 2026.~~
PR2021-24: CCSBT should continue to implement CMMs based on ESC and ERSWG advice for both target and non-target species.	Implementation of CMM's has been possible given a robust stock assessment conducted in 2023. Updates to the operating model have been completed~~progressed in preparation~~ for running the stock assessment in 2026. The Management Procedure has been run in 2025 to provide advice on the SBT TAC for the next CMM[, and the ESC reconfirmed the recommendation in 2026]. ~~ESC 30 also considered opportunities to strengthen the relationship between ERSWG and ESC.~~	The ESC supports progress towards this action and notes effective monitoring of fishing activity, including through observer coverage or EM programs, is essential. The ESC also notes that implementation of CMM's relies on a strong compliance program.
PR2021-55: ESC to improve accessibility of reports to non-technical readers.	ESC has developed and made available each meeting report. This has included a Chair's summary for each ESC in non-technical language to help facilitate communication with the EC/other subsidiary bodies.	Continue the current process.
Ensure members are submitting high quality, clear, consistent, and completed reporting.	ESC has encouraged all Members to submit annual reports, and there have been some improvements recently. [The ESC notes that not all Members submit reports as required.]	The ESC will continue to encourage all Members to submit high quality, clear, consistent and completed reports.
PR2021-16: Continue to study the spatial aspects of the SBT stock structure and movements, and the fleets that exploit SBT.	Tagging projects continue to be delivered to improve understanding of stock structure.	Work developing a multiple fleet CPUE index (addressing effects of contraction

	The ESC now has a standing Agenda Item “Potential impacts of climate change”.	of the spatial distribution of the core Japanese fleet) is proposed in the SRP.