



FAD Management

What Are FADs?

Fish Aggregating Devices or FADs are man-made floating objects deployed to attract fish. FADs can be anchored in certain waters, but the majority are left to drift freely around the ocean. Most drifting FADs are equipped with a satellite buoy to aid in locating them. When fishers find other large floating objects (logs or marine debris), they can also equip them in the same manner.

Thousands of drifting FADs are utilized by purse-seine fishing vessels at sea each year. Such floating objects—both man-made and naturally occurring—aggregate a number of fish species, including tunas, and therefore make commercial purse-seine tuna fishing more efficient, improving catch volume and often lowering vessel fuel usage. FAD usage varies by ocean depending on fleet strategies. Worldwide, sets on FADs account for nearly 40% of tuna catches, including 50% of skipjack catches.

Why Is FAD Management Needed?

While FADs certainly have their benefits for purse-seine tuna fishing, their impact on tuna stocks and the broader marine ecosystem has increasingly come into question—specifically regarding the bycatch of non-target species like sharks and other marine life as well as impacts on sensitive areas due to stranded FADs and marine debris. All types of fishing gears require active management, and FADs are no exception. As reflected in [ISSF Conservation Measure 3.7](#), concerted global effort in every ocean is needed to:

- **Collect and report data on fishery statistics by set type** (including FAD sets), through FAD logbooks and observers, and reporting by fleets to appropriate RFMOs and science bodies
- **Enhance monitoring** of FAD use, including the provision of FAD tracking and echosounder biomass data to RFMO and science bodies
- **Adopt science-based FAD management measures**, such as limits on the overall number of FADs used and/or FAD sets made
- **Use only fully non-entangling FADs without netting** that reduce entanglement and minimize bycatch and ghost fishing (see [ISSF's Guide to Non-Entangling FADs](#))
- **Mitigate other environmental impacts due to FAD loss** by promoting the use of biodegradable FADs and implementing FAD recovery policies
- **Adopt effective bycatch mitigation measures** for primary bycatch species, such as silky sharks



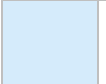
These elements are also important for purse-seine tuna fisheries in Fishery Improvement Projects (FIPs), including those seeking Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) certification, as well as MSC-certified purse-seine tuna fisheries with conditions that make sets on FADs (for more details, see [ISSF Technical Report 2023-10](#), [ISSF Technical Report 2020-11](#) and the [NGO-aligned guidance for well-managed FAD fisheries](#)).









FAD Management by RFMO

Recommended Best Practices

The following table shows the level of progress in each tuna RFMO in implementing the recommended best practices.

Color Coding Key			
	Element(s) are consistent with the suggested best practices.	Some element(s) are present, but amendments or a change in procedure is needed to be consistent with best practices.	Element (s) are missing or inconsistent with best practices.








RFMO	Sustainable Fish Stocks and Effective Management				Minimizing Environmental Impact						
	FAD data reporting by set type required and flag State compliance assessed	Providing data on FAD use to RFMO science bodies (e.g., buoy tracks, echosounder estimates of biomass, etc.) even if not required	Science-based limits on FAD deployments and/or FAD sets	Time/Area FAD closure	Require the use of fully NE FAD designs without netting	Require the use of biodegradable FADs	Established FAD marking scheme consistent with FAO guidelines	Established FAD recovery policy, including mechanisms to alert coastal States of derelict FADs that may impact sensitive habitats	Require mitigation measures for silky sharks (main bycatch species in FAD sets)	Adopt safe handling and release practices for sharks, rays and sea turtles	Prohibit intentional setting on whale sharks and cetaceans
IOTC	Data required, but IOTC compliance assessment weak (Res 15/02; Res 24/02)	Data tracks of all buoys to be provided to the IOTC Secretariat for compliance purposes Data compiled at monthly intervals with a time delay of at least 60 days but not longer than 90 days (Res 15/02; Res 24/02)	Active FAD limits per Res 24/02: From 1 January 2026: 250 per vessel; from 1 January 2028: 225 per vessel Maximum buoy acquired annually = 400 instrumented buoys from 1 January 2026 Not science-based / No FAD set limit	 Some CPCs have chosen to implement a voluntary FAD closure on the high seas for their flagged vessels (Res 23/03)	 Requires the use of fully NEFADs without netting (Res 24/02)	Definiton of “biodegradable” adopted and timeline adopted for use of biodegradable FADs: Use of BioFAD categories required from: - 1 Jan 2026 (designs I, II, III, IV only permitted) - Category V no longer allowed - 1 Jan 2027 use only category I and II - 1 Jan 2029 use only category I Res 24/02	 (Res 24-02)	 FAD tracking and recovery policy developed, with arrangements for VMS tracking of dFADs. Policy includes coastal State notification (Res 24-02) dFAD register implemented to require/facilitate FAD recovery (Res 24-02)	 No binding requirement for silky sharks Encourages live release of sharks and use of handling practices (Res 17/05)	Need best practices for sea turtles Need to update the BPs for rmobulids	 (Res 23/06 & Res 13/05)

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	FAD data reporting by set type required and flag State compliance assessed	Providing data on FAD use to RFMO science bodies (e.g., buoy tracks, echosounder estimates of biomass, etc.) even if not required	Science-based limits on FAD deployments and/or FAD sets	Time/Area FAD closure	Require the use of fully NE FAD designs without netting	Require the use of biodegradable FADs	Established FAD marking scheme consistent with FAO guidelines	Established FAD recovery policy, including mechanisms to alert coastal States of derelict FADs that may impact sensitive habitats	Require mitigation measures for silky sharks (main bycatch species in FAD sets)	Adopt safe handling and release practices for sharks, rays and sea turtles	Prohibit intentional setting on whale sharks and cetaceans
IATTC	Data required, but IATTC compliance assessment weak (C-18-05)	✔ Daily raw satellite buoy information (position and biomass) on all active FADs to be reported with a time delay of at least 60 days but no longer than 90 days (C-24-01)	Active FAD Limits — vary by vessel size and to be phased down from 2022-2024 ¹ / Not science-based / No FAD set limit (C-24-01)	✔ Closure for all purse seine fishing (FADs, dolphin sets, or free school) (C-24-01)	✔ Use only NEFAD without netting (C-23-04)	BioFAD requirements required from 1 Jan 2026 (designs I, II, III, IV permitted), with progressive shift to category I and II bio-FAD requirement by 1 Jan 2029 (C-23-04)	FADs (buoy or raft) to be marked with unique identifier code (C-23-03)	Encourages voluntary FAD retrieval programs of dFADs Expanded requirements for keeping satellite buoy communications active to support FAD recovery initiatives (C-25-02)	Retention prohibition; improved mitigation measures needed (C-23-08)	✔ (C-24-05, C-19-06, & C-15-04)	No prohibition on intentional cetacean setting Prohibition on intentional setting on whale sharks (C-19-06)
ICCAT	Data required, but flag state compliance weak (Rec. 24-01)	✘	Active FAD limits to 300 in 2025 per vessel and 288 per vessel for 2026 & 2027 (Rec. 24-01) / Not science based / No FAD set limit	45-day period from 17 March to 30 April 2025 (Rec. 24-01) Closure adopted without scientific advice or an assessment of its effectiveness in addressing specific management objectives	✔ Requires use of full NE FADs without netting (Rec. 24-01)	Timeline adopted in Rec 24-01 Use of BioFAD categories required from: - In 2025, only allow vessels to deploy or redeploy FADs of bedegradability categories I, II, and III - In 2025, no longer deploy any FADs of category IV - As of 1 Jan 2026, CPCs shall use only FADs of categories I and II - As of 1 Jan 2028, CPCs shall use only FADs of Category I	✘	✘	Retention prohibition; improved mitigation measures needed (Rec. 11-08)	Needed for sharks (Rec 23-13 & Rec 24-12)	Prohibition on intentional setting on whale sharks (Rec. 23-12) Encourages the prohibition of intentional setting on cetaceans (Res. 12-15 [non-binding])

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¹ For example, in 2022: Class 6 (1,200 m3 and greater): 400 FADs / Class 6 (< 1,200 m3): 270 FADs. / Class 4-5: 110 FADs / Class 1-3: 66 FADs

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WCPFC	Data required, but WCPFC compliance assessment is not transparent (CMM 2023-01)	 PNA members voluntarily provide to the SPC available buoy track data for vessels operating under the PNA VDS. No FAD echosounder biomass data is required.	Active FAD Limit = 350 / Not science based / No FAD set limit (CMM 2023-01)	1.5-month FAD closure July-mid August for EEZ and HS and additional one-month FAD closure April, May, November or December for HS only (CMM 2023-01)	 Fully non-entangling FADs required as of 1 Jan 2024 (CMM 23-01)	 Encourages use of non-plastic and biodegradable materials in the construction of FADs. Adopted categories for types of biodegradable FADs (CMM 2023-01)		 No formal WCPFC FAD recovery policy. Encourages vessels to carry equipment to retrieve FADs and make reasonable efforts to retrieve lost FADs and report these losses to concerned coastal State(s). (CMM 2023-01)	Retention prohibition; improved mitigation measures needed (CMM 2024-05)	 (CMM 2018-04, CMM 2024-05 & CMM 2019-05)	 (CMM 2024-05 & CMM 2024-07)