

# Shark Finning Reports Ignored on MSC-Certified Vessels in the Western Central Pacific Ocean

*Shark Guardian investigation exposes how fishery observer reports of shark finning on MSC-certified vessels in Western Central Pacific Ocean are being ignored.*

LONDON, UNITED KINGDOM, May 17, 2022 /EINPresswire.com/ -- A new Shark Guardian investigation reveals how fishery observer reports of shark finning and other malpractices on MSC-certified vessels in the Western Central Pacific Ocean are being routinely ignored by the authorities.



This is a worrying level of shark finning for a supposedly sustainable fishery, and for the reports to be ignored like this demonstrates that these fisheries and the MSC are out of control."

*Brendon Sing, Co-Founder of Shark Guardian*

The 'Slipping Through the Net: Reported but Ignored' investigation is based on a review of fishery observer data sets for the years 2017-2021 obtained from the Fijian National Observers Programme (FJOB), the Solomon Islands National Observers programme (SBOB) and the PNA Observer Agency (POA), as well as subsequent in-country investigations conducted by Shark Guardian researchers.

Shockingly, a total of 24 incidents of shark finning were identified, all of which took place on MSC-certified vessels, 19 of them during MSC trips and sets classified as MSC eligible.

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[SHARK GUARDIAN BLOGPOST ON FISHERIES OBSERVERS REPORT](#)

Brendon Sing, Co-Founder of Shark Guardian said, "This is a worrying level of shark finning for a supposedly sustainable fishery, and for the reports to be ignored like this demonstrates that these fisheries and the MSC are out of control."

Our new report 'Slipping Through the Net: Reported but Ignored' exposes how fisheries management has been compromised in several key areas, including:

□ Assessments of the impacts of fisheries on non-target species

□ The monitoring of illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing

□ Violations of Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission's (WCPFC's) Conservation and Management Measures (CMMs)

□ Violations of the Marine Stewardship Council's (MSC's) own standards by MSC-certified vessels, often during sets classified as MSC-eligible, including involvement in shark finning



A whale shark fights for its life as it finds itself trapped inside the net sack of an MSC-certified tuna fishing vessel that uses harmful Fish Aggregating Devices, or FADs, in the Western & Central Pacific Ocean.

This last point alone, should make sets ineligible for certification to the MSC standard for sustainable fisheries.

Based on our findings, the Conformity Assessment Bodies (CABs) – the independent auditors monitoring the MSC standard – have failed to identify numerous issues raised by observers.

Alex Hofford, Shark Guardian's Marine Wildlife Campaigner said "Our review is based on a small number of data sets that were drawn from a narrow selection of observer reports on just a handful of trips. The actual scale of violations is likely to be much greater, considering the high number of violations found in such a small sample."

The consequence of the ignored observer reports is that fishing sets during MSC trips on MSC-certified vessels were classified as MSC-eligible, despite documented practices during these sets that were in violation of MSC standards. MSC-certified purse seiners continue to violate the MSC certification guiding principles rather than facing their MSC certification being revoked or suspended.

Critical incidents identified in the new report include:

□ Shark finning

□ Fishing boats deliberately setting their nets around schools of tuna associated with live whales or whale sharks

- Inhumane treatment of cetaceans and whale sharks caught inside nets and landed on deck dead or dying due to negligence
- A helicopter illegally dumped at sea
- Violations of observer rights
- Fishing on highly environmentally destructive Fish Aggregating Devices (FADs) during specified FAD closure period
- High grading (discarding the on-board catch to make room for better quality, larger size fish or for more marketable species)
- Discrepancies in daily catch and effort reporting by the vessel

Alex Hofford said, "These findings undermine the credibility of the MSC who must urgently assert its influence to improve reporting practices, and the enforcement of existing regulations. CABs must take Observers' reports seriously and act upon them."

Brendon Sing continued "These incidents occurred with observers onboard. Without observers there would be no checks and balances at all, and no accountability. The illegal dumping of a helicopter is shocking and highlights the ongoing need for high observer levels."

Shark Guardian's new report exposes a seafood industry turning a blind eye to the significant and meticulous reporting efforts undertaken by its observers. The WCPFC, Observer programmes, nation states, and the MSC, must now work to ensure that valuable advances in the sustainable management of tuna fisheries are not compromised through negligence, non-compliance, and corruption.

Auditing practices and observer data flow need to be improved to ensure that observers' reports are not ignored. Without accurate reporting and reliable reporting procedures, buyers, stakeholders, and consumers have no guarantee that MSC-certified fish from tuna fisheries in Fiji, the PNA and Solomon Islands is genuinely sustainable.

### [INVESTIGATION PHOTOS & VIDEO](#)

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