

The South Pacific Fisheries Management Organization

The South Pacific Fisheries Management Organisation (SPRFMO) is a fifteen-member intergovernmental, treaty-based organization with the objective of ensuring the long-term conservation and sustainable use of fisheries resources of the South Pacific Ocean, and safeguarding the marine ecosystems they inhabit. SPRFMO manages certain high seas and straddling fish stocks in the southern Pacific, excluding salmon, tuna, and sedentary species of the Continental Shelf. The Convention Area covers approximately one-quarter of the world's ocean areas beyond national jurisdiction.

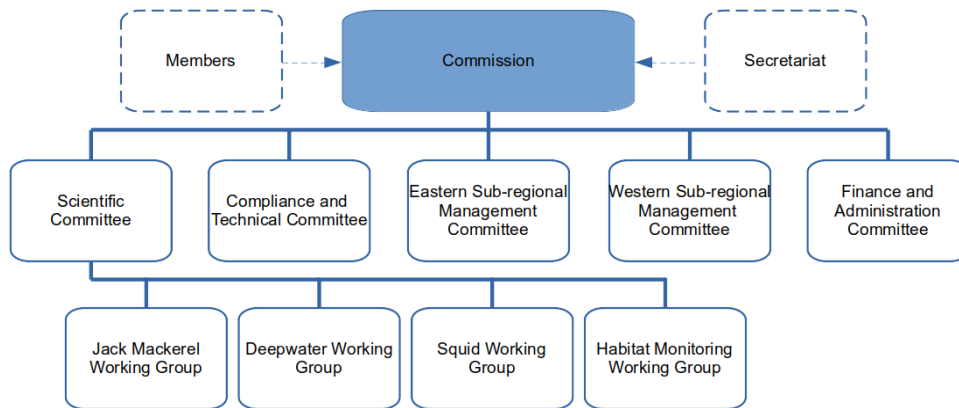
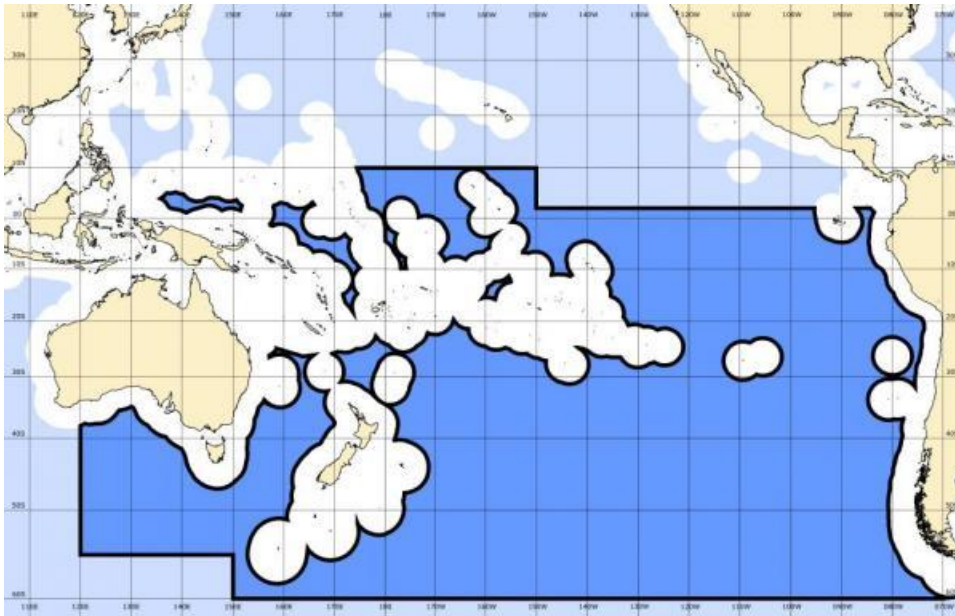
SPRFMO was established in 2012, in part in response to a UN call for stronger action to regulate destructive bottom-fishing activities. The United States has played a major role in setting those guidelines, was instrumental in the SPRFMO negotiations, and has been integral to the organization's subsequent development. The United States participated in the Commission as a Cooperating non-Contracting Party (CNCP) until it became a full member in 2017.

Most of the catch under SPRFMO jurisdiction is of pelagic species, notably jack mackerel and jumbo flying squid. Another significant fishery is for orange roughy and other demersal deep-sea stocks, which are caught through trawling and other bottom-fishing methods. Bottom-fishing is managed to avoid significant adverse impacts on vulnerable marine ecosystems that occur on seamounts and other areas where such fish stocks are often found. The United States does not currently participate in the fisheries managed by SPRFMO.

The Commission is the primary decision-making body, with several subsidiary standing committees. The Scientific Committee has several Working Groups, which focus on particular scientific areas. As a general rule, decisions by the Commission are taken by consensus.

The United States is officially represented in SPRFMO by not more than three commissioners: one government official, typically from NOAA, and one the chairperson or designee of the Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council. U.S. delegations include officials from NOAA, the State Department, and the U.S. Coast Guard.

Top U.S. priorities include ensuring that SPRFMO conservation and management measures are grounded in science and support the long-term sustainability of the resources and their ecosystems, and adoption of a specific measure to govern high seas boarding and inspection (HSBI) of fishing vessels in the Convention Area. SPRFMO has an interim HSBI measure that applies relevant provisions of the UN Fish Stocks Agreement (UNFSA), but which lacks certain useful operation details specified in the HSBI procedures of some other RFMOs. For several years the United States has introduced a specific proposal, and in 2021 it garnered support for the proposal from all members except one. Convinced that SPRFMO needs HSBI now to strengthen enforcement of its conservation and management measures the United States has notified the Secretariat that it plans to operationalize the interim measure. We have not decided if we will introduce a measure at the next Commission meeting, but we do plan to continue to work toward a specific measure.



Contracting Parties

 Australia	 Republic of Chile	 People's Republic of China
 Cook Islands	 Republic of Cuba	 Republic of Ecuador
 European Union	 Faroe Islands	 Republic of Korea
 New Zealand	 Republic of Peru	 Russian Federation
 United States of America	 Republic of Vanuatu	

Other Members

Taiwan participates as Chinese Taipei, a “Fishing Entity” - entitled to membership but not a Contracting Party.

Cooperating non-Contracting Parties (CNCPs):

Curaçao, Republic of Liberia, and Republic of Panama.