

## **CORAL REEF FISHERIES STATUS ASSESSMENT REPORTS FOR THREE FIJI CUSTOMARY FISHING GROUNDS**

### **REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS**

**Issue date:** 3 February 2025

**Closing date and time:** 17 February at 11:59 PM (GMT + 12)

#### **Background**

The Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) is an international non-governmental organization committed to working with communities, the government, and other partners to safeguard Fiji's biodiversity and sustainably manage natural resources through integrated land- and seascape management, underpinned by applied research. WCS has been working in the country for over two decades. As part of these efforts, WCS has been working with indigenous resource owners in the Vatu-i-Ra Seascape to support the sustainable management of coastal resources. This includes undertaking coral reef benthic cover and reef fish surveys to understand the status of coral reefs and fisheries resources.

WCS is seeking a suitably qualified and experienced consultant to analyse available data from three customary fishing grounds (*qoliqoli*) of Bua, Bureta and Nakorotubu and prepare fisheries status assessment reports for each. These reports will utilise available ecological data provided by WCS, including reef fish and coral reef benthic surveys. The analysis will identify the status of the fishing ground and provide clear recommendations on how resource owners can ensure sustainable extraction practices (e.g., catch and size limits, periodical closures). The report should also reflect on the impact of management regimes such as *tabu* areas.

This work is being carried out through the Climate Adaptation and Protected Areas (CAPA) initiative. This initiative is implementing nature-based solutions to strengthen climate resilience and safeguard biodiversity. The project is funded by Global Affairs Canada and is implemented in collaboration with the International Institute for Sustainable Development.

#### **Scope of work**

The purpose of this consultancy is to provide an assessment of coral reef fisheries status in three *qoliqoli* areas to support indigenous resource owners to make informed fisheries management decisions. This will be achieved through a comprehensive analysis of coral reef fisheries and benthic data collected from customary fishing grounds within three Fijian districts. The analysis will assess coral reef fisheries status within each fishing ground (*qoliqoli*); determine whether management regimes implemented (no take and access restrictions) have resulted in changes in coral reef fish status and provide recommendations to inform fisheries management decisions and monitoring program design.

The consultant will undertake the following tasks:

- Review the available coral reef fish survey and benthic data provided by WCS Fiji, in the form of data sheets extracted from [Mermaid](#). This includes 41 sites (across the 3 fishing grounds). Underwater visual census (UVC) was used to survey reef fish and benthic communities on fringing, barrier and patch reefs across the study sites. Within each site UVC fish belt transects (using scuba) were conducted using 6 belt transects (50m x 5m) at 3m and 6m depth (where possible). Fish were recorded to species level (where possible) and size class. For coral reef benthic data, Point Intercept Transects were used along the same transects, recording categories at 0.5m intervals. Benthic attributes were classified in life form and to genus categories where possible. Benthos sampled in the benthic survey included live and dead hard coral within life-form categories (branching, plate, solitary, tabular, massive, foliose, encrusting) live soft coral, sponges, zoonathids; other biota, macro-algae, coralline algae, rock, rubble, sand and silt. Secondary data including prior reports from the study sites and more broadly for similar seascapes will be required to guide and compare results.
- Document and submit the fisheries assessment design and methodology for WCS review and endorsement. This should include analysis techniques to be used, key data to be presented, data visualization options and key assumptions.
- Undertake coral reef fisheries survey data analysis in relation to coral reef benthic data, survey locations, and management regimes. The analysis should use standard analytical and statistic software (preferably excel and R). The analysis should:
  - a. Quantify fish abundance, biomass and composition (including important fish families, ecological species and functional groups) across different habitats within each *qoliqoli*.
  - b. Compare and identify any observed changes in reef fish status (including important food fish families, ecologically significant species and functional groups, distribution, size, density, and biomass) attributable to current management regimes.
  - c. Identify reefs/sites more at risk, in terms of biodiversity and food fishes.
  - d. Evaluate potential indicator fish species, or groups for each of *qoliqoli* areas that may be used to demonstrate fisheries management outcomes.
  - e. Provide clear recommendations for future management actions for resource owners to ensure sustainable harvests and positive outcomes for reef fisheries and coral reef ecosystems.
- Produce three (3) reports (one for each *qoliqoli*) based on the analysis to communicate outcomes and key recommendations with communities. Reports should be clear, concise and use data visualisation, diagrams and language suitable for communicating scientific information with communities.
- In a short separate technical report (2-3 pages), provide an overview of data analysis undertaken, assumptions made and any actionable recommendations for future monitoring activities to improve data robustness.

## **Deliverables**

The consultant is expected to deliver the following:

1. The design and proposed methodology for the fisheries status assessment analysis for review and endorsement
2. Three fish assessment reports (one for each qoliqoli), detailing the findings from the analysis and recommendations for sustainable fisheries harvests.
3. A short technical report that documents and provides an overview of data analysis undertaken, assumptions made and recommendation for future monitoring activities to improve data robustness.

## **Timeline**

The consultancy work will ideally start by late February 2025 and be completed by the end of April 2025.

## **Requirements and qualifications**

The consultant will have the following minimum experience and qualifications:

- Considerable experience working in tropical marine coral reef fisheries, ideally in the Pacific region.
- A degree in fisheries, marine conservation, resource management or related field, preferably a Masters degree or higher.
- Fluency in both spoken and written English.

## **Submission requirements**

The following must be submitted:

1. Brief technical statement outlining previous experience conducting reef fish status assessments (maximum two-page). Proposers are encouraged to submit examples of previous assessment reports they have prepared.
2. CV
3. Financial proposal

Submitted rates are deemed to include all costs, insurances, taxes, fees, expenses, liabilities, obligations, risk and other things necessary for the performance of the Requirement. Any charge not stated in the Proposal as being additional, will not be allowed as a charge against any transaction under any resultant Contract. All rates and prices submitted by Proposers shall be in US dollars.

All proposal documents should be emailed directly to [pvannimwegen@wcs.org](mailto:pvannimwegen@wcs.org) by the closing date. Late submissions will not be considered.

## Evaluation criteria

The following criteria will be used to evaluate proposals:

<b>Evaluation criteria</b>	<b>Weighting given</b>
Financial proposal	30 %
Technical experience and capacity	60 %
Experience working in a Pacific context	10%