FAD-Watch: turning the tide on FAD-beaching

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Summary

This document presents the Seychelles FAD Watch Project as a Case Study for the handling of FADs at risk of beaching in sensitive areas and proposes some guidelines for the implementation of such initiatives in other areas. The Seychelles FAD-Watch project is a first multi-sectorial initiative intended to prevent and mitigate FAD beaching across islands in the Republic of Seychelles, in which the impact of FADs at risk of beaching is reduced through its removal from coastal waters. It is the result of collaborative work, involving OPAGAC, and three agencies in Seychelles: Island Conservation Society (ICS), Island Development Company and Seychelles Fishing Authority. Upon request from OPAGAC, its buoy service providers set up a FAD detection system, covering 6 island groups in the archipelago. This made possible sending alerts to ICS for FADs that crossed the established buffer areas. ICS collects information on each intercepted FAD, including its location at interception and fate, habitat type, ownership, FAD design, and entangled fauna and its fate. The results from the Project are assessed regularly with changes introduced as required.

In recent years, tuna-RFMOs have adopted specific data reporting standards concerning FADs, with most recommending the implementation of initiatives to evaluate the number of FADs that are lost each year, their fate, the risk that lost FADs may ultimately pose to the environment, and the way in which those impacts could be reduced.