Reducing FAD Impacts on Ocean & Coastal Ecosystems

8 Recommendations from a Collaborative Workshop

Tuna fishers, fisheries managers, and fisheries scientists working in three oceans met to identify how lost/abandoned Fish Aggregating Devices (FADs) can harm oceans and coastlines — and what can be done to prevent or minimize those ecosystem impacts.

Their recommendations spanned several areas, from FAD design, deployment, and retrieval to future research and collaboration opportunities.

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Approximately **40%** of the world's tuna **is caught with FADs**

Lost FADs can persist in the ocean for years as marine litter, or damage vulnerable habitats such as coral reefs. Plastics used in FADs that remain in the ocean can break down into smaller micro-particles and may enter the food web.

The Fisheries and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations estimates that **640,000 tons** of fishing gear, including FADs, **are lost at sea annually.**

Switching to biodegradable FAD (BFAD) structures made of **natural materials** – which ISSF is testing in three oceans – can minimize FADs' ecosystem impacts. As we progress successful implementation of BFADs, it's important to continue investigating all ways to lessen FAD impacts.

1. Develop a best-practice guide

for purse seiners & auxiliary vessels to reduce FAD loss/abandonment and improve FAD retrieval.

2. Quantify FAD strandings

by identifying beaching zones & high-priority FAD retrieval areas. Encourage buoy manufacturers, ship owners, & scientists to design a data-collection framework for FAD beaching estimates and a FAD retrieval strategy.

3. Study how to simplify FAD structures

as much as possible while still meeting fleet needs.

4. Study FAD trajectories

based on deployment position/time to identify high-risk areas for FAD loss & ineffective fishing effort.

5. Study FAD deployment in fishing waters near shore

to better manage those areas of high risk - e.g., by changing deployment zone/time or using anchored FADs.

6. Study FADs with navigation capacity

at sea to understand FAD "drone" behavior and strategies.

7. For coastal FAD retrieval, ensure efficient collection,

determine minimum requirements for vessel FAD recovery, & manage FAD waste on land.

8. Host fisher-scientist workshops

to discuss these recommendations & find solutions for each ocean.

To learn more, download our report at iss-foundation.org/fad-ecosystem-impacts

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