

SouthMAC

**Sub-Antarctic Fisheries
Management Advisory
Committee**

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CHAIRMAN'S SUMMARY

SouthMAC 21

18 November 2004, Hobart

Attendance

Members

Mr Peter Franklin – Chair
Ms Paula Shoulder, AFMA Member
Ms Margaret Moore, Conservation Member
Dr Malcolm Haddon, Scientific Member
Mr Martin Exel, Industry Member
Mr Les Scott, Industry Member
Mr Stuart Richey, Industry Member
Mr Ian Hay, AAD Member
Mr Peter Neave, Executive Officer

Permanent observers

Mr Grant Pullen, DPIWE
Ms Tori Wilkinson, Department of the
Environment and Heritage

Observers

Mr Ian Cartwright, AFMA Board
Dr Campbell Davies, AAD
Mr Bob Stanley, AFMA
Ms Liza Fallon, University of Tasmania

Apologies

None

Introduction

The twenty-first meeting of the Sub-Antarctic Fisheries Management Advisory Committee (SouthMAC 21) was held in Hobart on 18 November 2004. The Chair welcomed the attendance of Mr Ian Cartwright from the AFMA Board.

The primary objectives of the meeting were to:

- discuss the outcomes of the twenty-third meeting of the Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR XXIII);
- recommend catch limits for the Heard Island and McDonald Islands (HIMI) Fishery and New and Exploratory fisheries for the 2004/05 season;
- discuss bycatch management arrangements in the HIMI Fishery;
- discuss proposed amendments to the *Heard Island and McDonald Islands Fishery Management Plan 2002*; and
- discuss the proposed Macquarie Island Fishery Toothfish Management Plan.

The annual public meeting of SouthMAC was also held on the afternoon of 17 November 2004. Fourteen people attended the meeting including Members of SouthMAC and the Sub-Antarctic Fisheries Assessment Group (SAFAG), and representatives from the CCAMLR Secretariat and the University of Tasmania.

Following the Chairman's Report to the public meeting presentations were made from:

- Mr Les Scott from Petuna Sealord Pty Ltd on the operations of the Australian longline vessel *Janas* in the HIMI Fishery; and
- Mr Bob Stanley from AFMA on a project to investigate the use of video technologies in monitoring fishing operations.

CCAMLR XXIII outcomes

CCAMLR XXIII was held in Hobart over the period 25 October to 5 November 2004. A report prepared by AFMA on the outcomes is provided at Attachment A.

Dr Davies reported the meeting was very successful from an Australian perspective. He reported that the total allowable catches (TACs) for toothfish and icefish were agreed as were the applications of the sole Australian operator to fish in CCAMLR New and Exploratory fisheries. For longline operations in the HIMI Fishery approval was given to allow day setting (subject to seabird bycatch limits) and continued use integrated weight lines (IWL). Australia had also been successful in amending Conservation Measures relating to Statistical Divisions 58.4.1 and 58.4.2 (high Antarctic waters) where zero TACs were set in alternate 10° blocks of longitude

SouthMAC noted the success in reducing illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) toothfish removals had also reduced the estimates of seabirds killed in IUU operations to levels only slightly greater than the total estimated for all regulated fisheries in the CCAMLR area. No seabirds were killed during the season by Australian longliners.

SouthMAC also noted that CCAMLR had agreed to adopt a centralised Vessel Monitoring System (VMS).

SouthMAC strongly endorsed the efforts of the Australian delegation at CCAMLR, and noted success with the centralised VMS, the dramatic drop in IUU activity, progress with the Mauritius acceding to the Convention and the implementation of practical Conservation Measures.

Catch limits for the HIMI Fishery

CCAMLR prescribed the catch limits for the HIMI Fishery which were recommended by Australia, and shown in the following table. SAFAG 22 held on 16-17 November 2004 reviewed these limits and recommended to SouthMAC 21 that they be adopted for the 2004/05 season, commencing on 1 December 2004.

| Target species (tonnes) | | Bycatch Limits (tonnes) | | | | |
|-------------------------|------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------|--------------|--------------------|
| Patagonian toothfish | Mackerel icefish | Skates and rays | <i>Macrourus</i> spp. | Unicorn icefish | Grey rockcod | Each other species |
| 2787 | 1864 | 120 | 360 | 150 | 80 | 50 |

SouthMAC noted the catch limit recommendations for toothfish, mackerel icefish and bycatch species are consistent with the biological reference points as required by *Heard Island and McDonald Islands Fishery Management Plan 2002*.

In relation to the catch limits, SouthMAC noted:

Patagonian toothfish - the Scientific Committee reassessed the catch limit for Patagonian toothfish in Division 58.5.2 based on the final assessment provided by WG-FSA and recommended a TAC of 2,787 tonnes for the 2004/05 season, which was adopted by CCAMLR. This is a decrease of 86 tonnes from the 2,873 tonnes TAC for the 2003/04 season. The change in TAC relative to the previous season, and the preliminary assessment submitted by Australia for 2004/05, resulted from revisions to the recruitment series agreed during WG-FSA aimed at providing consistency across surveys and cohorts. The assessment took into account an estimated IUU catch of 634 tonnes from the HIMI Fishery.

Mackerel icefish - the Scientific Committee reassessed the catch limit for mackerel icefish in Division 58.5.2, and agreed to recommend a TAC of 1,864 tonnes for the 2004/05 fishing season, for the area known as the Heard Island Plateau. This is a substantial increase from the 292 tonnes TAC prescribed for the same area in 2003/04. The large increase in the TAC is consistent with the preliminary assessment submitted to SAFAG and WG-FSA by Australia and is the result of a very strong cohort entering the fishery.

Other bycatch species - no new assessments were undertaken for other bycatch species and therefore catch limits prescribed by CCAMLR for grey rockcod (80 tonnes), unicorn icefish (150 tonnes), skates and rays (120 tonnes), macrourids (360 tonnes) and each other species (50 tonnes each) remain unchanged.

SouthMAC agreed to recommend to the AFMA Board that the catch and size limits prescribed by CCAMLR XXIII be determined for the HIMI Fishery for the 2004/05 season.

Catch limits for New and Exploratory fisheries

SouthMAC noted that the proposals by the sole Australian operator to fish in CCAMLR New and Exploratory fisheries in 2004/05 were endorsed by CCAMLR XXIII.

SouthMAC recommended the catch limits outlined in the following table, which would apply to Australian flagged vessels in the 2004/05 season. No assessment of stocks in these areas has been undertaken and these limits are considered to be precautionary.

| Area | Method | Target species limits (tonnes) | By-catch limits (tonnes) | | |
|-----------|----------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| | | | Skates & Rays (per region) | <i>Macrourus</i> spp. (per region) | Other species (per SSRU) |
| | | <i>Dissostichus</i> spp | | | |
| 58.4.3(a) | Longline | 250 | 50 | 26 | 20 |
| 58.4.3(b) | Longline | 300 | 50 | 159 | 20 |
| 88.1 | Longline | 3,250 | 163 | 520 | 20 |

SSRU means small scale research unit.

Rules for catch limits for by-catch species adopted by CCAMLR XXIII

Skates and rays 5% of the catch limit for *Dissostichus* spp. or 50 tonnes, whichever is greater.

Macrourus spp. 16% of the catch limit for *Dissostichus* spp., except in Divisions 58.4.3a and 58.4.3b.

Other species 20 tonnes total per SSRU.

SouthMAC noted that for New and Exploratory fisheries, vessels from a number of other CCAMLR member countries were also given approval to operate in the various CCAMLR Statistical Divisions, and the catch limits for each Division will be on a competitive basis.

Bycatch management arrangements in the HIMI Fishery

SouthMAC discussed the bycatch management arrangements for the HIMI Fishery, particularly in relation to skates and rays. The skates and rays catch limit was maintained at 120 tonnes for 2004/05. The catch limit is a significant concern for Australian industry operators as the catch of skates and rays in the longline fishery was over 60 tonnes in 2003/04. With the increased mackerel icefish TAC in 2004/05 there is expected to be an increased catch of skates and rays as a bycatch in trawl operations. In 2002/03 when the icefish TAC was 2980 tonnes trawl operations took close to 30 tonnes. It was noted that should a bycatch limit be reached the entire HIMI Fishery would be closed.

SAFAG 22 had discussed the issue the previous day and agreed on a set of protocols to be adopted to monitor the catch of skates and rays in 2004/05. The new logbook format requires the skipper of a vessel operating in the HIMI Fishery to report on the catch and life status of bycatch species. This information from the 10 day reporting format will be used to monitor the catch from each sector on an ongoing basis. AFMA undertook to consult with AAD to determine a suitable sample size to determine the weights to be used in calculating the catch.

It was also agreed to assume a mortality rate of 25% applies to skates and rays cut off at the water in line with the CCAMLR instruction. That is, the CCAMLR Scientific Committee recommended that vessels be advised that, where possible, they should cut all rajids (skates and rays) from their lines whilst the rajids are still in the water, except on the request of the scientific observer.

SouthMAC agreed if catches of skates and rays reached either 30 tonnes in the trawl sector, 60 tonnes in the longline sector or 60 tonnes total between sectors a review would be triggered which would examine procedures and practices, aimed at ensuring that one sector does not adversely impact on the other sector.

SouthMAC welcomed the undertaking by AAD to conduct a stock assessment for skates and rays prior to the 2005/06 season.

Proposed amendments to the HIMI Fishery Management Plan

SouthMAC discussed a range of proposed amendments to the *Heard Island and McDonald Islands Fishery Management Plan 2002* or associated legislation. The issues discussed were:

- making longline fishing a prescribed fishing method;
- examining increasing the number of vessels permitted to operate;
- amending the overcatch provisions to bring it into line with the proposed procedure under the Macquarie Island Toothfish Fishery Management Plan;
- allowing for transshipment;
- specifying the total number of Statutory Fishing Rights (SFRs); and
- amending the date for finalising the Fisheries Assessment Plan.

SouthMAC noted the success to date of the operations of the longline vessel *Janas* in the HIMI Fishery and that no seabirds had been killed over the two seasons the vessel has operated. It was noted that Australian operators would be seeking to introduce new longliners in the Fishery, with a possible reduction in the trawl vessel numbers.

The current longline season extends from 1 May to 14 September and industry members advised that the current three vessels permitted to operate (if all longliners) would be unable to take the toothfish TAC, if the TAC were around current levels (2787 tonnes for 2004/05).

SouthMAC noted that:

- prior to the introduction of longlining as a prescribed method, a report on the deleterious effects of longlining needed to be prepared and considered;
- that if the proposal to longline and increase vessel numbers was supported a new Strategic Assessment for the Fishery would probably be required; and
- that AFMA would be raising these issues in writing with the Department of the Environment and Heritage.

SouthMAC considered an industry proposal to have consistency between the overcatch provisions in the HIMI Fishery and that proposed for the Macquarie Island Toothfish Fishery. It is proposed that any overcatch from 0 – 10 tonnes would come off the following season's quota on a one for one basis, and any overcatch from 10 - 20 tonnes would come off the following season's quota on a three for one basis. Any overcatch above 20 tonnes would be subject to the three to one reduction and possible prosecution.

SouthMAC noted that AFMA had no 'in principle' objections to transshipping provided the operation was supervised and gave preliminary support to this proposal. Industry members advised that transshipping of catch potentially offered an economically efficient means to assist fishing operations, where considerable steaming time to and from the grounds could be avoided, particularly for longline operations where there is a restricted season length.

SouthMAC supported an industry proposal to include in the Management Plan an explicit reference to the maximum number of SFRs for toothfish and icefish (30,000 per species).

The HIMI Fishery Management Plan currently requires that the Fisheries Assessment Plan (FAP) for the season needs to be completed prior to the start of that season (1 December). SouthMAC noted this was proving to be impractical and, given that the research requirements specified in the FAP do not commence until around May, discussed altering the date the FAP needs to be finalised to around March.

SouthMAC agreed the issues, outlined above, would be further discussed at its next meeting.

Macquarie Island Toothfish Fishery Management Plan

SouthMAC discussed the development of the Macquarie Island Toothfish Fishery Management Plan, which had been given Board approval in June 2003. SouthMAC noted the current draft Management Plan which would be progressed following consideration of a number of issues including the allocation of Statutory Fishing Rights and boat numbers.

SouthMAC noted that the Independent Advisory Panel (IAP) which was looking at the allocation of Statutory Fishing Rights issue for the Fishery was scheduled to report prior to the AFMA Board meeting on 25–26 November 2004. Some Members expressed concern that the IAP had not issued a draft report for public consideration, but instead had prepared a 'Statement of Issues' which the IAP perceived to underpin its final advice to AFMA.

SouthMAC supported an AFMA proposal that the IAP report be released for a further period of public comment once considered by the Board.

SouthMAC discussed the boat number issue and noted the discussions from SAFAG the previous day. It was agreed a key principle was to protect the high environmental values of Macquarie Island and its surrounds. It was recognised that the stringent environmental requirements on fishing authorisations and the standard of operations on fishing vessels were fundamental to this issue, particularly given that the fishing rights would be tradeable.

It was noted that SouthMAC, at its previous meeting on 25 March 2004, agreed that more than one boat operating in the Fishery was acceptable as long as appropriate measures to minimise environmental impacts were in place. A mechanism to limit the number of vessels at any one time was recognised as an issue for further consideration.

AFMA undertook to write to the Department of the Environment and Heritage to clarify their position on the boat numbers issue and agreed to advise SouthMAC of the outcomes out-of-session.

SouthMAC discussed the overcatch provisions in the draft Management Plan. Industry proposed that any overcatch from 0 – 10 tonnes should come off the following season's quota on a one for one basis, and any overcatch from 10 - 20 tonnes would come off the following season's quota on a three for one basis. Any overcatch above 20 tonnes would be subject to the three to one reduction and possible prosecution.

AFMA undertook to circulate a further draft of the Management Plan once the above issues had been progressed.

Fisheries Assessment Plan

SouthMAC noted that SAFAG had discussed the Fisheries Assessment Plan for the HIMI Fishery, and agreed to the required levels of research and monitoring.

Collaborative research between Australia and France

SouthMAC noted that officials from France had given a generally positive response to the proposal to conduct a collaborative research program to investigate whether toothfish are a shared stock on the Kerguelen Plateau. It is envisaged the joint project would operate under the scientific annex of the Australian/French Cooperation Treaty which was scheduled to be finalised in the coming months. Officials from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry have been and would continue to be involved in the process.

Levy base for 2004/05

SouthMAC discussed the levy calculations for 2004/05, and noted that AFMA had agreed to defer some of the levy collected while the Macquarie Island Toothfish Fishery Management Plan was being developed. The costs of the Plan development would be collected by SFR holders once the Plan had been finalised. AFMA agreed to investigate the level of the deferred costs and report back to SouthMAC at its next meeting.

Next meeting

The next meeting of SouthMAC was tentatively scheduled for March 2005, but would be dependent on progress with the Macquarie Island Toothfish Fishery Management Plan.