



Australian Government

Australian Fisheries Management Authority



**Northern Prawn Fishery
Management Advisory Committee
(NORMAC)**

**FINAL
TELECONFERENCE
RECORD**

CHAIR: Stuart Richey

Date; 23rd March 2007

Draft Minutes NORMAC Teleconference – Friday 23rd March 2007

Attendees:

| | |
|----------------|-------------------------------|
| Stuart Richey | Chairman |
| Dorothea Huber | AFMA Member |
| Wade Whitelaw | NPF Manager |
| Dave Perrott | AFMA Finance |
| Dave Alden | AFMA Research |
| Adrienne Burke | AFMA |
| Mike Gerner | AFMA |
| Ian Knuckey | NPRAG Chair |
| Ean Casey | Industry Member |
| David Carter | Industry Member |
| Mike O'Brien | Industry Adviser |
| Eddie Hegerl | Conservation Member |
| Jim Gillespie | State Govt Permanent Observer |
| Annie Jarrett | NORMAC Executive Officer |

Apologies:

Cathy Dichmont, George Raptis

The Chairman opened the teleconference at 1.00am on Friday 23rd March 2007 stating that the only item for discussion on the agenda was the NPF draft 2007/08 budget. The Chairman stated that the papers which would be discussed were the NPF draft budget 2007/08; two spreadsheets emailed by AFMA, an email from David Carter in response to the draft budget and an email from the NORMAC EO to AFMA querying how the surplus levy funds and excess receipts had come about.

Discussions took place as follows:

Research Budget

NORMAC noted that, according to the draft budget there was \$993,000 available for NPF research in 2007/08. Concerns were raised in relation to the lack of detail contained in the budget papers, and the inability of members to understand how the levy surplus of \$468,658 and excess receipts of \$495,747 came about. Industry members queried how surplus funds of this magnitude had been accumulated without the surplus being apparent in previous budgets, particularly at a time when the fishery had been experiencing economic hardship.

The AFMA Research Manager advised that the levy surplus was made up of \$396,000 of surplus industry funds and \$130,000 of government funds. He advised that in the past, unspent industry levies had not been acquitted back to industry, and instead had been rolled over. This had resulted in an accumulation of unspent research funds. The MAC noted that the \$486,000 was not surplus funds, but represented funds that had been committed for current and future research projects.



NORMAC noted that of the \$993,000, \$259,000 had already been expended on projects which had commenced in the current financial year but which had not been previously budgeted for, leaving a total of \$ 747,000. The MAC noted that based on explanations provided by AFMA, the proposed budget resulted in a deficit of \$64,000. It was noted that an additional \$95,000 required for analyzing the bycatch monitoring data had not been included in the draft budget and this would result in a budget deficit of \$154,000.

MAC members agreed that it was inappropriate to approve the draft research budget without a comprehensive, written acquittal of the draft budget. It was agreed that the AFMA Research and Finance sections would provide NORMAC with a revised draft research budget, including a full explanation of all income streams and proposed expenditure (including current and future research projects relating to the budget) by COB Tuesday 27th March. It was agreed that, if the MAC is unable to agree on the draft research budget out of session, an additional teleconference would be required at the end of the week.

Industry members of NORMAC reiterated their concerns regarding the way the budget was presented and indicated that it was unacceptable to have budget surpluses being accumulated and unaccounted for. The AFMA member gave an undertaking that in the future, the fishery budgets, including research, will be transparent and comprehensive.

Ian Knuckey, David Perrott and Dave Alden left the conference call at 12.45.

Fishery/ NORMAC Budget

The MAC considered the draft fishery and MAC budgets and agreed to the following amendments/conditions:

- the removal of the \$20,000 for consultants and contractors
- the removal of \$1000 for indigenous and other consultation
- the proposed budget for 2 AFMA staff to attend the skipper briefings in Cairns and Darwin and one AFMA staff to attend the Karumba briefing

Industry MAC members expressed concern about the increase in the costs of log books and data management, and queried why these costs would increase when the number of boats in the fishery has been reduced by 43%. NORMAC noted that the distribution of these costs to each fishery by AFMA was calculated using an averaging approach based on previous activity in the fishery. It was noted that the proposed increases in these costs centres were minor however industry members of the MAC objected to the approach used as the previous averages would not be relevant to future use due to the significant reduction in vessel numbers in some fisheries, including the NPF.

Industry members expressed extreme concern about the 25% increase in licensing/quota management costs. The MAC again noted that an 'averaging' approach was used to distribute licensing costs to each fishery and that this was inappropriate and irrelevant given the SAP outcomes. The MAC agreed that the Chairman should write to the AFMA Chair advising that NORMAC accepted the fishery budget, with the exception



of the licensing/quota management component, and advise that the 25% increase in licensing costs is totally indefensible, given the 43% reduction in vessel numbers.

It was agreed to also request the AFMA Board to review its policy on using the 'averaging approach' for licensing, data management and log books before the development of the 2008/09 budgets, as past averages would not be relevant to future activities as a result of the significant reduction in trawlers in the NPF.

NORMAC noted its previous agreement to a maximum budget of \$150151.00 for one scientific observer to participate in the bycatch monitoring program and noted that this should result in a budget surplus in 2007/08 if an external (none-AFMA) observer is used. It was noted that an additional \$95,000 was required for analyzing the data and that this had been identified for inclusion in the revised draft research budget.

NORMAC noted the significant decrease in the compliance budget which had been achieved by taking account of the reduction in vessel numbers in the NPF and by adopting a new approach to policing closures. NORMAC members congratulated the compliance section for its efforts in seriously addressing compliance costs and taking new approaches to compliance in the fishery.

Resolutions:

That NORMAC approves the draft NPF budget (excluding research), with the exception of the licensing/quota management component of the budget

That the Chairman will write to the AFMA Board advising that the increase in licensing/ quota costs is indefensible given the 43% reduction in vessel numbers and requesting the Board to review this part of the budget

That the MAC congratulates the Compliance Section on the budget cuts and for its efforts in seriously addressing compliance costs and taking new approaches to compliance in the fishery

That AFMA Management will provide a revised draft NPF research budget which will include a full explanation and acquittal of the draft NPF research budget by COB Tuesday 27th March

Other Business

NORMAC noted advice from Mike O'Brien that the Queensland Minister for Transport had announced a marine Board of Inquiry into the Zinifex barge/ zinc spill incident. NORMAC noted that NPFIO have asked to be including on the register for submissions to the inquiry.

It was noted that the AFMA project to develop a generic Elog system which will be provided to industry free of charge for use in 2008 is still a high priority. It was noted that



the generic AFMA Elog would only record catch data, and no other industry related information.

AFMA Management gave an undertaking to keep NORMAC informed of any developments relating to Native Title and other indigenous issues relating to the NPF.

The teleconference concluded at 1.30pm.

