



**Australian Government**

**Australian Fisheries Management Authority**



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

**Final Minutes NORMAC 65  
6<sup>th</sup> July 2007  
Brisbane**

**Chairman: Stuart Richey**

**NORMAC 65 Attendance List**

Stuart Richey  
Eddie Hegerl

Chairman  
Conservation Member

Cathy Dichmont	Scientific Member
Nick Rayns	AFMA Member
David Carter	Industry Member
Norm Peovitis	Industry Member
Greg Albert	Industry Member
Ean Casey	Industry Member
Jim Gillespie	State Government observer
Caitlin Barry	DEW Observer (for Lara Musgrave)
Annie Jarrett	Executive Officer

### **Apologies**

George Raptis

### **Advisors**

Ian Knuckey	NPRAG Chair
Wade Whitelaw	AFMA
Ian Boot	Industry
Ron Earle	Industry
Mike O'Brien	Industry
Max O'Halloran	Industry
Andy Prendegast	Industry

### **Observers/Invited Guests**

Ian Cartwright	AFMA Board
Andy Bodsworth	AFMA
Noel Hoschke	Industry
Vic Binding	Industry

## **Item 1. Chairs Opening Remarks/ Apologies/Adoption of Agenda**

The Chairman opened the meeting at 8.45am and welcomed all members, advisers and observers, including the new MAC members and advisers being Nick Rayns (AFMA



member), Norm Peovitis and Greg Albert (industry members), Ian Boot and Max O'Halloran, (industry advisers). Mr. Richey welcomed Ian Cartwright (AFMA Board member), Caitlin Barry from DEWR (attending on behalf of Lara Musgrave) and Andy Bodsworth, Acting Northern Fisheries Manager. He also noted the attendance of Noel Hoske as an observer and made mention of Noel's strong commitment and regular attendance as an observer

The MAC received an apology from George Raptis who was unable to attend due to a pending knee operation.

The Chairman reminded all in attendance of the requirement to observe usual meeting protocols and called for any additional items for inclusion on the agenda. Additional items proposed were the Zinifex zinc spill, appointments for the NORMAC Research & Environment Committee and MPAs. It was noted that due to time constraints, a number of the usual procedural items had not been included on the agenda and would be considered at the MAC meeting in August.

NORMAC agreed to adopt the agenda as amended.

**Resolution:**

**That the agenda be adopted as amended.**

**Item 2. Declaration of Interests**

The Chairman reminded members that the AFMA policy paper on MACs and the CAC Act required members to declare their interests in relation to the MAC and/or specific agenda items.

The Chairman reiterated that declarations of interest must also include any conflict of interest or possible conflict of interest arising from any legal or political actions or pending prosecutions pertaining to the fishery. All MAC members are required to make conflicts of these types known when other declarations of interests are recorded. No declarations of this nature were received.

The specific interests of members were declared as follows:

Stuart Richey: FRDC Board Member

The specific commercial interests of the industry members of NORMAC were recorded as follows:

David Carter: CEO of a company holding 9 Class B SFRs and a number of gear SFRs



Ean Casey: Shareholder in 1 B class SFR and a number of gear SFRs  
Norm Peovitis: 4 B Class SFRs and 2568 gear SFRs  
Greg Albert: 2 B Class SFRs and 1275 gear SFRs  
George Raptis: Shareholder in 10 Class B's and a number of gear SFRs

Standing declarations of interest remain on record for the NORMAC Executive Officer in relation to the development of harvest strategies (pecuniary interest) and MSC Certification (non-pecuniary interest), and for Eddie Hegerl in relation to MSC (non-pecuniary interest).

### **Item 3. Record of NORMAC 64**

The Chairman noted that a revised version of the draft minutes had been circulated which included editorial changes proposed by members since the first draft was prepared. The MAC approved the draft record of the meeting with no additional amendments.

#### **Resolution:**

**That NORMAC approves the draft minutes of NORMAC 64**

### **Item 4. AFMA Management Report**

NORMAC received the AFMA Management report which included information of the status of the NPF Bycatch Action Plan; an update on the AFMA's ERA/ ERM process; an update on staffing levels and NPF-related expenditure; and the NPF draft bycatch project plan.

NORMAC noted that the first extension to the 2007 banana prawn season had been successfully implemented but that there was insufficient catch of banana prawns to meet the criteria for a second extension. The NPF Manager advised that a number of vessels had failed to report catch and effort information prior to the second assessment. NORMAC members were reminded that one of the decision rules is that the trigger to extend the season is applied only if catch data for the whole fleet or >95% of NORMAC members and advisors is supplied to AFMA. In this case the lack of data from NORMAC members and advisors may have meant that even if the catches had been over 500kg/per vessel/day, the season would not have been extended.

The MAC noted that NPF operators are complying with the policy to minimize the take of tiger prawns in the first half, with a total tiger prawn catch of 2800 kgs for the banana season.



NORMAC noted that AFMA received a number of negative comments from skippers who did not agree with the decision to extend the season. The AFMA member advised that AFMA is required to respond to the complaints but noted advice from industry that there were a number of reasons behind the skipper's complaints which were not related to the fishery (ie pre-booked holidays etc). It was agreed that AFMA Management would advise skippers that there are protocols in place in relation to extending the banana prawn season and managing small prawns, and that issues of concern should be taken up with NPFIO.

The MAC discussed the Crew Monitoring Observer project, noting that 13 CMOs, including 7 new members, had booked for the CMO training program due to commence at the Gold Coast. This would provide CMO coverage for approximately 20% of the fleet. NORMAC noted that there had been some difficulties getting observers on trawlers during the banana prawn season but these had been primarily related to lack of coordination between observer movements and trawler schedules. NORMAC agreed that arrangements between owners and AFMA need to be put in place well in advance of observers arriving at ports and that AFMA should contact owners to make prior arrangements.

It was noted that there are no skippers involved in the CMO program this year. NORMAC agreed that all skippers should be made aware that the CMO program is supported by industry and the MAC, and that the program needs to be fully supported by the skippers at sea.

### **Resolution:**

#### **That NORMAC notes the report**

##### **Item 5. Industry Report on NPF**

NORMAC noted advice from NPFIO that the organization is in the process of becoming incorporated as a company under the Corporations Act. A Board of Directors has been elected which is representative of current NORMAC industry members, and Ron Earle has been appointed as Chairman – shares in the new company will be issued based on NPF gear SFR holdings.

The MAC noted that the vision of NPFIO is to improve economic viability of the fishery, and to adopt a “self management” approach to the fishery, whereby the MAC would be responsible for setting the policy direction for the fishery, and NPFIO would be responsible for more of the day to day decision making and implementation of management and compliance approaches. AFMA would adopt more of an “audit” role to ensure that the management of the fishery is consistent with AFMA’s legislative objectives.



NPFIO provided its report on the fishery as follows:

**Market information:**

The export market continues to struggle under the crushing weight of the strengthening A\$ which has caused many producers to take a closer look at the Australian domestic market. This is occurring at a time which is not traditionally strong for consumption which has resulted in generally lower prices to producers. Exporting to the EU is still under severely restricted due to risk of rejection based on unreasonable EU limits for cadmium in prawns.

The lower than average production of banana prawns for this year, the exceptional size and quality of much of the catch and the prospect of import restrictions being placed on whole green prawns from countries with prawn diseases leaves open a good opportunity for stronger prices later in the year if operators are able to fund the holding strategy.

**Catch information:**

Most of the catch was taken in the first month of the season and mostly from the eastern side of the Gulf of Carpentaria where sizes have been some of the best seen. Production from the west of the Gulf was generally low and Fog Bay seemed to produce its normal 200 tonnes or so. There was also around 200 tonnes of squid caught during the season from one small area around Tully.

The smaller fleet was noticeable with boats often reporting being on their own or just in ones and two. For many the extended season was not really worth the cost of the fuel that was consumed.

**Cost information:**

Much of the fleet opted for unloading ashore this season thus delivering some worthwhile savings compared with use of the motherships. Fuel prices were generally lower by 20% compared with last year which was welcome relief.

**License Trading:**

No known trading

**Resolution:**

**That NORMAC congratulates NFPIO on the decision to incorporate and welcomes the opportunity to work more closely with a cohesive industry in the future**



## **That NORMAC notes the industry report**

### **Item 6. Issues arising from ITQ Workshop**

NORMAC members unanimously agreed that the ITQ workshop had been very successful, and had created industry confidence that the process of ITQ investigation was transparent and inclusive. The MAC was very complimentary about the willingness of all participants to be open-minded and generous in their participation, despite the underlying concerns about quota management in the NPF. It was noted that the working group approach had been successful and that a number of common themes came out of the working group discussions.

The MAC noted the advice from Tom Kompas that a preliminary analysis indicated that ITQs would not deliver economic benefits to the banana fishery and but would deliver some economic benefits for the tiger prawn fishery. Dr. Kompas advised that his analysis also did not include in-season management of banana prawns which may affect his results. It was also noted that the preliminary analysis did not include any costs or benefits and Dr. Kompas recommended that a full cost benefit analysis should be undertaken.

The AFMA member indicated that he would be seeking AFMA Board support and funding for a cost benefit analysis to be undertaken so that both AFMA and industry could have confidence that the preferred ITQ option(s) would provide positive benefits to the industry. The MAC noted that AFMA did not want to implement anything that would cause the fishery to go backwards economically. NORMAC supported the need for a cost-benefit analysis of ITQ options to be undertaken and welcomed the offer by Dr. Rayns for NORMAC and industry to provide input on the terms of reference for this, if the Board approved the proposed project.

The MAC discussed the possibility that an ITQ system might only apply to tiger prawns (at least in the first instance) and the implications of that approach for the FRDC-funded TAC project. The MAC agreed that it would make a decision as to whether there was a need to change the focus of the TAC project at the August meeting.

The MAC noted that MRAG would circulate a summary of the workshop outcomes in due course. The outcomes of the workshop would be incorporated into the modeling work and the final MRAG et al report on ITQ options for the fishery. The MAC will receive presentations by MRAG on the final report at its August meeting.

### **Resolutions:**

## **That NORMAC notes the success of the ITQ workshop**



**That NORMAC supports the commissioning of a cost-benefit analysis of ITQ options for the fishery**

**Item 7/ 7.1 NPRAG Report/ Operationalising the NPF Harvest Strategy under Input Controls<sup>1</sup>**

NORMAC received a report from the NPRAG, noting that two RAG meetings had been held since February. The key issues addressed by the RAG included the 2007 stock assessment; the draft prawn assessment; the NPF bio-economic model, the Commonwealth's draft harvest strategy policy and the NPF Harvest Strategy Under Input Controls. Bycatch research, AFMA's Ecological Risk assessment process, and consideration of the MRAG et al interim report on ITQs had also been the focus of RAG work.

NORMAC welcomed the RAG advice that 2006 tiger stock assessment indicated that the targets of the stock rebuilding strategy implemented in 2001 had been reached and that both species of tiger prawns were no longer overfished, and are now classified as "fully fished". The fishing effort in 2006 was 42% of the  $E_{MSY}$  for grooved tiger prawns and 36% of the  $E_{MSY}$  for brown tiger prawns. NORMAC agreed that this was a great achievement which had come at an economic and personal cost to NFF fishers and agreed that a concerted communications strategy should be put in place to capitalise on this achievement. It was agreed that the NORMAC EO would work with AFMA Management and NPFIO to develop an appropriate strategy.

NORMAC noted that advice had been sought from the NPRAG on a number of gaps in the NPF Harvest Strategy, including the implications of using one MEY value to address more than one species; the implications of not having a target reference point for endeavours; and advice on whether the 'estimate of headrope to catch' (Venables) model can be adapted to calculate for increases in gear, as it previously only allowed for reductions in gear.

The RAG advised that the concept of a multi-species MEY target under effort controls is difficult to elucidate. It appeared that the main difficulty related to the assumption that the MEY target, once achieved, would confer the same relative stock size on all key commercial species – this is incorrect. There are two important points: 1) Due to different growth and life history strategies, the individual prawn species will move towards a stock size appropriate to MEY at different rates; 2) Once the fishery is at MEY, the individual prawn species will almost certainly exist at different stock sizes relative to virgin biomass or  $B_{MSY}$ . That is, at MEY for the fishery, one stock of a key commercial species may exist at  $1.5B_{MSY}$  while another is at  $0.7B_{MSY}$  and another at  $0.9B_{MSY}$ . This is a legitimate situation under a Harvest Strategy Policy, and a management response would

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<sup>1</sup> EO's Note: due to the overlap in the issues, the record of discussions on items 7 and 7.1 has been amalgamated to avoid duplication



not necessarily be required unless one of the stocks fell below  $0.5B_{MSY}$ , ie triggered the LRP as defined above.

Noting the RAGs advice, NORMAC agreed that the MEY target should be calculated as the combined value of Smey for both tiger prawn species and that endeavour prawns should be treated as an economic bycatch in the model.

NORMAC noted concerns raised by NPFIO in relation to the 2012 nominal target date to achieve MEY. These included the need to identify the major changes in the fleet capacity and dynamics which have occurred as a result of the SAP; the fact that stock assessment advice on tiger prawns and advice on the economic status of the fishery will not be available until May 2008; and the unknown impacts of implementing ITQs. NPFIO recommended that it would be more appropriate to determine a target date of 2014 (based on a 7 year horizon) to achieve MEY. The MAC agreed to amend the target date in the HS to 2014.

NORMAC noted concerns raised about the timing of the economic surveys to identify the economic impacts of the SAP, and the need for the economic information to be available in early 2008 for incorporation into the 2007 stock assessment. The MAC requested the NORMAC Executive Officer to take the matter up with ABARE to ensure the data is provided to CSIRO in early 2008. NORMAC agreed that it would be useful for AFMA and the MAC to prepare a project plan which identifies information gaps and outlines the various activities and projects which have to be implemented in the pursuit of the MEY target.

Dr. Dichmont presented the preliminary endeavour prawn assessment, advising that this was “work in progress” and significant improvements and changes to the model are still required. All of the inputs to the model were explained (catchability, growth, natural mortality, fecundity, proportion ripe etc), and areas of uncertainty in parameter values were highlighted. The MAC noted that discussions with NPFIO on the previous day had highlighted the deficiencies in the model inputs.

Concerns were expressed that the output from the model is currently not credible as it does not reflect the changes in the fishing practices in the NPF over the past 6 years (ie many of the endeavour prawn grounds have either been closed during the stock rebuilding strategy or the economics of fishing is limiting the targeting of endeavour prawns).

The MAC agreed that the CSIRO draft report to AFMA/ FRDC on the endeavour prawn assessment should explicitly state that the endeavour model has insufficient data to run an assessment and agreed that until such time as there is a strong stock recruitment relationship and a credible stock assessment for endeavours, they should not be included in the combined economic model for the fishery.



NORMAC noted that the RAG had reviewed an analysis of scampi catch, catch rate and position data with a view to better defining the triggers and management responses for scampi in the HS. The RAG agreed that appropriate triggers for this fishery would relate to a minimum catch rate and/or maximum catch occurring over a three year period. The management response to this trigger would be a full analysis of the fishery catch and effort data to investigate the potential for an adverse impact on the stocks. NORMAC endorsed this approach.

The RAG commissioned a revision of the 'estimate of headrope to catch' (Venables) model to allow the model to be adapted to calculate for increases in gear, as it previously only allowed for reductions in gear. Bill Venables gave a presentation on the output from the project. NORMAC noted that the project delivered the information required for the HS, including an effort-gear conversion formula which can be incorporated into the HS decision rules. NORMAC agreed to incorporate the results from the Venables project into the HS.

**Resolutions:**

**That NORMAC notes the report from the NPRAG**

**That the NPF MEY target will be limited to the combined value of Smey for both tiger prawn species and that endeavour prawns will be treated as an economic bycatch in the model at this time**

**That NORMAC adopts 2014 as the target to achieve MEY**

**That NORMAC recommends the CSIRO draft report to AFMA/ FRDC on the endeavour prawn assessment should explicitly state that the endeavour model has insufficient data to run an assessment**

**That until such time as there is a strong stock recruitment relationship and a credible endeavour prawn stock assessment, endeavour prawns will not be included in the combined economic model for the fishery**

**That the MAC endorses the approach proposed by the NPRAG that triggers for the NPF scampi fishery would relate to a minimum catch rate and / or a maximum catch occurring over a three year period**

**That the outputs from the revised Venables "estimate of headrope to catch" model, including the effort-gear conversion formula will be incorporated in to the NPF HS**

**That the NORMAC Executive Officer will advise ABARE of the need for the 2007 economic data to be provided to CSIRO in early 2008**



## **Item 8. Confirmation of 2007 Tiger Prawn Season Dates**

NORMAC confirmed the 2007 tiger prawn season dates as 1<sup>st</sup> August to 15<sup>th</sup> November. Industry members queried whether there was any capacity to extend the length of the season if high catches still prevailed late in the season given the reduction in boat numbers.

The MAC noted that the RAG advice to NORMAC in February indicated that minimal changes should be made in the 2007 tiger prawn season so that the affects of the SAP could be identified and factored into the stock assessment. The Scientific Member reminded the MAC that the reason the season is closed on 15<sup>th</sup> November is because there are massive amounts of recruits coming into the fishery in November which are not spatially separated from the good size prawns. Dr. Dichmont advised that allowing fishing on those recruits could have quite negative implications for the stock.

NORMAC noted advice that there was a noticeable decline in CPUE as the season progresses and requested the RAG to provide a paper on catch rates and prawn size for consideration at the August NORMAC meeting. NPFIO agreed to provide advice on a tiger prawn catch trigger point based on fishing economics.

NORMAC requested the NPRAG to provide advice on options for setting future fishing seasons to maximize the economic return from the fishery, including the possibility of revising the current mid-year closure timing and/or extending the length of the tiger prawn season in 2008 and beyond.

The MAC noted that for planning purposes, industry would require early advice of any significant changes to current fishing seasons and management approaches and recommended the early provision by AFMA of 2007 tiger prawn season data to CSIRO to allow the stock assessment to be undertaken early in the 2008 year. AFMA Management advised that the timing of provision of data to CSIRO was contingent on when the log book information was received by AFMA. The MAC noted that AFMA is still in the process of developing the software to facilitate the cost-effective transmission of elogs but that this would not be available before 2008.

### **Resolutions:**

**That NORMAC confirms the 2007 tiger prawn season dates as 1<sup>st</sup> August to 15<sup>th</sup> November**

**That NORMAC notes the query regarding the potential to extend the tiger prawn season if catch rates are still high as a result of the reduced number of vessels, and requests the RAG to provide a paper on historical tiger prawn season CPUE and prawn size data for consideration at the August NORMAC meeting**



**That NORMAC notes that NPFIO will provide advice on an appropriate tiger catch trigger point based on fishing economics**

**That NORMAC notes the request to AFMA to expedite the provision of 2007 catch data to CSIRO, and notes that this will require cooperation by industry to submit log book returns in a timely fashion**

**Item 9. AFMA's Regulation on navigating closed areas- impacts/ solutions for NPF tiger prawn season**

NORMAC noted a ban on navigation was proposed for the NPF from 8am to 6 pm during the tiger prawn season. Trawlers which are not at anchor will have to steam at 5 knots or more and for more than one hour during this time to avoid being in breach of this ban.

NORMAC welcomed the attempts by AFMA to streamline compliance approaches and reduce compliance costs, and noted that it is proposed to introduce the regulations across all Commonwealth fisheries. However industry MAC members advised that the system will impose unrealistic operational constraints on operators which are basically unworkable for the NPF tiger prawn fishery. . Industry members advised that they did not want to increase the available fishing time but the system would be difficult to comply with given the need to transfer gear between trawlers, meet motherships etc. They considered that the proposed system would be difficult to comply with and could result in unintentional breaches of the system as a result of the operational aspects of the tiger prawn fishery.

NPFIO agreed that due to the operational complexity of the issue, representatives from NPFIO and AFMA compliance need to negotiate to find an acceptable solution which achieves the mutual objectives of the current proposal.

**Resolution:**

**That NORMAC appoints Mike O'Brien to negotiate with the AFMA compliance section to find an acceptable solution which would allow operational flexibility at the same time ensuring that fishing is not occurring during the daylight trawling closure**

**That NORMAC notes the appreciation expressed by NPFIO for the attempts of the compliance section to streamline approaches and reduce compliance costs**

**9.1 Regulating Navigation in Closed Areas – 2007 Banana Prawn Results**

The MAC received a report from AFMA Compliance on the ban on navigation in closed areas in the banana prawn season. It was noted that 16 breaches of the regulation had occurred and were being followed up by AFMA



## **Resolution:**

### **That NORMAC notes the report**

#### **Item 10. Proposed use of external scientific observers in NPF**

At its February meeting, NORMAC discussed the need to find more cost effective ways of monitoring bycatch, including the use of accredited external scientific observers if they could be contracted at a lower rate than AFMA scientific observers. It was agreed that NPFIO would investigate the potential to use external observers from the 2007 tiger prawn season and onwards. AFMA Management provided a background paper on the costs of AFMA observers compared to some external observer provider services (including CapFish and MFish) for consideration by NORMAC 65.

The MAC noted that there were considerable differences in the cost base of the service providers and noted industry concerns about the level of difference between the service provider rates, and concerns about the suggestion that AFMA overheads will be imposed on external observer provider services. Industry member advised that rates indicated by the New Zealand company FAS were considerably lower than the rates in the AFMA paper.

NORMAC recognized that AFMA has made considerable investments in training and accrediting scientific observers to ensure that rigorous scientific bycatch data can be collected. It was also noted that the use of external observers in the NPF may have implications for the other fisheries.

The MAC noted that industry MAC members were keen to get a rigorous, but cost effective observer program in place and noted the NPFIO recommendation that AFMA provide the scientific observer at the FAS rate or contract FAS observers to provide the service for the 2007 tiger prawn fishery. NPFIO recommended that thereafter, AFMA accredited independent observers should be contracted by NPFIO in accordance with the move to self management of the NPF, and the mutual objective of AFMA and NPFIO to reduce and streamline management costs and services. *To progress this issue NPFIO and AFMA agreed to meet in the second half of 2007 with the aim of settling observer services to be applied in the 2008 fishing seasons.*

The AFMA member advised that there are longer term considerations which had to be addressed in relation to AFMA's overall observer program but indicated that AFMA was willing to provide an SO at the most cost-effective independent rate for the 2007 tiger prawn season. The industry MAC members gave an undertaking to provide the FAS rate quoted to NPFIO to AFMA.

Industry members of the MAC expressed appreciation to the AFMA member for AFMA's cooperation on this issue. Industry members advised that the placement of SOs



on trawlers had implications for owners insurance and requested AFMA to ensure that appropriate insurance and Workplace Health & Safety provisions are in place for all scientific observers working on NPF trawlers.

**Resolutions:**

**That NORMAC notes that AFMA will provide an AFMA scientific observer at FAS rates for the 2007 tiger prawn season**

**That NPFIO will provide AFMA with the rate quoted by FAS for an SO to work in the NPF in 2007**

**That AFMA and NPFIO representatives will meet in the second half of 2007 with the aim of settling observer services to be applied in the 2008 fishing seasons**

**Item 11. Bycatch Issues**

NORMAC received a report of the Bycatch Committee Meeting which had been held in Cairns on 29<sup>th</sup> June 2007. The main issues discussed by the Committee were the Natural Heritage Trust (NHT) Project “Bycatch Reduction Improvement in the NPF”; the Bycatch Project Plan; the Ecological Risk Assessment & Residual Risk for the NPF; and the BRD which workshop is scheduled to place in Darwin on July 25.

The MAC noted that AFMA is developing a bycatch and discard policy paper to address a range of concerns and issues raised by MACs. This will be provided to the MACs for comment with a view to further refining the current policy.

The MAC noted that Wade Whitelaw had obtained Natural Heritage Trust (NHT) funding to carry out the following interconnected tasks:

- Flume tank testing of the ‘Popeye Fishbox’ and one other developmental BRD - potentially the ‘witches hat BRD enhancers’;
- Provide, deploy and implement 20 Popeye Fishboxes and 20 witches hat BRD enhancers (if successful in flume tank trials) onto 20 representative NPF vessels;
- Purchase and trial two electronic load cells to determine total bycatch for individual NPF vessels; and
- Trial existing approved BRDs closer to the codend drawstring to demonstrate their potentially improved efficiency (increased bycatch reduction without compromising prawn catch).

The MAC congratulated Wade on obtaining this funding. Industry members advised that there are safety concerns relating to the weight of the Fishboxes and that the next step should be to investigate designs using other materials including rubber, which is what is used in the USA.



A very preliminary draft NPF Bycatch Project plan was presented to the MAC. NORMAC noted that the REC will review the research priorities in the draft Plan and will provide input to the Plan. NORMAC agreed that the content of the NPF Project Plan is critical and requested that a revised plan be provided to NORMAC for consideration at the August meeting.

NORMAC received updates on the NPF Level 2 and Level 2.5 ERAs, noting that a total of 272 species were assessed under the Level 2 ERA and 28 species (15 byproduct and 13 TEP) were identified as high risk in the banana prawn component and 25 species (16 byproduct and 9 TEP) were identified as high risk in the tiger prawn component.

A 'Level 2.5' ERA was also specifically conducted on teleosts and chondrichthyans. The 'Level 2' ERA purposely did not assess bycatch as the bycatch species had already been assessed via the Level 2.5 methodology.

The use of different categorisation of 'bycatch' and 'byproduct' species at the Level 2 and Level 2.5 assessments resulted in 61 species being assessed in both Level 2 and Level 2.5 ERAs. Of the 61 species commonly examined, 11 were deemed high risk in the Level 2 ERA while they were determined to be not at risk in the Level 2.5 ERA. As the level 2.5 method is a more quantitative assessment, the outcome of the level 2.5 assessment is taken as the more accurate estimate of risk from the fishery.

The Level 2.5 ERA identified 5 at risk species and recommended that these species along with listed TEP species should be included in the bycatch monitoring program. The MAC was pleased to note sea snakes are no longer deemed to be high risk and that the level 2.5 had produced very good results for the NPF. The MAC noted that a CSIRO project was in place to undertake risk assessment on invertebrates.

It was noted that the residual risk guidelines, in conjunction with the final ERA results, will be used to determine the residual high risks. These residual high risks will become the focus for further consideration for management responses. The residual risk guidelines are currently being reviewed as a result of the results from the ERAs.

The MAC noted that three key fisheries have been chosen as models for the residual risk and ecological risk management (ERM) process, being the SESSF, ETBF and NPF. The ERA report and the residual risk assessment for the NPF (along with the two other example fisheries) is expected to be completed by late July 2007. The MAC agreed that the elements of the ERM will be critical to the fishery and agreed that the MAC and industry must be very involved in the development of the ERMs at an early stage.

## **Resolutions:**

### **That NORMAC notes the report**



## **Other Business**

### ***Report on Zinifex Zinc Spill/ Wunma Inquiry***

NORMAC noted that Mike O'Brien went to Marine Board of Inquiry into the *Wunma* incident but did not get accepted as an interested party. AFMA has been accepted as an interested party and will be providing input.

The Scientific Member advised that the raw data from the sampling which done on and near the spill site and the roadstead had been sent to Malcolm Haddon for analysis. The MAC noted that two days had been set aside as part of the current at-sea survey to collect additional samples.

NORMAC congratulated AFMA on the excellent letter which was sent from AFMA to Zinifex on the incident and expressed appreciation to Mike O'Brien, Cathy Dichmont and Dave Johnson for the carriage and oversight of this issue.

### ***REC Appointment***

The MAC agreed to a proposal that Roland Pitcher replace Alan Butler as one of the scientific members on the REC.

## **Resolutions:**

**That NORMAC note the update on the *Wunma* incident.**

**That NORMAC appoints Roland Pitcher as a scientific member on the NORMAC REC**

Prior to the meeting closing, the MAC thanked the Chairman for the excellent job he does of chairing the meetings and steering the MAC to get balanced and objective outcomes on what are often contentious issues.

**The meeting closed at 12.30.**



## **NPF Strategic Planning Session**

**6<sup>th</sup> July 2007**

### **Brisbane**

NORMAC undertook a dedicated strategic planning session on 6<sup>th</sup> July 2007. An informal analysis of the performance measures against the strategies which were incorporated in the 2001 - 2006 Strategic Plan was undertaken by the NORMAC Executive Officer and provided to the MAC for information.

The MAC noted that, despite the fact that considerable uncertainty and change occurred in the fishery (eg effort reductions, strategic assessment, the Ministerial Direction etc) since the last strategic review was undertaken in 2000, the fishery has made some major achievements and the majority of the performance measures contained in the current strategic plan have been met.

The MAC noted that the success of tiger prawn stock rebuilding strategy and the removal of vessels under the SAP, together with spatial management approaches, bycatch mitigation and the NPF harvest strategy should continue to address fishery/eco-system sustainability into the future.

However the fishery is currently faced with highly challenging external economic pressures resulting from high fuel prices, the most unfavourable exchange rates experienced in 20 years, and pressure in the market place from cheaper, aquaculture products and trade barriers (eg in the EU). There are currently only 52 trawlers remaining in the NPF, and only 19 levy payers, but the total management cost for the NPF remains in the order of \$2 million<sup>2</sup>. Furthermore, it is unclear how long it will take for any economic benefits to be derived from the potential shift to ITQs in the NPF and it is highly probable (at least in the short term) that further economic losses will be incurred as a result of the experimental nature of implementing ITQs in a short lived, highly variable, multi-species tropical prawn fishery, and the need for the precautionary approach to TAC setting.

Whilst the NPF HS is aimed at achieving the MEY target by 2012 (in line with the expectation that a larger stock size will result in improved profits), it is clear that there is also an urgent imperative to reduce the costs of fishing and to improve profitability of the fishery to ensure that the benefits of the NPF SAP are not lost and that NPF fishers are economically viable in both the short and longer terms. A key challenge for NORMAC is to identify management and research strategies which are targeted toward these objectives. To this end, there was general acceptance during the discussions of the need for a more commercial focus on the management of the fishery in the future.

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<sup>2</sup> Including govt contributions



The session undertook a SWOT analysis which will provided some guidance on the issues which should be addressed in the development of the new Strategic Plan. In undertaking the SWOT analysis, the MAC noted that strengths and weaknesses are internal and that opportunities and threats are external. The broad outcomes of the SWOT analysis are recorded in order of importance below. There was some overlap in the issues identified in the SWOT analysis<sup>3</sup> and the ratings will need to be further refined. It was agreed that the NORMAC EO would work with NPFIO to work up a draft scoping paper on future strategic direction taking into account the SWOT for consideration at the August meeting of the MAC.

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<sup>3</sup> Note: The NORMAC EO has made some minor adjustments to the groupings of issues identified at the strategic planning session to reflect commonality of issues



## SWOT ANALYSIS – NORTHERN PRAWN FISHERY

<p><b>Strengths</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Robust stock</li> <li>2. Good wild caught product</li> <li>3. Eco-sustainability/ strategic assessment</li> <li>4. 19 owners – incorporated industry body</li> <li>5. Lots of science tools</li> <li>6. Visionary fishery / Adaptability</li> <li>7. Credibility &amp; Stakeholder relations</li> </ol>	<p><b>Weaknesses</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Lack of profitability / Heavy fuel use</li> <li>2. Product quality/disunified marketing</li> <li>3. Industry disunity</li> <li>4. Bycatch/ eco-system impacts</li> <li>5. Aging Boats / members/ diminishing crew skills</li> <li>6. High management costs</li> <li>7. Race to fish</li> <li>8. Remoteness of fishery</li> </ol>
<p><b>Opportunities</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Co-management/ self-regulation/ AFMA’s new outlook</li> <li>2. Marketing/ promotion/ communication/ media</li> <li>3. Enviro-credentials, MSC, MPAs</li> <li>4. Technology/ innovation</li> <li>5. Collective buying capacity – commercial economies of scale</li> <li>6. Under-utilised species eg bycatch</li> <li>7. Incentive-based change</li> <li>8. Quota Management</li> <li>9. OCS</li> </ol>	<p><b>Threats</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Fuel prices</li> <li>2. Mining, Aquaculture, Land Use, Traditional owners</li> <li>3. Public perception, Bottom Trawling, MPA’s</li> <li>4. Regulation/ Bureaucracy</li> <li>5. Exchange rates</li> <li>6. OCS</li> <li>7. Illegal fishing</li> <li>8. Labour shortage</li> <li>9. Climate Change</li> <li>10. IMP’s (introduced marine pests)</li> </ol>



