



Australian Government

Australian Fisheries Management Authority



Northern Prawn Fishery Management Advisory Committee (NORMAC)

MAC CHAIR'S SUMMARY
6TH & 7TH MARCH 2008

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NORTHERN PRAWN FISHERY MANAGEMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE (NORMAC)

CHAIR: Stuart Richey

The 67th meeting of NORMAC took place in Brisbane on 6th & 7th March 2008. The key outcomes of the meeting are summarised as follows:

- NORMAC noted the success of the 2nd NPF Optimal Solutions Workshop which took place on 5th & 6th March and the outcomes of the Workshop
- NORMAC endorsed the agreement of the Workshop to undertake a comprehensive cost benefit analysis on four management options being Optimised Status Quo; ITQs with a TAC update; MRAG proposal (Input controls for bananas / ITQs for tigers) and ITQs for bananas/ Input controls for tigers
- NORMAC agreed to seek funding through the FRDC Tactical Research Fund and the NPF/ FRDC MOU for the cost benefit analysis, noting that the project would go out to tender. It was agreed that the project would report on the outcomes of the cost benefit analysis in early July 2008
- NORMAC agreed to allow targeted tiger prawn fishing in an area east of Mornington Island for a one year trial. Catch taken from this area will not be included in the tiger prawn trigger limit however all other trigger points and decisions rules will apply to the rest of the fishery
- NORMAC agreed that for operational reasons, the decisions rules currently in place to determine the length of the banana and tiger prawn seasons should be reversed to provide for the seasons to be shortened, rather than lengthened. The decision rules in the NPF Harvest Strategy under input controls will need to be amended to reflect this decision
- NORMAC noted the draft NPF 2008/09 budget and approved the budget with some amendments. It was agreed that the NFP budget is not sustainable at its current levels, particularly given the reduced number of levy payers as a result of the NPF SAP
- NORMAC noted the advice that NPF Industry is going to proceed to implement fishery-wide e-logs and will undertake trials of winch monitors in the 2008 tiger prawn season
- NORMAC noted that NPF Industry is keen to take a greater role in managing the fishery and will work with AFMA to implement co-management in the fishery. The initial priorities will be taking over the responsibility of the MAC and the NPF log book, scientific observer and crew member observer programs
- NORMAC noted the on-going concerns of industry regarding the operational impacts of the proposed ban on navigation in the tiger prawn season and agreed



that industry should pursue these concerns with AFMA Compliance. Other issues for discussion are the removal of penalties in relation to log books, and the introduction of in-possession rules for gear and banned fish products

- NORMAC noted advice from DEWHA that the Northern section bio-regional marine planning process has been delayed by the change of government. The MAC appointed an AFMA/ industry sub-committee to draft an NPF position paper to ensure that key NPF fishing grounds are not negatively impacted by MPAs

More comprehensive comments on the above issues follow:

Outcomes of 2nd NPF Optimal Solutions Workshop

The 2nd NPF Optimal Solutions Workshop to review management options took place in Brisbane on 5th & 6th March 2008. The purpose of this workshop was to consider the outcomes of the quantitative analysis undertaken by Dr. Tom Kompas (as attached) of a revised set of management options for the NPF, and to determine which of the options should be subject to a more comprehensive cost benefit analysis.

The Workshop was comprised of both plenary and working group sessions. Presentations were made on each of the options for discussion, the cost-components of each of the options and the outcomes of the Kompas initial cost benefit analysis. A semi-quantitative evaluation of the options was undertaken by each of the working groups. Performance Indicator groups were developed for each sub-fishery (banana and tiger) and for the fishery as a whole. Each Group PI contained a number of individual performance indicators of relevance to the fishery. Initial weightings were assigned to each performance indicator within a group to reflect the relative importance of the individual indicators. The results of the working group analysis were then combined with the results of the Kompas cost-benefit analysis to determine which of the options performed the best.

Based on the analysis process, the Workshop agreed to undertake a comprehensive cost benefit analysis on four management options being Optimised Status Quo; ITQs with a TAC update; MRAG proposal (Input controls for bananas / ITQs for tigers) and ITQs for bananas/ Input controls for tigers

NORMAC agreed to seek funding through the FRDC Tactical Research Fund and the NPF/ FRDC MOU for the cost benefit analysis, noting that the project would go out to tender. NORMAC has appointed a sub-committee to develop the terms of reference for the project, to oversee the tender process and to recommend the preferred tenderer. The project is scheduled to report to NORMAC on the outcomes of the cost benefit analysis in early July 2008. I will provide the report from the 2nd NPF Optimal Solutions Workshop to the Board when it has been finalised.



Mornington Island Tiger Prawn Fishing

NORMAC agreed to allow targeted tiger prawn fishing in a defined area East of Mornington Island from the start of the fifth week of the 2008 banana prawn season on a one year trial basis. This was in response to industry concerns that mature tiger prawns are being lost to the fishery as there is currently no tiger prawn fishing in the banana prawn season. It was noted that traditionally the best time for catching tiger prawns in the area in question was May/ June. The 2008 NPF recruitment survey results showed mature tiger prawns in the area however they are not available for capture by commercial trawlers in the tiger prawn season.

NORMAC agreed that catches of tiger prawns from the defined area would be exempt from the tiger prawn trigger limit which applies in the banana prawn season however the existing trigger limits and decision rules will apply to the rest of the fishery. Log book and VMS data will be used to monitor tiger prawn catches during the banana prawn season.

Season Length Decision Rules

NORMAC discussed the existing decision rules which are used to determine the season length for both the banana and tiger prawn fisheries. There was unanimous agreement that the decision rules are an excellent management tool and they are working well however there are some operational issues in relation to crew which need to be addressed. It was therefore agreed that for operational reasons the decision rules should be reversed to provide for the seasons to be shortened, rather than lengthened. The change in wording of the decision rules does not change the intent of the rules however the NPF Harvest Strategy under input controls will need to be amended to reflect this decision.

NPF 2008/09 Draft Budget

NORMAC noted the draft NPF 2008/09 budget and commended AFMA, and in particular the AFMA Compliance section, for reducing the budget on the previous year however industry members of the MAC expressed concern about the on-going high costs of NPF management. It was agreed that the NPF budget is not sustainable at its current levels, particularly given the reduced number of levy payers as a result of the NPF SAP.

The MAC agreed to discontinue the AFMA/ skipper briefings in 2009 and noted that industry will take responsibility for ensuring all skippers are aware of NPF rules and regulations.

The MAC agreed that current approaches to compliance should be further reviewed to remove unnecessary regulations (eg the log book requirements) and to implement more cost-effective approaches such as in-possession rules for gear and banned species.



Industry representatives will work with AFMA Compliance on these issues over the next few months.

The MAC noted that industry is moving to implement fishery-wide elogs and to trial winch triggers in the NPF in the 2008 tiger prawn season in efforts to reduce costs in the future.

It was noted that the AFMA/ FRDC co-management project also provided an opportunity to further reduce fishery management and compliance costs. The MAC noted that the priority areas for co-management identified by industry include assuming responsibility for MAC activities, the NPF log book program and the scientific and crew member observer programs. The MAC noted the EO will work with AFMA over the next few months to facilitate the implementation of co-management approaches in the NPF.

Compliance

NORMAC noted industry concerns about a small number of very serious offences (eg in relation to TEDs/ BRDs and banned species products) in the 2006/07 financial year. Industry advised that a harsh industry code of conduct was being implemented across the fleet which would result in persons responsible for alleged offences not being eligible for any incentive bonuses, and any prosecutions would result in the persons responsible being dismissed and not re-employed elsewhere in the fleet.

NORMAC discussed the on-going industry concerns regarding the operational impacts of the proposed ban on navigation in the tiger prawn season, noting that industry proposed that the trials continue for one more year. NORMAC agreed that industry should pursue the concerns and the recommendation with AFMA Compliance.

Northern Section Bio-regionalisation Marine Planning Process

NORMAC received a presentation from Annemarie Watt (DEWHA) on the progress of the Northern section bio-regional marine planning process, noting that the change in government has resulted in delays in relation to the Northern Section. The MAC noted that the draft profile is being developed and would be provided to NORMAC in due course. It was noted that the government is currently reviewing the Displaced Fishing Effort and other policies which could affect the introduction of MPAs and this needed to be done before the MPA process could proceed.

NORMAC reiterated its commitment to the implementation of MPAs in a form that will enhance existing management measures in place to protect key NPF habitats (eg sea grass). The MAC agreed it was important to be pro-active in proposing potential MPA areas that would protect key fishery habitats but would not impact on existing fishing grounds.

Other Issues



Other issues discussed at the MAC meeting included the need to allow the use of increased gear in the fishery to operationalise MEY, a proposed change to the QFJA Fin Fish Fish Trawl fishery boundary, the AFMA Management and NORMAC Research Committee reports and the review by DEWHA of the decision to not implement a threat abatement plan for northern turtles.

I also bring to your attention that the current State Government permanent observer, Mr. Jim Gillespie is not going to be available to attend NORMAC meetings for the rest of the year. QDPI has requested that Mr. Andrew Thwaites replace Mr. Gillespie during this period and I am therefore seeking approval for Mr Thwaites to replace Mr Gillespie until the 31st of December 2008 when the MAC membership is to be reviewed. . .

Yours sincerely,

Stuart Richey

NORMAC Chairman



ATTACHMENT 1: Industry Report on NPF

Market Information:

Exchange rates continue to have a large negative impact in the market place and the ability to make a profit.

The wild-capture industry has received some benefits out of the biosecurity ruling on imported prawns as it has created quite a lot of demand due to the shortage of product in the domestic market, particularly for prawn meat and cutlets. However the biosecurity ruling on imports has created a problem for NPF operators as they can no longer to take product offshore for processing and bring it back into the country.

The market place is expected to be very tough for the next 12 months.

Catch:

The total tiger prawn tonnage in the 2007 tiger season was the worst on record – primarily because of the reduced fleet size and the constraints on the operational efficiency of the vessels.

There is some optimism about the forthcoming banana prawn season as a result of the earlier wet season however given the current economic conditions its unlikely that operators will make a profit this season.

Cost information:

Fuel prices are at an all time high, the labour drain continues to make it difficult to get crew. Delays with the issue of 457 visas are also making it difficult to get foreign crew.

License trading:

There has been little, if any, trade of SFRs although some leasing between operators has occurred.



ATTACHMENT 2

NORMAC 67 Attendance

Stuart Richey	Chairman
Eddie Hegerl	Conservation Member
Cathy Dichmont	Scientific Member
Nick Rayns	AFMA Member
George Raptis	Industry Member
David Carter	Industry Member
Norm Peovitis	Industry Member
Greg Albert	Industry Member
Annie Jarrett	Executive Officer

Apologies

Ean Casey, Jim Gillespie

Advisors

Melissa Brown	AFMA
Ian Knuckey	RAG Chair (Thursday only)
Ian Boot	Industry (Thursday only)
Ron Earle	Industry
Mike O'Brien	Industry
Max O'Halloran	Industry
Andy Prendegast	Industry
Andrew Thwaites	QDPI (for Jim Gillespie)

Observers/Invited Guests

Peter Schultz, Scott Howard, Brian Corbett: Industry
Anne-Marie Watt: DEWHA

