




Australian Government

Australian Fisheries Management Authority



# Small Pelagic Fishery Resource Assessment Group (SPFRAG)

MEETING RECORD  
MEETING 04  
10 DECEMBER 2007

## **SMALL PELAGIC FISHERY RESOURCE ASSESSMENT GROUP (SPFRAG)**

**CHAIR** James Findlay

**Date and time** 10 December 2007

**Location** Ravendale Sporting Club, Port Lincoln, SA.

### **Attendance**

#### *Members*

James Findlay	Chair
Melissa Brown	AFMA
Selina Stoute	Executive Officer (AFMA)
Denis Brown	Industry
Gerry Geen	Industry
Graham Pike	Recreational fisher
Jeremy Lyle	Tasmanian Aquaculture and Fisheries Institute (TAFI)
Richard Lindsay	CFA

#### *Observers*

Jay Hender	BRS
Grant Pullen	Tasmanian Fisheries
Stephanie Cooper	AFMA



## Recommendations and actions arising

SPFRAG recommends that:

- the Board and SPFMAC note that the agreed recommended biological catch (RBC) in the Small Pelagic Fishery (SPF) Harvest Strategy will be:
  - Tier 1: 20%
  - Tier 2: 17%
  - Tier 3: 10%
  - Tier 4: will be discussed at the next SPFRAG
  - Tier 5: to not exceed 500t
- the Board and SPFMAC note that Tim Ward has been requested to refine and critique the spawning biomass estimates that resulted from the Blue mackerel Project (FRDC 2002/061) project. On the basis of this, it is asked that Tim write a simplified paper outlining the results in order to inform RAG decisions on appropriate Tier 4 exploitation rates.
- the Board and SPFMAC note that Jeremy Lyle is to
  - work towards distributing a preliminary report on the Redbait Project
  - provide the RAG with definitions of “preliminary” and “robust” DEPM estimates.
- Tim Ward produce a 1 page summary document on the Pilchard Project
- SPFRAG members are to comment on the “Evaluation Against the Commonwealth Harvest Strategy Policy and Guidelines” section of the HS by 11 January 2008



## PRELIMINARIES

### 1. Introduction and apologies

Apologies were received from Terry Romano, Jon Bryan, Tim Ward and Michael Thomas.

### 2. Declaration of interest

Pecuniary interests declared by Members are shown in Table 1. Denis Brown and James Findlay have updated their interest since the last RAG and all other members disclosed the same interest as those declared at the previous RAG meeting.

**Table 1** Pecuniary interest declared by Members

Participant	Interest declared
James Findlay	General Manager, Fisheries, Land and Social Sciences Branch, Bureau of Rural Science
Melissa Brown	None declared.
Selina Stoute	None declared.
Denis Brown	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Holder of 2 SPF Zone D SPF Permits; 1 SPF ACD Permit and an Informally Managed (purse seine) Fishing Permit;</li><li>- Director of corporate entities with holdings of:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• one Zone A, B, C, D purse-seine Permit package; and</li><li>• one Zone A, C, D purse-seine Permit package and Informally Managed (purse seine) Fishing Permit; and</li><li>• Pelagic Fish Processors plant at Eden</li></ul></li></ul>
Gerry Geen	Director of Seafish Tasmania PTY LTD that holds: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- two Zone A, B, C, D midwater trawl; purse-seine Permit packages; four Zone A purse-seine SPF Permits;</li><li>- four Tasmanian purse-seine Jack Mackerel Permits; and</li><li>- a Southern and Eastern Scalefish and Shark Trawl Boat SFR.</li></ul>
Graham Pike	None declared.
Jeremy Lyle	None declared.

### 3. Adoption of agenda

SPFRAG accepted the draft meeting agenda.

## SPFRAG MEETING 3

### 4. Adoption of record

SPFRAG accepted the draft record of the second meeting of SPFRAG (7 December 2007) as true and accurate with the following exception:

#### *9. Harvest Strategy options for the SPF - pg 9, dot point 5*

The wording is to be changed to:



- consistent with literature on precautionary harvest rates for keystone pelagic species designed to protect ecosystem impacts, the SPF HS should consider limiting harvest rates to between 7.5-15% of estimated spawning biomass. SPFRAG noted that SARDI's ecosystem project will assist in verifying the appropriateness of these limits.

A copy of the final meeting record is attached.

## 5. Actions arising

SPFRAG noted that the incomplete actions arising from previous meetings will be addressed through the work on the SPF Harvest Strategy.

It was agreed to add another action arising:

	Meeting	Action Required	Progress
4	SPFRAG 3	A low cost industry-based sampling regime (in the order of \$10 000) is to be established as a matter of priority to improve estimates of spawning area and of adult parameters for stocks in waters adjacent to NSW	<b>Not Completed</b>

## 6. Draft Harvest Strategy for Finalisation

### *Preamble*

Dr Findlay opened the draft SPF Harvest Strategy (HS) for discussion by suggesting that not only do some technicalities and numbers in the strategy need examination, but overall the readability could be improved. It was also noted the draft HS needed to be finalised by the February Board Meeting.

An Industry Member was of the view that the outcomes of IAAP will have implications on the implementation of the harvest strategy. He would like clarification on the linkages between the Management Plan, the Policy, the Harvest Strategy and the allocation process.

The Total Catch Limits (TCLs) set in April 2000 were set at a precautionary level that could allow development of the fishery. Since that time, DEPM work on blue mackerel and other stocks have shown the TCLs were appropriately cautious.

Another industry member suggested the HS had “no depth”, that the framework needs to be further developed, and was concerned that MEY is not being considered.

In response, Dr Findlay compared the SPF and its HS to “Small Fisheries” and their HSs, as one option is to treat the SPF like a Small Fishery. The RAG agreed the SPF was further ahead and could articulate a HS that enabled further development of the fishery. The merits of considering MEY was discussed amongst members, industry supporting embedding the concept within the HS whilst others argued there was no benefit to bringing MEY into the HS when overfishing was not occurring.



The RAG discussed the reasons for suggesting a Recommended Biological Catch (RBC) of between 10-20% of the spawning - members explaining that this rate is precautionary but comparable to the current exploitation rates in small pelagic fisheries in Australia and around the world. Other pelagic stocks have shown an unpredictable “boom bust” cycle which has led to collapses. The RBC that will be set for SPF species should recognise these generic issues as well as SPF-specific ones e.g. ecosystem importance.

The RAG agreed to use “Metarules” for considering

- Localised depletion
- Change in ecosystem functioning
- Bycatch
- Threatened, endangered and protected species (TEPs)
- Fluctuation in stock levels

This would entail parties presenting evidence to the RAG if they felt there was a case for one of the above. The RAG will ultimately decide if the evidence supports the case.

The RAG then discussed each Tier in turn

#### **Tier 5**

The RAG was advised no current target species would be classified as Tier 5. Tier 5 could be used if new target species are brought into the fishery in the future, for example after the inclusion of IMF species in the SPF under the new Management Plan.

#### **Tier 4**

SPF target species (except those with DEPM information) probably would be classified as Tier 4. Tier 4 species have information such as catch history and size structure but have not had DEPM work undertaken, for example Jack Mackerel.

The RBC set for species in Tier 4 will be revisited by the RAG after consideration of the outcomes of current FRDC projects on redbait and blue mackerel. Preliminary figures from this work suggested much lower TAC figures than those presently in-force, which caused some discussion amongst RAG members.

#### **Tier 3**

The RAG discussed possible definitions of “preliminary” and “robust” in regards to DEPM work. It was determined that at this stage that the RAG will determine whether a DEPM is “preliminary” or “robust”. The RAG will also decide on the time-frame that is acceptable to advance species to higher Tier levels.

#### **Tier 2**

The RAG agreed the RBC at Tier 2 would be set at 17% of the most recent spawning biomass estimate. This figure reflects both the large amount of investment that would be required to undertake multiple biomass assessments over a relatively short time frame, and the resulting heightened accuracy of the stock estimation.



## **Tier 1**

The RAG discussed the level of exploitation they would accept at Tier 1. A comparison was made with the rates of other fisheries, such as the South Australian Sardine Fishery. The South Australian Sardine Fishery has a current exploitation rate of 11% and a target rate of 15%. The fishery has a lower limit of 10% and an upper limit of 20%. The RAG agreed that an acceptable RBC for the SPF was 20% (of the most recent spawning biomass estimate). As other small pelagic fisheries have RBCs of up to 20% this was felt to be a conservative estimate, and takes into account the biology of small pelagic species and their ecosystem importance.

## **General**

The RAG considered implementing the "50% rule" – that is, no more than 50% of the TAC can be caught in any 5 degree band of latitude.

It was discussed that the pilchard project highlighted certain gaps of knowledge of small pelagic species. RAG members suggested that investigating these parameters in between DEPM work would assist species to progress through tier levels.

The draft Harvest Strategy, with all the comments from the RAG incorporated is attached.

## **7. Other Business**

The RAG confirmed there was no further business to discuss.

## **8. Next meeting**

SPFRAG agreed to confirm the schedule for its next meeting out-of-session, noting that it is likely to be held in January or February 2008. The major objective of the meeting will be to finalise the RAGs advice on the draft SPF harvest strategy in time for the February Board Meeting.

Graham Pike advised he would be unavailable from the 19<sup>th</sup> January 2008 but will take part in the discussions on the Harvest Strategy via phone.

