



Australian Government

Australian Fisheries Management Authority

**Bass Strait Central Zone Scallop
Fishery Resource Assessment Group
(ScallopRAG) Meeting 33**

Meeting minutes

Date: 26 February 2020

Teleconference

Meeting Minutes

1 Preliminaries

1.1 Welcome and apologies

The Chair welcomed members to the meeting, noting apologise, and made an Acknowledgement of Country statement recognising the Traditional Owners of the many lands in which we met and payed respect to Elders past, present and emerging.

Attendees	Membership
Brendan Kelaher	Chair
John Cull	Industry Member
Nic Marton	Scientific Member
Mervi Kangas	Scientific Member
Julian Morison	Economic Member
Daniel Corrie	AFMA Member
Heather Johnston	Executive Officer
Matt Koopman	Invited participant, Fishwell Consulting
Apologies	Membership
Stuart Richey	Industry Member
Jayson Semmens	Scientific Member

1.2 Introduction of new members

The Chair welcomed the three new members who have been appointed to ScallopRAG:

- Dan Corrie AFMA member;
- Mervi Kangas scientific member;
- Julian Morison economic member.

1.3 Declaration of interests

The RAG followed the conflict of interest declarations as outlined in Fisheries Administration Paper 12. Members and participants reviewed and updated the Declarations of Interest included at [Attachment B](#).

John Cull declared a potential conflict with agenda item 6 '2020 biomass survey beds'. Mr Cull left the meeting while the RAG considered his interests and how they should be managed. The RAG

decided he could be a part of the discussion, but should not participate in forming the RAG recommendation for agenda item 6.

1.4 Adoption of Agenda

The AFMA member requested to include a discussion regarding proposed amendments to the limit on research catch allowance in the annual biomass survey.

The agenda at [Attachment A](#) was adopted by the RAG as final.

2 Meeting administration

2.1 Minutes of previous meeting

The RAG noted the final minutes of the ScallopRAG meeting of 6 June 2019 are available on the AFMA website.

2.2 Actions arising from previous meetings

The RAG noted the action items from the previous meeting had either been completed, will be addressed in later agenda items, or addressed in the June 2020 meeting.

3 Fishery update

3.1 AFMA management

The AFMA member provided an update on matters relevant to management of the Bass Strait Central Zone Scallop Fishery (BSCZSF).

- The commercial scallop TAC was 75 per cent caught for the 2019 season and zero bycatch and protected species information was reported;
- During the 2019 fishing season AFMA amended the *Bass Strait Central Zone Scallop Fishery Management Plan 2002*. Specifically, the amendments:
 - removed the requirement to use specified fishing methods in the BSCZSF;
 - repealing the obligation to consider any requirements (if any) prescribed in the Scallop Regulation prior to varying the TAC for doughboy scallops during a fishing season;
 - removed reference to the fishing year, and redefine the fishing season; and
 - reduced the notification period for Total Allowable Catch decisions from seven days to 48 hours.
- AFMA are working with Dr Julian Morison to develop an economic data collection form to inform a Maximum Economic Yield (MEY) approach under proposed revisions to the Harvest Strategy;
- Fiona Hill has been appointed as senior manager of the Demersal and Midwater Fisheries section.

3.2 Industry update

The Industry Member provided an update on the BSCZSF 2019 season.

- There were contrasting views on the 2019 season in regards to TAC; one view was that the TAC was appropriately set, with the other view that the TAC was set too high and contributed to a lower beach price;
- Operators had no trouble finding and catching scallops, but the amount which they could land was influenced by the processors and market demands;

- Market demand and price dropped across the fishery half way through the season due to a reduced demand in seafood;
- There is a continued effort to develop an export market, with samples being sent overseas;
- There are concerns regarding the potential impacts of the Coronavirus, including an increase in imported seafood on the Australian market;
- Historically, catch rates were reduced in the area between existing scallop beds, however catch rates these areas do not appear to be dropping in current seasons.

4 Economic data collection update

AFMA introduced the item asking the RAG to note AFMA's proposal to collect economic data from operators in the Bass Strait Central Zone Scallop Fishery (BSCZSF) to inform a Maximum Economic Yield (MEY) analysis under a revised Harvest Strategy approach.

The RAG noted the following:

- Baseline economic data for the BSCZSF has been updated annually since 2015, however this data is not representative the entire fishery and there is a need to collect additional finer scale information regarding revenue and costs in order to integrate economic information into the TAC setting process;
- AFMA are currently working towards having a revised BSCZSF Harvest Strategy implemented for the 2021 fishing season, which will likely include collection of economic data as an input under a MEY analysis or a proxy of MEY;
- While industry have been providing catch and effort information to support decision making for many years, the absence of detailed economic data means that it is difficult to make an informed assessment of the economic implications of different management decisions, such as TAC level, for the fishery as a whole;
- In May 2019, AFMA wrote to industry to seek economic information, with a view to provide an overview of the economic performance of the fishery and support the TAC setting process. Only a limited amount of data has been collected to date, and its usefulness towards setting TACs is limited;
- To support ongoing collection of economic data in the BSCZSF, AFMA intend to develop an economic data collection form, to be completed by industry in-season, which allows for economic data to be collected in a consistent format;
- AFMA have engaged Julian Morison to develop the economic data collection form and will work with industry to develop a template;
- AFMA intends to have the economic data collection form developed for the start of the 2020 fishing season.

The RAG made the following key points:

- An economic analysis will provide information to guide the TAC setting process, however, other information is also used in the process and there are often broader, more strategic issues to consider, including stability and market share;
- The economic data collected would be readily accessible to operators, including variable costs such as fuel and crew labour, which would be related back to an operating cost per tonne basis;
- It is challenging to take a 'fishery-wide view' given the different views across industry with regards to economics and TAC.

5 Principles to prioritise survey beds

AFMA introduced the agenda item, asking the RAG to consider and provide advice on the proposed principles for prioritising survey beds under the annual biomass survey. An overview of the proposed principles is provided at Attachment D.

The RAG noted the following:

- The number of surveyed and known beds has increased over time as surveys have been undertaken each year. Within any given year, however, the number of beds which can be surveyed is limited by funds and timing. As such, there is a need to prioritise the beds to be surveyed each year;
- There has been previous bed prioritisation recommendations made by ScallopRAG, as well as during a Scallop Research Workshop in 2017, and the document 'Principles of Prioritising BSCZSF survey beds' intends to capture all of these recommendations while still ensuring the objective of the annual biomass survey is met;
- There are different objectives of the annual biomass survey in the survey report and the BSCZSF Harvest Strategy. The RAG agreed it should be consistent, but also agreed to review the objectives of the survey to include improving our understanding of the scallop stock and its bed dynamics to support the longer term application of the Harvest Strategy.

The RAG made the following key points:

- The number of beds that can be surveyed each year is limited, due largely to time and budget constraints;
- The survey could be completed with less vessels, however, four vessels are currently used to allow for the pre-season scallop catch to be distributed to different processors;
- It may not be necessary to survey the maximum number of beds each year, and this should be considered based on results of previous surveys and current economics of the fishery. There is a need to be flexible when designating the regions to be surveyed each year to allow for expansion and recognising cost, resources and requirements of the survey.
- Only beds surveyed in a given year could be closed under the Harvest Strategy, but industry are able to implement voluntary closures;
- Beds with juvenile scallops used to be surveyed in Port Phillip Bay to gain an understanding of scallop growth rates. There is an interest from industry to do the same in the BSCZSF, as beds with scallops under 80 mm aren't normally surveyed;
- Surveying beds with juvenile scallops over multiple years can indicate the growth rate of that particular bed, but not for the whole of the Bass Strait area;
- The RAGs reluctance in surveying the bed of juvenile scallop in 2019 was the potential for mortality compared to the value in surveying these beds, given they would not contribute to the closures as the minimum size under the Harvest Strategy is 85 mm;
- Surveying some beds on alternating years was a practical way forward given the life span of scallops and the ability to monitor the cohorts on a 2 year basis;
- The RAG require a mechanism to decide when beds are not surveyed in the near future;
- Prioritising the beds each year allows for the most current knowledge to be used and allows for flexibility when planning the survey.

Action item 1. AFMA to re-draft the principles of prioritising survey beds document to capture the key discussion points

Matt Koopman joined the meeting

6 2020 biomass survey beds

AFMA introduced this item, asking the RAG to recommend beds to be surveyed in the 2020 biomass survey, considering the advice provided in the document 'Proposed 2020 Scallop Survey Design' and recommendations from the Industry Co-Management Committee.

The RAG noted the following:

- In accordance with the BSCZSF Harvest Strategy, the TAC will not be increased over 150 t unless a biomass estimate, as determined by the research survey, is able to identify an area or scallop bed containing at least 1,500 t biomass of high density scallops with a minimum size of 85 mm;
- The objectives of the annual survey are to:
 1. coordinate a fishery survey to measure the size and distribution and calculate biomass estimates to assess to the potential for commercial catch rates of scallops in BSCZSF;
 2. inform the assessment of fishery impacts on bycatch;
- ScallopRAG and the Industry Co-Management Committee are responsible for identifying and prioritising survey beds each year;
- The Industry Co-Management Committee recommendations for the 2020 Biomass Survey were provided out of session;
- The Proposed 2020 Scallop Survey Design, prepared by Fishwell Consulting, was included in the meeting papers.

Dr Koopman from Fishwell Consulting presented the Proposed 2020 Scallop Survey Design.

The RAG made the following key points:

- If the Flinders Island bed isn't surveyed in 2020, it cannot be closed under the Harvest Strategy, however, it could be closed voluntarily by Industry;
- Industry have reported that the 'space' between historical commercial scallop beds are producing scallops, and some beds seem to be joining.
- A partial survey of the JH bed would provide information on the growth of the bed, but would not contribute to closures under the Harvest Strategy;
- The draft prioritisation principles do not provide a lot of guidance on how to prioritise between two similar beds, rather, the RAG made their recommendation based on recruitment, proximity of commercial fishing and scallop biomass;
- Twelve beds were considered to be high priority, and were recommended to be included in the survey, with JH bed to be partially surveyed. 'King Island 5 small', 'King Island new' and 'Flinders Island' were considered to be medium priority, with one of them to be included in the survey as the 12th bed to be fully investigated.
- The RAG decided to not survey Flinders Island in 2020 but in order to keep the time series would recommend it is surveyed in 2021
- The RAG decided to include 'King Island 5 small' due to this bed showing more promising signs of recruitment in recent years than King Island new. It was also in closer proximity to recent commercial fishing.

The RAG recommended eleven beds to be fully surveyed:

- King Island 5 Small;
- King Island Middle;
- Blue dot extended;

- Apollo Bay 1;
- Apollo Bay 2;
- King Island 6;
- King Island 7;
- King Island 8a;
- King Island 8b;
- King island 9;
- Blue dot south east.

The RAG recommended that 'The Hill/ 5 hours' be explored during the survey and to be fully surveyed if it was considered worthwhile.

The RAG recommended that the JH bed be partially surveyed.

The Chair thanked Fishwell Consulting for the biomass survey presentation.

Action item 2. AFMA to write to operators to remind them to complete logbook information regarding size and tonnage of discarded scallops.

Action item 3. Fishwell Consulting to correct the confidence intervals for the JH bed.

Action item 4. AFMA to include an additional principle for prioritising surveyed beds based on recruitment, proximity of commercial fishing and biomass in the prioritisation principles document.

Matt Koopman left the meeting

7 Other business

Research Catch Allowance

Currently, there is a 37.5 t per vessel limit when allocating Research Catch Allowance (RCA) after the annual biomass survey, with a total cap at 150 t. AFMA proposed removing the 150 t catch limit, and allocating RCA based on time spent undertaking the survey.

The RAG made the following key points:

- It is not clear whether the 150 t limit referred to in the Harvest Strategy refers to the RCA, or whether it refers to the allowable TAC in the absence of a biomass survey.
- AFMA suggested the 150 t limit in the Harvest Strategy refers to a TAC to search for and locate commercially viable scallop beds prior to a survey.
- The RAG was comfortable removing the 150 t RCA limit for the 2020 survey as a trial, as long as the entire research catch comes of the recommended biological catch when setting the TAC. AFMA noted that it is unlikely to be exceeded. The RAG suggested that this should be addressed formally in the revised Harvest Strategy if the trial is successful.

The RAG recommended removing the 150 t RCA limit for the 2020 Biomass Survey as a trial, to be reviewed for the 2021 survey.

Other Business

AFMA is intending to hold ScallopRAG 34 on 9 June 2020 in Melbourne.

The Chair thanked the RAG for their contributions to the meeting. The meeting was closed at 3 pm.

Signed (Chairperson):

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be the initials 'BR'.

13/03/2020

Attachments

Attachment A: ScallopRAG 33 final agenda

Attachment B: Declarations of interest

Attachment C: Action item status

Attachment D: Overview of the proposed principles for prioritising scallop beds for survey



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Bass Strait Central Zone Scallop Fishery Resource Assessment Group (ScallopRAG)

Meeting 33 Agenda – Teleconference

Wednesday 26 February 2020

Time (EDT): 12:00

Approximate time	Item
12.00	<p>Agenda item 1. Preliminaries</p> <p>1.1 Welcome and apologies</p> <p>1.2 Introduction of new members</p> <p>1.3 Declaration of interests</p> <p>1.4 Adoption of agenda</p>
12:15	<p>Agenda item 2. Meeting Administration</p> <p>2.1 Minutes of previous meeting</p> <p>2.2 Actions arising from previous meetings</p>
12.30	<p>Agenda item 3. Fishery update</p> <p>3.1 AFMA management</p> <p>3.2 Industry update</p>
12.45	<p>Agenda item 4. Economic data collection update</p> <p><i>ScallopRAG to note the concept that is being proposed to collect economic data in the scallop fishery</i></p>
13.20	<p>Agenda item 5. Principles to prioritise survey beds</p> <p><i>ScallopRAG to provide advice regarding principles to assist in the prioritisation of beds to include in the annual biomass survey.</i></p> <p>Attachment A - draft principles for prioritising BSCZSF survey beds</p> <p>Attachment B - BSCZSF Harvest Strategy</p> <p>Attachment C – 2017 Scallop research workshop minutes</p>

14.20	<p>Agenda item 6. 2020 biomass survey beds</p> <p><i>ScallopRAG to provide advice on scallop beds to surveyed in 2020.</i></p> <p>Attachment A – 2020 survey proposed beds for consideration</p> <p>Attachment B – Advice provided by Industry Co-Management Committee</p>
15.20	<p>Agenda item 7. Other business</p>
15.30	<p>Close</p>

Attachment B – Register of interests

Name	Membership	Declared interests
Professor Brendan Kelaher	Chair	No interest in the fishery pecuniary or otherwise.
Nic Marton	Scientific	ABARES employee. Organisation is known to submit research funding application for consideration by ScallopRAG
Julian Morison	Economic	Director, Kuti Co Pty Ltd – SA Pipi quota holder, Director, BDO Advisory (SA) Pty Ltd - current contracts with SA & Qld state governments collecting fisheries economic data, providing economic advice; Member, SA Snapper Management Advisory Committee (PIRSA), Economics member, Shark Resource Assessment Group (AFMA), Member, Economics Working Group (AFMA), Member, Human Dimensions Research subprogram Steering Committee (FRDC), Principal & coinvestigator on several FRDC research projects
Mervi Kangas	Scientific	Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development, WA employee. No interest in the fishery pecuniary or otherwise.
John Cull	Industry	Holds Commonwealth and State concessions.
Daniel Corrie	AFMA member	AFMA employee. No interest in the fishery pecuniary or otherwise.
Heather Johnston	Executive Officer	AFMA employee. No interest in the fishery pecuniary or otherwise.
Dr Matt Koopman	Observer	Fishwell Consulting. Have undertaken the BSCZSF since 2015. Submit research funding applications and undertake research projects for Commonwealth, State and International fisheries agencies and other organisations including fishery associations and private companies. Engaged by SETFIA to report to numerous seismic exploration companies on fishing catch, effort and value that takes overlaps with the proposed seismic testing areas. This included catch and effort from the BSCZSF. A slightly related project is looking at the effects of the seismic survey off east Gippsland on Danish seine catches. No interest in any commercial fisheries.

Previous action items

RAG meeting #	Agenda item	Action item #	Action item	Agency/person	Timeframe	Progress
32	10	4	AFMA to prepare a discussion paper regarding the harvest strategy review for consideration by the RAG at its June 2020 meeting.	AFMA	Next meeting	Will be completed for June meeting

New action items

RAG meeting #	Agenda item	Action item #	Action item	Agency/person	Timeframe
33	5	1	AFMA to re-draft the principles of prioritising survey beds document to capture the key discussion points	AFMA	June meeting
33	6	2	AFMA to write to operators to remind them to complete logbook information regarding size and tonnage of discarded scallops.	AFMA	Start of 2020 season
33	6	3	Fishwell Consulting to correct confidence interval on JH bed	Fishwell Consulting	June meeting
33	6	4	AFMA to include an additional principle for prioritising surveyed beds based on recruitment, proximity of commercial fishing and biomass in the prioritisation principles document..	AFMA	June meeting

Attachment D: Overview of the proposed principles for prioritising scallop beds for survey

1. A maximum of 12 beds can be fully surveyed in the annual biomass survey
2. Where possible, the annual biomass survey will include beds across the three broad geographical regions of Flinders Island, Apollo Bay and King Island
3. Beds should be prioritised, with the lowest priority beds to be replaced by exploratory marks if they are identified as being viable to be fully surveyed
4. If an exploratory mark does not yield scallop beds considered worthwhile surveying, the survey schedule will continue as planned.
5. If a bed of juvenile scallops is identified, either:
 - a) do not sample the bed in order to preserve it; or
 - b) conduct a small survey of the area with a minimal number of shots to obtain length frequencies
6. Beds that are considered to have a good time series and are currently fished will be surveyed annually based on age, tonnage and density of the bed from previous surveys and its capacity to contribute to closure arrangements under the Harvest Strategy for the upcoming season
7. Beds that are considered to have a good time series but aren't currently fished will be surveyed on alternating years based on the age, tonnage and density of the bed from previous surveys and its capacity to contribute to the closure arrangements under the Harvest Strategy for the upcoming season if there new beds of a higher priority to be surveyed