

Commission meeting

The Commission convened for its 85th meeting in Canberra on 7-8 September 2022.

The Commission met with representatives of the Northern Prawn Fishing Industry, Tuna Australia, and received written briefings from the Southern Squid Jig Fishery, Great Australian Bight Industry Association, Scallop Fishermen's Association of Tasmania, Commonwealth Fishers Association, South East Trawl Industry Association, Southern Shark Alliance, Small Pelagic Fishery Industry Association and the Bass Strait Scallop Industry Association. The Commission recognised with appreciation the level of detail provided by industry, and the contribution that these regular briefs make to good decision making.

The Commission also met with representatives of the Fisheries Research and Development Corporation to discuss research alignment and additional opportunities for cooperation.

Closures in the Commonwealth Trawl Sector

The Commission decided to implement closures (indicative map shown below) in the Southern and Eastern Scalefish and Shark Fishery (SESSF) to commence from 1 May 2023. The Commission noted and appreciated industry's input in the consultation process between May and August 2022, particularly though engagement at port meetings and providing feedback on the placement of closures to seek maximum conservation gain without undue cost.

The Commission also decided that Danish Seiners would be allowed into Closure D, subject to AFMA agreement to a forthcoming industry proposal on gear modifications for the Danish Seine sector. This was agreed because the seine catch of jackass morwong is very low in that area and therefore the additional risk would be compensated by gear changes in the sector.

The Commission noted that Government had not yet confirmed whether the proposed buyback of trawl SFRs would proceed in the new budget (October). While the buyback would be an important contributor to mitigating the transfer of effort to open areas and creating the basis for an economically resilient fleet, the Commission agreed that the closures need to proceed regardless of whether the buy-back was confirmed or not.

Northern Prawn Fishery Harvest Strategy Amendments

The Commission approved changes to the Northern Prawn Fishery Harvest Strategy, which were endorsed by the NPRAG and NORMAC. The key changes to the Harvest Strategy approved by the Commission were:

- broad changes to the introductory and background sections of the Harvest Strategy to reflect the current arrangements and modernise the Harvest Strategy.
- inclusion of a specific review period of the Harvest Strategy of 5 years.
- updates the tiger prawn fishery section to clarify the application of decision rules.
- updates to the redleg banana prawn fishery section to incorporate the new decision rule.
- updates to the byproduct species triggers based on a recent review of the available information including:
 - Scampi – 30 tonnes annual catch trigger; and
 - Scallops and Cuttlefish – 50 tonnes review trigger; and
- includes the key elements to be undertaken under a review trigger event for byproduct species.

The Commission also noted that NPRAG did not recommend any changes to the current limits for squid and has requested additional information be compiled. Once this occurs, the Commission will consider any recommendations from the RAG and MAC.

Ecological Risk Management Guidelines

The Commission approved the release of the revised *Fisheries Management Paper 14: AFMA's Approach to Ecological Risk Management* and the supporting *Guide to AFMA's Ecological Risk Management Framework* for consultation and also agreed that the consultation process should align with the Commonwealth Fisheries Association's (CFA) roundtable process. Key changes to both documents included:

- Updated objectives to be more aligned with the latest drafts of the Commonwealth Fisheries Harvest Strategy Policy (CFHSP), Commonwealth Fisheries Bycatch Policy (CFBP) and *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act);
- Updated guidance for when Ecological Risk Assessment (ERA) reassessments are to be completed;
- Revisions to reflect previous Commission advice to move away from an ISO 9001 Quality Management System and defining more streamlined fishery management strategy requirements;
- Updated methodological approaches to align with updated definitions in the guiding CFHSP, CFBP and take account of new automated ERA approach;
- Updated templates for Bycatch, Research and Data and Monitoring strategies; and
- A new reassessment checklist for Resource Assessment Groups and Management Advisory Committees to inform decisions on updating ERA/ERM.

The Commission extends its thanks and appreciation to all industry participants that help inform its decisions.

The Commission will next meet in Mooloolaba on 9-10 November 2022.



Helen Kroger

Chairman

