

MEETING OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY FISHERIES JOINT AUTHORITY

9 December 2022
Teleconference

RECORD OF DECISIONS

Attendance

Members:

Anna Willock, Executive Manager Fisheries, Australian Fisheries Management Authority, Deputy for the Commonwealth Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Ian Curnow, Senior Executive Director Fisheries, NT Department of Industry, Tourism and Trade, Deputy for the Northern Territory Minister for Agribusiness and Fisheries

Secretary:

Patti Kuhl, NT Department of Industry, Tourism and Trade (NT DITT)

Observers:

Jeremy Smith (AFMA), Elissa Mastroianni (AFMA), Rachel Downes (AFMA)

Ms Anna Willock (Chair) opened the meeting at 8:00 am (ACST).

1. PROCEDURAL MATTERS

Officials of the Commonwealth and NT DITT met on 9 December 2022 to discuss current issues relevant to the Northern Territory Fisheries Joint Authority (NTFJA). Discussion and recommendations from the meeting are detailed below.

1.1 *Identification of Member's Deputies, Secretary and Delegations*

The identification of present delegates and deputies to the meeting was noted, as was the appointment of a secretary and the identification of observers.

Officials of the Commonwealth and NT DITT confirmed their status as members' deputies was in order. Ms Patti Kuhl was appointed as the secretary to the NTFJA for the purpose of the meeting.

1.2 *Confirmation of Agenda*

Members confirmed the agenda as circulated.

1.3 Record of Decisions arising from the NTFJA meeting of 8 December 2021

The Record of Decisions arising from the NTFJA meeting of 8 December 2021 was confirmed as an accurate reflection of the meeting and Members agreed to sign out-of-session. It was noted there were no action items from the meeting.

2. MATTERS FOR CONSIDERATION / INFORMATION

2.1 Update on status of NTFJA fisheries

2.1.1 Timor Reef and Demersal Fisheries

Members noted the information provided in the background papers attached to the agenda.

It was noted the legal appeal by Australia Bay Seafoods (ABS) was dismissed by the Full Court on 14 November 2022. The Commonwealth Minister had deferred a decision on releasing the draft NOF management plan for public consultation until after the outcome of the appeal had been determined. The judgement and other relevant information was now being considered by both NTFJA members.

Members noted the results and findings of the 2021 biomass survey for tropical snappers had been finalised, with a report in the final stages of completion and expected to be published in early 2023. A copy of the report would be provided to the Commonwealth once available.

It was noted a formal request had been made by ABS for the results of the biomass survey to be applied to revise current TACC settings for the Demersal and Timor Reef fisheries. The survey was not scoped to provide an absolute biomass estimate to revise TACC settings, but would complement and inform existing and future stock assessments for key species. Any process to review TACC settings would use all available data including Stock Reduction Analysis (SRA) models (i.e. the process currently in place to assess sustainability), the biomass survey results and any other relevant research. A proposed approach to review the TACCs for the fisheries was discussed further at Item 2.2.

2.1.2 Offshore Net and Line Fishery

Members noted the information provided in the background papers attached to the agenda.

The NT member noted concerns relating to the proposal to list all Carcharhinidae and Sphyrnidae species on Appendix II of CITES and the potential impacts this may have on WTO requirements. It was noted that Blacktip Sharks in particular are highly underutilised in the NT and that shark

depredation in NT waters continues to be a growing issue in a number of fisheries. Members discussed the need for a more pragmatic approach towards Non-Detriment Findings and associated requirements if the CITES proposals are adopted.

Members noted the steps required before an increase to the TACC of Grey Mackerel in the Western Zone of the ONLF should be considered, including finalisation of a review of the Spanish Mackerel Fishery and revision of the ONLF Harvest Strategy.

2.2 TACC setting for Timor Reef and Demersal Fisheries

Members discussed a proposed approach to review the TACCs in the Timor Reef and Demersal fisheries and supported development of a draft review process as a first step. This will involve engagement of an expert sustainable fisheries science consultant to develop a best-practice review process, seeking feedback from stakeholders on the draft process, and subsequently providing recommendations to the NTFJA for consideration and decision.

It was noted the process to review TACC settings would use all available data including SRA models, biomass survey results and other relevant research.

2.3 Update on Offshore Constitutional Settlement Arrangements

Members reaffirmed support to transition the offshore snapper fisheries and ONLF to a single jurisdiction as soon as practicable.

3. JOINT AUTHORITY ANNUAL REPORTING

Members noted the 2021-22 NTFJA Annual Report had been prepared and would be circulated to Deputies to sign out-of-session, prior to it undergoing final print review and publication. It was also noted the 2020-21 NTFJA Annual Report would be tabled concurrently in the Commonwealth Parliament in early 2023.

4. OTHER BUSINESS

No other business was tabled.

5. NEXT MEETING

Members agreed the next meeting of the NTFJA would be convened at a similar time in 2023.

6. CLOSE

The Chair closed the meeting at 9:05 am (ACST).