



**Australian Government**

**Australian Fisheries Management Authority**

# **Southern Bluefin Tuna Management Advisory Committee SBTMAC 46 Teleconference**

## **Meeting Minutes**

### **20 September 2022**

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# 1. Preliminaries

## 1.1 Welcome/apologies/acceptance of agenda

1. The Chair opened the 46<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Southern Bluefin Tuna Management Advisory Committee (SBTMAC) and delivered an acknowledgement of country.
2. Apologies were received from Phil Turner. The Chair welcomed members, in particular, Ms Selina Stoute as the AFMA member on the SBTMAC replacing Ms Fiona Hill while on maternity leave. The chair also welcomed the new observer Mr Robert Wood.
3. Participants on the SBTMAC 46 teleconference included:

**Table 1 Members, invited participants and observers in attendance at SBTMAC 46**

<b>Members</b>	
Mr Max Kitchell	Chair.
Ms Selina Stoute	AFMA Member
Mr Andrew Wilkinson	Industry Member (Farm industry sector)
Mr Terry Romaro OAM	Industry Member (Longline)
Mr Marcus Stehr	Industry Member (Farm industry sector)
Mr Brett Cleary	Recreational/Charter Fishing Member
Mr Glenn Sant	Environment Member
Mr David Galeano	Scientific Member
<b>Invited participants</b>	
Mr Brian Jeffriess AM	Australian SBT Industry Association
Prof Gavin Begg	State Government
Mr David Ellis	Tuna Australia
<b>Observers</b>	
Mr Robert Wood	AFMA
Ms Ann Preece	Employee of CSIRO.
Dr Campbell Davies	Employee of CSIRO
Mr Neil Hughes	Department of Agriculture, Fisheries & Forestry (DAFF)
Mr James Van Meurs	Department of Agriculture, Fisheries & Forestry (DAFF)
Mr Matt Daniel	AFMA

## Adoption of agenda

4. The agenda (**Attachment A**) was adopted by SBTMAC.

### 1.2 Pecuniary interest declaration

5. The Chair stated that as outlined in the *Fisheries Administration Act 1991* and *Fisheries Management Paper 1*, all members and invited participants of SBTMAC must declare any interests in the Southern Bluefin Tuna Fishery as they relate to specific agenda items at the commencement of the meeting (Table 1). SBTMAC noted that if a member or invited participant discloses an interest in an agenda item, the person must absent themselves from the meeting while SBTMAC makes a decision as to whether they can participate in the discussion and in the making of recommendations or remain absent from the meeting for the agenda item. The attendees declared their conflict of interests as follows:

**Table 1 Declared interests of members, invited participants and invited observers at SBTMAC 46**

Name	Declared Interests	Agenda Items Relevant to Declared Interests
<b>Members</b>		
Mr Max Kitchell	Employed as the SBTMAC Chair. No pecuniary interest in the SBT Fishery.	Nil
Ms Selina Stoute	Employee of AFMA, no pecuniary interest in SBT Fishery	Nil
Mr Andrew Wilkinson	Public Officer of company that owns and operates a tuna farm/catching business. Consultant to various SFRMs.	6.1, 6.2
Mr Terry Romaro OAM	Director of a company that owns SBT, ETBF & WTBF quota SFR's & a Fish Processing factory & a factory that recycles SBT waste in Pt Lincoln. Mr Romaro further advised he is also a member of Squid Resource Assessment Group and Tropical Tuna Management Advisory Committee (TTMAC) and an invited participant on the Tropical Tuna Resource Assessment Group (TTRAG). Mr Romaro attends Indian Ocean Tuna Commission & CCSBT meetings representing Industry & is a Director of Tuna Australia P/L.	6.1, 6.2
Mr Marcus Stehr	Board member of Clean Seas, Board member of Australian Maritime and Fisheries Academy and Board member of Australian Southern Bluefin Tuna Industry Association. Mr Stehr is also an SBT quota holder.	6.1, 6.2
Mr Phil Turner	Public Officer of company that owns and operates a tuna farm/catching business.	6.1, 6.2
Mr Brett Cleary	Trustee International Game Fishing Association and Life Member of Game Fishing Association of Australia [GFAA]*. Mr Cleary has no pecuniary interest in SBT Fishery. *Have or are funding research into SBT.	Nil
Mr Glenn Sant	Employee of Traffic Oceania, which has a collaboration agreement with the University of Wollongong, no pecuniary interest in SBT Fishery.	Nil
Mr David Galeano	Employee of ABARES, no pecuniary interest in SBT fishery, noting that ABARES conducts research on a range of fisheries issues.	Nil
<b>Invited participants</b>		

Name	Declared Interests	Agenda Items Relevant to Declared Interests
Mr Brian Jeffriess AM	Chief Executive Officer of Australian Southern Bluefin Tuna Industry Association.	Nil
Prof Gavin Begg	Executive Director, Fisheries and Aquaculture, PIRSA. No pecuniary interest in SBT fishery.	Nil
Mr David Ellis	CEO of Tuna Australia (industry association).	Nil
<b>Observers</b>		
Mr Robert Wood	Employee of AFMA, no pecuniary interest in SBT Fishery	Nil
Ms Ann Preece	Employee of CSIRO, no pecuniary interest in SBT Fishery. Noting that CSIRO conducts research on range of fisheries issues.	4.1, 4.2
Dr Campbell Davies	Employee of CSIRO, no pecuniary interest in SBT Fishery. Noting that CSIRO conducts research on range of fisheries issues.	4.1, 4.2
Mr Neil Hughes	Employee of the Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment, no pecuniary interest in SBT Fishery	Nil
Mr James Van Meurs	Employee of the Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment, no pecuniary interest in SBT Fishery	Nil
Mr Matt Daniel	Employee of AFMA, no pecuniary interests in the Southern Bluefin Tuna Fishery.	

6. The following members declared interests under Agenda Item 6.1: Mr Andrew Wilkinson, and Mr Marcus Stehr.
7. As per requirements, the above MAC members, left the teleconference, and the remaining SBTMAC members agreed that the members should be allowed to return to the teleconference for all discussions and recommendations made under Agenda Item 6.1.

### 1.3 Final minutes from SBTMAC 45

8. SBTMAC noted the SBTMAC 45 minutes from 15 September 2021 meeting as a true and accurate account of the discussions. Members noted that the comments received on the draft minutes circulated in September 2021 were incorporated.

### 1.4 Action arising SBTMAC 45 and intersessional work

**Table 3 Actions arising from SBTMAC 45**

Action arising	Status
There were no Actions arising from SBTMAC 45.	Complete

#### Intersessional work

9. The following items/issues have been progressed out-of-session since the last SBTMAC meeting in September 2021:
- 12 May 2022 – Draft Minutes for clearance (email)
  - 12 May 2022 – Draft Budget for comment (email)
  - 28 July 2022 – Review of SBT Annual Research Statement (email)

d) 28 July 2022 – Review of the SBTF Five Year Strategic Research Plan (email)

e) 12 September 2022- Draft SBTMAC Agenda for comment (email)

## 2. State of the Fishery

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### 2.1 Informal industry report on the 2021/22 catching season, markets and outlook

10. Industry members noted that the season was again affected by a La Nina weather pattern with cooler temperatures and cloudy windy days predominating. Fishing began in January 2022 which was later than normal and was completed by March 2022. The fish were predominantly caught south east of Port Lincoln and as far east as off Robe. Fish size was generally smaller however, all farmers caught their intended target catch. Harvesting started in June this year which is about a month earlier than normal with ninety per cent going to Japanese freezer vessels. The remaining ten per cent was land frozen. Container freight costs have increased and are now around \$22,000 per twenty tonne container. The SBT beach price improved this year primarily due to a global shortage of bigeye and yellowfin tuna and some effective marketing. The increase was partially offset by the weakness of the Japanese Yen.
11. The longline sector representative noted that the SBT fishing season commenced later than normal, with the fishing steadily improving throughout the season and larger catches being observed towards the close of season. Crew and skippers remain difficult to attract to the industry, this is further exacerbated by the current low unemployment rate. Industry have been seeing rampant poaching of employees between fishing companies and sectors. Higher input costs have also been observed for fuel and bait. Industry noted negligible seabird interactions for the season and questioned whether the longline sector remains a key threatening process to seabirds as it was determined in the late 1990's.
12. The environment member asked about potential impacts of foreign fleets operating outside the Australian exclusive economic zone. The longline sector representative noted that they have considerable concerns about these fleets and their impacts on target and bycatch species as well as protected species interactions. It was noted that there is very little publicly available data relating to these issues as observer coverage in the Pacific, especially on Spanish and Chinese vessels is often very low. This point was emphasised by the fact that the European Union did not provide a national report to the CCSBT Scientific Committee this year as it believed its vessels were not catching SBT despite that fact that they are often fishing in areas where fleets from other nations are actively targeting SBT. It was further noted that with respect to SBT catch by Chinese longline vessels that China has quite strong laws relating to the retention of SBT. Industry noted that their sources inside China have not reported the presence of SBT on the market in recent years however, this is not to say that it couldn't happen in the future. CCSBT annually considers the impact of unaccounted SBT mortality from non-member fleets. This work has traditionally been undertaken by New Zealand and Australia and is scheduled to be updated in 2023.

**ACTION ARISING – AFMA to provide the CCSBT UAM paper to the group out of Session**

## 2.2 Informal industry report from the recreational sector member

13. The recreational member noted that fishing is getting back to normal in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic and the impact that travel restrictions had on the sector. The Recreational member highlighted the increasing consistency of catches of big fish (100+kg) being indicative of the current improved stock status. The length of the season is also getting longer with SBT being encountered for the full calendar year off Tasmania.
14. The recreational member noted that the extension for the Tuna Champions project (funded through the Fisheries Research and Development Corporation (FRDC) has been signed off by the Minister and the program will continue for the next 2-3 years. The project has gained widespread support throughout the fishing community and it was pleasing to see clubs and individuals keen to embrace best practice initiatives across the sector.
15. The recreational member spoke of the possibility of expanding the program internationally and across further species. The program would be run on a volunteer basis with New Zealand being the first point of expansion followed potentially by South Africa and Asia.
16. The meeting noted the ongoing success of the Tuna Champions project and thanked Brett for the work he had done with the program over the last five years.
17. The meeting was informed of the recent recreational capture of a 130kg SBT taken off Victoria. The fish was tagged with an orange CSIRO tag (rather than yellow) indicating it had been injected with strontium chloride to mark its otoliths. The fish was tagged by Anthony de Fries on 24 February 1993 at 52cm fork length off Esperance, Western Australia aboard the vessel the Carolyn Anne. This is a record time at liberty for a tagged SBT.
18. It was noted that through the quick thinking of some recreational anglers linked to the Tuna Champions program, the frame including the otoliths was recovered. It was hoped that the strontium mark will provide validation of the ageing techniques used to determine the longevity of SBT.

## 2.3 AFMA Manager's report

19. The SBT Manager noted that SBT catch, to date, in the longline sector was approximately 787 tonnes, bringing the total catch in the fishery to 5,728 tonnes. Catching in the longline sector is expected to continue into late October this season. It was noted that catches have passed the TAC undercatch threshold for this season meaning all concession holders who held uncaught quota at the end of the season will be able to carry that forward into the next season. It was also reiterated that undercatch cannot be traded and must be caught by the concession holder who generates it.

# 3. Commission for the Conservation of Southern Bluefin Tuna (CCSBT)

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## 3.1 Outcomes from the CCSBT 27th Extended Scientific Committee meeting (August 2022)

20. The Scientific member provided a summary of the meeting. SBTMAC noted that the management procedure was run this year and no exceptional circumstances have been triggered so the recommendation is that the 2023 global TAC remain at 17,647 tonnes.

21. The management procedure was also run for the 2024-2026 TAC block, resulting in a recommended 3,000 tonne TAC increase (maximum increase). The recommendation will be considered at the annual CCSBT Commission meeting in October 2022.
22. The scientific member noted the CCSBT Extended Scientific Committee adopted a new process for submitting and ranking research project proposals that address topics in the Strategic Research Plan (SRP). The criteria used in the new process are:
- Relevance –clearly identifies the need and urgency for the research in terms of improving the stock assessment, operating model, and/or management procedure;
  - Impact – realistically describes the actual or potential magnitude of improvement and/or risks associated with not doing the research within the current 5-year SRP cycle;
  - Feasibility – clearly describes how the research will be accomplished with the CCSBT funding provided in combination with existing or other resources over the 5-year SRP period;
  - Cost – provides an accurate estimate of and justification for project costs.
23. It was noted that not all projects seek funding from the CCSBT, but endorsement of their relevance and impact by the CCSBT Extended Scientific Committee can help to secure funding from alternative sources.
24. The scientific member noted that effective analysis of the SRP was hindered by meeting virtually and it was hoped that in 2023 a face-to-face discussion relating to the SRP would deliver better outcomes.
25. Ms Preece noted that the Operating Model and Management Procedure Technical Meeting (OMMP) meeting was held face to face in Hobart in June this year. The updated CPUE series was the focus of that meeting. Following a rigorous testing process the new CPUE was successfully incorporated into the MP.
26. It was further noted that the CCSBT gene tagging project was progressing well however the move from onshore processing of fish to processing them directly on freezer boats was causing some issues for tissue sample collection. Ms Preece indicated that the gene tagging was a very important input into the MP and that CSIRO would work with industry to overcome the logistical challenges.
27. Dr Davies noted that Close Kin capture recapture is a key part of the management procedure (one of the three data sources we use) and the collection of tissue samples, otoliths and size information in Indonesia has not been undertaken (over the past 12 months) due to extensive institutional changes in the research areas. Dr Davies noted that there had been a number of high level discussions with Indonesian officials recently and that he was confident that a temporary solution would be found in the short term and longer term budgeted option would be implemented for the following year.
28. Mr Jeffriess commented that the science being used in CCSBT was first class and a number of other Regional Fisheries Management Organisations were now basing their management on the CCSBT model. Mr Jeffriess also noted that while the science had been a success CCSBT has failed to address the issue of bycatch of seabirds and sharks and this was highlighted in the recently released performance review of the CCSBT.



29. The environment member noted that Indonesia had overcaught in the previous season and questioned what was being done about this overfishing. The meeting noted that at the annual CCSBT meeting in 2021, Indonesia agreed to a payback plan of 90 tonnes per year for the next five years and agreed to remain within its allocation in upcoming seasons. Reported catch for the most recently completed season indicates that Indonesia was within its prescribed allocation.
30. With respect to Indonesia, the COVID-19 pandemic had a significant impact on the country in 2020/21 and it was likely that there was an increase in artisan fishing effort over that time however it was unlikely that much of this effort was directed at fishing for SBT. It was highlighted that traditionally the Indonesian fleet caught SBT as a bycatch of its tropical tuna fisheries, however now more than half of the SBT bycatch was being taken by Indonesian freezer vessels targeting SBT in the southern Indian Ocean. It was noted that Indonesia is investigating options relating to the allocation of quota across a number of its fisheries and that Indonesian officials were very interested in learning about the Australian experience in this space.
31. The meeting noted that New Zealand and to a lesser degree the European Union were keen to see substantive progress on the Japanese market and the Australian farm issues before the 3,000t global TAC increase (for the 2024-26 quota block) could be endorsed by NZ at the October 2023 CCSBT Commission meeting.
32. It was noted that if the advice coming out of the MP was not endorsed it would be contrary to the way the MP was designed to work and concerns were raised about a precedent being set and the implications of this, if in the future there was ever a situation where the TAC needed to be reduced.
33. The Chair noted the greatly improved state of the stock (5% of virgin Spawning Stock Biomass in 2009 to 22% in 2022) and noted that it was a great result that had been achieved by some very innovative science, cooperation across industry and government and international cooperation at the RFMO level.

## 4. Research issues

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### 4.1 Proposed 2022/23 research program and priorities

34. The meeting noted the CSIRO intersessional science project 2021/24 was agreed for a three year period and is currently in its last year.
35. The project is essential for providing ongoing scientific advice to AFMA to support the adequate monitoring, implementation and success of management arrangements in the Southern Bluefin Tuna Fishery. It also includes the routine otolith archiving, ageing and developing age-length keys for the Australian SBT surface fishery.
36. It was noted that there were no projects seeking AFMA funding for this year however the SBT Intersessional Science project was in its last year and it will be up for consideration in 2023.
37. The meeting noted that the design study for electronic tagging (CSIRO) is being progressed slowly behind the scenes, considering historical and archival tagging projects and data to aid in figuring out the recapture rate and location of tagged fish.

38. SBTMAC noted that Industry is seeing drastic changes in the fishery particularly in Port Lincoln with the stock rebuilding. Environmental factors such as LaNina and global warming are seeing fish move further east, prompting the discussion on what sort of research questions do we want to answer to look at those spatial shifts in large scale fish migration patterns.

## 5. Compliance update

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### 5.1 Compliance update and outcomes

39. The AFMA observer gave an update from the National Compliance Strategy section on compliance activities in the SBT fishery for the current 2021/22 fishing season. AFMA undertook a range of compliance checks from January to April including 14 at sea boardings (Purse seine and tow boats). No compliance issues were detected.
40. The AFMA observer noted that during a joint WCPFC compliance operation on the high seas a Chinese vessel had been detected (via DNA testing) with a single SBT on board. Following correspondence with the flag state, China reported the offender was fined \$175,000 US dollars and had their fishing licence revoked for a year. The environment member sought further details about the boarding and the outcomes of the investigation. It was noted that these details had been provided as a paper to CCSBT and that the paper would be circulated to SBTMAC members after the CCSBT annual meeting in October.

**ACTION ARISING – Circulate Australia’s letter to CCSBT re Chinese vessel boarding out of session following the conclusion of the 2022 CCSBT annual meeting.**

41. Industry members noted and thanked AFMA management for the support they had received at the port briefings which assisted with ensuring compliance. Industry encouraged this initiative to continue.

## 6. Domestic management issues

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### 6.1 Monitoring arrangements in the SBTF – Farm sector

42. The meeting noted that Australia Southern Bluefin Tuna Industry Association (ASBTIA) wrote to AFMA on 25 August 2022 seeking that “*SBTMAC and the AFMA Commission agrees to the weight separation concept to remain in place, but the separation point be six (6) kg plus rather than 10kg plus*”.
43. It was noted that the transfer weighing procedure is reviewed annually by SBTMAC and the AFMA Commission.
44. It was noted that the 10kg rule was introduced in the late 1990s to reduce the risk of fishers attempting to bias the then ‘40 fish’ sample (100 fish sample since 2013) by adding small vigorous fish to the tow cage prior to sampling. The small fish are thought to be more active and take the bait more readily, potentially biasing the sample size down.
45. The meeting noted that the average size of fish in the purse seine catch had reduced from 17.44kg in 2017 to 12.24kg in 2022, well below the historic average of 15.87kg. Industry attributed this change to improvement in recruitment for the SBT stock and the potential for current environmental factors to influence the spatial and temporal movements of the species.

Consecutive unprecedented La Nina years and climate change warming ocean temperatures closer to shore could show a preference for smaller SBT that require the warmer conditions to facilitate a rapid growth rate and pushing the larger fish deeper into cooler waters that are out of reach. These spatial and temporal changes are forcing industry to look further and fish harder to catch better quality fish.

46. CSIRO observers noted that while there was an increase in the size of the spawning stock it was too soon to see an upwards trend in recruitment due to the stock rebuild. It was noted that the smaller size of fish being seen was more likely to be related to environmental/spatial factors rather than directly related to recruitment.
47. The ASBTIA submission noted that industry believed that as the average size of fish was getting smaller the impact of the 10kg rule (upwards bias) on the weight sample was increasing.
48. The meeting noted that the only definitive assessment of the impact of the 10kg rule on the average weight calculation was conducted by DSI Consulting in 2005. The report titled *Review of SBT catch monitoring procedures* was commissioned by AFMA to investigate a range of issues related to catch monitoring in the farm sector. The final report noted with respect to the 10kg rule, that:

*“Overall, the effect of requiring SBT included in the 40-fish samples to be at least 10kg in weight results in an approximately 2-3% increase in the total weight estimate”*
49. Industry believe that the penalty to SBT concession holders in the current season due to the 10kg rule was approximately 285t or 6% of the catch.
50. The AFMA observer proposed a number of alternative sampling options. The meeting discussed the options and concluded that there was no statistically valid reason to increase the sample size from the current 100 fish however, the MAC noted that a cap of 150 fish would be appropriate in order to remove the possibility of sampling continuing (potentially hundreds or thousands of fish) in the event that a cage dominated by sub 8kg fish was taken. It was proposed that if the cap was reached all 150 fish in the sample would contribute to the average weight calculation.
51. After considerable discussion relating specifically to the weight threshold, the meeting agreed to seek further analysis from ABARES to analyse the current effect of the 10kg rule and provide options for adjusting the procedure, in light of the observed reduction in sampled fish weights.
52. It was agreed that the analysis would be conducted by ABARES with input from the South Australian state observer and CSIRO. The finalised document would be incorporated into a paper that would be considered out of session by SBTMAC. The outcomes of those discussions would then form the recommendation to the AFMA Commission on the transfer weighing procedure for the 2022/23 fishing season.

**ACTION ARISING - Provide out of session transfer weighing paper to SBTMAC that includes the agreed ABARES analysis**

## 6.2 SBT TAC update

53. Australia's share of the global TAC for the period 2021-23 is 6,238.4 tonnes annually.

54. The domestic TACC for the 2023 season will be considered by the AFMA Commission in November 2022, following decisions taken at the annual Commission for the Conservation of Southern Bluefin Tuna (CCSBT) meeting in October 2022. No exceptional circumstances have been identified and it is highly likely that the TACC will remain the same for the coming season. In addition to allocations for Members, 6 tonnes has been set aside for research mortality allowance each year until 2023
55. The domestic TACC for the 2024 season will be considered by the AFMA Commission in November 2023 following decisions taken at the annual CCSBT meeting in October 2023. Five per cent of Australia's annual CCSBT allocation is set aside to account for recreational mortality of SBT.

### 6.3 E-logs in the Farm Sector

56. It was noted that AFMA is mandating digital reporting for all Commonwealth logbooks through an update to the *Fisheries Management (Logbooks for Fisheries) Determination 2021*, under section 42 of the *Fisheries Management Act 1991*, from 1 July 2022.
57. The AFMA observer commented that the software does not currently exist for purse seine operations however, it is envisaged that this will change in the coming months. Until this time, fishers are exempt from using e-logs when fishing with purse seine gear.

### 6.4 SBT 2022/23 budget and 2021/22 acquittals

58. The AFMA member noted that the draft SBTF cost recovered budget was supplied to SBTMAC members for comment on 12 May 2022. It was noted in the paper that the SBT component of the electronic monitoring budget was incorrect (\$84,254). The correct amount should have been \$145,182.
59. The final SBTF cost recovered budget (reflecting the change above) for 2022/23 was \$1,476,196. This equates to a decrease of \$62,624 (4%) from the previous year.
60. Levy calculations for the 2022/23 year have recently been finalised. The amount levied in 2021/22 was \$1,508,182. The amount to be levied in 2022/23 is \$1,379,142. This includes a refund from the previous year of (\$97,061). This is a reduction of \$129,040 or 8.6%.

### 6.5 Environmental Update

#### US Marine Mammal Import Rule:

61. The AFMA observer noted that the first stage of implementation involved Australia providing a suite of information to the US on how Australia manages its commercial fisheries regarding marine mammal interactions. The US used this information to assess and categorise Australia's fisheries as either 'exempt' or 'export'. At this stage of the process a range of Commonwealth fisheries are assessed as "Export" (e.g. ETBF) which means they would not be able to export their product to the US on 1 January 2023.
62. AFMA and the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry are currently awaiting the outcome of the assessment of this data to understand which Australian Fisheries remain as "Export" and what can be done to move them to the exempt category and if not what that means for affected fisheries in the lead up to the 1 January 2023 deadline.

#### Interpreting Net Economic Returns:

63. The AFMA observer noted that at its July 2022 meeting, the AFMA Commission considered and approved a statement clarifying how AFMA reports its performance against the Net Economic Return (NER) objective and Commonwealth Fisheries Harvest Strategy Policy (CFHSP).
64. It was agreed that this will be an interim statement pending the finalisation of a comprehensive Fishery Management Paper (FMP) on NER reporting. Development of the new FMP is well progressed but finalisation, including stakeholder consultation, on the new FMP will be progressed once the CFHSP review is completed. A copy of the interim statement will shortly be available on the AFMA Website.

#### **Updating the Ecological Risk Management Framework:**

65. AFMA Management is undertaking a review of *Fishery Management Paper Number 14 – AFMA’s Approach to Ecological Risk Management and its supporting Guide to AFMA’s Ecological Risk Management Framework*. The policy and guide have been updated through AFMA’s Ecological Risk Management Steering Group (ERMSG) to address criticism of performance, improve efficiency and be up to date with latest approaches in the implementation of risk management. In September 2022, the AFMA Commission approved release of a draft version of the policy and guidelines for consultation.

#### **Delisting of Southern Bluefin Tuna as Conservation Dependant**

66. The AFMA observer noted that the Finalised Priority Assessment List (FPAL) is the list of nominated species, ecological communities and key threatening processes that have been approved for assessment by the Minister responsible for the EPBC Act (the Minister) for a particular assessment year (1 October–30 September).
67. These have a statutory timeframe in which the assessment must be completed. The proposed delisting of Southern Bluefin Tuna is currently included on the finalised priority assessment list for the assessment period commencing 1 October 2021. The list indicates that the assessment by the Threatened Species Scientific Committee (TSSC) is due for completion by 30 October 2023.

#### **SBT Wildlife Trade Operation:**

68. The AFMA member noted that the SBT Fishery was originally declared an approved Wildlife Trade Operation (WTO) under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act) on 10 November 2004.
69. Since then, the SBTF has been re-approved under the EPBC Act five times with the current WTO accreditation valid until 11 November 2022.
70. AFMA provided a submission for reassessment of the fishery to the Department of Environment on 26 May 2022. The Department considered the submission that included a public comment component and is recommending the fishery be approved for a further three years. The Environment Minister, Ms. Tanya Plibersek will consider the recommendation in the coming months. It is understood that the conditions to which the approval is subject will be similar to those in the current approval.

## 7. Other Business

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71. SBTMAC did not note any other business for this meeting.

72. The SBTMAC Chair thanked the members, invited participants and observers and closed the meeting at 14:19 pm.

# Meeting of the Southern Bluefin Tuna Management Advisory Committee (SBTMAC 46)

Tuesday 20 September 2022

10 am – 2.30pm (Australian Eastern Standard Time)

Teleconference

## Draft Agenda

- 1. Preliminaries/matters arising**
  - 1.1 Opening remarks/apologies/acceptance of agenda
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- 2. State of the Fishery**
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- 7. Other Business**
- 8. Next meeting**