



**Australian Government**

**Australian Fisheries Management Authority**

# **Tropical Tuna and Billfish Fisheries Management Advisory Committee TTMAC 25**

## **Meeting Minutes**

**23 March 2021**

**Holiday Inn Sydney Airport**

# Contents

<b>1. Preliminaries</b> .....	<b>3</b>
1.1. Welcome and Apologies.....	3
1.2. Adoption of agenda .....	4
1.3. Declaration of interests.....	4
1.4. Adoption of minutes from TTMAC 24 .....	6
1.5. Actions arising from previous meetings .....	6
1.6. Intersessional correspondence between TTMAC 24 and TTMAC 25.....	11
<b>2. Background and discussion items</b> .....	<b>12</b>
2.1. AFMA Management Report .....	12
2.2. Fishery Catch Data – 2019/20 to date .....	12
2.3. International meetings update .....	12
2.4. Tuna Australia Update .....	13
2.5. General update from members, invited participants and observers .....	13
<b>3. Consideration / Decision items</b> .....	<b>14</b>
3.1. 2021 CRIS and 2021/22 Budget.....	14
3.2. Striped Marlin harvest strategy update .....	15
3.3. Other outcomes of TTRAG 31 .....	16
3.4. Coral Sea hook trial Update (AFMA) .....	16
3.5. Seabird Interaction update.....	17
<b>4. Other information/Discussion items</b> .....	<b>17</b>
4.1. Senate Inquiry into the fisheries quota system .....	17
4.2. Policy Environment Economic and Research Update.....	18
4.3. Research Update.....	18
4.4. Update on Electronic Monitoring .....	18
4.5. Deployment of recreational FADs.....	19
4.6. Fisheries Management Strategy (FMS) .....	19
<b>5. Other business</b> .....	<b>20</b>
5.1. Freezer technology.....	20

<b>6. Date and venue for next meeting .....</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>DRAFT AGENDA .....</b>	<b>21</b>
Table 1 Members, invited participants and observers in attendance at TTMAC 25 .....	3
Table 2 Declared interests of members, invited participants and invited observers at TTMAC 25 .....	4
Table 3 Correspondence circulated out-of-session since TTMAC 24. ....	11

## 1. Preliminaries

### 1.1. Welcome and Apologies

1. The Chair opened the 25<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Tropical Tuna Management Advisory Committee (TTMAC), held at the Holiday Inn Sydney Airport and via Microsoft Teams, with an Acknowledgement of Country.
2. Apologies were received from industry member Paul Lavelle and industry invited participant Paul Williams.

**Table 1 Members, invited participants and observers in attendance at TTMAC 25**

<b>Members</b>	
Ms Catherine Sayer <sup>1</sup>	Chair
Mr Trent Timmiss <sup>1</sup>	AFMA Member
Mr Terry Romaro OAM <sup>1</sup>	Industry Member
Mr Pavo Walker <sup>1</sup>	Industry Member
Mr Grahame A Williams OAM <sup>1</sup>	Recreational/Charter Fishing Member
Ms Alice McDonald <sup>2</sup>	Environment Member
Mr Rowan Lamason* <sup>2</sup>	Industry Member
Dr Robert Campbell <sup>1</sup>	Research Member
<b>Invited Participants</b>	
Mr Ian Bladin <sup>2</sup>	Recreational/Charter Fishing
Mr Phil Bolton <sup>2</sup>	NSW State Industry Representative
Mr David Ellis <sup>1</sup>	Tuna Australia
Mr Brian Jeffriess AM <sup>2</sup>	Australian SBT Industry Association
Mr Andrew Powell**	AFMA
<b>Observers</b>	
Dr Ashley Williams <sup>1</sup>	CSIRO
Mr Mat Kertesz <sup>2</sup>	Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment
Ms Kerrie Robertson <sup>2</sup>	Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment

Mr Josh Fielding <sup>1</sup>	AFMA
Ms Saoirse Hannam <sup>1</sup>	AFMA
<b>Executive Officer</b>	
Ms Natalie Rivero <sup>1</sup>	AFMA
*Joined the meeting during Agenda item 2	
**Joined the meeting for Agenda item 4.4 only	
<sup>1</sup> Attended in person	
<sup>2</sup> Attended via teams	

## 1.2. Adoption of agenda

3. The agenda (Attachment 1) was adopted with TTMAC noting the late addition of *Agenda item 4.6 Fisheries Management Strategy* and the late circulation of the paper for *Agenda item 3.1 2021 CRIS and the 2021/22 Draft Budget*.

## 1.3. Declaration of interests

4. The Chair stated that as outlined in the *Fisheries Administration Act 1991* and Fisheries Management Paper 1, all members and invited participants of TTMAC must declare any interests in tropical tuna fisheries as they relate to specific agenda items at the commencement of the meeting (Table 2).
5. TTMAC noted that if a member or invited participant discloses an interest in an agenda item, the person must absent themselves from the meeting while TTMAC 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 2 Declared interests of members, invited participants and invited observers at TTMAC 25**

Name	Declared Interests	Agenda Items Relevant to Declared Interests
<b>Members</b>		
Ms Catherine Sayer	Chair TTMAC, CEO of Food South Australia. No pecuniary interests in tropical tuna fisheries. Aquaculture Tenure Allocation Board member, Glenelg Football Club Board member. Chair of KIN Premium Australian Seafood, Port Lincoln, Chair of Marine Fishers Association.	No
Mr Trent Timmiss	Employee of AFMA, no pecuniary interests in tropical tuna fisheries.	No
Mr Terry Romaro OAM*	Director of a company that owns Eastern Tuna and Billfish Fishery (ETBF) boat statutory fishing rights (SFRs), minor line SFRs, ETBF longline SFRs, Western Tuna and Billfish Fishery (WTBF) boat SFRs, WTBF longline SFRs, Western Skipjack Tuna Fishery (WSTF) purse seine permit, Small Pelagic Fishery (SPF) purse seine, mid-water trawl SFRs, and SPF quota SFRs. Shareholder of a company that owns shares in a proposal to fish with foreign longliners in the WTBF. Director of Bight Fisheries Pty Ltd. Long Line Industry member on Southern Bluefin Tuna (SBT) MAC and industry representative at the Commission for the Conservation of SBT (CCSBT). Industry member for squidRAG and squid concession holder.	3.1, 3.2, 3.4, 4.5

Name	Declared Interests	Agenda Items Relevant to Declared Interests
	Director on the Board of Tuna Australia. Member of the Southern and Western Marine Park Advisory Committee.	
Mr Pavo Walker	Owner of several ETBF boat SFRs, and ETBF quota SFRs for all five species. Holds a Coral Sea permit and minor line permit.	3.1, 3.2, 3.4, 4.5
Dr Robert Campbell	No pecuniary interests in Australian tropical tuna fisheries.	No
Mr Grahame A Williams OAM*	Past President of the Game Fishing Association of Australia, Treasurer and Records Officer of the NSW Game Fishing Association and Game Fishing Association Australia Executive Officer. No pecuniary interests in tropical tuna fisheries. Member of the NSW Recreational Fishing Trust. NSW Minister for Fisheries Special Advisory Council – RF NSW.	4.5
Mr Rowan Lamason	Family holds Boat SFRs (ETBF and Coral Sea) and quota SFRs	3.1, 3.2, 3.4, 4.5
Alice McDonald	No pecuniary interests in tropical tuna fisheries.	No
Phil Bolton	NSW Department of Primary Industries Employee, State invited representative, no pecuniary interests in tropical tuna fisheries.	No
<b>Executive Officer</b>		
Ms Natalie Rivero	Employee of AFMA, no pecuniary interests in tropical tuna fisheries.	No
<b>Invited Participants or Regular Observers</b>		
Mr David Ellis	CEO of Tuna Australia (industry association), Director of consultancy company (David Ellis and Associates).	3.1, 3.2, 3.4, 4.5
Mr Paul Williams	Director of a company that holds ETBF boat SFR and ETBF longline SFRs, minor line SFRs and a Commonwealth fish receiver permit. Member of TTRAG.	3.1, 3.2, 3.4, 4.5
Mr Gary Heilmann	Director of companies that hold a fish receiver permits in ETBF. Member of TTRAG.	3.1, 3.2, 3.4, 4.5
Mr Brian Jeffriess AM	CEO of Australian Southern Bluefin Tuna Industry Association.	No
Mr Ian Bladin	President of the Game Fishing Association of Australia, Director Australian Recreational Fishing Foundation, former Queensland charter boat owner.	4.5
Ms Saoirse Hannam	Employee of AFMA, no pecuniary interests in tropical tuna fisheries.	No
Mr Josh Fielding	Employee of AFMA, no pecuniary interests in tropical tuna fisheries.	No
Dr Ashley Williams	Employee of CSIRO, undertaking research in ETBF and WTBF. No pecuniary interest in tropical tuna fisheries.	No
Mr Andrew Powell	Employee of AFMA, no pecuniary interests in tropical tuna fisheries.	No
<b>Observers</b>		
Mr Mat Kertesz	Employee of Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment, no pecuniary interests in tropical tuna fisheries.	No
Ms Kerrie Robertson	Employee of Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment, no pecuniary interests in tropical tuna fisheries	No

6. The following members and invited participants declared interests as follows:

- i. Mr Terry Romaro OAM – as per requirements as a MAC member who has declared interests under an agenda item, Mr Romaro left the meeting. The remaining members of TTMAC agreed that Mr Romaro should be allowed to return for all discussions and recommendations made under Agenda Item 3.1, 3.2, 3.4, 4.5.
- ii. Mr Pavo Walker – as per requirements as a MAC member who has declared interests under an agenda item, Mr Walker left the meeting. The remaining members of TTMAC

agreed that Mr Walker should be allowed to return for all discussions and recommendations made under Agenda Item 3.1, 3.2, 3.4, 4.5.

- iii. Mr Gary Heilmann - as per requirements as a MAC member who has declared interests under an agenda item, Mr Heilmann left the meeting. The remaining members of TTMAC agreed that Mr Heilmann should be allowed to return for all discussions and recommendations made under Agenda Item 3.1, 3.2, 3.4, 4.5.
- iv. Mr David Ellis – as per requirements as a MAC invited participant who has declared interests under an agenda item, Mr Ellis left the teleconference. The remaining members of TTMAC agreed that Mr Ellis should be allowed to return for all discussions and recommendations made under Agenda Items 3.1, 3.2, 3.4, 4.5.
- v. Mr Rowan Lamason – as per requirements as a MAC member who has declared interests under an agenda item, Mr Lamason left the teleconference. The remaining members of TTMAC agreed that Mr Lamason should be allowed to return for all discussions and recommendations made under Agenda Items 3.1, 3.2, 3.4, 4.5.

7. The following members and invited participants declared interests under Agenda Items 4.5: Mr Grahame Williams OAM and Mr Ian Bladin.

- i. Mr Grahame Williams OAM – as per requirements as a MAC member who has declared interests under an agenda item, Mr Williams OAM left the meeting. The remaining members of TTMAC agreed that this participant should be allowed to return for all discussions and recommendations made under Agenda Item 4.5
- ii. Mr Ian Bladin – as per requirements as a MAC invited observer who has declared interests under an agenda item, Mr Bladin left the meeting. The remaining members of TTMAC agreed that this participant should be allowed to return for all discussions and recommendations made under Agenda Item 4.5

#### **1.4. Adoption of minutes from TTMAC 24**

8. The minutes from the TTMAC 24 meeting held via teams on 26 October 2021 were circulated out of session to the MAC on 11 November 2021.
9. No comments were received.
10. The MAC noted that minutes are finalised out of session after the period for member comments has closed.
11. No further amendments to the final minutes were made.

#### **1.5. Actions arising from previous meetings**

12. The MAC discussed the action items arising from previous meetings and commented on the progress on each item in Table (3).

Item	Meeting raised	Action	Responsibility	Status	Comments from TTMAC 25 meeting
1	TTMAC 20 - action arising	AFMA draft up a simple report card, undertake a cost benefit analysis and review where the fishery sits now relative to the required performance benchmarks across each category being proposed.	AFMA	<b>Not complete</b>  Still to be done. A review of the priority of this project against other fishery projects will be conducted in 2021.	The MAC noted there would be further discussion on FMS annual reporting under Agenda item 4.6
2	TTMAC 21 – action arising	AFMA to include EPBC listed species interaction rates (particularly for seabirds and turtles) in future environment updates.	AFMA	<b>Complete</b>  Rates were circulated out of session after the last meeting.	<b>Status to be changed to incomplete.</b>  It was noted that while protected species interaction rates were circulated to the MAC out of session for the most recent quarter, this item was intended to include historical trends of protected species interactions.  <b>ACTION ITEM 1:</b> AFMA to circulate protected species interaction rates that include multiple years/quarters to determine historical trends in species interactions. A first draft of the paper to be circulated to the environment member for comment prior to being circulated more broadly to the MAC.
3	TTMAC 21 – action arising	Japanese catches in the WTBF during the	CSIRO	<b>Data not readily available</b>	The MAC noted that WTBF Japanese catches are held by CSIRO and will be

		1990s to the WTBF indicators document.		To be added to the WTBF indicators document for future TACC discussions.	added to the WTBF indicators document for the September 2021 meeting.
4	TTMAC 21 – action arising	Limit reference points to be added to the ETBF and WBTF Indicators documents.	CSIRO/AFMA	<b>Complete</b> Relevant reference points were included in the TACC advice paper prepared by TTRAG and presented to the MAC.	<b>Noted.</b>
5	TTMAC 24 – action arising	AFMA to contact operators still using paper logs to notify of possibility to continue using paper logs.	AFMA	<b>Complete</b> All ETBF operators are now using e-logs	<b>Noted.</b>
6	TTMAC 24 – action arising	AFMA to circulate Protected Species Interactions table rates to TTMAC.	AFMA	<b>Complete</b>	<b>Noted.</b>
7	TTMAC 24 – action arising	Coral Sea Zone hook proposal: TTMAC agreed that a two-year trial with sufficient safeguards	AFMA	<b>Complete</b> See agenda item 3.4	<b>Noted.</b>



		to ensure Blue and Black Marlin interactions are managed be implemented from early 2021.			
8	TTMAC 24 – action arising	Coral Sea Zone hook proposal: To form a small working group to determine the exact specifications of the trial.	AFMA	<b>Complete</b> See agenda item 3.4	<b>Noted.</b>
9	TTMAC 24 – action arising	Potential revisions to seabird counts: TTMAC noted the proposed revisions to the current ETBF seabird and SFR conditions which AFMA intends to implement in time for the 2021 ETBF fishing season.	AFMA	<b>Complete</b> Seabird measures were updated in SFR conditions.	<b>Noted.</b>
10	TTMAC 24 – action arising	Proposal to increase Swordfish Undercatch: the AFMA member gave an undertaking that the MAC majority and Industry position on	AFMA	<b>Complete</b> The AFMA Commission considered the request and wrote to Tuna Australia	<b>Noted.</b>

		this issue would be put to the AFMA Commission.		outlining their decision.	
--	--	-------------------------------------------------	--	---------------------------	--

## 1.6. Intersessional correspondence between TTMAC 24 and TTMAC 25

13. The MAC noted the following correspondence was circulated out of session since TTMAC 24 held on 26 October 2020 (Table 4).

**Table 3 Correspondence circulated out-of-session since TTMAC 24.**

Date	Communication type	Item
11 November 2020	Email to TTMAC members and invited participants	Draft TTMAC 24 minutes circulated for participant comment
4 December 2020	Email to TTMAC members and invited participants	Circulation of Action item 1 from TTMAC 24 – rates of protected species interaction for information
4 February 2021	Email to TTMAC members and invited participants	Email from TTMAC EO proposing date of TTMAC 25 (23 March)
9 February 2021	Meeting request to TTMAC members and invited participants	Meeting request for TTMAC 25 sent to members and invited participants attaching the Draft Agenda for comments and 2021 ETBF Management Arrangements Booklet for information.

## 2. Background and discussion items

---

### 2.1. AFMA Management Report

14. The MAC was provided with a verbal management report from the AFMA member noting:
- Mr Don Bromhead is no longer with AFMA, however he will be continuing to provide scientific advice for Swordfish management through the WCPFC in his new position at ABARES.
  - Mr Josh Fielding joined AFMA in mid-January from the Fisheries Research Development Corporation (FRDC) as the new Tropical Tuna Manager.
  - ABARES are working on a Turtle interaction analysis that will be presented to TTRAG in March 2022.
  - Parks Australia are in the process of exploring implementation of a marine park in the area around Christmas and Cocos (Keeling) Islands and AFMA have requested they consult directly with Tuna Australia and industry.

### 2.2. Fishery Catch Data – 2019/20 to date

15. The MAC noted the fishery catch data paper provided by AFMA. In particular, it was noted that:
- The 2020 season had the lowest catch of Swordfish, Striped Marlin and Bigeye Tuna in the last twenty years. This was despite total effort in 2020 being similar to recent years (around 8 million hooks).
  - Swordfish and Striped Marlin catches are likely explained by limited market access during the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, however Bigeye Tuna catch has been consistently low for the last four years.
  - Albacore catch was highest since the 2006/07 period, when it peaked.
  - Yellowfin Tuna catches were marginally better than an average year.
16. In discussing Bigeye Tuna catch it was noted that effort in the Coral Sea area will be scaled down which will likely result in even lower catches of Bigeye Tuna in the future.

### 2.3. International meetings update

17. The AFMA member provided TTMAC with an update on key outcomes and observations from recent international meetings. It was noted that with meetings taking place virtually there has been a significant increase in the number of meetings scheduled for 2021.
18. The Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC) met on 7-15 December 2020 when no significant change to the Tropical Tuna Conservation Management Measure (CMM) was made but a process aimed at revising the measure throughout 2021 was agreed.
19. Two week-long workshops will be held, one to be held in April 2021 and another one to be held in June/July 2021, with the aim of having a draft revised Tropical Tuna CMM for discussion at WCPFC18 in December. The AFMA member noted that industry is welcome to be part of the delegation for the upcoming workshops and should contact AFMA or the Department of Agriculture Water and Environment (AWE) if they would like to be involved.
20. It was further noted that progressing other work, such as improving the Swordfish CMM or addressing items in the Harvest Strategy work plan through the Scientific Committee will be difficult given the focus on the Tropical Tuna CMM but they remain a priority for Australia.

21. The IOTC met in March this year, and agreed to have a special session on Yellowfin Tuna that was held on 8-12 March 2021. The meeting considered two proposals from the European Union and Maldives, which initially both proposed restricting Australian catches of Yellowfin Tuna to recent averages (~50t). During negotiations the proposals were merged which changed the proposed limit for Australia to 2,000t. Ultimately, there was no agreement on the revised measure, but this is likely to form the basis of negotiations at the upcoming IOTC 25 meeting scheduled for June 2021.
22. The Technical Committee on Allocation Criteria (TCAC) will meet from 22 - 25 March to discuss the scope, regime and principles under which allocation for a number of species including Yellowfin Tuna, Bigeye Tuna, Albacore and Swordfish could be made in the IOTC. This is the first of three TCAC meetings to be held throughout 2021.
23. The MAC noted industry's position on reductions to allowable catch of Yellowfin Tuna being discussed in the IOTC. It was explained that the Australian industry has made a significant investment over the last 15 years to improve monitoring and mitigation measures in Australian tuna fisheries. The Australian industry is not the main contributors to over-catch of Yellowfin Tuna in the Indian Ocean region, and has endeavoured to only catch a small proportion of the resource that is available within the Australian EEZ to ensure catch is taken sustainably.
24. A key concern from industry is that a reduction to Australia's allowable catch of Yellowfin Tuna that is mostly uncaught, encourage other member countries to increase their actual catches Yellowfin Tuna and be counterproductive in reducing overall Indian Ocean catch. The underlying issue of how Statutory Fishing Rights (SFRs) are considered in these situations by the Australian government should be discussed further and be better aligned with other frameworks such as how water entitlements are established.

## 2.4. Tuna Australia Update

25. The Tuna Australia invited participant gave a verbal update on behalf of industry, key points from the update were that:
  - Fishing in the southern sector of the ETBF has been quiet recently with some boats heading north to fish off Coffs Harbour before returning back south due to poor weather.
  - The deployment of recreational fish aggregating devices (FADs) (to be discussed further under Agenda item 4.5) has been a key issue for industry recently. Industry were in consultation with QLD Fisheries on their deployment and received a letter from QLD Government informing them the FAD deployment had already taken place while consultation was still underway.
  - Labour on vessels continues to be an issue during the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic and it is difficult to source labour domestically.
  - Recently Tuna Australia have been successful in receiving FRDC funding for a project focused on managing Work Health Safety (WHS) associated with wildlife mitigation measures on-board vessels.

## 2.5. General update from members, invited participants and observers

26. Industry members and invited participants provided an update on recent fishing activity with the MAC noting:
  - The Covid-19 pandemic had a significant impact on air freight exports to key Swordfish markets in the US and Japan. In response, there have been changes to fishing practices for some operators such as switching to targeting Albacore with Sardine bait instead of

the usual targeting of Swordfish with lightsticks and Squid bait. Domestic markets have also presented a challenge due to restaurant closures and last minute changes to events such as no spectators at the Australian Open, reducing the demand for product.

- WTBF operations have also struggled with expensive air freight costs resulting in a sole focus on providing product domestically. Sourcing labour has also been a challenge which has resulted in only one of two boats operating in the west.
- There has been Bigeye Tuna landed early into processing facilities in Mooloolaba and the price of imported squid has dropped to ~\$4/kg from its peak at ~\$8/kg which may see a return to the use of Squid bait in the fishery. Freight issues are continuing with access to the east coast of the US still very expensive and mostly impractical.
- In the SBT farm sector, productivity continues to improve, for example mortality in cages is <0.3%. Water temperature is ~2° cooler than usual and fish are moving straight through the Great Australian Bight. Despite initial difficulties in finding schools with fish of the same size, the farm sector is close to filling their cages. Prices of New Zealand fish have been good, but longline exports to Japan will be dependent on air freight availability.

27. The Scientific member provided an update with the MAC noting:

- Dr Robert Campbell will remain for the rest of his term as member of TTMAC and CSIRO have officially filled the position left vacant by his retirement.

Dr Campbell will also be continuing his role on the WCPFC Scientific Committee and attending the upcoming pre-assessment beginning 30 March 2021.

- The scheduled assessments for 2021 are Swordfish, South-West Pacific Albacore and South-West Pacific Blueshark. There is also a call for members to nominate experts to support the peer review of the Yellowfin Tuna assessment.

28. The Recreational/Charter Fishing member and invited participant provided an update on recent recreational fishing activity with the MAC noting:

- Mr Grahame Williams OAM, circulated a written update to TTMAC members and invited participants on 22 March 2021.
- The live tackle Billfish season has been the best in the last 20 years.
- International travel restrictions are an issue facing the charter sector and operators are relying solely on domestic business.
- The Queensland managed Black jewfish season closed early because the commercial quota was caught.

## 3. Consideration / Decision items

---

### 3.1. 2021 CRIS and 2021/22 Budget

29. The AFMA member presented the 2021 CRIS and 2021/22 budget noting the late circulation of the budget paper as AFMA needed to write to the Commonwealth Fisheries Association (CFA) prior to circulating MAC/RAG committees.

30. AFMA will be seeking comments on the draft budget out of session from industry through Tuna Australia over the next three week period.

31. Key changes in the draft 2021/22 budget in comparison to the final 2020/21 budget were:

- An overall decrease (~\$1k) for ETBF levy budget; where increases in management costs (driven by budgeting for resumed normal MAC/RAG travel) and inclusion of bycatch overheads (which were incorrectly not included in the last budget) were offset by a reduction in the research budget.
- Decreases in the WTBF (~\$13K) and Skipjack Tuna Fishery (~\$14k) mainly driven by a reduction in licensing administration and revenue collection costs.
- The way IT costs are recovered has changed. Previously they were mainly allocated to licensing administration, whereas now they are mainly allocated to data collection and management. It was noted the move to and integration of digital data collection for logbooks and CDR's has resulted in a net increase (~\$30k) to the ETBF.

32. It was questioned why the move to digital data collection has resulted in an increase in ETBF levies where one of the key reasons for a transition to digital data collection was to create cost savings for industry.
33. The AFMA member explained that there has been a significant IT investment at AFMA which is the driver for the increase. It was further noted that while there has been an increase in data costs, it has been offset by the reduction in licensing IT costs.
34. It was suggested that tracking the GVP of the fishery against the levy costs could prove to be a good measure for how AFMA is tracking against its economic based legislative objectives.

### **3.2. Striped Marlin harvest strategy update**

35. The MAC noted that the TTRAG at its 9 -10 March 2021 meeting, considered a paper provided by CSIRO outlining results of the Management Strategy Evaluation (MSE) on a candidate Striped Marlin Harvest Control Rule (HCR).
36. The results of the MSE were highly uncertain due to uncertainty within the Striped Marlin stock assessment. Generally, under most scenarios, the Harvest Control Rule (HCR) resulted in spawning biomass increasing much higher than the reference period and increasing Total Allowable Commercial Catches (TACCs), although with significant high (and in some cases implausible) inter-annual variability.
37. TTRAG asked for some further work on projections, including constant catch scenarios which will be presented to the July TTRAG meeting and it is expected recommendations will be provided to the October TTMAC.
38. The MAC noted that with work continuing on a candidate HCR, the 2022 Striped Marlin TACC will be set using advice based on indicators, as in previous years.
39. A question was raised as to whether a Harvest Strategy for Striped Marlin is achievable and whether using fisheries indicators is more appropriate given the uncertainty around recreational catch mortality. It was noted that the RAG will be considering how well the HCR operates when they are presented with the final outcomes of the MSE testing produced by CSIRO.
40. It was further noted from the NSW state invited participant that there is now a biennial recreational fishing survey that includes information about Striped Marlin and that recreational catch information for the species should improve in the future.

### 3.3. Other outcomes of TTRAG 31

41. The MAC noted that key items of discussion at the TTRAG meeting were the outcome of the Striped Marlin MSE work (covered under Agenda item 3.2 above), the Coral Sea hook trial (covered under Agenda item 3.4) and Research project updates (covered under Agenda item 4.3).
42. The other key outcome was agreement from TTRAG to form a small data working group to look at the effects the Covid-19 pandemic may have had on the CPUE standardisations prior to the TTRAG's July meeting where they will be discussed.

### 3.4. Coral Sea hook trial Update (AFMA)

43. The MAC noted that since the last TTMAC meeting, a small working group consisting of industry, scientists, managers and several recreational members of either TTRAG or TTMAC met to discuss the conditions of the Coral Sea Zone (CSZ) hook trial.
44. The working group formed the following conditions for a two year trial in the CSZ:
  - Limit the trial to a maximum of 1,200 hooks set per day.
  - If shooting more than 500 hooks, only one set can be conducted per day.
  - Fishing under the proposed hook limit would occur over a two year trial period east of 148°E. Fishing west of 148°E will be restricted to certain months.
  - The first year of the trial in the area west of 148°E will occur between the months of March to August in 2021, with a review of the data arising from year one to inform the time period for 2022.
  - A two-tier marlin catch limit will apply during the trial. If the first tier is reached, this will trigger AFMA convening the working group (within two weeks of the breach) to review available data. If the second tier is reached, the trial will be terminated.
  - The following catch limits will be applied:

	Blue Marlin	Black Marlin
First Tier	34	65
Second Tier	45	86

- All boats operating in the trial must comply with the ETBF e-monitoring requirements. AFMA will continue to monitor e-monitoring audit rates for reporting accuracy.
  - Life status and size data (less than or greater than 20kg) will be collected during the trial, facilitated through the new e-log software and verified through e-monitoring.
45. Mr Rowan Lamason informed the MAC that recent changes to ownership within Great Barrier Reef Tuna have resulted in their company operating one vessel for the foreseeable future and they hoped that boat would resume fishing in the coming weeks after some recent refitting work.
  46. With changes to proposed effort in the CSZ, the MAC noted that the trial will not operate as originally expected and will therefore be reassessed at the first check point later in 2021.
  47. A question was raised as to how to the working group formed the agreed catch limits and tiers where it was explained that the group looked at the historical four year average catch of marlin



in the area and based the tiers on a conservative proportion of those catches (*NB: The upper threshold (second tier) being twice the four year average, and the lower (first tier) being 75% of the upper threshold*).

### 3.5. Seabird Interaction update

48. The MAC noted key points from the Seabird interaction update provided, where:

- Overall, the number of seabird interactions in the fishery have reduced over the most recent summer and winter TAP seasons when compared with the interaction spikes observed in previous seasons.
- In the current calendar year, there was an incident where multiple interactions occurred on a single fishing shot for a boat targeting Southern Bluefin Tuna (SBT) off Eden. The vessel is now required to implement additional mitigation measures as per the ETBF seabird conditions.
- In the last few days, AFMA received a report of a few Shearwater interactions which were not included in the total numbers presented to the MAC but will be included in future data summaries.
- Overall, there were nine boats that were identified as the main contributors to interactions in the fishery, all of which have lowered their interactions.
- Antipodean Albatross were identified through genetic sampling and AFMA intends to look into the results of the genetic sampling further in the coming months.
- AFMA has revised the wording in concession conditions around “weighted swivels” to allow operators to use Lumo leads to further reduce interactions.
- AFMA has been working on creating a new protected species identification guide for industry that includes migration and spatial distribution maps for species of interest.

49. In discussing the Seabird interaction update, a question was raised as to whether it would be useful to look at a comparison between the ETBF and other Commonwealth managed or international fisheries (such as New Zealand) to track the fishery’s performance in reducing seabird interactions.

50. It was noted that tracking the performance of how effective the fishery’s management of seabird (and other protected species) interactions is something that may be useful to include in the Fishery Management Strategy (FMS) annual report.

## 4. Other information/Discussion items

---

### 4.1. Senate Inquiry into the fisheries quota system

51. The MAC noted that the Senate inquiry into the fisheries quota species is underway and were provided the terms of reference and a link to the received submissions web page which was circulated during the meeting.

52. It was noted that AFMA and the Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment have provided submissions to the inquiry that are publicly available at the link (below) provided to TTMAC.

## 4.2. Policy Environment Economic and Research Update

53. The MAC noted the written Policy, Environment, Economics and Research Section (PEER) update provided by AFMA.

## 4.3. Research Update

54. The MAC was provided with an update on relevant research projects in the fishery noting that:

- Tuna Australia will be discussing market diversification at their annual board meeting and will be looking at innovative options on how to maximise the use of target species product.
- The fisheries oceanography project is progressing well and yet to be completed. Project results will continue to be reported to the RAG as they become available.
- The genetics projects led by Dr Karen Evans is nearing completion. A draft final report was submitted and reviewed by the TTRAG in the latter parts of 2020 with comments and additional samples currently being incorporated into the project's final output.
- The recreational fishing project undertaken by Dr Julian Pepperell and Dr Robert Campbell concluded that there are no strong underlying environmental trends identified as the key driver for the decline in catches of Yellowfin Tuna. The project recommended that further analysis should be undertaken to better understand what is happening, including focussing the analysis on the last 10 years, determining if there have been major changes in recreational behaviour and seeking alternative sources of information that could inform this analysis.

## 4.4. Update on Electronic Monitoring

55. The MAC was provided with an update on Electronic monitoring (EM) from Mr Andrew Powell, A/g Manager Fisheries Services AFMA, noting that:

- The current contract for EM services ceases on 26 June 2022 and AFMA has released a Request for Information on AusTender to better understand what options and solutions are available on the market for the delivery of flexible, cost effective and robust EM program.
- The Request for Information closed on 21 February 2021 with several vendors providing responses. AFMA will now review these responses to further refine and shape the future delivery of the EM program. This will include further consultation and engagement with industry.
- AFMA has now formally transferred the ownership of EM systems to industry for systems that were originally purchased by AFMA at the commencement of the EM program in 2015.

56. A question was raised as to whether Radio Frequency Interference (RFI) issues that were experienced by a number of operators are still continuing or if they have been resolved. The MAC noted that RFI issues have been resolved on most vessels where a solution was possible and for vessels where no working solution was found, AFMA has made allowances for systems to be switched off to allow vessels to safely search for beacons.

57. The MAC noted that Tuna Australia has been in communication with AFMA around costs associated with the EM program, and AFMA and Tuna Australia will continue to meet and discuss the future program.
58. It was also noted during discussion that the CSIRO AI project that is currently underway has produced some promising preliminary results and has potential to reduce catch review times through image recognition, which may generate future efficiencies in the EM program if the technology continues to develop.

#### **4.5. Deployment of recreational FADs**

59. The MAC was provided a verbal update from the invited participant from Tuna Australia noting that there will be an FRDC funding proposal put forward by the CFA to look at recreational FADs and their potential impact on the shared resource and make recommendations for a framework for future implementation.
60. The Tuna Australia invited participant stated that the recent rollout of recreational FADs by the Queensland government will significantly impact the commercial Tuna fishing industry and FADs are becoming an increasing issue for the Tuna fishing industry.
61. The Recreational/Charter Fishing Member noted that the NSW FAD program has been successfully in operation since 2003 with 32 FADs implemented and three more planned to be rolled out. The program has been in operation for over 17 years without issue and is funded by the NSW Fishing Trust. The NSW program should be looked at if a standard for recreational FAD deployment is to be looked at under the proposed CFA project.
62. The MAC noted that FADs will be a continued topic of discussion at future meetings as the CFA proposal develops.

#### **4.6. Fisheries Management Strategy (FMS)**

63. The AFMA member provided a summary of the MAC's previous involvement in the development of the ETBF Fisheries Management Strategy (FMS) noting that the next step in the process is to develop an annual report that provides useful information on how the fishery is tracking against its objectives.
64. The MAC discussed what metrics may be useful to report noting that examples could include:
- TACC vs. Actual catch for each of the target species in the fishery (similar to what is provided in the TTMAC Fishery Catch Data paper).
  - Management costs as a proportion of Fishery Gross Value Production (GVP) to measure the economic performance of the fishery. It was also noted that previous economic summaries provided by ABARES had useful information and AFMA will be in contact with ABARES to see what can be provided in future.
  - Protected species catch rates showing trends over time to demonstrate how the fishery is tracking in terms of minimising interactions.

65. It was agreed that MAC members would provide further feedback to AFMA out of session and further discussion on the FMS annual report would be added to the agenda for the next TTMAC meeting in October.

**ACTION ITEM 2: (a) TTMAC members to provide AFMA with feedback on what information would be useful to include in the FMS annual report (b) An agenda item for discussion on the FMS annual report to be added to the next TTMAC meeting in October.**

## 5. Other business

---

### 5.1. Freezer technology

66. Mr Terry Romaro presented the MAC with a video describing emerging freezer technology that could benefit the seafood industry in keeping product fresher for a longer period of time than a conventional freezer.

67. The link to the video was circulated to meeting participants and can be accessed at:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TnlPcXuqaO0>

68. The MAC thanked Mr Romaro for the presentation.

## 6. Date and venue for next meeting

---

69. As the current membership term for the TTMAC is due to expire on 30 June 2021, the MAC agreed to set a date for the next meeting when the new TTMAC membership appointment process is completed.

70. The Chair thanked participants and members for their contributions and closed the meeting at 1:10pm.

# Tropical Tuna Fisheries Management Advisory Committee (TTMAC) 25 Meeting

**Date: 23 March 2021**

**Venue: Holiday Inn Sydney Airport**

**9:30am to 3:00pm (AEDT)**

## **DRAFT AGENDA**

- 1. Preliminaries/Matters Arising**
  - 1.1. Welcome (including Acknowledgement of Country) and apologies
  - 1.2. Adoption of agenda
  - 1.3. Declaration of interests
  - 1.4. Adoption of Minutes from previous meetings
  - 1.5. Actions arising from previous meetings
  - 1.6. Intersessional correspondence between TTMAC 24 and TTMAC 25
- 2. Background Information/Discussion Items**
  - 2.1. AFMA Management Report
  - 2.2. Fishery Catch Data – 2021 season to date and final 2020 season
  - 2.3. International meetings update
  - 2.4. Tuna Australia / Industry update
  - 2.5. General update from members, invited participants and observers
- 3. Consideration/Decision Items**
  - 3.1. 2021 CRIS and the 2021/22 Draft Budget
  - 3.2. ETBF Striped Marlin Harvest Strategy outcome
  - 3.3. Other outcomes of TTRAG 34
  - 3.4. Coral Sea hook trial update
  - 3.5. Seabird Interaction update
- 4. Other Information/Discussion Items**
  - 4.1. Senate Quota Report
  - 4.2. Policy, Environment, Economics and Research Section (PEER) update
  - 4.3. Research Update
  - 4.4. Electronic Monitoring update (Claire van der Geest)
  - 4.5. Deployment of recreational FADs (David Ellis)
  - 4.6. Fisheries Management Strategy (FMS)
- 5. Other business**
  - 5.1. Freezer technology (Terry Romaro)
- 6. Date and venue for next meeting**