



**Australian Government**  
**Australian Fisheries Management Authority**



# **Southern Bluefin Tuna Management Advisory Committee (SBTMAC)**

**FINAL MINUTES  
SBTMAC 43  
25 SEPTEMBER 2019  
CANBERRA**



## **SOUTHERN BLUEFIN TUNA MANAGEMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE (SBTMAC)**

### **Introduction**

The forty third meeting of the Southern Bluefin Tuna Management Advisory Committee (SBTMAC 43) was held in Canberra on 25 September 2019.

The primary objectives of the meeting were to discuss:

- the outcomes from the 2019 Commission for the Conservation of Southern Bluefin Tuna (CCSBT) Operating Model and Management Procedure Technical Meeting and 24<sup>th</sup> Extended Scientific Committee meeting;
- the proposed 2020/21 research priorities;
- 2019/20 Total Allowable Catch and accounting for all forms of mortality;
- overcatch and undercatch arrangements and transfer weighing procedure; and
- climate change project.

### **Agenda Item 1: Preliminaries/matters arising**

#### **1.1: Opening Comments**

1. The Chair, Mr Max Kitchell, opened the meeting at 9:00am and welcomed members, invited participants and observers to the 43rd meeting of SBTMAC. In particular, the Chair welcomed returning member Mr Justin Nelligan.

2. Apologies were noted from Mr Marcus Stehr and Mr Phil Turner.

3. Participants at SBTMAC 43 were:

#### Chair

Mr Max Kitchell

#### Members

Dr Bertie Hennecke (ABARES)  
Mr Trent Timmiss (AFMA)  
Mr Andrew Wilkinson (farm industry sector)  
Mr Terry Romaro OAM (longline industry sector)  
Mr Brett Cleary (recreational sector)  
Mr Glenn Sant (conservation member)

#### Invited Participants

Mr Brian Jeffriess AM (industry sector)  
Mr Justin Nelligan (industry)  
Mr Sean Sloan (State government)  
Mr David Ellis (Tuna Australia)

#### Executive Officer

Ms Sarah Kirkcaldie (AFMA)

#### Observers

Ms Ann Preece (CSIRO)  
Dr Campbell Davies (CSIRO)  
Mr Matt Daniel (AFMA)  
Ms Sally Weekes (AFMA phone)#  
Mr George Day (AFMA)\*  
Ms Danait Ghebregabhier (AFMA)^

#agenda item 2.4

\*agenda item 6

^agenda item 7.1

SBTMAC Chair Max Kitchell c/- Executive Officer Sarah Kirkcaldie, Po Box 7051 Canberra BC ACT 2610



## **Adoption of agenda**

4. SBTMAC adopted the agenda that was circulated prior to the meeting with one change: Agenda item 2.4 – Resource sharing was added to the agenda (**Attachment A**).

## **1.2: Pecuniary interest declarations**

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, not limited to just pecuniary gain, in 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.

**Table 1: SBTMAC members, invited participants and permanent observers' declarations of interest**

<b>Members</b>	<b>Declared Interests</b>	
Mr Max Kitchell	Employed as the SBTMAC Chair. No pecuniary interest in the Fishery.	Nil
Mr Trent Timmiss	Employee of AFMA, no pecuniary interest in SBT Fishery	Nil
Mr Andrew Wilkinson	General Manager of company that owns and operates a tuna farm/catching business.	Nil
Mr Terry Romaro OAM	Director of a company that owns SBT, ETBF & WTBF quota SFR's. 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). He attends Indian Ocean Tuna Commission & CCSBT meetings representing Industry & is an Alternate Director of Tuna Australia P/L	6.1, 6.2 and 6.5
Mr Brett Cleary	Chair of Tasmanian Association for Recreational Fishing [TARFish]*, Board member Sustainable Marine Research Collaboration (SMRCA) Institute for Marine and Antarctic Studies (IMAS)*, 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 Bertie Hennecke	Employee of ABARES, no pecuniary interest in SBT fishery, noting that ABARES conducts research on a range of fisheries issues.	Nil
Mr Glenn Sant	Employee of the University of Wollongong which has a collaboration agreement with Traffic Oceania, no pecuniary interest in SBT Fishery.	Nil
Ms Sarah Kirkcaldie	Employee of AFMA, no pecuniary interest in SBT Fishery.	Nil
<b>Invited participant</b>	<b>Declared interests</b>	Nil
Mr Brian Jeffriess AM (Invited Participant)	CEO of Australian Southern Bluefin Tuna Industry Association.	Nil
Mr David Ellis (Invited participant)	Chief Executive Officer of Tuna Australian (Industry Association). Mr Ellis is also a member on TTRAG and TTMAC.	6.2
Mr Sean Sloan (Invited participant)	Executive Director, Fisheries and Aquaculture, PIRSA. Member of the Australian Fisheries Management Forum, Chair of the Aquaculture Committee and member of the South Australian Advisory Committee. Mr Sloan further advised he is	Nil

	also the Chair of the Australian Fisheries Management Forum. No pecuniary interest in SBT fishery.	
Mr Matt Daniel (Observer)	Employee of AFMA, no pecuniary interest in SBT Fishery	Nil
Ms Ann Preece (Observer)	Employee of CSIRO, no pecuniary interest in SBT Fishery. Noting that CSIRO conducts research on range of fisheries issues.	4.1 and 4.2.
Dr Campbell Davies (Observer)	Employee of CSIRO, no pecuniary interest in SBT Fishery. Noting that CSIRO conducts research on range of fisheries issues.	4.1 and 4.2.

Mr Terry Romaro – as per requirements as a MAC member who has declared interests under an agenda item, Mr Romaro left the room. The remaining members of SBTMAC agreed that Mr Romaro should be allowed to return for all discussions but not recommendations made under Agenda Item 6.1, 6.2 and 6.5.

Ms Ann Preece – as per requirements as a MAC observer who has declared interests under an agenda item, Ms Preece left the room. The remaining members of SBTMAC agreed that Ms Preece should be allowed to return for all discussions but not recommendations made under Agenda Items 4.1 and 4.2.

Dr. Campbell Davies - as per requirements as a MAC observer who has declared interests under an agenda item, Dr Davies left the room. The remaining members of SBTMAC agreed that Dr Davies should be allowed to return for all discussions but not recommendations made under Agenda Items 4.1 and 4.2.

### 1.3: Acceptance of minutes from SBTMAC 42

6. SBTMAC noted the SBTMAC 42 minutes from the September 2018 meeting as a true and accurate account of the discussions. Members noted that the comments received on the draft minutes circulated in October 2018 were incorporated.

### 1.4: Actions arising from SBTMAC 42 and subsequent intercessional work

7. Members noted the status of the actions arising from SBTMAC 42 as outlined below:

<p><b>Recreational and commercial fishing interaction –</b> ASBTIA and PIRSA to liaise with maritime safety to identify what can be done to resolve issues occurring from recreational and commercial fishing interactions.</p>	<p>SBTMAC noted that Mr Sloan wrote to Australian Maritime Safety Authority (AMSA) to make them aware of the situation between commercial and the recreational sector. Mr Sloan agreed to circulate the letter to SBTMAC (<b>Action arising 1</b>). Members noted that PIRSA and ASBTIA will continue to monitor the situation. Mr Cleary advised that he had informally met with South Australian recreational fishers and noted that there was a lack of understanding from some as to how purse seining operations worked.</p>
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	Members noted that liaison via radio between sectors on the water could improve the situation for both sectors.
<b>Otolith collection protocols</b> – AFMA, industry representatives and CSIRO will review the current otolith collection protocols to ensure adequate sampling continues for the development of the new management plan.	SBTMAC noted that this action will be discussed under Research issues (agenda item 4).
<b>Electronic system for catch monitoring</b> – AFMA agreed to provide the MAC with a cost benefit analysis of implementing an electronic system for catch monitoring forms.	SBTMAC noted that this action was completed and the electronic catch monitoring system has been implemented.
<b>Climate change</b> - AFMA will provide an update on climate change work being undertaken for future SBTMAC meetings.	Members noted that this action will be discussed under agenda item 7.1.

#### Intersessional work

The following items/issues have been progressed out-of-session since the last SBTMAC meeting on 25 September 2018:

- a) 31 October 2018, the acting Executive Officer circulated the draft minutes from SBTMAC 42 for comment;
- b) 20 November 2018, the Executive Officer sent an email informing members that their membership was about to expire and the process of renewing membership of SBTMAC;
- c) 30 January 2019, the Executive Officer seeking comments on an ARC research proposal;
- d) 12 February 2019, the Executive Officer circulated an seeking individual input into AFMA's domestic compliance risk assessment process;
- e) 14 March 2019, the Executive Officer circulated the draft 2019/20 budget for the southern Bluefin Tuna Fishery for comment;
- f) 25 March 2019, the Executive Officer circulated an email regarding a call for members on various RAGs and MACs;
- g) 5 August 2019, the Executive Officer circulated an email confirming 25 September as the date for SBTMAC 43 in Canberra; and
- h) 2 September 2019, Executive Officer circulated the draft agenda for SBTMAC 43.

## **Agenda Item 2: State of the fishery**

### **2.1: Informal industry report on the 2017/18 catching season, markets and outlook**

No members had any potential conflict of interests to declare under this item.

Industry members informed SBTMAC that the purse seine fish were caught after Christmas south of Kangaroo Island and south east of Robe. Members noted there has been speculation regarding why the fish are not staying in the Great Australian Bight including that the seismic surveys may have an impact. Industry noted that they will continue to monitor the Bight and the movement of fish. Members noted that the price for fish is similar to last year. Industry advised that the catch was mixed in size classes with a larger percentage of smaller fish this season.

The Tuna Australia representative informed the SBTMAC that the east coast longline sector had a good SBT season. Members noted that schools were more mixed in size classes than had been seen in recent seasons. Members were informed that mixed catches of SBT and yellowfin tuna were currently being taken off Ulladulla and Wollongong. Members also noted that at times during the season there was an oversupply in of SBT in the market and prices suffered accordingly however the yen exchange rate was favourable.

### **2.2: Informal report from the recreational sector member**

The recreational member provided an update on the recent recreational catches of SBT which were similar to the 2018 season. Members noted that the SBT caught in Tasmanian have been smaller recently, however, South Australia and Victoria are consistently seeing small runs of fish in the 100kg plus range. In New South Wales there were issues early in the season with the SBT being too far offshore for the recreational fleet. A good run of yellowfin was encountered closer inshore and a number of vessels targeted these instead of SBT. The recreational member noted that the previous 'gold rush' in South Australia and Victoria appears to have eased and there are not hundreds of boats all fishing at once.

The recreational member provided some background regarding the Tuna Champions program. Members noted that the Tuna Champions program is an initiative of the Australian Recreational Fishing Foundation (ARFF) in collaboration with the Institute for Marine and Antarctic Studies and is the largest single species funded program by the Fisheries Research and Development Corporation (FRDC) (\$600,000). The program is now a recognised brand with high profile ambassadors including Al McGlashan and Patrick Dangerfield and has over 4,000 Facebook followers and 1,000 Instagram followers. Members noted that the program is advocating the use of single hooks as opposed to trebles on lures during game fishing tournaments, as they are less damaging to the fish. It was noted that for the 2019 Port Lincoln Tuna Classic, single hooks were mandatory.

SBTMAC noted that all sides of Government have now endorsed Tuna Champion and ethos and there has been a suggestion to do a similar program for Yellowfin. Members noted that the SBT program only has a few months to go and the ARFF are discussing how to continue the program with FRDC.

The recreational member noted that the Al McGlashan's SBT documentary "Life on the line" will be launched on 6 November 2019 at the IMAX theatre in Melbourne. SBTMAC members were encouraged to attend and the recreational member agreed to extend the invitation to all members (**Action arising 2**). Members noted that the Minister will be launching the documentary and there will be a full media campaign leading up to the launch. CSIRO and PIRSA indicated their willingness to be involved in the launch to assist in promoting the documentary. The documentary will be screened on free to air television on Saturday 16 November 2019.

### **2.3: AFMA manager's report**

The SBT Fishery manager noted that SBT farming sector caught a record 5,290 tonnes in the 2018/19 season. Members noted that this included 85 tonnes of overcatch.

The SBT manager further noted that the longline sector is still catching SBT and there is about 59 tonnes of the 605 tonne quota remaining. SBTMAC noted that if all the quota is taken Australia will be over its allocation. Members noted that the SBT zone is still in place off Ulladulla and will remain in place till the fish move further south in the coming months.

### **Agenda item 2.4 – Resource Sharing**

SBTMAC noted that the Australian Government is developing a Commonwealth Fisheries Resource Sharing Framework to improve fishery management outcomes for all fishers and users of Commonwealth fisheries. Members noted that this is not a national policy as the states have not signed on. Members were advised that there are three stages to developing the framework:

- (1) Consultation to define the problem (consultation just started and is expected to conclude in early 2020);
- (2) Preparation of a draft framework for further consultation; and
- (3) Finalisation of the framework by June 2020.

Members noted that the first part of the process is seeking input from stakeholders through an online survey to help define the 'issue' of resource sharing. This early input will help design a usable framework that meets the needs of stakeholders and the online survey will be open for a month (23 September to 21 October 2019). The Department of Agriculture will then be holding a number of workshops with key stakeholders which will be determined by the interest expressed. SBTMAC noted that they will be consulted on the framework.

The State government invited participant noted that it is an issue that the States were not engaged earlier in the process especially when there are a numbers of species that interact with both commonwealth and state sectors. Members noted that as part of the process all State policies on resource sharing will be collated.

Industry noted that they would seek clarification from the Department as they were advised that an SBT process will run in parallel to general policy (**Action arising 3**).

SBTMAC thanked Ms Weekes for presenting the resource sharing agenda item.

### **Agenda Item 3: CCSBT**

No members had any potential conflict of interests to declare under this item.

### **3.1: Outcomes from the CCSBT Operating Model and Management Procedure Technical Meeting and 24<sup>th</sup> Extended Scientific Committee meeting (September 2019)**

The CSIRO observer gave a presentation on close kin monitoring program that is funded through CCSBT. The latest data collected includes samples of adults from Bali and juveniles from Port Lincoln (3 year olds). The CSIRO observer noted that the 2018/19 tissue sampling is now complete and data has been exchanged through CCSBT processes. Members noted that the next update will be available for the 2020 stock assessment and the running of the

new Management Procedure. CSIRO thanked Indonesia (Research Institute of Tuna fisheries), Seatec and industry for their assistance during the project.

Members noted that at the Operating Model and Management Procedure Technical Meeting, Australia provided an update of the operating models that are used to test the Management Procedure. CSIRO noted that the gene-tagging information was added for the first time and members noted that this year there is a definitive bottoming out and then an increase in the stock status.

Members note that the close kin data and gene tagging data is very important in the assessment and provides strong direct information that will help with future assessments. This data gives information on recruitment as well as climate effects on recruitment.

The ABARES observer noted that the majority of the discussion at the meetings focussed on the new Management Procedure.

Members noted that in 2011, CCSBT adopted the Bali Procedure and the following associated management parameters and operational constraints as its MP. The Bali Procedure is tuned to a 70% probability of rebuilding the stock to the interim rebuilding target reference point of 20% of the original spawning stock biomass by 2035 with a minimum TAC change (increase or decrease) of 100 tonnes and a maximum TAC change (increase or decrease) of 3,000 tonnes. The Bali Procedure has successfully recommended the global SBT TAC for the fishing seasons from 2012 to 2020. With the discontinuation of the scientific aerial survey, a new MP with different data inputs is required to recommend the TAC for 2021 to 2023 and onwards.

Candidate Management Procedures (CMP) were developed by Member scientists based on standardised longline CPUE, estimates of 2-year old abundance from the gene tagging program and spawning stock abundance indices from the close-kin mark recapture monitoring program. The performance of four CMPs were tested against eight criteria and based on this consideration of overall performance the extended Scientific Committee recommended the RH13 (developed by Rich Hillary) CMP to the EC for the 30% SSB by 2035 tuning.

The meeting noted SBT is listed on the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) red list as critically endangered. The species was last assessed in 2019 and is due for re-assessment within the next year. It was noted that CCSBT agreed that the Secretariat should contact IUCN and provide information, with assistance from experts if required, to IUCN for its review of SBT's classification.

Members noted that the listing is unlikely to change if the species is below B20. Industry members explained that the red listing means that some restaurants and hotels will not take the product and that any fish meal containing SBT offal cannot be sold for certain purposes.

The AFMA member advised he will circulate a report summarising the outcomes of the meeting but he reminded members that the outcomes are not public until the end of the Commission meeting.

### **3.2: Update on progress towards a new Management Procedure**

Members noted discussions on progress towards a new Management Procedure was combined with the update from the CCSBT Scientific Committee meeting.

## Agenda Item 4: Research issues

### 4.1: Proposed 2020/21 research program and priorities

The AFMA observer provided the SBTMAC with the background to the research programs and priorities for discussion. This included:

- a) **Intersessional science and the otoliths project** – CSIRO noted that this project provides support to the Australian delegation at CCSBT including data exchange, stock assessment, annual review of exceptional circumstances, collection and ageing of otoliths, updating the Operating Procedure and close kin data.
- b) **Development of, or application of, Economic Indicators to allow more comprehensive monitoring of the economic performance of AFMA's fisheries**
- c) **Integration of additional ERA/ERM methods found to be appropriate in the international context into AFMA's ERA/ERM process as a result of the recommendations from the FRDC 'Cumulative Impacts cross fisheries in Australia's marine environment' project headed by Beth Fulton, CSIRO** – members noted that the cost of this project was split across all fisheries with the SBT costs \$5,972.
- d) **Development of the new management procedure** - CSIRO noted that the project is funded by the Department of Agriculture through to December 2020.
- e) **Close kin work** – Members noted that this project is funded through CCSBT and samples are collected in Bali (adults) and Port Lincoln (juveniles).
- f) **SBT gene-tagging** – Members noted that a funding request has been submitted to CCSBT and is essential for juvenile abundance estimates to be calculated for a new management procedure.
- g) **Changes in spatial dynamics of SBT** - SBTMAC gave in principle support for the project which is seeking funding from FRDC. The project aims to examine changes in SBT spatial dynamics that may be occurring as a result of climate change, shifts in the GAB environment and seismic impacts, and compare it with earlier research program results. The study will be an electronic tagging program with gene-tagging field work, analysis and reporting.

Members agreed to finalise the SBTF Annual Research Statement for the 2020/21 financial year (**Attachment B**).

SBTMAC members noted the Chair's Report of the CCSBT Maturity Workshop which was held in Bali on 7-8 May 2019. The CSIRO observer noted that Ms Jessica Farley from CSIRO was leading this project which aims to estimate size/age at first maturity of SBT.

Members noted that the samples for the project need to be taken when immature and mature fish are mixed on their feeding grounds soon after spawning is complete. Samples have been collected by Korea, New Zealand, Australia and Taiwan with Australia also processing the New Zealand samples. Members noted that due to reduced resources that Japan did not provide samples. Members further noted that they have been encouraged to participate and have collected some material. At the workshop Ms Farley held a practical session viewing ovary histology using microscopes and an image analysis system. This permitted material to be viewed by all participants simultaneously. Scientists from most of the member countries attended for the training and standardisation process. SBTMAC noted that the final set of data were not available for analysis at the workshop as the data has been processed but there is still quality control to be completed.

The CSIRO observer presented the outcomes of the project titled 'Evaluation of SBT direct ageing requirements for the Australian longline fishery'. Members noted that the SBT stock is assessed using age and length-based models, which require estimates of the commercial catch in numbers at age or numbers at length. The project developed a statistical model to evaluate the number of direct age estimates required to estimate the age composition of SBT in the catch of the Australian longline fishery. The project recommended a minimum of 300 otoliths (age estimates) are obtained annually using a length-stratified sampling approach (20 fish per 5cm length class). The project further recommended that the five main ports are randomly sampled.

SBTMAC agreed that AFMA, CSIRO and industry will now discuss and develop a plan to collect the otoliths and calculate how much this project would cost.

## **4.2: Research Mortality Allowance**

SBTMAC noted that Australia did not request any Research Mortality Allowance for 2020.

## **Agenda Item 5: Compliance issues**

No members had any potential conflict of interests to declare under this item.

### **5.1: Compliance update**

The AFMA member gave an update for both domestic and international compliance. Members noted that the domestic farm sector received inspections from Primary Industries and Regions South Australia (PIRSA) and AFMA earlier this year, with no compliance issues noted. AFMA also observed one weight sample process. No issues were detected.

## **Agenda Item 6: Domestic management issues**

### **6.1: 2019/20 Total Allowable Catch and accounting for all sources of mortality**

The AFMA member introduced this agenda item and provided the SBTMAC with a background to Australia's 2019/20 total allowable catch (TAC) set by AFMA Commission in 2018. Members noted that the TAC is checked at the annual CCSBT Scientific Committee meeting to determine if any exceptional circumstances exist that may require changes. No exceptional circumstances were found and the recent Scientific Committee meeting held in Cape Town, South Africa and it is expected that the TAC will be recommended to be 6,165 tonnes which includes the undertaking that the commercial sector will not catch 250 tonnes.

AFMA management recommended the current undercatch and overcatch arrangements be continued for the 2019/20 fishing season. That is:

Undercatch – 20% of the Member's uncaught National Allocation from one year to the next

Overcatch

- the overcatch determined percentage at 5%;
- the overcatch determined amount at 100 tonnes; and
- the overcatch determined additional weight at 2 tonnes.

Industry members that declared an interest under this agenda item left the room and SBTMAC agreed to recommend the 2018/19 undercatch and overcatch arrangements be continued for the 2019/20 fishing season.

#### Transfer weighing

The AFMA member explained that the current procedure for estimating the average weight transferred into a tuna farm involves catching and weighing a sample of 100 fish that are 10 kg or over (known as the '100 fish' sample) and then videotaping the transfer of fish from tow cage in the farm pontoon in order to ascertain the number of fish in the tow cage.

Members noted that the 100 fish sample determines the number of fish transferred and the average weight of fish transferred. These are multiplied to produce an amount to be deducted off quota.

SBTMAC accepted the AFMA Management recommendation that the 100 fish sampling procedure be used for the 2019/20 fishing season to determine transfer weight.

SBTMAC noted that Australia is required to implement any decision of CCSBT or commitments that Australia gives to CCSBT.

#### Progress on the Australian recreational SBT catch survey

The ABARES member stated that the recreational survey will be a single point survey of daytime recreational boat catch (retained and released) of Southern Bluefin Tuna in Australia over a 12 month period. Members noted that a total estimated catch will be reported for each state and summed for a national estimate.

Members noted that the on-site survey commenced on 1 December 2018 and is due to finish on 30 November 2019. Members noted that the University of Tasmania will also undertake the statistical analysis of the results, which are due to be provided to ABARES in March 2020. Both organisations will undertake the write up of the final report, which is due in the second half of 2020.

The recreational member highlighted that this survey is a single point survey and would need to be done three times over the next five years to get an accurate estimate of catch. The recreational member recommended seeking funding for the continuation of the survey.

The conservation member expressed concern with the recreational catch being adequately accounted for each year. The industry expressed concern regarding scaling as they have heard that recreational fishers and charter operators are maximising catch whilst the survey is being conducted.

#### CCSBT Farm and Market study

The AFMA observer noted that in 2018 the CCSBT Extended Commission (EC) meeting developed a Terms of Reference for discussion on Australian Farm and Japanese Market Analysis. The aim was to review the history of discussions on these two issues and develop methodologies for estimating possible unaccounted mortality.

Two independent experts (one for farms Dr Ana Gordo and one for markets Dr Shelley Clarke) were appointed to assist the Extended Scientific Committee (ESC) in its task of developing methodologies. The independent experts were tasked with reviewing historical reports and information to give them a background in the issues, and then provide independent advice on technical matters and contribute ideas on a way forward. SBTMAC noted that any decision on how to move forward with either the farm or market studies would need to be made by the EC at its annual meeting in October 2019.

SBTMAC noted that Australia has not changed its position on stereo-video and the concerns regarding cost and the need for automation remain.

Members noted that this issue will be further discussed at the CCSBT Compliance Committee in October 2019.

## **6.2 SBT conversion factor – Headed/gutted**

The AFMA observer stated that currently to convert processed weight to whole weight for quota management purposes AFMA uses one of two conversion factors A ( $1.176 \times$  Processed Weight) or B ( $1.12 \times$  Processed Weight + Number of fish) depending on how the fish are processed.

Members noted that processed form A means Southern Bluefin Tuna that has been gilled and gutted so that:

- (a) the gill plates are removed; and
- (b) the tail is wholly removed.

Processed form B means Southern Bluefin Tuna that has been gilled and gutted so that:

- (a) the gill plates are not removed; and
- (b) the tail is not wholly removed.

Members noted that in recent seasons the catch of SBT in the longline sector has increased. Traditionally the majority of the exported catch has been sent to Japan however favourable exchange rates have seen more fresh catch being exported to other countries. In 2018 fishers landing into Ulladulla Co-Op began shipping SBT to the United States. To save on shipping costs buyers required the fish to be in the headed and gutted form. Members noted that this processing type is not catered for within AFMA's SBT processing codes.

In order to operate within the AFMA system operators landing into Ulladulla Co-op are required to weigh the fish on certified scales and then remove the head before being weighed again to ascertain the weight for the packing list. This double handling causes considerable delays when large volumes of fish are being processed.

Members noted that to streamline this process industry approached AFMA, through Tuna Australia, to determine an appropriate conversion factor for fish in the headed and gutted state. During the 2019 season 190 SBT were weighed in processing form B and then again in the head off state. To determine a conversion factor individual fish were converted from processing state B to whole weigh using  $1.12 \times$  Processed Weight + 1. The whole weight was then divided by the HG weight to ascertain the conversion factor. Over the 190 measurements the average ratio equated to 1.27.

Members noted the current domestic headed and gutted conversion factor for albacore, bigeye and yellowfin tuna is 1.25 and the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT) also uses 1.25 for Atlantic Bluefin.

Industry members that declared an interest under this agenda item left the room and SBTMAC agreed to use the conversion factor that was calculated during the 2019 season and therefore a conversion of 1.27 will be implemented to convert SBT in the headed and gutted state to whole weight.

## **6.3: SBT budget issues –2019/20 budget and 2018/19 acquittal**

The AFMA member provided the MAC with a summary of the budget for the SBT Fishery in the 2019/20 financial year. SBTMAC noted that the SBT cost recovered budget had increased by 2% compared to 2018/19. Members noted that in the 2018/19 budget there was an underspend of about \$50,000 and that the levies that will be issued in January 2020 will be decreased by about \$30,000 as there has been a small increase in the research component collected on behalf of the Fisheries Research and Development Corporation.

SBTMAC noted the 2018/19 budget acquittals and the 2019/20 SBT budget.

#### **6.4: Environment update**

SBTMAC noted that the Wildlife Trade Operation (WTO) for the SBT Fishery expires on 13 December 2019. AFMA stated that they provided an application for reassessment to the Department of Environment and Energy in July 2019 for reassessment. The Department sought public comment on AFMA's application for assessment and the public comment period closed on 9 September 2019. Members noted that one submission was received from the Bribie Island Environmental Protection Association Inc. and the Department will consider this submission during the assessment for the fishery. Members noted that AFMA will also be given the opportunity to respond to the submission by email directly to the Department. Responses to the comment are required by COB Friday 27 September 2019. Members noted that the assessment will be based on the assumption that the Management Procedure is agreed to at CCSBT.

The ecological risk assessment (ERA) for the Southern Bluefin Tuna Fishery is scheduled for completion this financial year. ERAs are the primary means of assessing risks that commercial fisheries can pose to the marine environment. The ERA results will be used as a key component of development of a Southern Bluefin Tuna Fishery specific, Fishery Management Strategy (FMS). SBTMAC noted the outcomes from the third meeting of the Ecological Risk Management (ERM) Steering Group but noted that the outcomes have not been communicated well and the ERMs do not appear to be progressing.

Members noted that AFMA provides the Department of the Environment and Energy with quarterly reports that summarise protected species interaction information reported through AFMA logbook submissions. All quarterly summary interaction reports provided are posted on the AFMA website. SBTMAC noted that with the introduction of electronic monitoring there has been higher rates of reporting in the longline sector. Industry indicated their disappointment that inadequate progress has been made on the bycatch of seabirds caught by high seas fleets.

Members noted that AFMA is often asked to provide comments on proposed petroleum and related activities which may interact with fishing or have potential effects upon the fishing industry. Activities include petroleum / mineral exploration, burial at sea, sea dumping, marine farming development and boat scuttling. When responding to enquiries AFMA supplies data on fisheries and fishing operations that may be affected and requests that the applicant contact the appropriate industry bodies.

#### **6.5: Pontoon transfer between holders**

The AFMA member explained that the SBT02 is the logbook that AFMA uses to provisionally deduct quota from the holdings of the catcher company. Members noted that if there is a critical incident and some or all of the fish are killed or lost the SBT02 estimate is currently used by AFMA as the basis to determine what if any action needs to be undertaken.

Members noted that current management arrangements in the farming sector of the SBT fishery stipulate that the company that completes the SBT02 log book as the nominated SFR holder is responsible for all fish in the purse seine or tow cage (for compliance or quota purposes) until the completion of the SBT04 catch disposal record.

Industry explained that is not uncommon at the back end of the season for companies to have excess fish in tow cages. Several options exist in this situation:

- a) Transfer fish into farm cages and lease additional quota;
- b) Transfer fish between concession holders; or
- c) Apply to AFMA to undertake a live release.

Industry stated that they have civil contracts when transferring fish which do not involve AFMA but have requested a more formal process to protect all parties during a transfer of excess fish.

SBTMAC supported in principle, AFMA seeking legal advice on the following option as a potential way forward to reduce the risk to concession holders:

1. When a company identifies that it has excess fish and intends to provide them to another SFR holder the following process will need to be followed:
  - a. The company that completed the original SBT02 logbook must inform AFMA that it intends to relinquish control of the remaining fish in the tow cage to another entity. This correspondence must contain an estimate of the fish removed from the tow cage. This will be determined by multiplying the average weight by the rough count of fish (undertaken at the transfer) given to the farming company by AFMA's contractor.
  - b. AFMA will subtract the estimate above from the amount of quota on original SBT02, this will be then deemed to be the amount of quota remaining in the tow cage.
  - c. If the number is negative then a new estimate (derived from diving on the tow cage) will need to be provided, by the original SFR holder, to AFMA.
  - d. The entity taking over the tow cage must then complete a new SBT02 with an estimate of the amount of fish remaining in the tow cage. This will be the estimate that will be used for the purposes of satisfying 22B.4 of the *Southern Bluefin Tuna Management Plan 1995*. This estimate will stand until the *relevant weight*<sup>1</sup> is calculated for the remaining fish in the tow cage.
  - e. Following completion of the new SBT02 the company taking over control of the fish will need to nominate its tow boat to the tow cage. In doing so a new SBT03 will need to be completed. On this SBT03 there is provision to capture information about the new SBT02 and the previous boat that towed the cage.
  - f. For all remaining fish in the tow cage an SBT04 would need to be completed in the usual manner.

**<sup>1</sup>relevant weight**, in relation to a tow operation, means the total of the following:

- (a) the weight of Southern Bluefin Tuna determined by a transfer weighing conducted for the tow operation;
- (b) the weight of any Southern Bluefin Tuna likely to have died during the take and tow operation;
- (c) the weight of any Southern Bluefin Tuna likely to have died during any subsequent release operation.

## Agenda Item 7: Other business

Members noted that UN Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) recently listed the mako shark under Appendix 2. Members noted that Japan and New Zealand are concerned regarding the listing and have recommended that the issue be discussed at the joint Regional Fisheries Management Organisation (RFMO) bycatch meeting in December. Members noted that the decision to list mako Shark went against the recommendation of the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations.

### 7.1: Climate change project

SBTMAC noted that the *Adaptation of Commonwealth Fisheries to Climate Change* project commenced in early 2018 with the formation of a steering group composed of diverse fishery, government and environmental stakeholders. The project is funded through FRDC with assistance from AFMA and CSIRO. The first workshop was carried out in November 2018, where 45 workshop attendees were introduced to: climate change, impacts of climate change on fisheries and their implications on fishery management. This project builds on the findings of the project [Decadal scale projection of changes in Australian fisheries stocks under climate change \(FRDC 2016-139\)](#).

Members noted that at the workshop, stakeholders helped develop impact pathways to understand the various ways in which climate change may impact a fishery and its management. These impact pathways were used to develop a risk assessment methodology, which has been applied to two test case fisheries, one of which is the SBT. The SBT was chosen as there are two distinct components (ie wild and farming) and also due to the migratory nature of SBT. This methodology was run through AFMA project members and fishery managers in March 2019. A focused SBT workshop held on 13 August 2019 in Hobart identified some additional effects on the longline and recreational sectors that are currently being added to the model by the CSIRO.

Members noted that the paper outlining the risk assessment methodology and the preliminary results of the analysis undertaken by CSIRO on plausible impact pathways relevant to the SBT did not include some of the changes suggested at the focus workshop in August. AFMA agreed to follow up to ensure the changes are incorporated (**Action arising 4**).

Members expressed concern regarding the projected abundance drop of up to 20%. Members noted the importance of the CCSBT Management Procedure as it reacts to changes as they occur. CSIRO noted that there is a difference between projection and prediction and that more information could be provided in the document regarding current monitoring.

SBTMAC noted that the final steering group meeting and workshop will be held on 26-27 September 2019 and the completion of the project is expected in early 2020. The aim of the upcoming workshop is to present to the steering committee the preliminary results and to get input on what needs to be done.

## Agenda item 8: Next meeting

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Members agreed that the next SBTMAC meeting should be held in September 2020 with a date to be confirmed early next year.

The SBTMAC Chair thanked the members, invited participants and observers and closed the meeting at 2:52 pm.

**Attachment A**

**Meeting of the Southern Bluefin Tuna  
Management Advisory Committee  
(SBTMAC 43)**



Wednesday 25 September 2019

9.00 am – 5.00pm

Aquarium Room, AFMA, Canberra

**FINAL Agenda**

- 1. Preliminaries/matters arising**
  - 1.1 Opening remarks/apologies/acceptance of agenda
  - 1.2 Pecuniary interest declaration
  - 1.3 SBTMAC 42
  - 1.4 Action arising SBTMAC 42 and intersessional work
- 2. State of the Fishery**
  - 2.1 Informal industry report on the 2018/19 catching season, markets and outlook
  - 2.2 Informal report from the recreational sector member
  - 2.3 AFMA manager's report
  - 2.4 Resource sharing
- 3. CCSBT**
  - 3.1 Outcomes from CCSBT Operating Model and Management Procedure Technical Meeting and 24th Extended Scientific Committee meeting (September 2019).
  - 3.2 Update on progress towards a new Management Procedure
- 4. Research issues**
  - 4.1 Proposed 2020/21 research program and priorities
  - 4.2 Research Mortality Allowance
- 5. Compliance issues**
  - 5.1 Compliance update and outcomes
- 6. Domestic management issues**
  - 6.1 2019/20 Total allowable catch and accounting for all sources of mortality
  - 6.2 SBT Conversion factor – Headed/Gutted
  - 6.3 SBT budget issues - 2019/20 budget and 2018/19 acquittal
  - 6.4 Environment update - WTO approval update
  - 6.5 Pontoon transfer between holders
- 7. Other Business**
  - 7.1 Climate change project
- 8. Next meeting**

