



Australian Government

Australian Fisheries Management Authority

**Bass Strait Central Zone Scallop
Fishery Resource Assessment Group
(ScallopRAG) Meeting 32**

Meeting minutes

Date: 6 June 2019

Holiday Inn, Melbourne Airport

Meeting Minutes

1 Preliminaries

1.1 Welcome and apologies

The Chair opened the meeting 9:00 am and welcomed members and observers, and noted apologies.

Attendees	Membership
Brendan Kelaher	Chair
John Cull	Industry Member
Nic Marton	Scientific Member
Stuart Richey	Industry Member
Jayson Semmens	Scientific Member
Sally Weekes	AFMA Member
Heather Johnston	Executive Officer
Andrew Sullivan	Invited Participant, Industry
Daniel Corrie	AFMA, Observer
Dr Matt Koopman	Observer, Fishwell Consulting
David Mobsby	Observer, ABARES
Apologies	Membership
Amelia Grant	Invited Participant, Fisheries Victoria
Bob Lister	Invited Participant, Industry
James Parkinson	Invited Participant, DPIPWE, Tasmania

1.2 Declaration of interests

The RAG followed the conflict of interest declarations as outlined in Fisheries Administration Paper 12. Members and observers reviewed and updated the Declarations of Interest included at Attachment B.

The following participants took turns leaving the room while the RAG considered their respective interests and how they should be managed.

- John Cull - declared a potential conflict with agenda item 7 '2019 TAC and closures recommendations'. The RAG decided he could be a part of the discussion, but should not participate in forming the RAG recommendation
- Nic Marton - declared a potential conflict with agenda item 11 'research priorities' in that he and his organisation submits research proposals from time to time in relation to this fishery. The RAG decided he could be part of the discussion for research priorities, but should not participate in the recommendation decision making if a research priority was relevant to ABARES.
- Stuart Richey - declared a potential conflict with agenda item 7 '2019 TAC and closures recommendations'. The RAG decided he could be a part of the discussion, but should not participate in forming the RAG recommendation
- Jayson Semmens - declared a potential conflict with agenda item 11 'research priorities' in that he and his organisation submits research proposals from time to time in relation to this fishery. The RAG decided he could be part of the discussion for research priorities, but should not participate in the recommendation decision making if a research priority was relevant.
- Andrew Sullivan - declared a potential conflict with agenda item 7 '2019 TAC and closures recommendations' and agenda item 11 'research priorities' in that he/his organisation has submitted a research proposal. The RAG decided he could be a part of the discussion, but as an invited participant he was not part of the recommendation decision making and he would leave the room during the forming of the RAG recommendation.
- Matt Koopman - declared a potential conflict with agenda item 11 'research priorities' in that he and his organisation submits research proposals from time to time in relation to this fishery. The RAG decided he could be part of the discussion for research priorities, but as an observer he was not part of the recommendation decision making and he would leave the room during the forming of the RAG recommendation
- David Mobsby - declared a potential conflict with agenda item 8 'research priorities' in that he and his organisation submits research proposals from time to time in relation to this fishery. The RAG decided he could be part of the discussion for research priorities, but as an invited participant he was not part of the recommendation decision making and would leave the room during the forming of the RAG recommendation.

1.3 Adoption of Agenda

The agenda at Attachment A was adopted by the RAG as final.

2 Meeting administration

2.1 Minutes of previous meeting

The RAG noted the final minutes of the ScallopRAG meeting of 20 June 2018 are available on the AFMA website.

2.2 Actions arising from previous meetings

The RAG noted the action items from the previous meeting had either been completed or will be addressed in later agenda items.

3 Fishery update

3.1 AFMA management

The AFMA member provided an update on matters relevant to the MAC and the Bass Strait Central Zone Scallop Fishery (BSCZSF).

- Commercial catch and effort data for the BSCZSF 2018 season. The RAG noted the commercial scallops TAC was 83.9 per cent caught and zero bycatch and protected species information was reported.
- AFMA received a request from the Co-Management Committee to swap closures mid-season. AFMA encouraged industry to close beds and areas themselves where they can see value in doing so. AFMA did not support this request on the basis that:
 - The decision for the closures was based on the best available information at the time and there was no evidence provided that suggested this information was incorrect or lacking;
 - Changing the rules mid-season creates uncertainty, which undermines the harvest strategy;
 - The reasons provided were not clear on an ecological or economical basis.
- Revised Commonwealth Fisheries Harvest Strategy and Bycatch policies were released in late 2018.
- Consistent with AFMA's objective of maximizing economic returns to the Australian community, AFMA is starting to source fine-scale economic information (e.g. Beach price) from industry. It is intended that this information will be used to integrate economic information into the TAC setting process. The response from industry have been limited to date. This matter was considered more under Agenda Item 4 economics.
- Wez Norris has been appointed as AFMA's CEO and Anna Willock is currently AFMA's Executive Manager, Fisheries.
- From 1 July 2019, management of the BSCZSF will be moved to the Lakes Entrance with Dan Corrie as Manager and Heather Johnston as executive officer.

3.2 Tasmanian management

The Tasmanian Government participant provided a written update on the Tasmanian fishery prior to the meeting.

- The Tasmanian Scallop Fishery will remain closed for 2019, with no survey to take place. This is the second year of a two year closure as implemented by the Minister following a recommended from the SFAT, ScFAC and follow consultation with license holders.
- The Tasmanian Scallop Fishery will be next considered for an opening in 2020 following a survey.
- Tasmanian Government is currently going through a remake of the Fisheries (Scallop) Rules 2010, as the Tasmanian scallop fishery management plan and rules will expire at the end of February 2020. The new rules will largely be a rollover of the old rules, with the main changes relating to the definition of a dredge and stating the quota unit in terms of kg rather than a percentage that can be fished. It is expected that the new rules will be released for a two month public comment period in August and September.

3.3 Victorian management

The Victorian Government participant provided a written update prior to the meeting.

- There has been very little to zero catch reported in the Ocean Scallop fishery over the past 5 years.
- A stock assessment survey was completed in 2018 and indicates a continued low level of abundance throughout the fishery. Whilst the survey did find commercially available scallops, they were not at a level considered sufficient to provide ongoing recruitment to the fishery and justifiable of a TACC increase.
- A low level TACC of 135 tonne is in place for the fishery to allow for exploratory fishing.
- The TACC was set at zero tonnes for the 2010/11, 2011/12 and 2013/14 seasons, due to the stock assessment surveys in 2009 and 2012 finding that the fishery was neither commercially nor biologically viable. The TACC was set at 135 tonnes in 2014/15 and it has remained at this level since.
- Initial planning has commenced to develop a harvest strategy that aligns with the other jurisdictions of the shared stock. This will be based on identifying scallop beds of a set abundance and density deemed sufficient to provide ongoing recruitment to the fishery. Options to close areas of the fishery to promote recruitment and guidelines to set sustainable TACC's will be further considered.

3.4 Industry update

The Industry Members provided an update on the BSCZSF 2018 season.

- There were contrasting views on 2018 season in regards to TAC and beach prices; one view was that the TAC was appropriately set and the prices were high, with the other view that the TAC was set too high and contributed to a lower beach price.
- There were no exports in 2018.
- Industry have confidence in the fishery, which was demonstrated by investment, such improvements to processing plants.

4 Economic data

AFMA introduced the item asking the RAG to consider the advice from the Economic Working Group regarding how to integrate economic information into the decision making process, and the update on the Maximum Economic Yield (MEY) analysis.

The ScallopRAG **noted**:

- the legislative and policy drivers for AFMA pursuing the integration of economics into the decision making process for TAC setting;
- the advice from the economic working group that an MEY analysis to inform the TAC setting process is possible with the addition of some fine scale data, such as weekly beach price information and costs;
- AFMA's progress in collecting beach price information, which included writing to industry and asking for the data to which four people have responded to date;
- further work will be undertaken over the next 12 months to complete the analysis.

The RAG **supported** the approach of pursuing an MEY analysis and the collection of economic data to support it.

5 Biomass survey results

Dr Koopman from Fishwell Consulting presented the results from the 2019 biomass survey. Dr Koopman thanked the owners and crew of the three vessels that participated noting their valuable contribution.

The 2019 stratified random survey was conducted during May 2019 and aimed to estimate the commercial scallop biomass, discard rate, number of meats per kg, bycatch and size frequency, as well as calculate densities of 13 scallop beds (eight previously surveyed beds and five exploratory beds). Four vessels were selected to take part in the survey by an independent panel, but only three vessels undertook the work.

The beds were mostly pre-determined based on previous surveys and commercial catches from the previous year. Exploratory fishing was conducted at a potential new site, based on marks provided by industry. The beds were prioritised based on advice from ScallopRAG and the Industry Co-Management Committee.

A summary of the survey results are at Table 1.

Table 1. Summary table of information collected for each of the beds surveyed during the 2019 Bass Strait Central Zone Scallop Fishery annual biomass survey. Information includes: estimated biomass (t), % weight greater than 85 mm, estimated biomass of scallops > 85mm, density of individual per square metre, mean size and meats per kg. FI = Flinders Island, KI = King Island, AB = Apollo Bay. Source: Fishwell Consulting.

Area	Bed	Estimated biomass (t)	% weight > 85 mm	Estimated Biomass >85 mm (t)	Density (ind/m ²)	Mean size	Meats / kg
FI	FI1	1,961	84.8	1,607	0.211	90.5	68
	Sub-total	1,961		1,607			
KI	KI5Small	1,612	99.7	1,609	0.170	107.8	62
KI	KIBDE	8,353	86.5	7,135	1.597	90.6	80
KI	KIBDSE	19,592	94.2	18,714	3.088	92.8	88
KI	KINew	1,182	100.0	1,182	0.173	110.6	54
KI	KI6	1,960	99.0	1,932	1.458	100.5	71
KI	KI7	837	94.9	816	0.599	97.4	157
KI	KI8a	795	98.3	782	2.156	101.8	72
KI	KI8a	363	97.9	357	1.230	101.0	66
KI	KI9	9,616	96.6	9,398	2.867	95.7	84
KI	JH - Uncov	956	8.7	119	0.842	61.0	
	Sub-total	45,267		42,045			
AB	Apollo1	631	99.9	631	0.390	104.5	
AB	Apollo2	886	99.9	886	0.563	104.4	60
	Sub-total	1,517		1,517			
	Total	48,745		45,169			

ScallopRAG thanked industry for the efficient survey and Fishwell Consulting for their high quality and timely work.

6 Seismic activity scheduled for 2019-20

RAG considered the schedule of upcoming seismic activity, noting that there were three projects near Bass Strait at various stages of development. All planned activity from these projects is from 18 – 20 nm distance from known scallop beds. The RAG considered that this distance was not of concern for the known scallop beds in Commonwealth waters.

7 2019 TAC and closure recommendations

The RAG considered the results of the survey, noting that the biomass of scallops greater than 85 mm was 45 169 tonnes. From this, they considered Tier 2 of the Harvest Strategy was the most appropriate way forward.

In formulating its advice, the RAG considered:

- That most of the surveyed beds are ageing, but that there is evidence of recruitment in JH, KIBDE, KIBDSE and KI7;
- While there is evidence of recruitment, it is not widespread. In addition, there is uncertainty about where recruitment is coming from. It was also noted that this needs to be considered in TAC setting and closure arrangements;
- All of the beds, except JH uncovered and KI5 Small, had a density of >0.2 individuals/m², which the RAG considers the minimum density for viable spawning potential.
- KI7 had an unusually high meat count compared to the other beds.
- As per previous years, it was considered prudent to implement closures across the three broad geographical regions of Flinders Island, Apollo Bay and King Island.
- Industry members agreed that a TAC could influence demand and beach price.
- The economic work has not progressed enough to be used to directly inform the TAC.

In light of the above, particularly ageing beds and limited recruitment, the RAG recommended a 4000 tonnes TAC (with no step up) and the following closures:

Scallop beds	Estimated biomass > 85 mm (tonnes)	Density (individual/m ²)
Flinders Island (area of 2018 closure)	1 607	0.211
Apollo Bay 1	631	0.390
King Island Blue Dot East	7 135	1.597
Kind Island 7	816	0.599
TOTAL closed biomass	10 189	

8 Data requirements for bycatch

Dr Koopman from Fishwell Consulting presented the results from the bycatch analysis that took place during the 2019 biomass survey. The RAG noted that the collection of bycatch data is currently secondary to the biomass survey with the observers getting an estimate of every taxa they see.

The RAG noted the legislative and policy drivers for AFMA pursuing bycatch data.

The RAG recommended:

- that the annual biomass survey in its current form be used as the primary tool to monitor the impact of fishing on bycatch species in the fishery, as it provides information sufficient to meet the Commonwealth Bycatch Policy requirements;
- that the four species identified as high risk in the fishery by the 2010 ERA (Crassatella, southern blue ringed octopus, black and white sea star and pebbled crab) be included in the identification guide carried by the observers undertaking the biomass survey;
- when considering bycatch, data are presented for the four high risk species by year and by bed to allow monitoring through time.

Action item 1 –Fishwell Consulting to include the four high risk species in the identification guide provided to observer to aid identification.

Action item 2 – AFMA to liaise with Fishwell Consulting regarding the ongoing presentation of the bycatch information so that it includes bycatch species (with the four high risk species separated out where possible) by weight and percent frequency, by bed and by year.

9 Principals for prioritising survey beds

AFMA introduced this item, asking the RAG to provide advice regarding principles to assist in the prioritisation of beds to include in the annual biomass survey.

The RAG agreed that it would be beneficial to further develop the principles for prioritising beds to include in the survey, particularly given that there is not the capacity to survey every known bed every year.

Action item 3 – AFMA to prepare a discussion paper on principals for prioritising survey beds for further discussion for RAG consideration when it provides advice about 2020 survey areas (most likely late February).

10 Harvest Strategy Framework review- scoping

AFMA introduced this item, asking the RAG to provide advice regarding aspects of the harvest strategy that should be considered as part of the review.

RAG noted the drivers for review of the Bass Strait Scallop Harvest Strategy being the updated Commonwealth Fisheries Harvest Strategy Policy, as well as the need to provide more guidance regarding how to scale the TAC for both biological and economic reasons.

The RAG supported:

- the matters outlined in the paper being considered as part of the review;
- recommended clarifying definitions;
- consideration of potentially different rules for eastern Bass Strait to western Bass Strait, given the putative differences in growth rates, length frequencies and recruitment patterns.

The RAG noted that the FRDC report released recently by Jayson Semmens would be helpful to inform the review.

Action item 4 – AFMA to prepare a discussion paper regarding the harvest strategy review for consideration by the RAG at its June 2020 meeting.

11 Research priorities

The RAG considered research priorities for the fishery and made the following **recommendations**.

- AFMA funding (for AFMA Research Committee consideration)
 - 1) The annual biomass survey including reference to bycatch data is an essential priority and has a high feasibility. Approximate cost- \$70,000
 - 2) A MEY project to inform the harvest strategy/ TAC setting process. The RAG identified this as a medium/high priority and high feasibility. Importantly, the RAG agreed that this project should occur as soon as practical and, if possible, completed prior to TAC setting in 2020. Approximate cost- \$15,000
 - 3) A project to age scallops, including a validation of the technique was identified as a medium priority and feasibility. Ageing could improve understanding of the fishery and contribute to TAC setting. Approximate cost- \$ 40,000
 - 4) Optimising the end of season date was identified as a high priority and feasibility. This has been a priority for industry for a long time and would provide updated information to support management arrangements for season closures. Approximate cost- \$240,000
- FRDC funding
 - 1) Impact of seismic surveys on scallop larvae. This was identified as high priority and feasibility. Approximate cost- \$ 300,000

12 Timeline for 2020- noting

The RAG noted the draft consultation schedule to open the BSCZSF for 2020.

The RAG recommended that the meeting for prioritising areas and Research Catch Allowance for the 2020 survey should be either face to face or by video conference, rather than via email in February. Furthermore, the meeting in 2020 could include a discussion about the principals of prioritising of survey beds (Agenda Item 9).

13 Other business

BSCZSF proposal

The RAG considered a project proposal from the Bass Strait Scallop Industry Association for an industry-led, but science-based, approach to managing the season closure.

The RAGs priority is to ensure that there is robustness in the methods and that there is minimal adverse impact on the fishery.

The RAG supports industry-led research and with the development of a robust, scientific methodology they would support the project going forward.

The RAG noted that monitoring for spawning is not synonymous with settlement, but considered that there is value in improving the understanding of spawning to support better management.

RAG recommended:

- That a workshop should be built in as a milestone with the relevant scientists to provide input into the methodology.
- Given the recent work regarding gonad staging, that histology should be considered as the staging technique over the current visual key.

Other

The Chair thanked Fishwell Consulting for the biomass survey presentation and the RAG for their contributions to the meeting. The meeting was closed at 3 pm.

Signed (Chairperson):



Date: Thursday, 27 June 2019

Attachments

Attachment A: ScallopRAG 32 final agenda

Attachment B: Declarations of interest

Attachment C: Action item status



Australian Government

Australian Fisheries Management Authority

Bass Strait Central Zone Scallop Fishery Resource Assessment Group (ScallopRAG)

Meeting 32 – Holiday Inn, Melbourne Airport

Agenda

Thursday 6 June 2019

Time (EDT): 9:00

Participant	
Members	Membership
Brendan Kelaheer	Chair
Nic Marton	Scientific Member
Jayson Semmens	Scientific Member
Stuart Richey	Industry Member
John Cull	Industry Member
Sally Weekes	AFMA Member
Heather Johnston	Executive Officer
Matt Koopman	Observer, Fishwell Consulting
Daniel Corrie	Invited participant, AFMA
Andrew Sullivan	Invited participant, industry
David Mobsby	Invited participant, ABARES
Apologies	
Amelia Grant	Fisheries Victoria representative
Bob Lister	Invited participant, industry
James Parkinson	DPIPWE, Tasmania representative

Approximate time	Agenda item	
9:00	1	Preliminaries

		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Welcome and apologies 2. Declaration of interests 3. Adoption of agenda
9:15	2	Meeting Administration <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Minutes of previous meeting 2. Actions arising from previous meetings
9.30	3	Fishery update <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. AFMA management 2. Tasmanian management 3. Victorian management 4. Industry update
10.00	4	Economics <i>ScallopRAG will consider advice from the Economic Working Group regarding how to integrate economic information into the decision making process, and outcome of the Maximum Economic Yield (MEY) analysis.</i> Attachment A
10.30		<i>Morning tea</i>
10.45	5	Survey results (Fishwell Consulting) <i>Fishwell Consulting will present the results of the 2019 scallop biomass survey</i> Attachment B
11.45	6	Seismic activity scheduled for 2019-20 <i>ScallopRAG to consider the schedule of planned seismic activity and if there are any implications for the closures proposed under Item 7 above.</i> Attachments C,D,E,F,G,H and I
12.00	7	2019 TAC and closure recommendations <i>ScallopRAG to will develop advice for ScallopMAC and the AFMA Commission for the 2019 TAC and closures</i> Attachment J
12.45		<i>Lunch</i>
13.15	8	Data requirements for bycatch

		<p><i>Fishwell Consulting will present an analysis of the bycatch information that is collected from the annual biomass survey</i></p> <p><i>ScallopRAG to discuss and provide advice on data requirements for bycatch species in the fishery to meet Bycatch Policy requirements</i></p> <p>Attachments K and L</p>
14.00	9	<p>Principles to prioritise survey beds</p> <p><i>ScallopRAG to provide advice regarding principles to assist in the prioritisation of beds to include in the annual biomass survey.</i></p> <p>Attachment M</p>
14.30		<i>Afternoon tea</i>
14.45	10	<p>Harvest Strategy Framework review - scoping</p> <p><i>ScallopRAG to provide advice regarding aspects of the harvest strategy that should be considered as part of the review.</i></p> <p>Attachment N, O and J</p>
15.30	11	<p>Research priorities</p> <p><i>ScallopRAG to identify research priorities for funding in 2020-21</i></p> <p>Attachments P and Q</p>
16.00	12	Schedule for 2020 – for noting
16.05	13	<p>Other business</p> <p>BSSI proposal (20 minutes)</p> <p><i>Maximising economic returns in the Bass Strait Central Zone Scallop Fishery (BSCZSF) - an industry-led, adaptive and science-based approach to managing the season closure.</i></p>
16.30		Close

Attachment B – Register of interests

Name	Membership	Declared interests
Professor Brendan Kelaher	Chair	No interest in the fishery pecuniary or otherwise.
Nic Marton	Scientist	ABARES employee. Organisation is known to submit research funding application for consideration by ScallopMAC
Associate Professor Jayson Semmens	Scientist	Scallop Research Group Leader, Institute for Marine and Antarctic Studies. Organisation is known to submit research funding applications for consideration by ScallopMAC
Stuart Richey	Industry	Holds Commonwealth and State concessions.
John Cull	Industry	Holds Commonwealth and State concessions.
Sally Weekes	AFMA member	AFMA employee. No interest in the fishery pecuniary or otherwise.
Heather Johnston	Executive Officer	AFMA employee. No interest in the fishery pecuniary or otherwise.
James Parkinson	Observer	Manager Tasmanian scallop fishery. No interest in the fishery pecuniary or otherwise
Dr Matt Koopman	Observer	Fishwell Consulting. Have undertaken the BSCZSF since 2015. Submit research funding applications and undertake research projects for Commonwealth, State and International fisheries agencies and other organisations including fishery associations and private companies. Engaged by SETFIA to report to numerous seismic exploration companies on fishing catch, effort and value that takes overlaps with the proposed seismic testing areas. This included catch and effort from the BSCZSF
Daniel Corrie	Observer	AFMA employee. No interest in the fishery pecuniary or otherwise.
Andrew Sullivan	Invited participant	Executive officer BSSI. Contractor through Atlantis as the Executive Officer for the Commonwealth Fisheries Association. A co-investigator with Jayson Semmens on an un-related Octopus project.
David Mobsby	Invited participant	ABARES employee. Organisation is known to submit research funding application for consideration by ScallopMAC

Previous action items

RAG meeting #	Agenda item	Action item #	Action item	Agency/person	Timeframe	Progress
<i>Nil</i>						

New action items

RAG meeting #	Agenda item	Action item #	Action item	Agency/person	Timeframe
32	8	1	Fishwell Consulting to include the four high risk species in the identification guide provided to observer to aid identification.	Fishwell Consulting	Prior to 2020 biomass survey
32	8	2	AFMA to liaise with Fishwell Consulting regarding the ongoing presentation of the bycatch information so that it includes bycatch species (with the four high risk species separated out where possible) by weight and percent frequency, by bed, by year.	AFMA and Fishwell Consulting	Prior to 2020 biomass survey
32	9	3	AFMA to prepare a discussion paper on principals for prioritising survey beds for further discussion for RAG consideration when it provides advice about 2020 survey areas (most likely late February).	AFMA	February 2020
32	10	4	AFMA to prepare a discussion paper regarding the harvest strategy review for consideration by the RAG at its June 2020 meeting.	AFMA	Next meeting