




Australian Government

Australian Fisheries Management Authority



**Northern Prawn Fishery
Resource Assessment Group
(NPRAG) Meeting**

Teleconference Minutes

Date: 4 September 2015

Attendance

Name	Membership (type i.e. chair etc.)
Ian Knuckey	Chair
Rik Buckworth	Scientific Member - CSIRO
Shane Fava	AFMA Member
David Brewer	Scientific Member - CSIRO
Michael O'Brien	Industry Member
Phil Robson	Industry Member
Ian Boot	Industry Member
Malcolm Haddon	Scientific Member - CSIRO
Don Bromhead	Executive Officer
Steve Bolton	Observer - AFMA
Renee Bowling	Observer - AFMA
Annie Jarrett	Observer - NPFI
Trevor Hutton	Observer - CSIRO
Eva Plaganyi	Observer - CSIRO

Minutes

Agenda Item 1 - Preliminaries

1.1 Welcome and apologies

The Northern Prawn Fishery Resource Assessment Group (NPRAG) Chair, Ian Knuckey, opened the meeting noting that the primary focus of the meeting was the potential revision and re-submission to ComFRAB of the NPF research priority scope ***“Develop an understanding of ecological and economic tradeoffs of the impact of existing and proposed water resource development in Northern Australia (High priority)”***.

Apologies were received from Tom Kompas.

NPRAG meeting minutes are now being finalized and accepted out of session hence there were no previous minutes to consider at this meeting.

1.2 Adoption of Agenda

The NPRAG adopted the draft agenda for the meeting (**Attachment 1**).

1.3 Declaration of interests

The Chair asked that any members or observers present notify the NPRAG of any changes in declared interests to those identified in **Attachment 2**. One change was noted, with Annie Jarrett indicating that she is a member of the MSC Stakeholder Council. The Chair then asked if there were any *conflicts of interest* relating to Agenda Item 2 (Northern Waters Research Priority). Conflicts of interest were noted for the CSIRO members (David Brewer, Malcolm Haddon and Rik Buckworth) and observers (Trevor Hutton and Eva Plaganyi) at the meeting. Should ComFRAB give the research



priority a high priority and/or call for EOIs on that scope then CSIRO would be one of the agencies looking to submit an EOI with a view to undertaking the research.

Each of the above groups/individuals were required to hang up and allow the RAG time to discuss the stated conflicts and how it would be dealt with before phoning back in.

In each case, the NPRAG agreed that the participants should be allowed to participate in the meeting discussions due to their relevant expertise and capacity to contribute to discussions, providing the conflicts of interest are clearly noted in the minutes. However, *recommendations* made by the RAG under Agenda Item 2 on whether to submit a revised research priority and how that process would occur would need to be made with CSIRO participants excluded from the meeting.

2. Agenda Item 2 – Northern Waters Research Priority

The AFMA member provided a brief overview of the paper circulated for this agenda item. He noted that the main purpose of the meeting was to seek agreement on:

- The need for a revised “northern waters” research priority scope, so as to increase the likelihood of it being considered an FRDC research priority for 2016, and
- The process and content of any response to ComFRAB regarding their initial comments on the NPF research priority scope.

He also asked the RAG to consider if there was a need to submit an associated EOI to ComFRAB prior to the 20th September deadline for EOIs. He noted that a key priority is to ensure that the research priority is put strongly back on the ComFRAB radar, even if there is no immediate funding available or allocated to research to meet that priority. Research priorities given high priority by ComFRAB, even if not funded, might be viewed much more favourably by other potential funders (such as NESP or Grow North CRC in future).

Subsequent discussions by the RAG focussed on three main issues:

1. The revised research priority scope
2. Support letters from the RAG and NORMAC Chairs
3. Submission of an EOI for the 20 September meeting

Note that because the discussion switched regularly between each of these topics, for convenience the discussions are summarised by topic below.

2.1 The revised research priority scope

NPRAG initially noted an error in the title to Attachment B (Agenda Item 2 Paper), for which the word “EOI” should in fact state “NPF Research Priority”. The Chair noted that this research priority scope should be amended to clarify why such research is required and what existing research/information gaps it would address. If this priority scope is given elevated priority by ComFRAB, then there will be the potential for ComFRAB to put out an additional call for research.

In terms of improving the current research priority scope, the group identified needs to:

- Keep the current scope name but refine the content
- Re-focus the language to emphasise the key need and benefits from the project. Specifically, that the project will provide important information to support the consideration of water allocation options/regimes and Government decision making processes relating to this.



- Emphasise the current research gaps (e.g. limitations of research to date, such as spatial limitations)
- Emphasise the economic worth of the fishery and potential impacts upon this, potentially drawing upon preliminary figures from past work identified by CSIRO (T. Hutton).

AFMA indicated that if the RAG wished to endorse this approach then AFMA would take the lead on revising the text of the research priority scope.

Action item 1 –AFMA to revise the text of the research priority scope and distribute to NPRAG and NORMAC for comment prior to finalisation and submission to ComFRAB.

2.2 Support letters from the NPF RAG and NORMAC Chairs

It was suggested that the NPRAG Chair would work with AFMA and the NORMAC chair to put together an initial draft support/justification letter that would focus on responding to ComFRABs previous recommendation and justify why this research scope is being put up for reconsideration by ComFRAB. In doing so, the letter would need to acknowledge that the need and urgency of the research were poorly communicated in the original research priority. It was suggested that the AFMA member on ComFRAB could also play a role in explaining why the research priority is being resubmitted.

Action item 2 – NPRAG Chair to work with AFMA and the NORMAC chair to put together an initial draft support/justification letter that would focus on responding to ComFRABs previous recommendation.

2.3 Submission of an EOI for the 20 September meeting

The NPF observer noted that FRDC had indicated during recent discussions that it was open to receiving a revised research scope and EOI by Sept 20, despite the northern waters priority scope not meeting one of the current three priority scopes. This research idea was broadly supported by members. However, the RAG Chair cautioned the RAG against this approach, stating that it would not be consistent with the agreed ComFRAB research prioritisation and funding process and would might be perceived as lacking transparency and giving one research provider an unfair advantage over potentially competing research providers (who would have only seen the three ComFRAB priority scopes and not the NPF research priority). Some CSIRO members and observers present agreed with this concern and indicated they would feel uncomfortable with submitting an EOI under such circumstances.

However, concern was expressed by some members and observers that in not alerting ComFRAB to the type of research urgently needed, there would be unacceptable delays in moving forward to having the research undertaken. It was suggested that a package be put together containing the revised priority research scope, a joint support letter from the RAG and MAC chairs, and that one or more EOIs be either included as examples (to demonstrate the type of research required to meet the priority scope) or directly submitted to ComFRAB (via FishNet). NPRAG noted that ComFRAB may then choose to put out a general call for EOIs to undertake that work, if it was deemed to be a high priority. It was noted that in developing draft EOIs now, this would ensure the fishery was well prepared to take advantage of other funding opportunities outside the ComFRAB process.



Action item 3 – CSIRO to develop EOIs to support the revised research priority to be submitted to ComFRAB

2.4 Progress against related action items

An observer asked for clarification around progress against action items relating to northern waters research planning as identified at the NPRAG meeting in early March 2015. CSIRO clarified that:

- A draft 1 page proposal to undertake a review of research relevant to the consideration of the impact of northern waters developments upon the NPF had been developed but not costed.
- CSIRO Strategic research funding had been used to develop a preliminary MICE model for the NPF, which could then be further developed as part of the research being discussed at this meeting
- NESP funding options appear to be limited at this point in time with the northern hub mainly focussed on freshwater system issues and there has been no call for research as yet. CSIRO has found it difficult to obtain information on the future potential prospects of gaining funding via this avenue, and noted that the Grow North CRC was not yet established and it was unlikely that the potential for pursuing funding from that source would be known until later in the year.

At this point in the meeting it was determined that the NPRAG would need to make a recommendation regarding the above discussions, hence the CSIRO members and observers left the meeting, noting the conflict of interest highlighted at the start of the meeting.

2.5 Recommendation

NPRAG recommended that the following submission be made to ComFRAB by 20 September 2015:

- a. A revised priority scope that addressed the issues raised in item 2.1 above. This would be initially drafted by AFMA, in consultation with the NPF Chair.
- b. A combined letter of support from the MAC and RAG Chairs.
- c. Two EOIs, the first being a small research review proposal to highlight research gaps and summarise information around proposed northern waters developments, and the second outlining MICE and EcoPATH model based research and how that would address the current research gaps.

All three components will be submitted to the NPRAG and NORMAC for review and comment by COB 9th September, prior to finalisation and submission to ComFRAB, as early as possible prior to the 20 September deadline.

Action item 4 – AFMA to coordinate the compilation of a submission to ComFRAB comprising revised research priority, support letter from the NPRAG and NORMAC chairs, and example EOIs, as described in previous action items



3. Other Business

It was agreed that the exact dates for the next meeting would be discussed via email out of session. However there was general agreement around the need for a meeting prior to years end, most likely in November. There was no other business and the Chair closed the meeting at 11:15am.

Signed (Chairperson):

Date:

List of Attachments

- 1) NPRAG 4 Sept 2015 - Annotated Agenda
- 2) NPRAG 4 Sept 2015 - Declared Interests

DRAFT



Attachment 1

NPRAG Teleconference Agenda

4 September 2015

10:00am – 11:30am (Canberra time)

Phone in details

Toll Free Number: 1800 153 721

Participant PIN Code: 667768

Item	Responsibility	Paper
1. Introduction/ Meeting Management <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welcome • Adoption of agenda • Declaration of interests 	Chair	Yes
2. Northern Waters Research Priority <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ComFRAB feedback • Required revisions • Funding processes and timeframes • Review and sign off process • Support letters (MAC/RAG) 	AFMA	Yes
3. Other business		No

Confirmed attendees: *Ian Knuckey*
David Brewer
Phil Robson
Mike O'Brien
Ian Boot
Trevor Hutton

Rik Buckworth
Shane Fava
Malcolm Haddon
Don Bromhead
Annie Jarrett

Observers :

Apologies : *Tom Kompas*



Attachment 2

NPRAG Declared Interests

Name	Membership	Interest Declared
Ian Knuckey	Chair	Fishwell Consulting has applied (via EOI) to provide 8-10 observer days monitoring the tiger prawn fishery. Company is associated with electronic logbooks. Will review role as Chair should research applications be successful.
Rik Buckworth	Scientific Member - CSIRO	Research provider involved particularly in stock assessment research in NPF. Has in the past and may in future seek and receive funding for research in the fishery.
David Brewer	Scientific Member - CSIRO	Research provider. Has in the past and may in future seek and receive funding for research in the fishery.
Malcolm Haddon	Scientific Member - CSIRO	Research provider. Doesn't partake directly in research in the NPF however.
Michael O'Brien	Industry Member	Employee of a company that owns statutory fishing rights (SFRs) in the NPF.
Ian Boot	Industry Member	Managing Director of Austfish, a company which operates 4 NPF vessels. Has a commercial interest in the fishery.
Phil Robson	Industry Member	Employee of A Raptis and Sons, responsible for managing 12 NPF vessels. Has provided charter for scientific surveys in NPF in the past and may in future.
Shane Fava	AFMA Member	No pecuniary interest in the fishery
Don Bromhead	Executive Officer a/g AFMA member	No pecuniary interest in the fishery
Steve Bolton	Observer - AFMA	No pecuniary interest in the fishery
Renee Bowling	Observer - AFMA	No pecuniary interest in the fishery
Annie Jarrett	Observer - NPFI	CEO NPFI and <i>a member of the MSC Stakeholder Council</i> . Some research items are of relevance to NPFI
Trevor Hutton	Observer - CSIRO	Research provider. Has in the past and may in future seek and receive funding for research in the fishery.



Name	Membership	Interest Declared
Eva Plaganyi	Observer - CSIRO	Research provider involved particularly in stock assessment research in NPF. Has in the past and may in future seek and receive funding for research in the fishery.
<i>Tom Kompas*</i>	Economic Member -ANU	Research provider. Has in the past and may in future seek and receive funding for research in the fishery.
<i>Adrienne Laird*</i>	Observer - NPFI	Employed as contractor by NPFI.
<i>Roy Deng*</i>	Observer - CSIRO	Research provider involved particularly in stock assessment research in NPF. Has in the past and may in future seek and receive funding for research in the fishery.
<i>Robert Curtotti*</i>	Observer - ABARES	Economics research provider. No current pecuniary interest in fishery. Potential to seek and receive funding for research in the fishery in future.
<i>Shane Griffiths*</i>	Observer - CSIRO	Research provider. Has in the past and may in future seek and receive funding for research in the fishery.
<i>Sean Pascoe*</i>	Observer - CSIRO	Research provider. Has in the past and may in future seek and receive funding for research in the fishery.
<i>Rob Kenyon*</i>	Observer - CSIRO	Research provider particularly involved in monitoring and assessments in NPF. Has in the past and may in future seek and receive funding for research in the fishery.

(*did not participate in the current meeting but have participated previously in 2015)

