



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



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

**FINAL MINUTES  
SBTMAC 40  
21 SEPTEMBER 2016  
CANBERRA**



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

### **Introduction**

The fortieth meeting of the Southern Bluefin Tuna Management Advisory Committee (SBTMAC 40) was held in Canberra on 21 September 2016.

The primary objectives of the meeting were to discuss:

- the outcomes from the 2016 Commission for the Conservation of Southern Bluefin Tuna (CCSBT) Scientific Committee meeting;
- monitoring arrangements in the SBT Fishery;
- the proposed 2017/18 research priorities; and
- the status of the 2016/17 SBT Fishery budget.

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

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

1. The Chair, Mr Max Kitchell, opened the meeting at 9:15am and welcomed new members, invited participants and observers to the 40<sup>th</sup> meeting of SBTMAC.
2. Apologies were received from Mr Rick Kolega (industry member) and Mr Glenn Sant (conservation member).
3. Participants at SBTMAC 40 were:

#### Chair

Mr Max Kitchell

#### Members

Dr Ilona Stobutzki (ABARES)  
Mr Trent Timmiss (AFMA)  
Mr Andrew Wilkinson (farm industry sector)  
Mr Marcus Stehr (farm industry sector)  
Mr Terry Romaro OAM (longline industry sector)  
Mr Dallas D'Silva (recreational sector)

#### Invited Participants

Mr Brian Jeffriess AM (farm industry sector)  
Mr Michael Thomas (farm industry sector)  
Mr David Ellis (longline industry sector)  
Prof Gavin Begg (State government) – via telephone

#### Executive Officer

Ms Sarah Kirkcaldie (AFMA)

#### Observers

Ms Ann Preece (CSIRO)  
Dr Campbell Davies (CSIRO)  
Mr Matt Daniel (AFMA)  
Mr Adam Wade (AFMA)<sup>1</sup>  
Mr Mike Gerner (AFMA)<sup>2</sup>  
Mr Paul Ryan (AFMA)<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Present for Agenda Item 5 only. <sup>2</sup> Present for Agenda Item 6 only. <sup>3</sup> Present for Agenda Item 6.4 only.



## **Adoption of agenda**

4. SBTMAC adopted the new agenda that was circulated at the meeting with no changes (Attachment A).

### **1.2: Pecuniary interest declarations**

5. As this was the first meeting of the new Committee, members, invited participants and observers introduced themselves and declared their pecuniary interests. SBTMAC noted that the requirement to declare an interest at the beginning of each agenda item was only for members and not for permanent observers or invited participants. It was agreed that members would declare interests at the beginning of each main agenda item, that is, at the beginning of discussion on agenda items numbered 1 through 6.

6. Members acknowledged that AFMA has consultative groups such as Management Advisory Committees because of people's expertise in areas that are relevant to discussions.

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

<b>Member</b>	<b>Declared interests</b>
Mr Max Kitchell	Employed as the SBTMAC Chair. No pecuniary interest in the Fishery.
Mr Trent Timmiss	Employee of AFMA, no pecuniary interest in SBT Fishery
Dr Ilona Stobutzki	Employee of ABARES, no pecuniary interest in SBT fishery, noting that ABARES conducts research on a range of fisheries issues.
Mr Andrew Wilkinson	SBT quota holder, General Manager of company that owns and operates a tuna farm/catching business.
Mr Terry Romaro	Employee of a company that owns SBT SFR's and works with company that has a consultancy with Aus Asia fishing that may longline fish in SBT Fishery. Mr Romaro further advised he is also a member of SquidRAG.
Mr Marcus Stehr	Board member of Clean Seas, Board member of Australian Maritime and Fisheries Academy and Board member of Australian Southern Bluefin Tuna Industry Association
Mr Dallas D'Silva	General Manager, Victorian Recreational Fishing Peak Body
Ms Sarah Kirkcaldie	Employee of AFMA, no pecuniary interest in SBT Fishery.
<b>Permanent observer/invited participant</b>	<b>Declared interests</b>
Mr Brian Jeffriess (Invited Participant)	CEO of Australian Southern Bluefin Tuna Industry Association.
Mr Michael Thomas (Invited participant)	Board member of the Sarin Group that owns quota SFR's.
Mr David Ellis (Invited participant)	Chief Executive Officer of Tuna Australian (Industry Association).
Prof Gavin Begg (Invited participant)	Employee of PIRSA-SARDI, no pecuniary interest in SBT Fishery. Noting that SARDI conducts research on range of fisheries issues.

Mr Matt Daniel (Observer)	Employee of AFMA, no pecuniary interest in SBT Fishery
Ms Ann Preece (Observer)	Employee of CSIRO, no pecuniary interest in SBT Fishery. Noting that CSIRO conducts research on range of fisheries issues.
Dr Campbell Davies (Observer)	Employee of CSIRO, no pecuniary interest in SBT fishery. Noting that CSIRO conducts research on range of fisheries issues.

### 1.3: Acceptance of minutes from SBTMAC 39 and November teleconference

7. SBTMAC adopted the minutes as a true and accurate account of the discussions from SBTMAC 39 and the November teleconference with minor editorial changes provided by members.

### 1.4: Actions arising from November 2015 teleconference and subsequent intercessional work

8. Members noted the status of the actions arising from November 2015 teleconference as outlined below:

	Action arising	Status
1	<b>Inter-sessional science</b> - CSIRO agreed to provide more detailed costings for SBTMAC to consider	SBTMAC noted that this project was funded in June and the project was underway with a milestone due at the end of September and completion by June 2017. Members noted that the original project was split in two with the transition to the new Management Procedure (MP) separated out.
2	<b>Close Kin</b> - Dr Davies agreed to put together an application to Fisheries Research and Development Corporation (FRDC) as soon as possible seeking funding	Members noted that CSIRO had received a formal letter from FRDC approving the project and funding and that work will start as soon as possible. The aim is to complete the project in September 2017. Members noted that this project is a priority and CSIRO is confident it is feasible to have the

		genetic processing (16,000 samples) done by December 2016/January 2017.
3	<b>Independent estimate of maturity</b> - AFMA agreed to discuss the collection of ovaries with the AFMA observer section.	SBTMAC noted that there is currently no independent estimate of maturity for SBT on and off spawning grounds. A proposal went to CCSBT a few years ago with Australia required to collect 200 samples. Currently 157 samples have been collected with the assistance of industry and AFMA observers. The next stage of the project is to do the histology to test whether the fish are mature. Members noted that there was a workshop planned for 2017.

### Intersessional work

9. SBTMAC noted the status of the action items and the intersessional work, including the following correspondence received between meetings:

- a) 24 September 2015, AFMA circulated the finalised acquittal of cost-recovered expenditure against the budget for the 2014/15 for the Commonwealth fisheries and also a letter from James Findlay, AFMA CEO, to the Commonwealth Fisheries Association;
- b) 6 October 2015, AFMA circulated an updated version of Fisheries management Paper 1 – Management Advisory Committees (FMP 1);
- c) 6 October 2015, AFMA circulated to SBTMAC for individual comments on the various research Expressions of Interests for FRDC funding in 2016-17;
- d) 22 October 2015, AFMA circulated an email organising a teleconference on 9 November 2015 to discuss the research outcomes from the 2015 CCSBT Commission meeting;
- e) 6 November 2015, AFMA circulated the key documents for the November teleconference;
- f) 18 November 2015, AFMA circulated a letter seeking applications for Chairpersons of various Management Advisory Committees and Resource Assessment Groups;
- g) 25 November 2015, AFMA circulated for comment the budget implications of the draft 2016 Cost Recovery Impact Statement (CRIS);

- h) 30 November 2015, AFMA circulated a letter from Nick Rayns to Max Kitchell regarding completing a MAC self-assessment;
- i) 30 November 2015, AFMA circulated a description of the proposed transfer weighing procedure that needs to be determined in the SBT Fishery;
- j) 1 December 2015, AFMA agreed to extend the consultation period for the draft 2016 CRIS;
- k) 15 December 2015, AFMA agreed to extend the deadline for the MAC self-assessment.
- l) 15 December 2015, AFMA reminded members that applications for Chairpersons of various MACs and RAGS were due;
- m) 23 December 2015, AFMA circulated the draft minutes from the November teleconference for comment;
- n) 14 January 2016, AFMA agreed to extend the consultation period again for the draft 2016 CRIS;
- o) 14 January 2016, AFMA circulated an email seeking members for the Commonwealth Fisheries Marine Mammal Group;
- p) 21 January 2016, AFMA circulated a letter from Beth Gibson, Policy, Environment, Economics and Research section, AFMA, to Max Kitchell regarding AFMA reviewing its undercatch and overcatch provisions;
- q) 4 February 2016, AFMA circulated an email seeking applications for member positions on Various MACs and RAGs including SBTMAC;
- r) 8 February 2016, AFMA circulated a letter seeking individual comments on a project to develop national guidelines for the quality assurance of fisheries research and science information;
- s) 25 February 2016, AFMA reminded members that applications for various MACs and RAGs were due;
- t) 17 May 2016, AFMA circulated the draft 2016-17 cost recovered budget for comment;
- u) 26 May 2016, AFMA circulated for comment two Australian research projects that have requested SBT research mortality allowance for the coming 2016/17 season;
- v) 23 August 2016, AFMA sent out appointment letters to all new SBTMAC members;
- w) 25 August 2016, AFMA circulated for comment the draft agenda for SBTMAC 40; and
- x) 6 September 2016, AFMA sought individual comments on the Ecological Risk Management Guide.

### **1.5: Govdex**

10. SBTMAC noted that there is a new secure online collaboration site that will allow members to view and download historic and upcoming meeting papers, committee related forms and policies and provide comments on meeting agendas and minutes.

11. The Executive Officer explained that SBTMAC members and invited participants should have recently received an invitation to the Govdex SBTMAC page. AFMA acknowledged that there had been some issues with the site but these had been rectified and if members had any further problems they should contact the Executive Officer as soon as possible. A comprehensive Govdex User Guide was provided to members.

12. SBTMAC noted that an overview and training will be delivered at the scheduled MAC and RAG workshop in Canberra on 28 September 2016.

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

No conflicts of interest were declared under this agenda item. SBTMAC noted that no recommendations were being made and that members were just providing information reports.

### **2.1: Informal industry report on the 2015/16 catching season, markets and outlook**

13. Industry members informed SBTMAC that fishing had been good this season with improved weather conditions. A lot of fish had been sighted enabling industry to be selective with the average size of fish 15-16 kg. Industry informed members that the quality of the fish coming out of farms had improved and this was a reflection of ranching methodology and fishing practices. Members noted that industry reported the mortality rate was low (between 0.4-0.5%).

14. Industry informed members that they were looking at expanding into new markets as the Japanese market price remains low. This is potentially the result of too much competition and an oversupply of fish. Industry members noted that they were competing with the wild caught New Zealand fish.

15. Members noted that the longline sector has had a good season on the east coast with good quality and sized Bigeye and Yellowfin tunas. Industry indicated that there had been some issues getting Bigeye quota as it is hard to find. SBTMAC noted that there had also been some weather issues which dictated when they could fish. This meant that when the weather was good a large percentage of the fleet was also fishing and the market became flooded driving prices down.

16. The Chief Executive Officer of Tuna Australia, Mr David Ellis noted that the industry association had been established in February 2016 and was now fully operational. Mr Ellis thanked AFMA for their assistance in establishing the association. Members noted that some of the issues facing the industry include improving quality of the fish, the need to diversify, being smarter with other markets and improving the Australian market. Industry also suggested that selling frozen product could be the future, providing a year round supply and meaning fishers are not as reliant on the fresh market.

### **2.2: Informal report from other SBTMAC members and invited participants**

17. The recreational member provided an update on the recent recreational catches of SBT in Victoria, Tasmania, New South Wales and South Australia (Attachment B). Members noted that overall the states have had a good recreational season except for New South Wales. SBTMAC noted that the industry and recreational members exchanged information and views

and this was beneficial and appreciated. Members noted that the low recreational catches reported in New South Wales do not correspond with the high catches by industry. The recreational member stated that the catching window in NSW was small this year. AFMA noted that the commercial catches were a long way offshore and this could have been a factor affecting the recreational catch of SBT in New South Wales. SBTMAC noted that the Victorian recreational fishers are targeting SBT out of more ports than in previous years.

18. CSIRO highlighted that a tagged SBT was recently caught by a recreational angler in Portland, Victoria. Data showed that the fish had been tagged as a 2 year old in 1991 and had been aged at 27 years old.

19. SBTMAC thanked the recreational member for providing a comprehensive report.

20. The State government invited participant noted that the South Australian state recreational fishing survey was complete and the final report had been published. Members noted that the harvested catch in the latest survey was 150 tonnes an increase from 44 tonnes in the 2007/08 survey. The State government invited participant suggested that recreational catch allocation is a major issue in the Fishery and an on-going priority. The AFMA member noted that this would be discussed at the Departmental stakeholder forum on the 22 September 2016. SBTMAC noted that the Department was currently considering a future recreational survey but this was currently unfunded. Industry noted that given the current larger size of SBT caught by the recreational sector the bag limit should be reduced from 2 to 1.

21. The State Government invited participant informed members that the Australian-New Zealand bid to host the World Fisheries Congress in Adelaide, 2020, was successful. Members noted that this is a key fisheries congress and a way for Australian fisheries to showcase what we do.

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

No conflicts of interest were declared under this agenda item.

#### **3.1: Outcomes from the 2016 CCSBT Commission meeting**

22. The Research member provided a summary of the outcomes from the 2016 CCSBT Scientific Committee (SC) meeting held in Taiwan. Members noted that the outcomes were confidential until after the 2016 CCSBT Commission meeting.

23. SBTMAC noted that the aerial survey was run during the summer but a reduced survey of just one plane meaning it was the minimum full survey. Two complete replicates were completed between January and March. The results indicated that this was the highest index since the survey began. Members noted that it was statistically significantly higher than any other year and the quality control did not show any anomalies although there will be some follow up regarding the oceanographic conditions. Members noted that the commercial catch is taken outside the survey area. Members noted that the CCSBT Commission has committed to the aerial survey being conducted in 2017 with a request for it to be done in 2018 as well.

24. SBTMAC noted that accounting for sources of mortality, including non-member catch, within the 2018-2020 TAC block is a high priority. Members noted that CCSBT was finding it difficult to get information on non-member catch. TRAFFIC had recently prepared a report for CCSBT on the presence of SBT in the Chinese Market. The report included an analysis of publicly available trade market information and sampling of sushi restaurants in some of the

main cities. The report indicated that SBT was present however further work needs to be undertaken to determine the origins of the fish and to quantify the size of the market.

25. Members noted that the CCSBT expect Australia to be accounting for recreational catch and discarding within its national allocation by 2018.

26. SBTMAC noted that the SC endorsed an increase in the TAC of 3,000 tonnes to 17,647 tonnes which was driven by the positive Japanese longline CPUE and the results from the aerial survey. The Commission reiterated the point made over the last few years that there was very little extra money available for research. Industry expressed a concern that there was discussion regarding shortening the timeframe for rebuilding under the Management Procedure from the current 2035 to 2030. This issue will be discussed at future SC meetings when the Management Procedure is reviewed. Members noted that in 2014 the stock was assessed as being at 9% of the original spawning stock biomass. This estimate would be updated following the results of the 2017 stock assessment.

27. SBTMAC noted that the scientific research plan was also discussed and there were concerns regarding developing a new Management Procedure and the extensive work that would be required. Members noted that to keep the 3 year TAC blocks a new Management Procedure is required. Members acknowledged the significant amount of work undertaken by Australian scientists.

28. SBTMAC noted the report from the Research member on the outcomes from the 2016 CCSBT Scientific Committee meeting.

### **3.2: Upcoming 2016 CCSBT Commission meeting**

29. Members noted that the CCSBT Commission meeting will be held on 6-13 October 2016 in Taiwan. SBTMAC noted that the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources is holding a stakeholders meeting on 22 September 2016 to discuss any issues for the upcoming 2016 CCSBT Commission meeting. The main issues for Australia at the meeting will be:

- a) Review of catch documentation scheme (CDS). Members noted that a working group was held in Canberra in 2016 and e-CDS was discussed.
- b) Accounting for mortality. Members noted that by 2018 all sources of mortalities must be included in the allocation.
- c) Non-member catch. SBTMAC noted New Zealand will be putting a paper to the CCSBT Compliance Committee on this issue.
- d) Quality Assurance Review. Members noted that Australia has already completed both the desktop and on site components in previous years. New Zealand and Korea will be reporting this year.
- e) Port State measures.
- f) Total Allowable Catch. Members noted that the Scientific Committee had recommended a TAC increase of the maximum 3000 t. The Global TAC will be decided at the annual CCSBT meeting in October.

SBTMAC discussed the importance of China joining CCSBT as a member due to concerns over the amount they are currently catching and future potential catches. Currently Taiwan is a member of the extended Commission.

#### **Agenda Item 4: Research issues**

Dr Stobutzki, as the MAC research member, Ms Preece, Dr Davies and Prof Begg declared an interest under this agenda item. All exited the room/hung up the phone and the remaining MAC members discussed their conflict. All remaining members agreed that Ms Preece, Dr's Stobutzki and Davies and Prof Begg's interest was not a significant one and they should be included in all discussions under this agenda item.

#### **4.1: Proposed 2017/18 research program and priorities**

30. SBTMAC noted that in previous years a sub-committee of SBTMAC was convened prior to the main MAC meeting to discuss issues relating to research. To avoid duplication it was agreed at SBTMAC 39 that no sub-committee meeting would be held in 2016 and that all research issues would be discussed in the main meeting.

31. The AFMA observer noted that research issues in the Southern Bluefin Tuna Fishery are predominantly driven by CCSBT and the requirements of the Management Procedure (MP) which is a pre-agreed set of rules that can specify changes to the total allowable catch (TAC) based on updated monitoring data. The MP 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. The minimum TAC change (increase or decrease) is 100 tonnes and the maximum (increase or decrease) is 3,000 tonnes. Members noted that the CCSBT has agreed to transition to a new MP in the coming years to potentially incorporate data other than the aerial survey and CPUE (catch per unit effort) such as gene tagging and close kin.

32. SBTMAC discussed the research priorities identified for the 2017/18 research program.

#### Intersessional Science

33. Members noted that through the SBT Inter-sessional Science Project, CSIRO provides scientific support and advice to AFMA, ABARES and Australian Industry, and provides Australian delegation contributions to the workings of the Commission for the Conservation of Southern Bluefin Tuna (CCSBT) Extended Scientific Committee (ESC). The project is funded by CSIRO and AFMA.

Members noted that the main objectives for the current project (June 2016-June 2017) include:

- Participate in planning, consultation, Extended Scientific Committee and Operating Model and Management Procedure (OMMP) meetings, inter-sessional webinars, review of exceptional circumstances and 2017 CCSBT data exchange, and provide scientific advice to AFMA, ABARES, Industry and the CCSBT.
- Prepare and run the MP to provide advice on the 2018-2020 TAC.
- Provide advice on approaches for including unaccounted mortality for the 2021 TAC block and beyond.
- Prepare for the 2017 stock assessment by preliminary reconditioning the Operating Models (OM) after data exchange in 2017.

- Undertake the routine archiving and ageing of 100 SBT otoliths from the Australian surface fishery, and provide data to CCSBT. Construct age-length keys and estimate the age distribution of the Australian catch.

### Transition to a new MP

34. Members noted that CCSBT requested in 2015 that the Extended Scientific Committee (ESC) commence work to transition to a new management procedure (MP). The new MP will include abundance estimates of juveniles from gene-tagging SBT, which have been recommended as essential data for use in a new management procedure in preference to the existing aerial survey relative abundance estimates, used in the current MP. Members noted that the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources (DAWR) and AFMA are funding this research.

35. SBTMAC noted that in 2016-17, the aim of the first stage is to review conditioning of the SBT operating models, develop the initial form of candidate MPs and the data generation processes in the projection models to evaluate the candidate MPs using Management Strategy Evaluation (MSE). In early 2017, the aim of the second stage includes further work on conditioning, data generation and MP runs, refining of MP performance and robustness tests. Members noted that CSIRO will review and test Australian and other member's proposed methods and models and provide advice to the Australian delegation and that further work will be required in 2017-19 to refine, test and select a new SBT MP.

### Gene Tagging

36. Members noted that gene-tagging has been proposed as an ongoing part of the CCSBT Scientific Research Program. Annual tagging is proposed, to provide a time series of estimates of absolute abundance of juvenile SBT for use in the SBT operating model and future management procedures. SBTMAC noted that a pilot gene-tagging project commenced in 2016 and will be completed in early 2018. The fieldwork for the pilot gene-tagging project commenced in February 2016, with an aim to tag (take tissue samples from) 5000 2 year old fish over 20 sea days, however only 3,768 SBT were tagged. Phase 2 involves taking tissue samples during harvest in June-August 2017 and initial scoping of the logistics for this stage have also been successfully completed. Members noted that 20-25 tag returns are expected based on the assumption of 2-3 million 2 year olds. SBTMAC thanked Industry for their participation in the pilot gene-tagging project.

### Close-Kin Mark Recapture

37. Close-Kin Mark-Recapture (CKMR) is a way of estimating absolute abundance, based on the use of modern genetics to identify close relatives. The first project completed in 2014 demonstrated that the technique was robust and applicable to SBT. In 2015 CCSBT considered various options for future sample sizes, and the pros and cons of changing to some newer genotyping technique to take advantage of rapid developments in genetics in the decade since CKMR for SBT began.

38. Members noted that the aim of this project was to develop a robust and practical method to estimate the abundance of adult (spawning-age) SBT (and of highly-migratory or hard-to-observe animals in general) that was independent of fishery CPUE. This would reduce the uncertainty about the state of the SBT stock and likely rebuilding rates.

### Aerial Survey

39. The AFMA observer explained that the index of juvenile SBT abundance based on a scientific aerial survey in the Great Australian Bight (GAB) is one of the few fishery-independent indices available for monitoring and assessment of the SBT stock. The CCSBT Management Procedure then determines TACs using information from the aerial survey index and the Japanese longline CPUE series.

40. Members noted that the survey was entirely funded by Australia (including an AFMA industry component) prior to 2015. In 2014, Australia indicated that it would not be fully funding future aerial surveys. CCSBT members were unable to agree on a funding model and as a consequence, no aerial survey was conducted in 2015. SBTMAC noted that CCSBT members subsequently agreed to fully fund a reduced aerial survey for 2016 and 2017.

41. Members agreed that the Management Procedure development and the aerial survey should be discussed at the next meeting (**Action arising 1**).

42. SBTMAC noted the proposed 2017/18 research program.

### **4.2: Annual research plan, including input to 2017 CCSBT stock assessment**

43. SBTMAC members discussed and updated the Australian Southern Bluefin Tuna Fishery Annual Research statement 2017-2018 (Attachment C). Members ranked the SBT Intersessional science and otolith archiving and ageing as essential, developing an independent estimate of size and age at maturity as well as the CCSBT maturity workshop as high and the CCSBT direct ageing workshop as low or medium (if it is done in conjunction with the maturity workshop).

44. Members noted that the transition to the new Management Procedure is included in the Intersessional Science project. It was noted that this project will cost around \$580,000 in 2017-18 and that a breakdown of costs should be included in the 5 year strategic research plan (**Action arising 2**).

45. Members noted that the aim of the CCSBT ageing workshop is to update the direct ageing of otoliths, agree to standards for ageing, check there hasn't been a drift, discuss the issues in New Zealand and include new members. The AFMA member noted that AFMA won't support funding of travel to international workshops. CSIRO noted that they may be interested in co-investigating.

46. Members agreed that the updated Annual Research statement 2017-18 should be forwarded to the AFMA Research Committee.

### **4.3: Research mortality allowance**

47. SBTMAC noted that Australia requested research mortality allowances (RMA) for two projects on Southern Bluefin Tuna (SBT) in 2017.

48. The AFMA observer explained that the overall RMA requested by Australia is small (1.7 t). The projects will enhance our understanding of the biology and ecology of SBT.

The two projects requesting RMA are:

- 1) A 0.5 t RMA is requested for a study examining the molecular basis for endothermy using SBT as a novel model. This project will involve the capture of small SBT off southern Western Australia. Larger fish will be purchased from Port Lincoln aquaculture farms and so not included in the RMA request. RMA has been granted previously for this project, however due to delays in the project commencing no RMA has been used in 2015 or 2016.
- 2) A 1.2 t RMA is requested for a project examining the health of wild SBT. RMA has been granted previously for this project. In 2016, to date, a total of 1.044 t of the 1.2 t RMA has been used.

49. The Industry observer for Tuna Australia expressed concerns regarding the usefulness of the second project. AFMA agreed to provide the outcomes of the Kirchoff et al. 2014 project (**Action arising 3**).

50. Members noted that in 2015, Australia was granted 6.70 t of RMA for four projects in 2016. Two of those projects are also requesting RMA for 2017. To date (1 June 2016), 1.561 t of RMA has been utilised in 2016, well below the amount granted, although additional RMA may be used during the remainder of 2016.

- a) A 1 tonne RMA was approved to continue initiatives focused on investigating: (a) the spatial dynamics and mortality rates of SBT utilising electronic tagging techniques; (b) the impacts of noise associated with oil and gas exploration on SBT in the Great Australian Bight. No RMA for this project has been used in 2016.
- b) A 0.5 tonne RMA was approved to use SBT as a model to test prevailing theories of the evolution of endothermy (warm-bloodedness). However, the project did not commence and no RMA was used in 2016.
- c) An RMA of 1.2 tonne was approved for a project examining the health of wild SBT. A total of 1.044 t of SBT was used for this project in 2016.
- d) A 4 tonne RMA was approved for the pilot gene-tagging implementation in 2016, to cover incidental mortalities. While this RMA was approved to Australia, the Extended Commission agreed to fund this project in 2016. A total of 0.517 tonne RMA was utilised in 2016 for this project.

51. SBTMAC noted the CCSBT Scientific Committee recommendations for the 2016/17 research mortality allowance.

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

No conflicts of interest were declared under this agenda item.

### **5.1: Compliance update**

52. The AFMA National Compliance Planning and Operations Manager, Mr Adam Wade, provided an update on recent compliance issues.

53. SBTMAC noted that on 24 June 2016 AFMA posted a Request for Tender (RFT) for the provision of Monitoring Services in the Southern Bluefin Tuna Fishery on the Austender website. The RFT noted that the successful tenderer would be required to undertake monitoring of the SBTf on behalf of AFMA in Port Lincoln. This involves attendance at each transfer and a video recording of all fish transferred. It also involves sampling a minimum of 100 fish ( $\geq 10\text{kg}$ ) from each tow pontoon to determine average weights for the purposes of decrementing catch quota.

54. SBTMAC noted that Seatec were the successful tenderer and are known personnel to AFMA. The contract is for a period of three (3) years with the option of extension with no reduction in services. Members noted that the contract was for mono-videoing and that stereo video would have additional costs. The AFMA member agreed to investigate providing the additional costs of stereo video to the next MAC meeting (**Action arising 4**).

55. Mr Wade informed SBTMAC that as part of a risk based program two AFMA officers monitor the transfer from capture to the cages and will also do field trips. In 2016 there had been a very high rate of compliance with 24 boats inspected with only minor low level logbook breaches.

56. SBTMAC noted that there had been some issues between purse seine operators and the recreational sector. Industry members noted that it would be helpful to get feedback on the issue and what happened and this information would be useful at the pre-season briefings.

57. The Chair questioned what had happened with the reports last year about recreational fish being sold in restaurants and at markets in the Canberra region. Members noted that AFMA had now signed a memorandum of understanding with the ACT Government and AFMA officers were deemed conservation officers under ACT legislation and can now go to Canberra markets and do inspections.

58. SBTMAC noted the update from AFMA Compliance and the SBTMAC Chair thanked Mr Wade for his time.

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

Mr Wilkinson, Mr Romaro, Mr Jeffriess, Mr Thomas and Mr Ellis all declared their conflict of interest under Agenda Item 6. In line with the requirements Mr Wilkinson, Mr Romaro, Mr Jeffriess, Mr Thomas and Mr Ellis left the room.

The remaining members of SBTMAC considered each declaration individually and agreed that Mr Wilkinson, Mr Romaro, Mr Jeffriess, Mr Thomas and Mr Ellis should all be allowed to return for all items under Agenda item 6 as each of their expertise was important to discussions and most items were for noting.

### **6.1: Monitoring update**

59. The AFMA Monitoring Manager, Mr Mike Gerner, provided an update on recent monitoring issues.

60. SBTMAC noted the current status of e-monitoring in AFMA's fisheries and noted that the e-monitoring program has been running in the Eastern and Western Tuna and Billfish Fisheries in Australia (ETBF and WTBF respectively) for 12 months now.

61. AFMA explained that approximately \$150,000 observer costs had been saved with the introduction of e-monitoring. Mr Gerner noted that in addition to cost savings some of the other benefits of e-monitoring includes improved data quality, ability to monitor more fishing event, no 'observer effect', reduced health and safety risks, improved compliance and risk assessments, potential to understand and regulate handling practices and it is auditable. However, members acknowledged that e-monitoring can't collect all the data required (e.g. collect otoliths/genetic samples, tag fish, weigh fish and also currently length sampling can't be done but this is a possibility in the future).

62. Members noted that cameras only record fishing activity and a minimum 10% of shots are audited with the footage analysis compared to logbook reports. SBTMAC welcomed the significant advance in monitoring the Fishery and acknowledged that there were still further efficiencies to be realised.

63. Industry questioned AFMA about when the e-monitoring system would be recognised and accepted internationally. Members discussed the benefits of reducing compliance costs and the possibility of having flexible management arrangements for individual vessels. Members noted that 100% of fishing operations are 'monitored' with automated checking of fishing start and end times, fishing start and end locations and fishing in closed areas. E-monitoring could also verify tori lines are being used correctly, discarding of quota species and complement at sea patrols and flights.

64. SBTMAC thanked Mr Mike Gerner for his presentation.

## **6.2 : Monitoring update in the ranch sector**

Members noted that this agenda item was discussed under agenda item 5.1.

### **6.2 a: Transfer weighing procedure**

65. Members noted that AFMA must determine the farm catch monitoring arrangements (transfer weighing procedure) for the 2016/17 fishing season before fish can be transferred between a tow pontoon and a farm pontoon. The determination of the transfer weighing procedure is necessary to enable the calculation of the total catch of Southern Bluefin Tuna (in the ranching sector) against the national allocation. The current procedure for estimating the average weight transferred into a tuna farm involves catching and weighing a sample of 100 fish 10 kg or over (known as the '100 fish' sample). Fish under 10 kg are excluded from the calculation of the average weight and sampling continues until 100 fish 10 kg or over have been caught and weighed. Members further noted that a video recording is then made of the transfer of the fish from the tow pontoon to the farm pontoon.

66. Members noted that the weight of fish in the transfer weight (the total deducted from quota) is the weight obtained by multiplying the average weight determined under the 100 fish sample and the number of fish determined from the video count.

67. SBTMAC noted that the 100 fish sample was introduced in the 2012/13 fishing season to increase the precision of Australia's catch monitoring in the ranch sector of the Southern

Bluefin Tuna fishery. It was intended as an interim measure pending the introduction of stereo-video based monitoring.

68. SBTMAC noted that an Australian Research Council project entitled - Automation of Species Recognition and Size Measurement of Fish from Underwater Stereo-Video is currently underway. The final project is due to report late in 2016. Outcomes from the project will assist Australia to further assess the merits of the technology.

69. The State government invited participant questioned if a cost/benefit analysis was done as part of the project. The SBT Manager noted that this wasn't part of the project but may be done after the project. SBTMAC agreed to discuss this at the next SBTMAC meeting (**Action arising 5**).

70. SBTMAC recommended that the 100 fish sample based transfer weighing procedure, used in the past three fishing seasons, be used again in 2016/17.

### **6.3: SBT budget issues – Reconciliation of 2015/16 SBT budget and status of AFMA's 2016/17 SBT budget**

71. SBTMAC noted that the total cost recovered budget for 2015-16 was \$1,231,904 whilst actual expenditure was \$922,891. The difference is mainly due to the removal of \$265,292 from the levy base as the Aerial Survey was included in the 2015-16 budget because when the budgets were finalised CCSBT had not committed to funding the survey. This amount was never collected so it will not be returned.

72. The AFMA member provided the MAC with a summary of the budget for the SBT Fishery noting that the 2016/17 budgets were developed on the basis of expected tasks and transactions related to the management of the fisheries. Members noted that the total cost recovered SBTF budget for 2016-17 is \$963,664 which is a decrease of \$268,240 from the 2015-16 budget. The decrease is primarily due to the Aerial Survey now being fully funded by the CCSBT.

73. The AFMA member stated that there was a slight increase in the salary costs allocated in 2016/17 due to a pay increase across all of AFMA, travel costs have also increased slightly along with logbooks, observers and overheads. Licensing costs have decreased due to operators using Gofish and Pisces.

74. The Research member raised concerns regarding the low research costs considering the value of the Fishery. Industry highlighted that these costs are just the research funds that go through AFMA. The AFMA member explained that AFMA invests more in the SBT stock assessment and research than any other stock.

75. SBTMAC noted the final 2016/17 AFMA budget explanation and levy acquittal for the 2015/16 budget.

### **6.4: Environment update**

76. The AFMA Environment Manager, Mr Paul Ryan, noted that the SBT Fishery Approved Wildlife Trade Operation (WTO) expires on 21 October 2016. The current WTO has been in place for 3 years and is subject to seven conditions and one recommendation.

AFMA is currently in discussions with the Department of Environment and Energy seeking another short term extension until after the outcomes of CCSBT can be considered.

77. The MAC noted that there were no interactions with protected species in the last two quarters of 2015 and the first two quarters of 2016. AFMA explained that interactions in the longline sector are reported under the Eastern Tuna and Billfish Fishery.

78. SBTMAC noted that the Australian Government Marine Reserves review to restore confidence in the Commonwealth marine reserve planning process has released an invitation to comment on the proposal to prepare draft management plans for the South-west, North-west, North and temperate east Commonwealth Marine reserve networks and the Coral Sea Commonwealth Marine Reserve. The Australian Government has noted its intention to finalise management plans by mid-2017.

79. Members noted that AFMA would be making a submission and that comments were due by 11 October 2016.

80. Industry members expressed three concerns regarding the Marine Bioregional Planning;

1. What are the consequences of line drift (the CEO of Tuna Australia agreed to investigate this issue (**Action arising 6**));
2. Why is mining allowed but not demersal fishing; and
3. West of Kangaroo Island – concerned raised that fishing would be banned but industry would like to be able to tow through the zone as they can in State zones.

81. Members noted that AFMA is regularly contacted regarding proposed petroleum activities which may interact with fishing or have potential effects upon the fishing industry. In responding to requests, the AFMA Environment staff consult with the relevant fisheries managers and will request that the applicant contact the appropriate industry bodies.

82. SBTMAC thanked Mr Paul Ryan for presenting the environment report.

### **6.5: Tags**

83. The AFMA SBT manager noted that in accordance with the CCSBT Resolution on the Implementation of a CCSBT Catch Documentation Scheme, all Southern Bluefin Tuna caught and retained for sale must be tagged, weighed and measured. For Australia, approximately 290,000 fish are tagged annually and the corresponding weight and length measurements are recorded on the appropriate CCSBT Catch Tagging Form.

84. Members noted that currently the Australian Southern Bluefin Tuna Industry Association (ASBTIA) provides all Australian tags. These tags are supplied by a company called Leader Products and are essentially a cattle tag.

85. Members noted that the longline sector has a large number of tag mismatch errors using the current system. Longline operators are often working in difficult conditions and under time pressures. The orientation of the tag can also cause issues. These errors are predominantly the result of fish being tagged at one point and then weighed and measured at a different time. During the weighing/measuring process tag numbers are often transposed wrongly causing the error.

86. AFMA has been in consultation with ASBTIA and Leader about the possibility of incorporating a barcode on the existing tag design to improve efficiency and accuracy. Leader have indicated that costs would be roughly 20 cents per tag which is similar to the current price of tags.
87. Some industry members and invited participants indicated that a new system may not be required and with more training and education the current system would work better. AFMA noted that the current system had not been working for the past 5 years despite training and education. Members noted that there would still be errors with the barcode system but hopefully these would be reduced. Mr Wilkinson noted that there was currently an off-the-shelf tag system available and may be useful. Mr Wilkinson agreed to send the information on the off-the-shelf system to the CEO of Tuna Australia and he would work with Industry to find a solution (**Action arising 7**).

### **Agenda Item 7: Next meeting**

No conflicts of interest were declared under Agenda Item 7.

88. The MAC discussed holding a face-to-face SBTMAC in Port Lincoln in late May 2017. Members noted that this would be an opportunity to observe the farms and a normal packing day. Industry agreed to discuss the feasibility of holding the meeting in Port Lincoln. Members agreed that a strategic discussion was required at the next face-to-face meeting on how to account for recreational mortality.
89. Dr Stobutzki announced that this would be her last SBTMAC meeting as she had accepted a position as the Department's Minister Councillor for the ASEAN region based in Bangkok. SBTMAC members congratulated Dr Stobutzki on her new position and thanked her for her significant contribution to SBTMAC.
90. Members further noted that Mr Justin Nelligan had not re-applied for SBTMAC and it was agreed that the Chair would write to Mr Nelligan and thank him for being on the MAC for the last 3 years (**Action arising 8**).

Meeting closed at 3:15pm

**Max Kitchell**  
SBTMAC Chair

**Attachment A**

**Meeting of the Southern Bluefin Tuna  
Management Advisory Committee  
(SBTMAC 40)**



9.00am – 4.00pm 21 September, 2016

AFMA Aquarium Room - 6<sup>th</sup> floor, Bank West House,  
73 Northbourne Avenue Canberra

**Final Agenda**

- 1. Preliminaries/matters arising**
  - 1.1 Opening remarks/apologies/acceptance of agenda
  - 1.2 Pecuniary interest declaration
  - 1.3 SBTMAC 39 and teleconference minutes
  - 1.4 Action arising SBTMAC 39 and intersessional work
  - 1.5 Govdex
- 2. State of the Fishery**
  - 2.1 Informal industry report on the 2015/16 catching season, markets and outlook
  - 2.2 Informal reports from other SBTMAC Members and Invited Participants
- 3. CCSBT**
  - 3.1 Outcomes from the 2016 CCSBT Scientific Committee meeting
  - 3.2 Upcoming 2016 CCSBT Compliance and Commission meetings
- 4. Research issues**
  - 4.1 Proposed 2017/18 research program and priorities
  - 4.2 Annual research plan, including input to 2017 CCSBT stock assessment
  - 4.3 Research mortality allowance
- 5. Compliance issues**
  - 5.1 Compliance update
- 6. Domestic management issues**
  - 6.1 Monitoring update
  - 6.2 Monitoring in the ranch sector – update
    - 6.2 a. Transfer weighing procedure
  - 6.3 SBT budget issues - Reconciliation of 2015/16 SBT budget and status of AFMA's 2016/17 SBT budget
  - 6.4 Environment update, including WTO renewal
  - 6.5 Tags

**7. Next meeting** – Discuss the potential for holding a MAC meeting in Port Lincoln in May 2017

