



Australian Government

Australian Fisheries Management Authority

## Small Pelagic Fishery Resource Assessment Group (SPFRAG) 19

### Minutes

**Date:** 4 September 2014  
**Venue:** AFMA Canberra Office

#### Attendance

Name	Representation
Dr Kirsten Davies	Chair
A/Prof Tim Ward	Scientific Member
Dr Jeremy Lyle	Scientific Member
Mr Andy Moore	Scientific Member – attended until 2pm
Mr Gerry Geen	Industry Member
Mr Jon Bryan	Environment/Conservation Member
Mr Graham Pike	Recreational/Charter Fishing Member
Mr Grant Pullen	Tasmanian Permanent Observer – arrived at 10am
Dr John Stewart	NSW Permanent Observer
Mr Steve Shanks	AFMA Member
Ms Kylie Tonon	Executive Officer
Mrs Kirsten Bates	Observer (AFMA) – attended until 1pm
Prof Colin Buxton	Observer (FRDC)

#### Apologies

Name	Representation
Terry Romaro	Industry Member
Denis Brown	Industry Member



## Summary of Actions Arising and Recommendations

No.	Action items
1	AFMA to report to the RAG on the ability for members to access sharepoint through AFMA WiFi systems during meetings and reimbursement of printing costs.
2	AFMA to provide SPFRAG members information requested in the meeting in relation to move on rules for comment.
3	The recreational member to seek advice from his constituents on representative areas spatially and seasonally where recreational fishing activity has historically been undertaken.
4	SARDI to present a paper at the next meeting proposing any required modifications to the harvest strategy based on the findings of the CSIRO project examining exploitation rates in the fishery.
5	SPFRAG Chair to write to The Government of Victoria inviting observer representation at SPF RAG meetings, alongside the current NSW and Tasmania representatives.
6	AFMA to provide the RAG with advice for the next meeting on any actions and processes concerning RAG members not disclosing conflicts of interest at meetings. This includes actions retrospectively where advice has been provided by a member who has deemed to be in conflict.
7	The recreational member to send links to RAG members regarding the IGFA papers on small pelagics.
8	SARDI to circulate proceedings from the Small Pelagics Technical Workshop to the RAG when available.
9	AFMA to respond to SPFRAG about the confidentiality restrictions under FAP 12 in the context of members' ability to consult with their constituents.
10	IMAS to provide AFMA with text concerning research examining the effectiveness of Seal Excluder Devices (SEDs) to be included in the list of research priorities.
11	SPFRAG to prioritise research priorities out of session.

## Minutes

Note that the agenda for this meeting can be found at **Attachment 1**.

Item No.	Discussion	Action Items / Recommendations
1 Acknowledge- ment of Country	The RAG noted the Acknowledgement of country.	
2 Introduction and apologies	<p>The RAG noted apologies from Terry Romaro (industry member) and Denis Brown (industry member). The RAG also noted that Prof Colin Buxton from FRDC and Kirsten Bates from AFMA were observing the meeting.</p> <p>Mrs Bates informed the RAG that she is looking to automate processes such as MAC and RAG member appointments, the ability to claim sitting fees and providing meeting papers online.</p> <p>The RAG was supportive of the automation of services particularly making papers available</p>	<p><b>Action Item 1</b></p> <p>AFMA to report to the RAG on the ability for members to access sharepoint through AFMA WiFi systems during meetings and reimbursement of printing costs.</p>



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	<p>however suggested that the hard copies still needed to be available upon request. The RAG noted the need to be able to reimburse members for printing costs. The RAG also asked about WiFi availability to access sharepoint during AFMA meetings.</p> <p>AFMA advised that hard copies of the papers would still be made available and that they would report back to the RAG on the ability to access sharepoint through WiFi systems during meetings and reimbursement of printing costs.</p>	
<p><b>3</b> Declaration of interests</p>	<p>The RAG noted the conflicts as recorded in meeting papers. Mr Bryan corrected his declaration stating the name of the campaign he is involved in is "Stop the Trawler" not "Stop the Super Trawler". Mr Geen added that he held a South East Trawl boat Statutory Fishing Right. The updated register of conflicts of interest is at <b>Attachment 2</b>.</p> <p>The Chair explained that if any member had concerns about conflicts not being declared that they write to either herself or Dr Nick Rayns on the matter.</p>	
<p><b>4</b> Correspondence</p>	<p>The RAG noted the correspondence sent and received since the last meeting.</p>	
<p><b>5</b> Move on rule to address the risk of localised depletion in the SPF</p> <p><b>Action Item 2</b> AFMA to provide SPFRAG members information requested in the meeting in relation to move on rules for comment.</p> <p><u>Discussion</u></p> <p>The AFMA member presented two methods for applying move on rule arrangements. These methods were; 1) move on a set distance or 2) move on to another grid.</p> <p>1) <u>Move on set distance</u> This would require AFMA to monitor catches by location on a near real-time basis. When a catch trigger is reached in a particular area, a vessel would be required to move away from the centre of the area (e.g. circle) for a distance of at least twice the radius of the circle to avoid overlapping catches.</p> <p>The RAG raised concerns about the increased work load involved with this method. This included monitoring multiple vessels with potentially very long shots and that moving on a set distance is subjective (i.e. need to determine the center of the circle) as opposed to a grid system where the areas to move onto are clearly defined. The AFMA member explained that this method would not involve a large amount of work for up to 5-6 vessels.</p>		



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	<p>The RAG noted that at the recent Small Pelagic Technical Workshop in Adelaide, the international experts agreed that identifying localised depletion is not a tractable research question and that it needed to be dealt with in a practical way through management arrangements.</p>	
2)	<p><u>Move on to another grid</u></p>	
	<p>Under this option, the fishery would be divided into a series of grids and a vessel would be required to move on to another zone in the grid when a catch trigger is reached.</p>	
	<p>The AFMA member considered that this method was administratively more complex due to the requirement to seek agreement on where the zones are located, and the monitoring requirements of numerous small zones.</p>	
	<p>Other RAG members considered that grids could be automated more easily using a trigger in a GIS system, which would reduce the monitoring cost and that both options, at the same scale, have the same potential to spread effort.</p>	
	<p>The RAG noted concerns that, in progressing this work, the ecological/scientific requirement for what the grids/move on distances are trying to achieve, needs to be clear. Some members noted that the application of the grid system would need to be based on scientific information to be useful, and that currently information on fish movements and the recovery rates of fish after fishing was not available. The RAG noted that the current harvest rates are conservative to reduce the risk of localised depletion and central place foragers can be protected with spatial and temporal closures. However, it was also noted that wide ranging foragers are highly migratory and do not need protection. The environment member read out a statement about his concerns in relation to the management of the fishery which can be found at <b>Attachment 3</b>.</p>	
	<p>The RAG noted that there were some ecological risks attributable to localised depletion. However, it was noted that the internationally recognised scientists at the technical workshop were in agreement that the occurrence of localised depletion and its impacts cannot be measured accurately. The RAG discussed how the current Management Strategy Evaluation (MSE) analysis results suggest possible decreases to exploitation rates for Redbait and Jack Mackerel may be appropriate.</p>	
	<p>The RAG noted further concerns of the potential for SPF catch to increase suddenly with no learning or adaptive management to address this situation. This comment was made in the context of the South Australian Sardine Fishery where catches were increased gradually.</p>	
	<p>The RAG noted that there is a commitment to ongoing SPF DEPM surveys if the fishery is developed. They discussed how there is a reasonable amount of information available on fish movements up and down the east coast and the results of various DEPM surveys being undertaken this year will further inform any TACs set. In addition the Expert Panel report will provide further information regarding issues of localised depletion and actions that could be taken to avoid adverse impacts to predators or the broader marine environment.</p>	
	<p>The RAG considered the ability to collect information on the escapement of fish from mid-water trawl shots by observing sonar. It was proposed that sonar data could potentially be used to provide an index of how much fish remained after fishing (i.e. size and number of fish marks). This could potentially be used as a qualitative or semi-quantitative index of escapement and even recovery of heavily fished areas.</p>	



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	<p>The RAG noted that the proposal had merit for understanding depletion rates and stock movement and could enhance information on which to evaluate any spatial measures / move on provisions. Any information on escapement provided could be used to inform discussions on research and management. However, the AFMA member explained that was not possible to apply the monitoring of escapement as a management measure in the fishery because information could not be accurately quantified or applied in a manner whereby its effectiveness could be measured. The AFMA member noted that due to the limited capacity to apply escapement as a management measure, it could be applied on a voluntary basis with the information obtained considered when managing and conducting research in the fishery. The RAG agreed to identify the use of acoustic information to assess depletion rates as a research priority.</p>	
	<p>Some members had reservations about adopting, and being able to effectively implement any of these options, due to the inadequacy of research to base the grids and that this would be widely accepted as a solution for localised depletion. RAG members were asked if anyone present had an alternative option or position to address the risk of localised depletion. The only alternative put forward was the option to exclude fishing southwards from (the northern end of Flinders Island) Bass Strait which would avoid the potential for the entire eastern and western zone TAC to be taken in grid squares at the southern tip of Tasmania. Mention was made of the canyons in the Great Australian Bight (GAB) that are located well offshore and that upwellings from these canyons support and attract marine life.</p> <p>The RAG proceeded to consider various questions to inform the development of a grid system proposal with a focus on long term arrangements.</p> <p><i>Q: Should the method be applied to the fleet or vessel level and who should the method be applied to?</i></p> <p><i>A: Fleet level apart from boats with low catches for human consumption</i></p> <p>The RAG agreed that any arrangements should apply across the whole fleet to address localised depletion apart from vessels catching low volumes of approximately five tonnes for human consumption. This is to ensure that large vessels that have the ability to fish further offshore, do not trigger the move on provisions for small operators who are restricted in their ability to fish offshore.</p> <p>The RAG discussed excluding vessels with a certain hold capacity from the move on arrangements was administratively easier to monitor, but concluded that hold capacity is irrelevant as some smaller vessels can catch significant quantities of fish.</p> <p><i>Q: In what timeframes should this method be applied?</i></p> <p><i>A: The arrangements should be monitored continuously, but a formal review should be undertaken every two years.</i></p> <p>The RAG discussed trialing the arrangements for one or two years. Concern was expressed by RAG members that if the trial was not meeting the objectives, then the capacity to change or modify the move on rule arrangements might not exist until the end of the trial. The question was raised, if the move on rule arrangements were deemed to not be working in the intended manner, would the fishery be closed? The AFMA member noted that in cases where management arrangements are not working effectively in fisheries they are reviewed and modified or changed to ensure they are addressing the required objectives.</p>	



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	<p>Further, the RAG had a detailed discussion around whether the application of the move on rules should be considered a trial. The RAG agreed that these arrangements should not be considered a trial, but rather an adaptive management approach to address localised depletion that would be reviewed following a two year period. The RAG noted that two years was required to have enough information for a review and that the arrangements should be monitored and adjusted continuously throughout the first two years. The RAG suggested that the review would consider items such as catches in each grid, level of compliance with the arrangements, technicalities associated with implementation, restrictions on industry, recovery of stocks between grids, seasonality, catch rates, and the utility of industry-based acoustic data to gain to gain a measure of abundance over time.</p> <p><i>Q: What should be the timeframe over which the catch is taken in a grid to trigger move on rule?</i>  <i>A: One month</i></p> <p>The RAG noted that a timeframe of one month to trigger the catch level could be appropriate as anything less than one month would be too restrictive, and once the trigger is reached, operators would be excluded from the fishing area for a further month. The industry member stated that industry would like to return to the same area multiple times as fish were not distributed evenly but tended to aggregate in specific areas.</p> <p>An alternative view was presented where the move on rule is triggered after one year, and once triggered, operators cannot fish in the grid for another year, as one year is the standard biological timeframe for breeding and behavioral cycles in predatory species such as seals. The majority of members considered that one year is not a relevant timeframe when considering localised depletion and the RAG generally accepted one month as an appropriate time frame. The environmental member suggested that a smaller catch trigger and longer time period would be preferred.</p> <p><i>Q: Should the catch limit be applied to all species combined or individual species? (additional question)</i>  <i>A: All species combined.</i></p> <p>The RAG agreed to apply the trigger limit to all species combined, primarily because addressing the risk of localised depletion should concern all species combined rather than individual species. Catches in midwater trawl shots are generally mixed so if move on rules applied on a per-species basis, the trigger could be reached for a single species while triggers for other species are under caught. Some members suggested that as the fishery is managed on a species by species basis, the triggers should be based on an individual species.</p> <p>The RAG noted that total catch is administratively simpler to monitor as a catch trigger.</p> <p><i>Q: What should the catch level be within a zone before a vessel is required to move on?</i>  <i>A: 4 per cent of the combined TAC.</i></p> <p>The RAG discussed applying a catch trigger of 4 per cent of the combined TAC for the smallest agreed grid size as a catch trigger limit and if triggered, operators cannot return to the grid to fish for another month.</p> <p>The RAG noted concerns that skippers could consistently fish different target species fishing just under the trigger limit and to stay in a zone for a prolonged period. In such a case almost</p>	



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	<p>half of the TAC could be caught in the same grid square if 4 per cent of the total TAC was harvested every month for 12 months. The RAG discussed applying an upper catch limit for each grid to ensure the effort was spread between grids but decided that an upper catch limit should only be applied if necessary after the two year review.</p>	
	<p>The RAG highlighted that it was important to consider the move on arrangements as a package with other spatial/temporal closures incorporated. AFMA agreed to draw up the whole package for the RAG to consider out of session. The RAG also agreed that it was important to seek a copy of the expert panel's report as soon as it was available, as it will inform the RAG's advice to the Commission on the package of measures to deal with localised depletion.</p>	
	<p><b>Q: How large should the grids be?</b></p>	
	<p><b>A: Grids should be 30nm x 30nm along the coast and 60nm x 60nm past that.</b></p>	
	<p>After discussing options for the size of grids and where they apply, the RAG agreed that grids should be 30 x 30nm along populated areas of the coast and 60 x 60nm in other areas along the coast up to the SA and WA border. In addition one 60 x 60nm grid would be applied outside of the 30 x 30nm coastal grids. The RAG suggested that these grids should sit on latitudinal and longitudinal lines to make the arrangements as simple as possible.</p>	
	<p>The reasons for the grid sizes are:</p>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 30x30nm is large enough to limit the possibility of midwater trawl shots extending over multiple zones, as shots can be up to 16nm long. This is an appropriate size to monitor the localised effects of depletion without being too restrictive on industry.</li> <li>• Predatory interactions are more likely to occur closer to shore. The majority of RAG members supported at least one set of 30 x 30nm adjacent to the coastline. The environmental and recreational members supported 2 sets of 30x30nm grids along the shoreline.</li> <li>• The 30 x 30nm grids extend across the fishery. The RAG considered it appropriate to apply grids next to the coast in high population areas (east coast of Tasmania, East coast of NSW and along the coast of Victoria through to Robe in SA) and adjacent to Port Lincoln.</li> <li>• The RAG recommended that in offshore areas (past the 30x30nm grids) the size of the grids should be doubled to 60x60nm because the risk of localised depletion and effects on predatory species is significantly reduced. The industry member did not support grids applying past 50nm offshore as there is limited ecological basis for applying move on provisions offshore. The recreational member explained that fishers can go up to 100nm offshore and highlighted that large pelagics are not always along the shelf.</li> <li>• If 4 per cent of combined TAC triggers a move on in 30x30nm grids, the RAG agreed to proportionally increase the catch to 16 per cent of the total combined TAC to trigger a move on in 60x60nm grids.</li> </ul>	
	<p>The RAG noted that the majority of the catch could still be taken from a few grids which may not be consistent with the objective of spreading catches throughout the fishery. The RAG considered that unfished grids were not a concern at this stage.</p>	
	<p>The AFMA member advised, that based on discussions, he would draw up a complete package of information for RAG members to comment on and comments on the package would be forwarded to SEMAC and the AFMA Commission. The RAG suggested that it was important</p>	



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	<p>that members seek feedback from their constituents before adopting the arrangements, but agreed that the package should go through the AFMA Commission before being released for public comment.</p> <p>The environment member mentioned that the RAG should recognise that localised depletion is only one issue of concern in relation to the management of the SPF. The other concerns that need to also be addressed are contained in the environmental member's statement to the RAG at <b>Attachment 3</b>.</p>	
<p><b>6</b> Spatial management measures</p>	<p>The recreational fishing member presented the paper he had tabled at the meeting (<b>Attachment 4</b>).</p> <p>The RAG discussed the context of closures as detailed at the last RAG meeting. They agreed that spatial and temporal closures form part of the toolbox for managing localised depletion and are important to incorporate into the package, such as implementing arrangements to avoid key recreational fishing events.</p> <p>The RAG suggested that AFMA run a series of stakeholder consultation sessions where a draft of potential spatial/temporal closures could be discussed with stakeholders. They highlighted the need for NSW fisheries to be involved as they know roughly where and when tournaments are held.</p> <p>The Chair suggested that AFMA could also pose questions to people via email where they can respond individually. However before potentially consulting more widely, the RAG recommended that the recreational member presents his paper at the next SPFRAG meeting, after further consultation with his constituents. Noting that the purpose of consulting was to obtain information in regard to areas where the recreational sector fish seasonally. The purpose of obtaining this information was to enable the RAG to examine areas that could potentially be closed to commercial fishing to avoid conflicts between recreational and commercial fishing operations.</p>	<p><b>Action Item 3</b></p> <p>The recreational member to seek advice from his constituents on representative areas spatially and seasonally where recreational fishing activity has historically been undertaken.</p>
<p><b>7</b> SPF Harvest Strategy MSE</p>	<p>The RAG noted that the draft CSIRO report on the project to '<i>Review and update harvest strategy settings for the Commonwealth small pelagic fishery</i>' was not available for the meeting as there were some technical concerns raised in regard to the application of the modelling that need to be addressed. The RAG were advised that the results are likely to be similar to those presented in previous MSEs where Sardine and Blue Mackerel exploitation rates were conservative, while Redbait and Jack Mackerel exploitation rates are less</p>	<p><b>Action Item 4</b></p> <p>SARDI to present a paper at the next meeting proposing any required modifications to the harvest strategy based on the findings of the CSIRO project examining exploitation rates in</p>



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	<p>conservative based on a 50 per cent probability of exceeding the limit reference point. It was suggested that the RAG may need to review the current exploitation rates in the Harvest Strategy at the next meeting when the draft CSIRO report is available.</p>	<p>the fishery.</p>
<p><b>8</b> Responses from SPFRAG recommendations</p>	<p>The RAG noted the responses from SEMAC and the AFMA Commission on recommendations from recent SPFRAG meetings.</p> <p>The RAG noted concerns from the environmental and recreational fishing members that their advice was being ignored at SEMAC and by the AFMA Commission. Specifically the environmental and recreational members were concerned that there is not enough information available for the SPF TACs to be set at the Tier 2 level and the advice they had provided on this matter was not reflected strongly enough in the minutes of the SEMAC meeting. The AFMA member explained that the Commission takes into account all views and advice provided and that they noted information from the recent DEPM surveys would provide further information to set the TACs for 2015. He explained that SEMAC had extensively discussed the issue and that it was difficult to collect a significant number of samples with limited, if any, fishing being undertaken. The SARDI scientific member highlighted that for the fishery to be assessed at the Tier 2 level, and to drop to Tier 3, would be inconsistent with the application of the harvest strategy.</p> <p>In the NSW industry member's absence, the AFMA member discussed SEMAC's view of the 500t limit for Australian Sardine. He said that SEMAC was of the view that similar discussions were held for school whiting and suggested that there was a risk of exceeding the RBC if a minimum Commonwealth allocation was set. As a result SEMAC did not wish to provide advice that promoted overfishing. The AFMA member also explained that SEMAC had asked how much Australian Sardine TAC had been caught recently. Given only 150 tonnes had been caught, the view of SEMAC was that catching was not pushing levels that would potentially justify a 500 tonne minimum TAC level.</p> <p>The RAG agreed that this was an issue for AFMA to resolve. However, they agreed that the RAG Chair would again write another letter/invitation to Victoria to engage in resource allocation discussions.</p>	<p><b>Action Item 5</b> SPFRAG Chair to write to the Government of Victoria inviting observer representation at SPF RAG meetings, alongside the current NSW and Tasmania representatives.</p>



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<p><b>9</b> Action Items from SPFRAG 17 and 18</p>	<p>The RAG noted that the majority of the Action Items had been completed.</p> <p>In relation to SPFRAG 17 Action Item #2 (<i>ABARES to prepare a paper on the benefits of acoustic surveys as part of research priorities discussion at the next SPFRAG meeting</i>) the RAG recognised that Dr Penney had moved on from ABARES into his own consultancy. The RAG agreed that this was no longer an action item nor should acoustic surveys (different to catch monitoring using acoustics) be a research priority at this stage.</p> <p>In relation to SPFRAG 17 Action Item #13 (<i>AFMA and ABARES to report to the RAG on existing literature and identify research gaps and resources required to produce a report on the abundance of SPF predator species, including their geographical location, by 31 March 2014</i>) the RAG agreed that this be postponed until the outcomes from the Expert Panel report are available.</p>	
<p><b>10</b> AFMA Management Update</p>	<p>The RAG noted that AFMA cannot publicly release un-aggregated data from less than five vessels without the operator's consent. The RAG discussed that industry and AFMA should share information on the public resource to gain public confidence and trust. The RAG discussed the possibility of licence holders publishing catch information but noted confidentially constraints make this difficult. The environment member pointed out that this was a very contentious issue in the community and that public scrutiny was necessary if concerns about the fishery, particularly those about localised depletion, were to be resolved.</p> <p>The RAG noted that members should write to the chair or Dr Nick Rayns if there are any concerns on conflict of interest disclosures and that the AFMA CEO has the power to remove a member from the RAG based on not declaring a conflict of interest. The AFMA member agreed to take a question on notice regarding the process if a RAG member had not declared a conflict of interest and the RAG had made recommendations in relation to issue. Although the RAG noted that its role was to provide advice and not to make recommendations.</p> <p>The AFMA member mentioned that the memberships were expiring at the end of the year and that AFMA will be sending out a call for membership shortly.</p>	<p><b>Action Item 6</b> AFMA to provide the RAG with advice for the next meeting on any actions and processes concerning RAG members not disclosing conflicts of interest at meetings. This includes actions retrospectively where advice has been provided by a member who has deemed to be in conflict.</p>



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	<p>The RAG noted that AFMA intends to organise a stakeholder forum in Hobart in mid-October that would provide information about management and science in the fishery for the purpose of seeking the views of the recreational and environmental sectors. The forum is intended to provide additional information to inform the advice of the RAG, SEMAC and the AFMA Commission.</p> <p>Although supportive of a stakeholder forum, some RAG members did not support AFMA holding the forum in mid-October, and advised that a forum in mid-November or later would be more appropriate to provide enough notice to stakeholders. Both the environment and recreational fishing members stated that a public forum on the SPF that was well planned with stakeholder consultation and input could be very constructive, and would be a useful way for AFMA to regain some trust in the wider community with regards to this fishery. They suggested that the way this forum was being organised with short notice, and before the Expert Panel's report was released, would not be helpful in building community relationships.</p>	
<p><b>11</b> Recreational and Commercial Sector updates</p>	<p>The recreational member informed the RAG that the World Recreational Fishing Conference was being held in Brazil between 1-4 September, and there was a petition being sent to the Brazilian Government aimed at stopping the commercial marketing of black and white marlin and seeking the enforcement of and higher compliance with laws to protect overfished small pelagic stocks off South America. The recreational fishing member also noted that the International Game Fish Association (IGFA) was producing papers on the importance to marine ecosystems and game fishing of small pelagic fish. These were available through the IGFA website. There were no significant updates from other sectors.</p>	<p><b>Action Item 7</b> The recreational member to send links to RAG members regarding the IGFA papers on small pelagics.</p>
<p><b>12</b> International Workshop</p>	<p>The RAG noted that the advice from the Small Pelagics Technical Workshop provided confidence in the way that both the SASF and the SPF are managed and indicated that Australia is a leader in ecosystem based fisheries management. The RAG noted that it would have been beneficial to have more stakeholders attend in the last few days of the workshop, but that the stakeholder forum, to be held by AFMA, will engage more stakeholders on the management and science in the SPF. The RAG noted that the proceedings from the Workshop in Adelaide will be available soon and would be circulated to RAG members.</p>	<p><b>Action Item 8</b> SARDI to circulate proceedings from the Small Pelagics Technical Workshop to the RAG when available.</p>



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<p><b>13</b> Other Items</p>	<p>The RAG noted a concern with section 4.1 of FAP 12 that limits the ability for RAG members to consult with their constituents on RAG issues as it states that RAG members must keep discussions and deliberations confidential unless otherwise agreed with the Chair. The AFMA member also took this issue as a question on notice.</p>	<p><b>Action Item 9</b> AFMA to respond to SPFRAG about the confidentiality restrictions under FAP 12 in the context of members ability to consult with their constituents.</p>
<p><b>Additional agenda item</b> SPFRAG research priorities</p>	<p>SPFRAG discussed the research priorities based on the feedback previously provided from RAG members. The research priorities proposed prior to the meeting include:</p> <p><i>1) Seek information about fish movements within stocks of target species and recovery times after fishing</i></p> <p>The RAG noted that that the technical workshop specifically looked at this question and concluded that it was very difficult to measure. It was suggested that acoustic information from fishing operations, as discussed earlier in the meeting, would be an appropriate way to provide information on stock distribution and possibly recovery times when incorporated in a package of grid squares.</p> <p>The RAG therefore suggested that a research priority be developed that aims to assess stock movement and distribution, based on information of depletion rates and escapement gathered through acoustic/sonar equipment on board fishing vessels. This research may also incorporate stock movement information gathered from the series of DEPM surveys and would inform the evaluation of the move on provisions.</p> <p><i>2) Develop a monitoring system to monitor the welfare of seals and dolphins, particularly for new bycatch reduction devices.</i></p> <p>The RAG noted concerns that the seal excluder device (SED) that was proposed to be used on the factory freezer vessel had not been tested. The RAG discussed the need for new equipment to be tested before fishing to ensure the welfare of seals and dolphins, but noted that there needs to be fishing to test the effectiveness of SEDs. The RAG discussed how SEDs and vessel management plans are required for midwater trawlers, and any interactions are recorded by both the observer and the skipper, however, this interaction data is rarely collated and analysed to inform managers on the</p>	<p><b>Action Item 10</b> IMAS to provide AFMA with text concerning research examining the effectiveness of Seal Excluder Devices (SEDs) to be included in the list of research priorities.</p> <p><b>Action Item 11</b> SPFRAG to prioritise research priorities out of session.</p>



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	<p>effectiveness of SEDs in mitigating interactions. The environment member stated that underwater video of the net / SED should be part of monitoring for the operation of this fishery.</p> <p>The RAG agreed that AFMA should continue to collect interaction information, but that there should be an adaptive program to improve arrangements which may include experiments on the effectiveness of new SEDs. The RAG requested the IMAS member to develop a brief proposal for this priority to incorporate into the research plan.</p> <p>3) <i>Ensuring DEPM based stock assessments for all target species reflect reality and</i></p> <p>4) <i>Undertaking DEPM based stock assessments so that stock assessments are recent and better represent actual condition of stocks.</i></p> <p>The RAG noted that DEPM surveys are already included in the SPF Research Plan and that there was a survey for Jack Mackerel and Sardine in January and a DEPM survey for Blue Mackerel, Sardine and Taylor currently underway.</p> <p>5) <i>Annual Development of the Fishery Assessment Report</i></p> <p>The RAG noted that this is also in the current research plan and that SARDI have been contracted to continue the report for a further three years.</p> <p>6) <i>Using ecosystem population models to examine exploitation rates at Tiers 1 and 2.</i></p> <p>The RAG noted that this priority has already been addressed through the report by CSIRO that will be available shortly.</p> <p>The RAG agreed that the research would be prioritised out of session.</p>	
<p><b>14</b> Meeting closure and next meeting</p>	<p>The RAG agreed to set a notional date out of session for a meeting in the week of 17-21 November.</p>	

Signed (Chairperson):



Date:

30 September 2014



**List of Attachments**

- 1) SPFRAG 19 Agenda
- 2) SPFRAG 19 Record of Conflicts of Interest
- 3) Paper from the Environmental Member
- 4) Paper from the Recreational Member





Australian Government

Australian Fisheries Management Authority

## Small Pelagic Fishery Resource Assessment Group (SPFRAG)

### Meeting No. 19

#### Agenda

**Date:** 4 September 2014

**Venue:** AFMA Canberra Office  
73 Northbourne Avenue, Canberra, ACT

**Time:** 8:00 am

#### **PRELIMINARIES**

- Agenda Item 1: Acknowledgement of Country
- Agenda Item 2: Introduction and Apologies
- Agenda Item 3: Declaration of interests
- Agenda Item 4: Correspondence

#### **ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION AND ADVICE**

- Agenda Item 5: Move on rule to address risk of localised depletion
- Agenda Item 6: Spatial management to address recreational concerns
- Agenda Item 7: SPF Harvest Strategy MSE Analysis summary and advice

#### **ITEMS FOR INFORMATION**

- Agenda Item 8: Responses from SPF RAG recommendations
- Agenda Item 9: Action Items from SPFRAG 17 and 18
- Agenda Item 10: AFMA Management Update
- Agenda Item 11: Recreational and Commercial Sector Updates
- Agenda Item 12: Update from International Workshop on Small Pelagic Fisheries

#### **OTHER ITEMS**

- Agenda Item 13: Other Business
- Agenda Item 14: Meeting Closure



## Register of Declared Conflicts of Interest

Participant & Membership	Interest declared
Kirsten Davies Chair	No financial interest in fishery.
Tim Ward Scientific	Role of science leader for the fisheries science program in SARDI. Conducts research for State fisheries and leads the Pelagic fisheries research team. Member of South Australia Sardine Fishery Industry research / management committee.
Jeremy Lyle Scientific	Senior Research Scientist, Institute for Marine and Antarctic Studies. Has led several research projects relevant to the SPF and is involved in the assessment of Tasmania's scalefish fishery. No pecuniary interest.
Andy Moore Scientific	Employed by ABARES which has done, and may do in future, research under contract on small pelagic fish species. No pecuniary interest
Graham Pike Recreational	No direct or indirect financial interest in the SPF. Concerned with the conservation and health of the natural resources on which recreational fishers and their recreational and charter fishing industries depend, particularly in the context of the RAG's advice and considerations in relation to the management of the SPF and of related marine ecosystems.
Jon Bryan Environment	No direct or indirect pecuniary interest. Member of TARFish which has an interest in the super-trawler debate. Involved in the 'Stop the trawler' campaign and expects to be part of this until issues surrounding localised depletion, ongoing SPF stock assessments and other related issues are resolved. Member of the Tasmanian Recreational Fisheries Advisory Committee and all other fisheries advisory committees in Tasmania. Does part time work for the Tasmanian Conservation Trust.
Denis Brown Industry	Holder of SPF SFRs for Redbait, Blue Mackerel and Jack Mackerel in the Eastern and Western Zones, and Australian Sardine in the Eastern Zone. Director of corporate entities with holdings of SPF SFRs for Redbait, Blue Mackerel and Jack Mackerel in the Eastern and Western Zones, and Australian Sardine in the Eastern Zone; and Pelagic Fish Processors plant at Eden. Holds concessions in the NSW state purse seine fishery and ocean haul fishery. Peripheral involvement with research on small pelagic fisheries. Member of NSW Research Advisory Working Group and the NSW Ocean Haul Management Advisory Committee. Peripheral interest of financial benefits of activities in the SPF through quota holdings.
Gerry Geen Industry	Director of Seafish Tasmania Pty Ltd that holds SPF SFRs for Jack Mackerel, Redbait and Blue Mackerel in the Eastern and Western Zones. Holds four Tasmanian purse-seine Jack Mackerel Permits; and four zone A purse seine permits. Director of Seafish Tasmania Pelagic Pty Ltd. Holds a South East Trawl SFR.
Terry Romaro Industry	Director of a corporate entity with holdings of SPF SFRs for Redbait, Blue Mackerel and Jack Mackerel in the Eastern and Western Zone. Permit holder in the Western Australian Purse Seine Pilchard Fishery and the Coral Sea Trawl Fishery. Member of TTMAC and participant in SBTMAC.
Steve Shanks AFMA	Works for AFMA, no financial interest
Kylie Tonon Exec Officer	Works for AFMA, no financial interest



**Statement from Jon Bryan, SPFRAG Environment Member**

1. The current definition of localised depletion is unsatisfactory as it lacks anything that can be quantified therefore there can be no performance measures - i.e. there is no way to measure success or failure of measures that might be taken to avoid the problem of localised depletion. If something can't be measured, it is impossible to manage it.

2. There is no new research or other information on the movement of target fish species within stocks. There is therefore no way to predict how long it will take for local fish populations to recover from fishing. There is also no way to assess if Bass Strait or other geographic/oceanographic features are a barrier to fish movements to the point where recovery of local fish populations is hindered.

3. There is still no long term commitment – as part of the formal SPF Harvest Strategy - to continuing, regular fixed term DEPM surveys that would underpin conservative exploitation rates. Even if the two small pelagic fishery failures that have occurred in Tasmania during the past 25 years (that is surface schools of jack mackerel and more recently, redbait, in the small pelagic fishery) were not related to fishing, these failures indicate that variability of stocks and, presumably, environmental factors, make it difficult to predict stock status into the future. It would also seem to be anti-scientific and foolhardy to rely on old stock assessments when there is no justification for assuming that they remain valid.

4. Regarding move on proposals: it should also be noted that #2 above means that it may be impossible to justify these on the basis of scientific evidence. There is no new research or other information on the movement of target fish species within stocks. There is therefore no way to predict how long it will take for local fish populations to recover from fishing. There is also no way to assess if Bass Strait or other geographic/oceanographic features are a barrier to fish movements to the point where recovery of local fish populations is hindered. There is no way to assess the effectiveness of move on proposals.

5. If spatial and temporal closures are proposed, actual details about locations and timeframes would be needed to make any proper assessment. It should also be noted that #2 above means that it may be impossible to justify these on the basis of scientific evidence. There is no new research or other information on the movement of target fish species within stocks. There is therefore no way to predict how long it will take for local fish populations to recover from fishing. There is also no way to assess if Bass Strait or other geographic/oceanographic features are a barrier to fish movements to the point where recovery of local fish populations is hindered. There is no way to assess the effectiveness of spatial and temporal closure proposals.

6. For public confidence, fishing activity must be transparent and open to public scrutiny. Information on location, time and quantity of catch must be available and the 5 boat rule should not apply.

Jon Bryan  
Tasmanian Conservation Trust



**RECREATIONAL FISHING DATA GATHERING AND RESEARCH IN SPF**

The recreational fishing sector makes these points:

1. Marine locations fished by game and sport fishers in the area of Australia's Small Pelagic Fishery are:
  - (a) Constantly changing (i) in size, therefore the boundaries are impossible to define; (ii) new areas are constantly emerging/being discovered, therefore cannot be identified at any particular point in time, and (iii) locations which have been favoured for various periods lose their popularity and are no longer fished regularly.
2. As the recreational fishing sector has long stipulated, data gathering and research resources should not be directed at gathering data on recreational fishing locations but on the research and data gathering necessary to:
  - (i) Provide pre-fishing Information about fish movements within stocks of target species and recovery times after fishing *to (1) determine how long before fish numbers in a local area recover after fishing and to (2) predict impacts of localised depletion on the recreational sector. This information is needed to understand the risks of localised depletion and develop management strategies to reduce this risk to acceptable levels*
  - (ii) Ensure DEPM based stock assessments for all target species reflect reality. This is fundamental to managing the SPF responsibly.
  - (iii) Undertake DEPM based stock assessments so that stock assessments are recent and better represent actual condition of stocks. This is fundamental to managing this fishery responsibly.
  - (iv) Development of the Fishery Assessment Report annually.
  - (v) Using ecosystem population models, backed by empirical research, to examine exploitation rates at Tiers 1 and 2 of the SPF Harvest Strategy.
3. AFMA/SPFRAG has determined that "zoning and spatial and temporal closures were not appropriate management mechanisms to address the risk of localised depletion. The basis for this position was that no capacity exists to measure the effectiveness of zoning or spatial and temporal closures." This makes any suggestion of gathering data on game/sport fishing locations redundant.
4. Game/sport fishing locations around the southern half of Australia are not only largely indeterminable (because of 1(a) above), but (a) cover a huge number of areas, and (b) in very many cases are known only to large groups of individuals and/or numerous formal and informal clubs and associations. Such factors make the logistics and resources necessary to gather geographic information practically impossible.

**General comments**



The recreational fishing sector is strongly of the view that AFMA needs to consider strategically the way in which the maximum Australian community benefit can be obtained from the SPF resource and whether that may indeed mean leaving it unfished or fished at much lighter levels than previously considered in view of the wide and significant contribution of these forage fish to the ecosystem and particularly certain valuable and iconic predators.

AFMA should consider “the best and highest use” for the fish resources of the SPF as part of its responsibility to consider the holistic ‘efficient’ management of these resources.

This is a common concept in other parts of the economy. For example, local government councils will often reject building applications or projects on land which have a “higher and better use” than the one proposed; eg. a factory might be rejected in a location that is better utilised for high rise residential or office applications. This is a common and accepted concept by the Australian community - that not all development is necessarily good development in all areas. This is despite the often loud protestations of the proponents that are seeking their own profit over the ultimate good of the Australian community.

The SPF resource is owned by all Australians. It is not owned by those with a percentage allocation of the quota that Australians decide they want commercially fished or by those owning fishing licences. Fishing licences and allocation methods are only a way to try to efficiently manage how that resource is utilised by the commercial fishing sector for the benefit of Australians.

AFMA has a legislative responsibility to consider ecosystem based management. It is unlikely that the maximum Australian community benefit would be achieved in the SPF by the use of large foreign-owned vessel/s, crewed largely by overseas personnel, which process on-board and export a low value product to countries which are now unable to sustain their own domestic fishing industry in a profitable way because of the previous actions of super trawlers in their waters.

- GP

