



Australian Government

Australian Fisheries Management Authority



Southern and Eastern Scalefish and Shark Fishery - Great Australian Bight Resource Assessment Group (GABRAG)

 GABRAG TELECONFERENCE 2013

MINUTES

The first Great Australian Bight Resource Assessment Group (GABRAG) meeting for 2013 was via teleconference on 18 April 2013.

Attendees

Members

Dr Rik Buckworth, Chair, CSIRO
Mr Ross Bromley, AFMA Member
Ms Marcia Valente, Industry Member
Mr Jim Raptis, Industry Member
Mr Tony Muollo, Industry Member
Mr Jeff Moore, Industry Member, GABIA
Dr Ian Knuckey, Scientific Member, Fishwell Consulting
Dr Neil Klaer, Scientific Member, CSIRO
Mr Andy Moore, Scientific Member, ABARES
Mr Cameron Pietsch, Executive Officer GABRAG, AFMA

Observers

Patrick Sachs, AFMA

Agenda Item 1 - Preliminaries

Welcome and Apologies

Rik Buckworth (the Chair) opened the meeting at 3:00pm (AEST) and welcomed members.

The Chair noted that in keeping with normal practice, the meeting would be recorded to assist with preparation of the minutes.

The Chair also acknowledged Patrick Sachs' participation as an observer as a learning experience.

Declarations of Interest

The Chair asked the RAG members to declare any interests and acquire the agreement of the meeting that no individual's personal interest is being served by participation.

Participant	Interest Declared
Dr Rik Buckworth, Chair	Employed by CSIRO, interest in sources of funding for research purposes and Director of a small company that sells hooks that sample tissue.
Dr Ian Knuckey, Scientific Member	Director Fishwell Consulting, interest in sources of funding for research purposes, research work for GABIA and a purveyor of electronic logbook systems, work on Fishery Independent Surveys (FIS).
Dr Neil Klaer, Scientific Member	Employed by CSIRO – Interest in sources of funding for research purposes, complete stock assessments
Mr Jim Raptis, Industry Member	GAB boat and quota SFR holder
Ms Marcia Valente, Industry Member	GAB boat and quota SFR holder
Mr Tony Muollo	GAB boat and quota SFR holder
Mr Jeff Moore, Industry Member	Great Australian Bight Industry Association (GABIA) EO, board member of Commonwealth Fisheries Association and industry member for Marine National Parks – No pecuniary interest.
Dr Andy Moore, Scientific Member	Employed by ABARES - Interest in sources of funding for research purposes, no personal pecuniary interest
Mr Ross Bromley, AFMA Manager	No pecuniary interest



Participant	Interest Declared
Mr Cameron Pietsch, AFMA, GABRAG EO	No pecuniary interest
Mr Patrick Sachs, AFMA Observer	No pecuniary interest

Adoption of Agenda

Members adopted the draft agenda

Agenda Item 2 - Risks to the GABTS of not undertaking a FIS in 2014

The chair asked Jeff Moore to open the meeting by letting the group know some of the background that has prompted GABIA to call this meeting.

Jeff Moore summarised GABIA's position to the group:

GABIA is committed long term to the FIS but in the short term they can't afford to pay, given the levy AFMA has requested. They asked for input on the risk of delaying the FIS for one year and to bring forward the flathead assessment, this being partly to mitigate risk but also to bring the RBC back to where GABIA believes it should be. There is an implicit concern that last year's assessment overly reduced the RBC in contrast to observations of recent higher catch rates. A background paper is provided at **Attachment A**.

The Chair asked Ian Knuckey to re-iterate his thoughts from the email that was circulated to the group on the 17th of April (**Attachment B**).

Ian Knuckey noted the significant conflict of interest he was facing on this issue and that it would be appropriate for him to leave once he had stated his opinions.

Ian Knuckey summarised his position to the group:

- The FIS provides more than just points on a graph, it is an index of abundance from data independent of fishery activities;
- The risk should be considered not just in terms of the risk to the stock of delaying for one year but the long term risk now that a lack of commitment has been shown
- The costs of the science is only part of the cost of the FIS and boat charter fees are paid to GAB operators involved in the survey
- Can't see any short-term threat to flathead stock for next year from not running a FIS THIS YEAR, but may have some issues if the lack of a FIS is continued for any longer
- GABIA and GABRAG should be seriously considering how to suck more information out of the FIS
- The surveys are considered very highly by people like the Marine Stewardship Council



Industry members Jeff Moore, Tony Muollo, Jim Raptis and Marcia Valente raised the following concerns:

- If there is a recognised public good to be had from the FIS then the government should be making a contribution
- Due to industry agreements not to trade quota, two SFRs are needed for one boat. This makes the levy costs of running one boat in the GAB \$132k, an amount which industry members considered unsustainable.
- The survey can be hit and miss because of the natural variability in the fishery
- The risk to the stock and the wider environment are very low due to the very small number of boats operating in a very large area.
- The industry members support the FIS in the long term; however the operation of the FIS needs to be looked at very closely
- There are significant amounts of data collected through other means including logbooks, crew-collected data and AFMA observers
- The intervals between stock assessments and the FIS needs to be agreed
- Funding for the FIS should be amortised over a number of years
- Everything comes down to cost and this year it is just not affordable

The AFMA member asked for some clear scientific advice from the science members on the risk to the stock.

The science members Ian Knuckey, Andy Moore and Neil Klaer raised the following concerns:

- The stock itself is in good condition (close to target) so we are not talking about risk to the stock at the moment
- You don't run a FIS only when you think it will benefit assessments. You use it to keep tabs on your stock in both positive and negative trends
- If you space out your assessments and you don't monitor them in the meantime big changes in the biomass estimate are more likely between those assessments
- The FIS has been one of the most consistent inputs into the assessment and has validated to some degree the accuracy of CPUE as an index
- The FIS also collects the Bight Redfish data for next year's assessment
- The GAB is still governed by quota regardless of the number of operators. The risk to the stock is in the catch (quota) that is removed each year not the effort
- the last survey point we have is from 2011 and we are now discussing pushing back the 2014 FIS which is already quite a big gap



- the error bounds for the FIS are significantly smaller so the stock assessment fits the FIS more closely than the CPUE, however they are not in conflict. This is partly due to the time series for the FIS being shorter than the CPUE
- the last data point from the FIS was a lower one and that is going to remain in the model until you complete another FIS. That is going to drag down the potential biomass estimate even if the CPUE goes up again
- Having a survey or something equivalent to a fishery independent survey is internationally the gold standard for fisheries management. Surveys have proliferated because CPUE has failed in some fisheries to be a good index of abundance
- A formal qualitative risk assessment needs to be looked at.

Ian Knuckey left after assisting with these issues (3:15pm).

The Chair summarised the group consensus as being that the group is comfortable with the level of risk associated with delaying the FIS for one year. The group also agreed to revisit longer-term research planning and re-evaluate the FIS (including funding, intervals, data use and design).

GABRAG recommendation – Delay the FIS for one year

Agenda Item 3 - Proposed 2013 stock assessment for Deepwater Flathead

The Chair directed the group to move on to Agenda item 3 and opened the discussion by asking Neil Klaer if it was feasible to move the stock assessment forward given that a FIS will no longer be run.

Neil Klaer made the following points:

- The last FIS data point will still be influential
- Additional CPUE, age/length and logbook data will be available
- You want to run as many assessments as is affordable
- A consideration is the possibility of bias to creep into the assessments when you only request two in a row if you are unhappy with the previous result.
- Bringing the assessment forward will align it with the full stock assessment project which is a good thing
- The industry collected data would be good to use in the assessment if it could be made available in time. The AFMA member pointed out that AFMA is working on the issues surrounding the crew collected data.

Industry members made the following points:

- Bringing the assessment forward is a prudent measure



- The decreasing trend in CPUE seems to have ceased

The Chair summarised the group's consensus: Bringing the assessment forward provides a level of comfort and provides a bit more confidence in the management direction of the fishery. It also serves to pick up management concerns about the last assessment and the CPUE information that was used in that so that it might rectify a downward trend.

GABRAG recommendation – Bring the Deepwater flathead stock assessment forward one year

Agenda Item 4 - Other Information/Discussion Items

The group discussed the workshop proposed by AFMA on issues surrounding the FIS and other research funding.

The group agreed to support AFMA's proposal to run a workshop in 2013-14 on research funding issues. Also, to support AFMA in securing funding for the workshop and some research on the best possible way forward.

GABRAG recommendation – AFMA conducts a workshop and research on future directions for research funding and in particular the future of the FIS.

The Chair thanked everyone for their participation

Meeting closes (5:25pm).

