



Australian Government

Australian Fisheries Management Authority



**Sub-
Antarctic
Resource
Assessment Group
(SARAG)**

**DRAFT MINUTES
SARAG 50**

11 SEPTEMBER 2014

SUB- ANTARCTIC RESOURCE ASSESSMENT GROUP (SARAG)

CHAIR: Dr Malcolm Haddon (Interim)

Date: 11 September 2014

Venue: Australian Antarctic Division, Channel Highway, Kingston

Attendance

Members

Dr Malcolm Haddon, CSIRO
Dr Richard Hillary, CSIRO
Dr Philippe Ziegler, AAD
Dr Dirk Welsford, AAD
Mr Martin Exel, Industry Member
Mr Les Scott, Industry Member
Ms Jo Fisher, AFMA
Ms Sarah Kirkcaldie, Executive Officer, AFMA

Observers

Dr Heather Patterson, ABARES
Mr Malcolm McNeil, Industry
Dr Andrew Constable, AAD
Dr Jemery Day, CSIRO
Mr Dale Maschette, Honours student, AAD

Apologies

Prof John Buckeridge – Chair

Introduction

Agenda item 1 - Preliminaries

The fiftieth meeting of the Sub-Antarctic Resource Assessment Group (SARAG 50) was opened at 8:40 am on 11 September 2014 by the interim Chair, Dr Malcolm Haddon. Members welcomed Mr Malcolm McNeill, Dr Andrew Constable and Mr Maschette as observers to the meeting.

1.1 Declaration of interests

Dr Haddon asked members and observers to declare their professions and any interests on specific agenda items.

Dr Haddon advised he is employed by CSIRO and is not undertaking specific research projects in relation to Sub-Antarctic fisheries, although he does provide advice to other researchers in relation to stock assessments, particularly for the Macquarie Island Toothfish Fishery (MITF). Dr Haddon is also a member on the Northern Prawn Fishery Resource Assessment Group and Southern and Eastern Scalefish and Shark Fishery Resource Assessment Group. Dr Haddon advised that he has no pecuniary interests in the sub-Antarctic fisheries.

Mr Scott advised that he is the Managing Director of Australian Longline P/L which holds various fishing rights in, and operates vessels in the Australian Sub-Antarctic fisheries and waters under the jurisdiction of CCAMLR. Mr Scott further advised he is a member on SlopeRAG, South East MAC, the Sub-Antarctic demersal longline member on the Threat Abatement Plan for Seabirds, industry representative on the Australian delegation to CCAMLR, director to Commonwealth Fisheries Association (CFA) and Director of South East



Trawl Fishing Industry Association (SETFIA). Mr Scott was not aware of any investigation or prosecution action by AFMA against his Company or of any legal action by his Company against AFMA.

Mr Exel declared his interest in all agenda items. He advised that he is the General Manager, Environment and Policy, Austral Fisheries P/L. Austral Fisheries P/L owns Statutory Fishing Rights (SFRs) in the Australian sub-Antarctic fisheries and waters under the jurisdiction of Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR). Mr Exel also declared that he is a Director of the Institute of Marine and Antarctic Studies, Director on the Commonwealth Fisheries Association (CFA), member of the South East Trawl Fishing Industry Association (SETFIA), Member of the Great Australian Bight Industry Association, Member of Coral Sea Fishers Association and Chair of the Coalition of Legal Toothfish Operators. He was not aware of any investigation or prosecution action by AFMA against his Company or of any legal action taken by his Company against AFMA.

Dr Hillary advised that he is employed by CSIRO and is the Principal Investigator of the MITF stock assessment project. He also advised that he is a member of AFMA's Southern Bluefin Tuna Management Advisory Committee (SBTMAC) and Tropical Tuna RAG. Dr Hillary advised that he has no pecuniary interests in the sub-Antarctic fisheries.

Dr Welsford advised that he is employed by the Australian Antarctic Division (AAD) and was responsible for monitoring and assessing the Heard Island and McDonald Islands (HIMI) Fishery and other CCAMLR fisheries and also data collection for the MITF. Dr Welsford advised that AAD get core funding but also seek grants from Fisheries Research and Development Corporation (FRDC) and AFMA. However, members noted that Dr Welsford salary was not connected to these grants.

Dr Ziegler advised that he is employed by AAD and is involved in the Heard Island and McDonald Islands (HIMI stock) assessment. Dr Ziegler has no pecuniary interest in the sub-Antarctic and his salary is not connected to any research grants noting that he is a co-investigator on a FRDC project.

Ms Fisher advised she is employed by the Australian Fisheries Management Authority (AFMA) and is currently acting Manager for sub-Antarctic fisheries at AFMA. Ms Fisher advised she has no pecuniary interests in the sub-Antarctic fisheries.

Ms Kirkcaldie advised she is employed by AFMA and advised that she is the Executive Officer for SouthMAC and the SBTMAC. Ms Kirkcaldie advised that she has no pecuniary interests in the sub-Antarctic fisheries.

Dr Patterson advised she is an employee of the Department of Agriculture and one of the authors of the Australian Bureau of Agricultural Resource Economics and Sciences (ABARES) Fishery Status report. Dr Patterson noted that she had no pecuniary interest in the sub-Antarctic fisheries.

Dr Day advised he is a CSIRO employee and was undertaking work on the MITF stock assessment. Dr Day advised that he has no pecuniary interests in the sub-Antarctic fisheries.

Mr McNeill advised he was attending the meeting as an observer and is the Resource Manager of Australian Longline P/L which holds various fishing rights in, and operates vessels in the sub-Antarctic fisheries and waters under the jurisdiction of CCAMLR. Mr McNeill was not aware of any investigation or prosecution action by AFMA against his Company or of any legal action taken by his Company against AFMA.



Dr Andrew Constable advised that he is the program leader for southern ocean ecosystem change program at AAD and co-team leader of the Australian Antarctic science program on southern oceans ecosystems. Dr Constable further advised that he was a chief investigator on the HIMI Benthic Impact project and is also the scientific committee representative from Australia at CCAMLR. Dr Constable has no pecuniary interest in the sub-Antarctic and his salary is not connected to any research grants.

Mr Scott, Mr Exel and Mr McNeill declared their interest under all agenda items and left the room. The group then discussed whether the Industry members and observer needed to leave the room for any agenda items; it was agreed that as their input was essential to most agenda items and that they should remain in the meeting room unless a specific conflict of interest was identified, at which point the member would be asked to leave the room for the duration of that particular discussion/recommendation.

1.2 Apologies

Apologies were received from Professor John Buckeridge.

Members noted that Ms Sally Wayte has resigned from SARAG and Dr Jemery Day has replaced her as a permanent observer on SARAG. Members recommended that the SARAG Chair write to Ms Wayte thanking her for her contributions to the resource assessment group.

1.3 Agenda

Members agreed that agenda item 8 should be discussed first and AAD requested that agenda item 8.3 Proposed CCAMLR and Fish Stock Assessment papers be included on the agenda. The agenda was adopted.

Agenda item 2 – Adoption of minutes from SARAG 49

SARAG noted that the draft minutes from SARAG 49, held on 8 May 2014, were circulated to members on 3 September 2014. Mr Scott provided comments on agenda items 9 and 10 which have now been incorporated and the minutes have been adopted as a true and accurate record of the discussions.

Agenda item 3 – Actions arising from SARAG 48 and 49

SARAG discussed the status of action arising items from SARAG 48 and 49.

Actions arising from SARAG 48

Action arising	Status
HIMI Fishery Research - Dr Welsford to test through MSE the potential effects on the HIMI Fishery stock assessments of moving the RSTS to every other year and an indication of the timing to undertake the work.	Dr Welsford advised that currently there is no capacity to complete any MSE work (Action arising 1).
HIMI Fishery Research - Dr Welsford to provide an outline of how the overcatch/undercatch issue could be addressed under	Dr Welsford advised that currently there is no



MSE and an indication of the timing required to undertake the work.	capacity to complete any MSE work (Action arising 2).
Public Disclosure Act - AFMA to clarify if SARAG members have indemnity.	SARAG noted that AFMA is currently seeking advice Australian Government Solicitor regarding indemnity (Action arising 3).
MITF catch 2013 – AAD to confirm the Macquarie Island catch in 2013.	Completed
MITF otoliths – CSIRO to indicate to AAD which otoliths are most important to age for future stock assessments.	SARAG noted that it is important to age otoliths from 2010. Dr Welsford advised that the backlog of ageing otoliths from HIMIF was decreasing and that AAD would soon switch to ageing MITF otoliths.
MITF recapture rates and post tag mortality. – CSIRO to explore and SARAG to discuss at the next meeting.	SARAG agreed to discuss the recapture rates at the next SARAG meeting (Action arising 4)
HIMI monthly review meeting - AAD to distribute HIMI Fishery Monthly Review group's workplan to SARAG for comment.	Completed. The workplan was distributed to members for comment
Strategic research plan – AFMA to draft new Five Year Strategic Research Plan and circulate it to members for comment	Discussed under agenda item 15.
CCAMLR website - AAD to advise CCAMLR secretariat that no Australian data should be published on the CCAMLR website without approval from Australia	Completed – AAD advised the CCAMLR secretariat and noted that they will continue to communicate with the Secretariat regarding information provided on the website.

Actions arising from SARAG 49

Action arising	Status
SARAG 51 - SARAG agreed that the RAG will be held as early as possible, to allow time for the TAC to be determined and industry to prepare for the season accordingly.	SARAG agreed to set a date for the next meeting under agenda item 24



CCAMLR - AAD to identify funds to complete required work before CCAMLR (including employing Bill de la Mare to validate stock assessment).	Completed
---	------------------

Members requested that in future this agenda paper include a column that reports against the action item in the agenda paper.

Agenda item 4 – Correspondence

SARAG noted the following correspondence which had been received out-of-session since the last meeting:

- an email dated 3 September 2014 from Jo Fisher providing information about a seminar on Australia’s Antarctic strategic interests in the 21st century;
- an email dated 28 August 2014 from Jo Fisher seeking comments on the HIMI Fishery Annual Status Report;
- an e-mail dated 28 August 2014 from Sarah Kirkcaldie seeking comments on the draft agenda for SARAG 50;
- an email dated 18 August 2014 from Jo Fisher seeking comments on the draft New and Exploratory Assessment Report;
- an e-mail dated 12 August 2014 from Sarah Kirkcaldie regarding the date for SARAG 50
- an e-mail dated 22 July 2014 from Sarah Kirkcaldie providing the agenda and details for the MSC annual surveillance audit for the HIMI toothfish and icefish and the Macquarie Island Toothfish fisheries;
- an email dated 9 July 2014 from Sarah Kirkcaldie seeking comments on the draft minutes from SARAG 48;
- an email dated 7 July 2014 from Jo Fisher seeking comments on the Expression of Interest received in response to the 2015 call for research projects commencing in 2015-16;
- an email dated 3 July 2014 from Jo Fisher notifying members of the HIMI Marine Reserve Management Plan public comment period; and
- an email dated 13 May 2014 from Sarah Kirkcaldie seeking comments on the draft Public Benefit Guidelines for Fishery Independent Surveys.

Agenda item 5 - Fishing operations update

Mr Scott and Mr Exel provided SARAG with a verbal updates on fishing operations in the HIMI Fishery and MITF.

Mr Exel stated that Austral Fisheries Pty Ltd had caught about 1000 tonnes of the 1200 tonne icefish quota they currently hold. Members noted that the breakdown of the fishing vessel Southern Champion had caused problems but the company was considering going back



down to get the last 200 tonnes. Mr Exel noted that there was a strong cohort of larger icefish which was a good indication for small fish in future years. SARAG noted that the Random Stratified Trawl Survey (RSTS) was completed in 2014. Mr Exel noted that Austral Fisheries Pty Ltd were getting consistently good catch rates whilst longline fishing for Patagonian Toothfish but that the weather had been particularly bad which resulted in high than usual gear loss. SARAG noted that the company will take around 1850 tonnes of Toothfish using the longline method with about 120t taken whilst trawling. Austral Fisheries Pty Ltd also reported an interaction with a penguin and that the vessels did see sperm whales and had to implement the Austral Fisheries policy of a voluntary move-on provision for cetaceans three times in the current season.

Mr Exel also reported that they had found very old Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing gear in HIMI which had no hooks or swivels. Members further noted that Austral Fisheries Pty Ltd was looking at purchasing a multi-purpose vessel and was still anticipating catching icefish and completing the RSTS every two years.

Mr Scott stated that Australian Longline Pty Ltd was the only company fishing in the MITF and had completed fishing for 2014 with about 1 tonne undercaught. Mr Scott noted that the company had fished more in the North than anticipated and tagged around 480 tags in an area that was data poor. Mr Scott highlighted that the vessel had caught a fish that weighed 98kgs and that gear loss was low. Mr Scott noted that the observer report for the vessel was good and acknowledged that it was a safe boat with good occupational, health and safety policies. Mr Scott noted that in the HIMIF, Australian Longline had currently caught about 70% of its Toothfish quota noting that they started later in the fishery and would be leaving around mid-end October. Currently the tag over-lap is a bit behind but that will improve. Mr Scott noted that the company leases its Icefish quota to Austral Fisheries Pty Ltd.

Mr Scott indicated his company's desire to fish in the CCAMLR New and Exploratory Ross Sea Fishery in the 2014/15 season, following submission of an application to CCAMLR, and if he is granted access, the fishing vessel *Antarctic Chieftain* would be sailing directly from Mauritius to the Ross Sea.

Macquarie Island Toothfish Fishery

Agenda item 6 – Stock assessment and MSE update

SARAG members noted that the AFMA Commission had determined the following TAC limits in the MITF as recommended by SARAG:

- Patagonian Toothfish at 410 tonnes; and
- 50 tonnes for any other single species taken in the fishery.

Dr Hillary noted that there was no update on the Management Strategy Evaluation since SARAG 49. Members noted that the AFMA research committee had endorsed CSIRO's proposal to undertake the next 2015/16 and 2016/17 stock assessments for the Macquarie Island Toothfish Fishery.

Members noted that tagging otoliths in the HIMI Fishery is currently the priority but if possible AAD agreed to randomly age 300 MITF otoliths from 2013 as soon as possible.

Agenda item 7 – MSC review results



SARAG noted the update on the MITF Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) annual review which was conducted in July 2014.

Members noted that, by June 2015, the HIMI Benthic impacts study needs to be applied to inform and undertake an Ecological Risk Assessment (ERA) for the MITF. This will also assist in identifying any changes to management arrangements that may be required to ensure additional protection of benthic habitats at Macquarie Island.

Heard Island and McDonalds Islands Toothfish Fishery

Agenda item 8 – Stock assessment

SARAG noted that scientists from AAD have prepared stock assessments for the two target species in the HIMI Fishery, Mackerel Icefish and Patagonian Toothfish, for peer-review and consideration by CCAMLR's Working Group on Fish Stock Assessments (WG-FSA) and Scientific Committee.

8.1 Mackerel icefish

Dr Welsford presented the preliminary 2014 Heard Island and McDonald Islands Mackerel Icefish assessment. The paper provided a preliminary assessment of Mackerel Icefish population structure, abundance and yield for the area of Division 58.5.2 to the west of 79° 20' E using standard CCAMLR methods.

The RSTS is conducted to estimate the biomass of the standing stock. The year classes present in that standing stock are then projected forward two years to estimate the TAC. The CCAMLR decision rule requires a TAC that allows 75% escapement of biomass that would have been there in the absence of fishing. Uncertainty is incorporated by using the lower 95 percentile of the biomass estimate in the projection which leads to a conservative approach.

SARAG noted that the population of Mackerel Icefish in 58.5.2 generally shows only one or two cohorts dominating in terms of abundance and biomass at any one time. However, in 2011, five year classes were present simultaneously with no single cohort overwhelmingly dominant. Similar to 2011, the 2014 survey showed multiple cohorts present in the population. Dr Welsford noted that a small number of 0+ fish (up to 8cm) were also detected in the 2014 survey, indicating successful recruitment for several years in a row.

Members noted that the large cohort present in recent years was still dominant; however, there is evidence that recruitment to the 0+ - 3+ cohorts has taken place. The assessment assumed that the 4+ and 5+ cohorts would be fully exploited so only the 1+ - 3+ cohorts were projected. The assessment recommended two scenarios:

- 1) a catch limit of 309 tonnes of Mackerel Icefish for the 2014/15 season and 280t for the 2015/16 season; or
- 2) a catch limit of 573t if fishing only occurs in the 2015/16 season.

Industry indicated that they would be conducting a RSTS in 2015 and therefore they would be trawling in 2014/15. Dr Welsford indicated that the timing of the RSTS is important and stated that April, May and June are the best times to conduct the survey.

SARAG agreed that the paper presented at CCAMLR would recommend a Mackerel Icefish catch limit of 309 tonnes in the 2014/15 season.



SARAG acknowledged the large amount of work conducted by AAD and in particular Dr Welsford in producing the assessment.

8.2 Patagonian Toothfish

Dr Constable declared his interest under Agenda Item 8.2 and left the meeting room. The remaining members of SARAG agreed that Dr Constable should be allowed to return for all discussions made under Agenda item 8.2.

Dr Ziegler presented the paper titled *Integrated Stock Assessment for the Heard Island and the McDonald islands Patagonian Toothfish (*Dissostichus eleginoides*) Fishery* (Division 58.5.2). The paper presented an interim report for an updated assessment for the Heard Island and the McDonald Islands Patagonian Toothfish (*Dissostichus eleginoides*) Fishery (Division 58.5.2) with data until mid August 2014.

Compared to the last assessment in 2013, this assessment has (a) new ageing data from the 2012-13 random stratified trawl survey (RSTS) and commercial ageing data from 2013, (b) an updated growth model, (c) an updated ageing error matrix (noting that this assessment is the only assessment in CCAMLR that estimates an ageing error), (d) a Beverton-Holt stock-recruitment relationship, and (e) uses a prior for the survey catchability q which has been estimated from the ratio of abundance of fish using the swept area method and the proportion of tag-recaptures in the catch on the main trawl ground.

SARAG noted that the assessment used CASAL model 2.3 as recommended by the Working Group on Statistics, Assessment and Modelling (WG-SAM).

A number of issues were identified during discussions including:

- a) 2014 RSTS ageing;
- b) Choice of growth model – members agreed that this was a high priority;
- c) Whether a scenario was required illustrating sigmoid justification versus dome-shaped – members agreed that this was not required;
- d) Making the sensitivity of q explicit – members agreed that this would be included in the bridging analysis;
- e) Producing a table of issues and solutions – members agreed that this was critical;
- f) 2013 stock assessment paper versus 2013 Fish Stocks Assessment versus 2014 stock assessment paper – members agreed that this should be included in the bridging analysis;
- g) Bridging analysis – members agreed this was a high priority;
- h) Comparison between 2013 and 2014 assessments – members agreed to include this in the bridging analysis;
- i) Illegal, unreported and unregulated versus poor recruitment;



- j) Median escapement equal to 0.50;
- k) Effective sample size (ESS) sensitivity – members agreed not to include in a paper but have the information available; and
- l) 2013/14 tagging data – members agreed to include this in the tagging paper.

When doing the assessment several scenarios were run to evaluate the impact of different data sets and a range of parameter and model assumptions. The base case (scenario 1) used survey numbers-at-age and length, accounted for process error in ESS of commercial data in iterative model fits, used a dome-shaped growth function that accounted for length-bin sampling. In alternative scenarios, survey numbers-at-length was omitted (scenario 2), the annual ESS of the Trawl or longline sub-fisheries were artificially down-weighted by setting them to ESS+10 (scenarios 3 and 4) or ESS = 1 for trawl (scenario 5 i.e. the effect of the trawl data set in the model fits was minimised while still allowing to estimate a selectivity function for this sub-fishery), natural mortality was set to $M=0.13$ (scenario 6), survey data were disaggregated into survey abundance index and survey catch-at-age proportions (scenario 7) and the best model scenario from 2013 was updated with all data from the base case scenario 1 (scenario 8).

SARAG agreed that scenarios 7 and 8 should be removed and the bridging analysis would be presented instead.

SARAG members discussed removing the tagging data from the assessment and providing a paper to CCAMLR explaining why it was removed. It was agreed that the assessment was not yet ready for endorsement and that SARAG would hold a teleconference on the 18th September to review a revised assessment with the tagging data removed.

SARAG thanked Drs Ziegler and Welsford for presenting the HIMI Patagonian Toothfish assessment.

8.3 Proposed CCAMLR and Fish Stock Assessment (FSA) papers

SARAG noted the papers that would be presented to the CCAMLR FSA meeting:

- 1) Mackerel Icefish stock assessment;
- 2) Random Stratified Trawl Survey;
- 3) Ageing error matrix;
- 4) Patagonian Toothfish habitat modelling;
- 5) Patagonian Toothfish tagging;
- 6) Ageing program;
- 7) Patagonian Toothfish stock assessment; and
- 8) Seabird season extension reporting.



Agenda item 9 – HIMI Fishery science work plan

SARAG noted the science workplan developed at the HIMI Fishery monthly review meetings to support Australia's position at CCAMLR 2014. Members noted that an updated workplan would be presented to the HIMI monthly review meeting scheduled for 18 September 2014. Members agreed that the workplan addressed all the concerns raised in the 2013 CCAMLR work group, scientific committee and annual meeting.

Agenda item 10 – Benthic impacts project

SARAG noted that the FRDC project titled 'An assessment of the vulnerability of benthic habitats to impact by demersal gears' had been completed and AAD provided members with a summary of the findings. Members noted that as a result of the project the Marine Protected Area (MPA) boundaries were expanded and also the data collected in the project was used in the review of the HIMI conservation zones. The efficacy of the MPAs in protecting habitats was again realised as a result of the project as well as AAD developing an observer benthic bycatch ID guide, which has been in use since 2009.

SARAG acknowledged the significant amount of work that had been completed and recognised the need for more research that would have to be prioritised in the Strategic Research Plan. Additional work identified included obtaining data on the nature and extent of habitat and gear interactions using cameras and reviewing the ecological risk assessment at multi-year intervals. Members noted that this research was included in the research plan but that there was currently not enough funding for the research to be undertaken.

Agenda item 11 – Resourcing for extension to Kerguelen Plateau project

SARAG noted the joint FRDC, industry, Institute for Marine and Antarctic Studies (IMAS) and University of Tasmania (UTAS) project currently underway entitled 'Development of robust assessment methods and harvest strategies for spatially complex, multi-jurisdictional toothfish fisheries in the Southern Ocean'. Members further noted that in June 2014, the project was extended to fund additional work on the HIMI stock assessment. The project extension was to address the concerns raised at CCAMLR 2013 regarding the HIMIF Patagonian Toothfish stock assessment and was jointly funded by industry, AFMA, WWF with in-kind support from AAD.

SARAG noted that AAD will report on the project to FRDC through the milestone reporting process.

Agenda item 12 – MSC review results

SARAG noted that in July 2014 the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) completed its annual review of the HIMI toothfish fishery and the HIMI icefish fishery. Members noted that all conditions for the HIMI Icefish Fishery had been completed and that the HIMI Patagonian Toothfish Fishery had four conditions still outstanding:

Condition 1.2.1

At the fourth annual surveillance audit, the client shall provide information to demonstrate that the harvest strategy is robust and precautions are in place and evidence exists that it is



achieving its objectives for all significant fisheries that target this stock and particularly for the fishery that operates within the French EEZ around Kerguelen Island.

Condition 1.2.2

By the fourth annual surveillance audit the client shall ensure that the harvest control rules take into account the main uncertainty in the assessment. This can be achieved once the stock assessment has been updated to incorporate the identified interactions between Toothfish across the Kerguelen Plateau. The client shall provide evidence that the harvest control rule application will also explicitly account for the distribution of future catches of Patagonian Toothfish in both the Australian and the French zones.

Condition 1.2.4

By the fourth annual surveillance audit the client shall ensure that the assessment is appropriate for the stock and specifically that it accounts for fishing impacts on the entire known range of the stock including the proportion found and fished in the French zone.

Condition 3.1.2

By the third annual surveillance audit the client shall provide information that demonstrates consultation processes in all the management systems provide opportunity for all interested and affected parties to be involved.

SARAG noted that there continues to be progress towards conditions 1.2.1, 1.2.2 and 1.2.4 in the form of collaboration between Australian and French scientists and in particular through the commencement of a new research project that is aimed at progressing a joint plateau-wide stock assessment by signing a formal data sharing agreement and the subsequent exchange of data.

Members acknowledged that for condition 3.1.2 it was impossible to guarantee that the French would correspond with the correct people but noted that Australia was encouraging them to do so.

SARAG supported the need for a Kerguelen Plateau workshop and a planning group consisting of Dirk Welsford, Martin Exel, Malcolm McNeill and Les Scott will be formed to progress the workshop.

Agenda item 13 – Unicorn Icefish bycatch limits

SARAG noted that Unicorn icefish is a bycatch of the targeted Mackerel Icefish fishery. In 2013/14 a bycatch limit for Unicorn Icefish of 150 tonnes was set by CCAMLR based on a biomass estimate conducted by Australia. Members noted that during the 2013/14 season at HIMIF, industry has so far caught 144 tonnes of Unicorn Icefish coming very close to the limit.

SARAG acknowledged that as the 2014/15 Mackerel Icefish TAC will be considerably lower than the 2013/14 TAC so it is unlikely that the same amount of Unicorn Icefish will be caught but members agreed that it was still important to conduct a stock assessment.

SARAG agreed that AAD would present a scoping statement to the next SARAG meeting to conduct a Unicorn Icefish stock assessment in 2015 with a view that any suggested amendments to the bycatch limit, and move-on provisions, be taken to CCAMLR in 2015 (**Actions arising 5**).



Research

Agenda item 14 – Research issues

SARAG noted the update on sub-Antarctic fisheries research issues, in particular the increase in the HIMI tagging rate to one tag per tonne.

Members noted that conducting a RSTS in 2015 is a priority for industry. THE RSTS is a key part of data collection for the Patagonian Toothfish and Mackerel icefish stock assessments.

SARAG acknowledged industry's significant contribution to research in the Antarctic fisheries (around \$4.6 million). Members sought information from AFMA on other fisheries and the comparison of Gross Value of Production and research contribution (**Action arising 6**).

Agenda item 15 – Five year strategic research plan

The AFMA member advised that AFMA had updated the Five Year Strategic Research Plan (the Plan) and provided a draft for comment on the research requirements needed to fill knowledge gaps. Once finalised by SARAG, the Plan will be provided to the AFMA Research Committee for review at its October 2014 meeting.

Members noted that at SARAG 48 members agreed that a detailed discussion on the HIMI Fishery Assessment Plan (FAP) is required to ensure that subsequent FAPs represent the needs of the fishery into the future. SARAG noted that these discussions need to include all current research in the fishery and ways that current research could be adjusted to better meet the needs of the fishery, with careful consideration of cost-effectiveness.

Agenda item 16 – Conversion factor

SARAG noted that on each fishing trip to HIMIF or MITF observers are required to collect data on the conversion of whole fish weight to headed, gutted and tailed (HGT) weight. The data is then used to calculate the vessel conversion factor for the following season.

Members noted that at the industry consultation meeting in August 2014, the need to collect data on every trip was raised.

AFMA agreed to write a paper for the SARAG meeting to be held in early 2015. Members agreed that issues that need to be addressed include: the amount of time spent on this work by the observers; the consistency to date of conversion factors for each vessel; and the need for conversion factors to be at four decimal places. The paper should also note the change in the way fish are headed (**Action arising 7**).

Environment

Agenda item 17 – Review of environmental interactions and gear loss

SARAG noted that there have been five wildlife interactions resulting in deaths in the HIMI Fishery since the last SARAG meeting in May 2014.



- 5/05/14 – an Antarctic fur seal was hauled to the surface wrapped and tangled around the mainline on the vessel *Austral Leader 2*. The seal may have been foul hooked on the bottom as it appeared to have been deceased for some time;
- 09/07/2014 – a Southern Elephant Seal was hauled to the surface entangled in the backbone of the line on the vessel *Isla Eden*;
- 1/08/2014 – a Northern Giant Petrel was found deceased on the deck of the vessel *Isla Eden* in extreme weather conditions. The skipper noted that the bird may have been flying 'blind' due to a snow storm and collided with the vessels superstructure;
- 17/08/2014 – a rockhopper penguin was hauled to the surface fouled hooked through the neck on the vessel the *Isla Eden*; and
- 19/08/14 - a Southern Elephant Seal was hauled to the entangled in the backbone of the line on the vessel *Isla Eden*.

Members further noted that in the MITF in the 2013/14 season 1,327,410 hooks were set with no wildlife interactions. For the current (2014/15) season 670,640 hooks have been set with no wildlife interactions.

Members also noted that the gear loss at HIMI had significantly increased compared to the previous season but a slight decrease in the MITF compared to last year. Industry noted that in the HIMI Fishery the consistently bad weather had resulted in an increase in gear loss.

Other

Agenda item 18 – Undercatch provisions

Industry members requested that SARAG discuss if there are any implications of having undercatch in the HIMI Fishery. Members noted that the HIMI Management Plan has provisions for overcatch but not undercatch. Industry indicated that an undercatch of 100 tonnes would meet their needs should weather conditions, vessel issues or other operational constraints result in the total allowable catch not being caught within the fishing season.

SARAG noted that the stock assessment scientists indicated that having an undercatch would not cause problems for the stock assessment.

SARAG acknowledged that any decision on undercatch in the HIMI Fishery is likely to then be considered for the MITF.

Members noted that this issue would need to be discussed at SouthMAC and CCAMLR.

Agenda item 19 – New and Exploratory Fisheries update

The AFMA member noted that Australian Longline Pty Ltd had provided AFMA with a pre-proposal to fish in CCAMLR New and Exploratory fishery in Statistical Sub-areas 88.1 and 88.2 (the Ross Sea) which was supported by the CCAMLR Consultative Forum on 16 April 2014.

SARAG noted that AAD had prepared and submitted a New and Exploratory Fishery full proposal to CCAMLR by the deadline of 1 June 2014. The proposal will be considered by



CCAMLR when it meets in October this year. The AFMA member informed SARAG that they have prepared the New and Exploratory Assessment report, as required under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*. SARAG and SouthMAC had provided comments which were considered by AFMA and the final report was provided to the Department of the Environment for public comment release.

Members noted that New Zealand has indicated that they intend to submit a working paper to CCAMLR 2014, proposing that the start date of the Ross Sea Fishery be delayed until 3 January 2015 because of concerns around ice conditions and safety issues.

Agenda item 20 – Revised FAP 12

Members noted that Fisheries Administration Paper 12 (FAP 12) is AFMA's key policy document on the operation of Resource Assessment Groups (RAGs). The paper outlines the roles, responsibilities and appointment processes for the RAGs. In May 2014, FAP 12 was revised, following consideration of submissions from earlier public consultation.

The AFMA member informed SARAG that FAP 12 does not take account of recent Commonwealth legislation, such as the *Public Interest Disclosure Act 2013*, which came into operation this year. This legislation provides for a confidential process for reporting and investigating concerns about corrupt, fraudulent and illegal behavior of public officials. In some circumstances it may apply to RAG members because they are considered to be public officials.

In June 2014, AFMA held a workshop for MAC Chairs, RAG Chairs and MAC members. The Commonwealth Ombudsman's Office spoke about the implications of this legislation for chairs and individual members. SARAG noted AFMA is looking to hold a similar workshop for RAG Chair and members during 2014-15 but this may not be until early 2015.

Agenda item 21 – Update on 20 year Antarctic Strategic Plan

SARAG noted that in October 2013, Dr Tony Press was appointed by the Australian Government to prepare a 20 Year Australian Antarctic Strategic Plan. The terms of reference for the development of the plan included consideration of:

- the strategic importance of Australia's Antarctic interests;
- expanding the role of Tasmania as the gateway for Antarctic expeditions and scientific research;
- ensuring robust and reliable access to the Australian Antarctic Territory;
- extending Australia's reach across the Australian Antarctic Territory;
- committing to undertaking nationally and globally significant science; and
- committing to exercising influence in the region through the Antarctic Treaty system.

Members were advised that the public were provided with an opportunity to have input into the development of the Plan, by providing submissions based on the terms of reference. Over 25 submissions were received. Members noted that Dr Press has handed his report to the Minister for the Environment and that the Minister is considering the report.



Action item 22 – MSC briefing on traceability and mercury contamination

SARAG noted that in a recent published research article, Marko et al reported that nearly a quarter of fish given the stamp of approval from the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) did not originate from their designated fisheries, but rather from unknown areas where mercury contamination is more likely.

Industry provided SARAG with an internal briefing that MSC had agreed to distribute that indicated their serious concerns about the scientific rigour of this new study and highlight that they take the integrity of the MSC supply chain seriously.

Action item 23 – Other business

No other business was discussed.

Agenda item 24 – Next meeting

SARAG agreed to hold a teleconference on 18 September 2014 to discuss the revised 2014 HIMI Fishery stock assessment. Members noted that the next face-to-face meeting would be held in early 2015.

The meeting closed at 3.00 pm.

Actions arising from SARAG 50

Item	Action arising	Status
1	HIMI Fishery Research - Dr Welsford to test through MSE the potential effects on the HIMI Fishery stock assessments of moving the RSTS to every other year and an indication of the timing to undertake the work.	Dr Welsford advised that currently there is no capacity to complete any MSE work
2	HIMI Fishery Research - Dr Welsford to provide an outline of how the overcatch/undercatch issue could be addressed under MSE and an indication of the timing required to undertake the work.	Dr Welsford advised that currently there is no capacity to complete any MSE work
3	Public Disclosure Act - AFMA to clarify if SARAG members have indemnity.	AFMA is currently seeking advice Australian Government Solicitor regarding indemnity
4	Recapture rates – SARAG to discuss recapture rates at the next meeting.	
5	Unicorn Icefish bycatch limits – AAD to present a scoping statement on conducting a Unicorn Icefish stock assessment in 2015 with a view that any suggested amendments to the	



	bycatch limit, and move-on provisions, be taken to CCAMLR in 2015.	
6	Research contribution - AFMA to provide information on other fisheries and the comparison of Gross Value of Production and research contribution	
7	Conversion factors – AFMA to draft a paper on conversion factors which includes: the amount of time spent on this work by the observers; the consistency to date of conversion factors for each vessel; and the need for conversion factors to be at four decimal places	

