



Australian Government

Australian Fisheries Management Authority



Sub-Antarctic Resource Assessment Group (SARAG)

MINUTES
SARAG 49

8 MAY 2014

SUB- ANTARCTIC RESOURCE ASSESSMENT GROUP (SARAG)

CHAIR: Professor John Buckeridge

Date: 8 May 2014

Venue: Australian Antarctic Division, Channel Highway, Kingston

Attendance

Members

Prof John Buckeridge – Chair
Dr Philippe Ziegler, AAD
Dr Malcolm Haddon, CSIRO
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
Dr Andrew Constable, AAD
Ms Gill Slocum, AAD
Mr Rhys Arangio, Industry

Apologies

Dr Dirk Welsford, AAD
Dr Richard Hillary, CSIRO
Dr Sally Wayte, CSIRO

Introduction

Agenda item 1 - Preliminaries

The forty-ninth meeting of the Sub-Antarctic Resource Assessment Group (SARAG 49) was opened at 9:15am on 8 May 2014 by the Chair, Professor John Buckeridge. Members welcomed Dr Andrew Constable, Ms Gill Slocum and Mr Rhys Arangio as observers to the meeting.

1.1 Declaration of interests

Professor Buckeridge asked members and observers to declare their professions and their interests on specific agenda items.

Professor Buckeridge advised that he is also the Chair of the Southern and Eastern Scalefish and Shark Fishery Resource Assessment Group (SESSFRAG) and advised that he has no pecuniary interests in the sub-Antarctic fisheries.

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 Slope 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 the 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 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 is a senior management officer in the Tuna and International section. She also 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 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.

Ms Gill Slocum advised that she is the Manager of Territories, Environment and Treaties at AAD and has no pecuniary interest in the sub-Antarctic fisheries

Mr Arangio advised that he is employed by Austral Fisheries P/L. Mr Arangio further advised that he is the secretary of the Coalition of Legal Toothfish Operators. Mr Arangio 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.



Mr Scott, Mr Exel and Mr Arangio declared their interest under all agenda items. 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 Dr Dirk Welsford (AAD), Dr Rich Hillary (CSIRO) and Ms Sally Wayte (observer).

1.3 Agenda

Members agreed that agenda items 6 and 7 should be discussed in conjunction with each other. The Industry members requested that the CCAMLR decision rules be added to agenda item 8 (HIMI stock assessment questions). The members also agreed to add agenda item 13.1 Public benefit guidelines – Fishery Independent Surveys. The agenda was adopted.

Agenda item 2 – Adoption of minutes from SARAG 48

SARAG noted that the draft minutes from SARAG 48, held on 1 April 2014, will shortly be distributed for comment. Once all comments have been received the minutes will be adopted as a true and accurate record of the discussions.

3 – 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 has two longliners operating in the HIMI Fishery this season and they had both started fishing just after 15 April 2014. Members noted that catches were currently low. Mr Exel advised that the Southern Champion had been icefish trawling and had taken 630 tonnes on the last trip which was cut short due to an engine breakdown. The vessel was currently in Albany for repairs but would be heading back to the HIMI Fishery in about a week to catch the remaining icefish quota and to complete the Random Stratified Trawl Survey. Mr Exel stated that about 95% of the HIMI Fishery Patagonian Toothfish total allowable catch would be taken by longline this season.

SARAG discussed the recent interaction with an Antarctic Fur seal and Austral Fisheries Pty Ltd agreed to provide more information regarding the depth at which the seal was captured, an estimation of how long it had been dead for, and clarify whether the death of the seal was a result of interaction with the fishing gear.

Mr Scott stated that Australian Longline Pty Ltd was the only company fishing in the MITF and was using auto-longline. The vessel (*Janas*) commenced fishing on 1 May 2014. Mr Scott noted that the weather in the MITF had been good for the first seven days of the season. Mr Scott noted that the fishing vessel *Antarctic Chieftain* was now registered as an Australian boat and had just departed to fish in the HIMI Fishery. Mr Scott indicated his company's desire to fish in the CCAMLR New and Exploratory Ross Sea Olympic Fishery 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 4 – Fishery 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.

SARAG were advised that the Commission had noted the importance of maintaining fishing across the entire Fishery, with SARAG recommending the TAC be taken in approximately the following proportions: 250 tonnes (maximum 260 tonnes) from the Aurora Trough, between 96-128 tonnes in the Southern Macquarie Ridge and 32-64 tonnes in the northern Macquarie Ridge noting that this arrangement is a voluntary agreement with Industry.

Members noted that the MITF Fishery Assessment Plan had been finalised incorporating comments from SARAG 48 and SouthMAC 32. The agreed tagging rate for the 2014/15 season was 2 tags per tonne.

Industry requested that the MITF Management Arrangements be distributed earlier in 2015 than 2014. SARAG agreed to set the meeting date earlier to ensure there is enough time to get the TACs determined by the AFMA Commission prior to the start of the season.

Action arising 1: 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.

Heard Island and McDonalds Islands Toothfish Fishery

Agenda item 5 – Update on Kerguelen Plateau project including post doctorate research and otolith sampling

AAD informed SARAG that two post doctorates had now been employed to assist with required research. Dr Paul Burch who will be working on the HIMI Fishery stock assessment and identifying which assessments are appropriate for the data available and Dr Clara Perron from France who will be studying the spatial distribution of tags. Members noted that Dr Perron had previously worked in France on Kerguelen Plateau birds. AAD further noted that Dr Welsford, Dr Burch and Dr Perron had attended a meeting in Paris where a data sharing agreement between Australia and France had been signed for the Kerguelen Plateau.

Members also noted that a student from Chile, Juan Carlos Quiroz, would soon be arriving in Tasmania to complete a PhD which was still in the planning phase.

SARAG noted that the aging work was progressing well and technical improvements had been made which resulted in some time efficiency. Nearly 800 otoliths have been aged (550 from 2012 and 270 from 2013). Members noted that as there were not enough otoliths



available from 2013 so the aim for the current RSTS was to collect around 600 otoliths in 2014.

SARAG noted that AAD is currently aging 2013 commercial otoliths and will then do age 2011 and 2012 otoliths. The AAD member indicated the priority was to age the RSTS otoliths first (2012, 2013 and 2014) as this gives year class strength for the stock assessment. Members noted that the commercial data is not unbiased due to the spatial structure of the Fishery and CASAL does not allow you to specify a spatial structure and therefore does not allow you to use the information to get the age structure of population.

Mr Exel expressed concern that the 2013 Working Group on Fish Stock Assessment had requested that all HIMI Fishery aging be done. AAD agreed that all concerns raised at CCAMLR 2013 needed to be addressed and that this was being tracked through the HIMI Fishery monthly meetings. Members noted that all inputs for the stock assessment needed to be available by mid-August to give sufficient time to be incorporated into the 2014 stock assessment.

SARAG agreed that AAD should look at all the remaining otoliths and discuss at the next HIMI Fishery monthly review meeting a strategy for aging the remaining otoliths to get maximum benefit.

Members noted that part of HIMI Fishery science workplan was to re-estimate length at age as some ages looked unlikely (particularly in the 1-2 age class). AAD had requested that the otoliths be aged again and this will affect the error matrix which will need to be re-estimated once the aging work is done.

Members noted that Dr Burch's early research in to stock assessment models so far had highlighted that no model was perfect for the data available (tagging data). Members noted that France use the CASAL model.

Agenda item 6 – 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.

Dr Constable presented a paper on developing a precautionary ecosystem approach to managing fisheries and other marine activities at Heard Island and MacDonal Islands in the Indian Sector of the Southern Ocean. The management strategy examines catch that can be taken while still meeting the objectives of CCAMLR in the long term. Members noted the feedback management system reduces uncertainty over time and ensures that the management strategy will be successful.

The paper asks if the spawning biomass went to 40% would the management strategy feedback system still allow Australia to meet the decision rules and not drop below 20%. The papers questions what is the constant catch that can be taken that will allow Australia to meet the decision rules.

Dr Constable noted that Australia needs to conduct a management strategy evaluation for the HIMI fishery, asking what management strategy (ie data, assessment and catch setting procedure) will deliver a sustainable fishery in to the future, noting the relationship on the Kerguelen Plateau.



Members noted Drs Constable and Welsford's paper on developing a precautionary ecosystem approach to managing fisheries and other marine activities at HIMI and noted the work that flows on from the paper.

Agenda item 7 – Resourcing for extension to Kerguelen Plateau project

This item was discussed under previous agenda items

Agenda item 7.1 – Antarctic Climate and Ecosystem Cooperative Research Centre (CRC)

AAD noted they were currently discussing with Industry the value of the CRC assisting with some of the work required in the future. Members noted there are currently no resources available in the CRC to address concerns but the CRC does have the tools to do work. Some current CRC work that could be beneficial included the Atlantis model of Indian Ocean, Status and trends in the Indian Ocean particularly over Kerguelen Plateau and improving the understanding the Kerguelen Plateau.

Members noted that some issues that could be addressed by the CRC with appropriate funding include:

- oceanography and population dynamics for Patagonian toothfish and how recruitment could be affected by oceanography;
- addressing the recommendations raised by the Marine Stewardship Council;
- options to look at the productivity of the system and how that might impact on Patagonian toothfish and Mackerel icefish; and
- examining the variability of the Mackerel Icefish stock and the impact of climate change.

SARAG agreed to discuss what work is required and the best way for this research to be conducted when it reviews the strategic research plan at the next SARAG meeting.

Agenda item 8 – HIMI stock assessment questions and CCAMLR decision rules

Mr Exel presented a paper to SARAG that identified three essential issues of concern to industry in the lead up to CCAMLR 2014.

1. HIMI Fishery stock assessment

Members noted the need to ensure that the version of CASAL used this year is the most recent published version (version 2.3). Industry had offered to provide funds to assist in ensuring that all required work is completed for the stock assessment. Members noted that Dr Paul Burch is examining how the stock assessment performs under different scenarios. Members noted that the Australian delegation needs to be confident that CASAL is working as expected. SARAG members agreed that CASAL version 2.3 should be used to do the 2014 stock assessment as it was currently the best scientific stock assessment available but that an evaluation of CASAL's suitability was required.

2. Harvest strategy rule used in CCAMLR



SARAG reiterated Australia's position, and the original intent of CCAMLR, that 50% spawning stock biomass is a target reference point and not a limit reference point. SARAG noted there was debate amongst CCAMLR scientists whether the 50% level of spawning biomass should be treated as a limit reference point, or a target at the end of 35 years. Industry produced a table that showed very little (if any) other regions are using the 50% as a limit. AAD noted that the Australian delegation position had not changed and will be defending this strongly at the 2014 CCAMLR meeting. This will clearly be articulated in the CCAMLR delegation briefing. Members noted that much of the criticism at CCAMLR 2013 surrounded the steepness of the drop and also how long the line remained below 50%

3. Trawling in the HIMI Fishery

Industry expressed concern that this issue was raised as a major issue at CCAMLR 2013 by Russia and was supported by a number of other nations (including Norway, Ukraine and United Kingdom). Industry highlighted the importance of finalising and printing the Benthic Impacts report as soon as possible. Industry questioned whether AAD had sufficient funds remaining to publish the report and do a press campaign. AAD agreed to allocate remaining funding to publishing.

SARAG noted that regardless of the evidence and science that Australia can demonstrate at the 2014 CCAMLR meeting it is likely that Australia will still be criticised.

SARAG agreed that sufficient expertise is required at the CCAMLR Working Group on Statistics, Assessment and Modelling in month to adequately represent the management of the Territory of the Heard Island and McDonald Islands. The necessary expertise includes: technical expertise in the stock assessment methods for Patagonian Toothfish and Mackerel Icefish; strong understanding of the application of the CCAMLR precautionary approach and how this relates to policy framework for Australia in CCAMLR; and a strong understanding of also Australia's domestic legislative requirements.

Action arising 2: AAD to identify funds required to complete work before CCAMLR (including employing Bill de la Mare to validate stock assessment).

Agenda item 9 – Update on Interdepartmental Committee (IDC) and CCAMLR Consultative Forum (CCF) meetings

SARAG noted that the IDC and CCF generally meet three times per year and that the last meeting was held on the 16th April 2014. Members noted that more time was required for the meetings as a number of issues had recently arisen. The two priorities for CCAMLR 2014 are the HIMI Fishery and the East Antarctica Marine Protected Area (MPA). Members noted that AAD were continuing to work with France and the European Union on the MPA. The groups also discussed Krill and feedback management of Krill and also CCAMLR conservation measure 47 regarding trigger level. AAD also advised of the outcomes of recently held bilateral discussions with New Zealand primarily focusing on the HIMI Fishery and the issues that arose at the 2013 CCAMLR meeting.

SARAG noted that the IDC and CCF also discussed the: proposals going to the Working Group on Statistics, Assessments and Modelling; the accreditation of Australia's observer program (which is now with the CCAMLR Secretariat); review of catch documentation scheme; extension of the HIMI marine reserve; Southern Ocean Senate Inquiry; and the New and Exploratory proposal to fish in the Ross Sea.



SARAG noted that an Illegal, Unregulated and Unreported support vessel is believed to have sunk in the Southern Ocean. The Australian Maritime Safety Authority (AMSA) sent two planes which found debris but no signs of life or life boats were found. Members noted that the fishing vessels Chang Bai and Thunder had been sighted heading in a northerly direction from that area and AFMA had reported the information to the Regional Plan of Action (RPOA) and as a result both vessels have been detained by Malaysia. Malaysia was expected to report to CCAMLR on the issue and showed that the RPOA was working well.

A positive benefit of the arrests was that catch on board can be identified, as well as time fishing as there are records of when the vessels left and when they came back. This information can be used by CCAMLR to estimate catch rates. This has previously been a major issue as to how much the illegal boats were actually catching.

SARAG noted that Hong Kong has also agreed to implement catch documentation scheme and will be sending officials to Hobart to meet with the CCAMLR secretariat.

Mr Scott expressed industry's appreciation to AMSA for conducting a search and rescue in response to a vessel believed to have sunk in the Southern Ocean.

Other

Agenda item 10 – New and Exploratory Fishery update

SARAG noted that Australian Longline Pty Ltd had submitted a new and exploratory pre-proposal to fish in CCAMLR statistical area 88.1 and 88.2 in the 2014/15 season. The CCAMLR Consultative Forum discussed the proposal at its meeting on 16 April 2014 and strongly supported it. Members noted that the vessel had fished in the Ross Sea since 2006 (under New Zealand flag). SARAG noted that AAD were currently completing the application to CCAMLR with notifications due on 1 June 2014.

Agenda item 11 – Action list for Marine Stewardship Council certified fisheries

SARAG noted that the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) is required to annually review those fisheries with MSC certification including the HIMI Toothfish Fishery, HIMI Icefish Fishery and the MITF. As part of the review process, SARAG discussed the MSC action list. Members noted that it would be important to have the benthic impacts report published by the review meeting. Members noted that the action lists will be taken to the MSC annual review meeting in Hobart on 23-24 July 2014.

Agenda item 12 – Input into Southern Ocean Senate inquiry

SARAG noted that on 24 March 2014, the Senate referred the following matter to the Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade References Committee for inquiry and report:

Australia's future activities and responsibilities in the Southern Ocean and Antarctic waters, including:

- (a) Australia's management and monitoring of the Southern Ocean in relation to illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing;



- (b) cooperation with international partners on management and research under international treaties and agreements;
- (c) appropriate resourcing in the Southern Ocean and Antarctic territory for research and governance; and
- (d) any other related matters.

Members noted that Industry, AFMA and Department of the Environment are all preparing submissions. The closing date for submissions is 1 July 2014.

Agenda item 13 – Other business

SARAG discussed the ‘other business’ item.

13.1 Public benefit guidelines

The AFMA member requested that members provide comments on the draft Public Benefit Guidelines for Fishery Independent Surveys (FIS) which have been developed by AFMA to assist with identifying ways of quantifying the public benefits of a FIS. Members noted that under AFMA’s Cost Recovery Impact Statement (CRIS), FIS’s are identified as industry funded with the capacity for a public benefit component of up to 20% government funding. Mr Scott stated that he believed the public benefit was around 40%. The AFMA member requested comments be forwarded to AFMA by Friday 16 May 2014.

Agenda item 15 – Next meeting

SARAG agreed to hold the next meeting on 9th September 2014 to discuss the 2014 HIMI Fishery stock assessment. Members noted that CCAMLR submission are due by 22 September 2014. Members noted that Dr Haddon will chair the meeting as Professor Buckeridge will be overseas in September. Dr Welsford noted that an ADD/AFMA and Industry consultation meeting will be held on 21-22 August in Hobart.

The meeting closed at 1.10 pm.

Actions arising from SARAG 49

Item	Action arising	Action person
1	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.	ALL
2	CCAMLR - AAD to identify funds to complete required work before CCAMLR (including employing Bill de la Mare to validate stock assessment).	AAD

