



Australian Government

Australian Fisheries Management Authority



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

**MINUTES  
SARAG 51**

**24 FEBRUARY 2015**

## **SUB- ANTARCTIC RESOURCE ASSESSMENT GROUP (SARAG)**

**CHAIR:** Professor John Buckeridge

**Date:** 24 February 2015

**Venue:** Australian Antarctic Division, Channel Highway, Kingston

### **Attendance**

#### **Members**

Prof John Buckeridge – Chair  
Dr Richard Hillary, CSIRO  
Dr Philippe Ziegler, AAD  
Dr Dirk Welsford, AAD  
Mr Martin Exel, Industry Member  
Ms Jo Fisher, AFMA  
Ms Sarah Kirkcaldie, Executive Officer, AFMA

#### **Observers**

Dr Heather Patterson, ABARES  
Dr Jemery Day, CSIRO  
Mr Peter Neville, SouthMAC Chair  
Mr Malcolm McNeil, Industry  
Mr Rhys Arangio, Industry  
Mr Trent Timmiss, AFMA  
Ms Kelly Buchanan, DoA  
Ms Kerry Robertson, DoA

#### **Apologies**

Dr Malcolm Haddon, CSIRO  
Mr Les Scott, Industry Member

## **Introduction**

### **Agenda item 1 - Preliminaries**

The 51<sup>st</sup> meeting of the Sub-Antarctic Resource Assessment Group (SARAG 51) was opened at 9:15 am on 24 February 2015 by the Chair, Prof John Buckeridge. Members welcomed Mr Peter Neville, Mr Malcolm McNeill, Mr Rhys Arangio, Mr Trent Timmiss, Ms Kelly Buchanan and Ms Kerry Robertson as observers to the meeting.

#### **1.1 Declaration of interests**

Professor Buckeridge asked members and observers to declare their professions and any potential conflicts of interest on specific agenda items.

Professor Buckeridge advised that he is the chair of the Southern and Eastern Scalefish and Shark Fishery Resource Assessment Group (AFMA) and is a Professor of Natural Resources Engineering at RMIT University; he has no pecuniary interest in the sub-Antarctic fisheries.

Mr Exel 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 Director of the



Institute of Marine and Antarctic Studies, Member of 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 is 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 CEO 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.

Mr Trent Timmiss is employed by AFMA and is the Senior Manager for Tuna and International fisheries. Mr Timmiss is also a member on the Tropical Tuna MAC and Southern Bluefin Tuna MAC and has no pecuniary interest in the sub-Antarctic fisheries.

Mr Neville declared that he was the Principal of a fisheries consulting business (P.J.Neville & Associates) but had no pecuniary interest in the sub-Antarctic fisheries.



Ms Buchanan advised that she is employed by the Department of Agriculture in the Regional fisheries and Treaties section. Ms Buchanan is attending SARAG as an observer and has no pecuniary interests in the sub-Antarctic fisheries

Ms Robertson advised that she is employed by the Department of Agriculture in the Regional fisheries and Treaties section. Ms Robertson is attending SARAG as an observer and has no pecuniary interests in the sub-Antarctic fisheries

Mr Exel, Mr Arangio 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 Mr Les Scott and Dr Malcolm Haddon.

## 1.3 Agenda

Members agreed that agenda item 20a 'Fishery Status Report' should be discussed after agenda item 5. The agenda was adopted.

### Agenda item 2 – Adoption of minutes from SARAG 50

Members noted that the minutes from SARAG 50 were circulated to members on 17 February 2015. Members were asked to provide all comments by Friday 6 March 2015. Members noted that the comments will then be incorporated and the final minutes will be circulated to members as a true and accurate record of the discussions.

**Action arising 1** – The Executive Officer to circulate the final minutes from SARAG 50.

### Agenda item 3 – Actions arising from SARAG 50

SARAG discussed the status of action arising items from SARAG 50.

#### Actions arising from SARAG 50

| Action arising   | Status   |
|--|--|
| <b>HIMI Fishery Research</b> - 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. | SARAG noted that at the CCAMLR review meeting on 23 February 2015 a workplan for 2015 was endorsed and this did not list the MSE as a priority |



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|--|--|
| <p><b>HIMI Fishery Research</b> - 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.</p> | <p>Dr Welsford advised that currently there is no CCAMLR policy on undercatch/overcatch. Members noted that if a company goes over quota it is referred to the CCAMLR Compliance Committee. Overcatch is accounted for under AFMA policy where the quota is deducted from the following seasons quota. SARAG noted that this is a policy decision and would not be difficult to incorporate into the stock assessment.</p> |
| <p><b>Public Disclosure Act</b> - AFMA to clarify if SARAG members have indemnity.</p>   | <p>The AFMA member noted that RAG members are appointed differently to MAC members and do not have indemnity. RAGs also only provide advice to AFMA. Members were advised that they would be updated if any changes to regulations occurred.</p>   |
| <p><b>MITF recapture rates and post tag mortality</b> – CSIRO to explore and SARAG to discuss at the next meeting.</p>   | <p>The CSIRO member advised that the post tag mortality is currently set at the CCAMLR rule of 10% but noted that this is a maximum amount and it is likely to be lower in the MITF. CSIRO agreed to examine this in the sensitivities in the MITF stock assessment.</p>   |



|  |  |
|--|--|
| <p><b>Unicorn Icefish bycatch limits</b> – 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</p>                          | <p>This item was discussed under agenda item 18</p>  |
| <p><b>Research contribution</b> - AFMA to provide information on other fisheries and the comparison of Gross Value of Production and research contribution</p>   | <p>AFMA to provide information as soon as possible. <b>Action arising 2.</b></p>   |
| <p><b>Conversion factors</b> – 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</p> | <p>SARAG agreed that a paper was not required as the observers confirmed that doing conversion tests was not a huge additional burden to the observer. Members noted that it was important to go to three decimal places given the size of the catch limits.</p> |

#### Agenda item 4 – Correspondence

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

- An email dated 1 September 2014 from Sarah Kirkcaldie providing information from Jonathon Barrington, Australian Antarctic Division regarding the *Threat Abatement Plan 2014 for the incidental catch or bycatch of seabirds during oceanic longline fishing operations*;
- An email dated 1 October 2014 from Jo Fisher seeking comments on the draft Five Year Strategic Research Plan;
- An email dated 23 October 2014 from Sarah Kirkcaldie attaching a letter from Senator the Hon. Richard Colbeck, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Agriculture, informing stakeholders that there will be a public consultation process in early 2015 regarding the development of a revised harvest strategy policy, bycatch policy and overarching fisheries policy;
- An email dated 11 November 2014 from Jo Fisher seeking further comments on the draft Five Year Strategic Research Plan;

and

- An email dated 4 December 2014 from Jo Fisher regarding the recommended total allowable catches for the HIMI Fishery.



## Agenda item 5 - Fishing operations update

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

Mr McNeill advised that Australian Longline Pty Ltd had finished fishing in the New and Exploratory Ross Sea Fishery earlier than anticipated due to the ice conditions. Members noted that it had been a successful season and that the vessel *Antarctic Chieftain* had fished only in CCAMLR statistical area 88.2. The *Antarctic Chieftain* was due back in to New Zealand in the first week of March and then would be heading to the HIMI Fishery. Members further noted that the fishing vessel *Janas* would start in the Macquarie Island Fishery at the beginning of the 2015/16 season and then move to the HIMI Fishery later in 2015.

Mr Arangio advised that the trawler *Southern Champion* only trawled a small amount of Patagonian Toothfish in the 2014/15 HIMI season and has now been retired. SARAG noted that Austral Fisheries Pty Ltd had purchased a new replacement vessel renamed *Atlas Cove* which is currently getting re-fitted to be a dual purpose trawler and long-liner. The company is also currently looking at purchasing another boat that has previously fished in the Ross Sea and South Georgia fisheries.

Austral Fisheries are expected to begin longline fishing in the 2014/15 HIMIF season in mid-April. *Atlas Cove* is expected to complete the random stratified trawl survey in mid to late April.

## Macquarie Island Toothfish Fishery

### Agenda item 6 – Stock assessment and MSE update

SARAG discussed the CSIRO prepared 2015 'Stock Assessment of the Macquarie Island fishery for Patagonian Toothfish (*Dissostichus eleginoides*) using data up to and including August 2014'. CSIRO advised that the stock assessment included the addition of the 2014 catches, 2014 length compositions, 2014 tag recaptures and 2013 age-at-length compositions. Members noted that the status of the Fishery was similar to last year with the stock at about 69% of  $B_0$  with similar trends in recruitment.

SARAG discussed the sensitivity analyses which examine the consequences of alternative assumptions to the base case scenario in the model results. SARAG agreed to remove the following:  $M=0.2$  (not reasonable for a long lived fish as this suggests there would be few fish older than 23 years of age),  $\sigma R = 0.7$  (resulted in a worse fit), leave out 2012 North Macquarie Ridge longline (this improved the fit to the length data but had little effect on the current stock status) and 50% female maturity at 120cm.

Catch levels that satisfy the CCAMLR decision rules were calculated under ten alternative assumptions regarding how the catches will be allocated to fleet and region. The projected 2015/16 catch from these scenarios ranged from 460t to 530t.

Industry participants left the room, and SARAG members agreed to recommend the following TAC limits in the MITF:



- Patagonian Toothfish at 460 tonnes ; and
- 50 tonnes for any other single species taken in the fishery.

SARAG agreed that it is important to maintain fishing across the entire fishery and recommended a TAC of 460 tonnes for the 2015/16 season to be taken in approximately the following proportions: 250 tonnes from the Aurora Trough, 84 tonnes in the Southern Macquarie Ridge and 126 tonnes in the Northern Macquarie Ridge.

SARAG noted that the distribution of catches was a voluntary agreement with Industry and the Group appreciated Industry's efforts to abide by the agreement. SARAG noted that spreading the distribution of catch across the Fishery will increase the stability of the stock assessment.

SARAG discussed a work plan for the coming months to complete all the work before the next stock assessment.

Issues to be resolved before completing the 2016 stock assessment:

1. Executive summary – include what the main changes are between the 2014 and 2015 stock assessments and what new data has been included;
2. Suitability of 10 days recapture for longline tags – members agreed that the assessment should not include any recaptures in the same season;
3. Estimation of growth with new age/length data;
4. Estimation of aging error matrix (Candy-Burch method);
5. Movement/recruitment between areas – is there size based movement, habitat, area. Members agreed that this would need to be examined in the long term and should be included in the Strategic Research Plan;
6. Examining if there is a stock division between the Southern Macquarie Ridge and Northern Macquarie Ridge or is it just reflective of break in current effort;
7. What new aging data is desirable. Members agreed that aging recent recruits is the most important then larger males (greater than 1.5m) followed by archives;
8. What is the depth x hook size influence on selectivity. Industry agreed to let CSIRO know if they change hook size and also if they are fishing in deeper water in a particular season;
9. Standardised diagnostics. Members noted that this needs to be better described – AAD agreed to discuss this with CSIRO;
10. Estimating M inside and outside the model. Members noted that this should be included in the Strategic Research Plan for CSIRO to complete noting that it will always be poorly estimated; and
11. Examining Stock Synthesis model specific quirks. Members noted that this has been a long term problem that will need to be included in the Strategic Research Plan but noted it was not impacting on management advice.

Members also noted that CSIRO and the Australian Antarctic Division will be working on the above to refine the model over the next 12 months.

Members thanked CSIRO for completing the MITF stock assessment and noted that the final stock assessment paper, incorporating minor edits, would be circulated in the coming weeks.



**Action arising 3:** CSIRO to circulate the final stock assessment paper in the coming weeks.

### **Agenda item 6.1 – MSE report**

The CSIRO member noted that no additional MSE work had been completed since the last face-to-face meeting in September 2014. SARAG noted that the AFMA member would soon be contacting New Zealand regulators regarding tags to determine whether any Australian tags have been retrieved by New Zealand operators.

**Action arising 4:** AFMA to contact New Zealand regarding tag re-captures

### **Agenda item 7 – Future stock assessment work**

Members noted that the stock assessment for the MITF is conducted by CSIRO on an annual basis. SARAG discussed three options for future stock assessments with the aim of reducing cost associated with doing an annual assessment.

Members recognised that Patagonian Toothfish are long-lived species, the stability of the stock assessment, and that the MITF is managed in a precautionary manner including CCAMLR decision rules. SARAG agreed to recommend to SouthMAC that moving to a two year assessment was the best option and did not incur significant additional risk.

SARAG noted that when CSIRO undertake the 2016 assessment, as per the existing CSIRO contract, it will recommend TACs for both the 2016/17 and 2017/18 seasons. A new stock assessment will then be required in 2018 for the 2018/19 and 2019/20 seasons. It was noted that two year TACs are consistent with CCAMLR managed Toothfish fisheries and supported by a Management Strategy Evaluation conducted by CCAMLR.

SARAG agreed that MITF multi-year TACs would need to be reviewed in a few years and it was agreed to include this requirement in the five year Strategic Research Plan.

### **Agenda item 8 – Fishery Assessment Plan**

Members noted that the Fishery Assessment Plan (FAP) is a requirement of the *Macquarie Island Toothfish Fishery Management Plan 2006*. SouthMAC noted the draft FAP proposed a tagging rate of two toothfish per tonne caught at Macquarie Island in the 2015/16 season. Members agreed to finalise the FAP with minor editorial amendments including removing the need to conduct the line weighting trials which are no longer a requirement of CCAMLR if the vessel is using integrated weight auto longline gear. Industry advised members that Australian Longline Pty Ltd would be completing all the requirements of the MITF FAP. The FAP will be finalised and circulated to members once the AFMA Commission has agreed to the MITF 2015/16 TAC.

**Action arising 5:** AFMA to circulate final MITF FAP to members.



## **Agenda item 9 – Season dates and longline fishing period**

SouthMAC noted that in November 2014, Industry sent a formal request to AFMA to change the Macquarie Island season date so that it extends from 15 April one year to 14 April the following year. Industry also requested that the longline fishing period be extended by two weeks to run from 15 April to 31 August (currently 1 May to 31 August).

At its teleconference in November 2014, SARAG noted that there were no scientific implications for the stock assessment by starting the season earlier but that any amendment to the longline fishing period would require consultation with the Threat Abatement Plan for seabirds team at the Australian Antarctic Division (AAD). AAD agreed that it is unlikely that the extension would pose any additional risks to seabirds at Macquarie Island.

SARAG noted that the AFMA Commission was currently considering the Industry's request and that the outcomes of the Commission's discussion will be communicated to members as soon as possible. If the AFMA Commission agrees to change the season dates, changes will be implemented through Statutory Determination.

**Action arising 6:** AFMA to inform SARAG of the outcomes of the AFMA Commissions discussions regarding the MITF season extension.

## **Heard Island and McDonalds Islands Toothfish Fishery**

### **Agenda item 10 – Fishery Assessment Plan**

SARAG noted that the HIMI Fishery Assessment Plan (FAP) is a requirement of the *Heard Island and McDonald Islands Fishery Management Plan 2002*. The draft 2014/15 FAP was provided for comment and members agreed to a tagging rate of two tags per tonne of toothfish caught in all fishing operations. SARAG noted that the normal tagging rate in the fishery is two fish tagged per three green weight tonne. However, the tagging rate for the 2014/15 season was increased voluntarily by industry to two fish tagged per green weight tonne to inject additional tags into the fishery. SARAG agreed that in the short term, increased tags are important for transitioning the fishery's stock assessment away from reliance on the RSTS (random stratified trawl survey) and to a tag-based assessment. SARAG congratulated Industry for volunteering to aim to tag that many fish. The FAP also set out the timetable for the RSTS. SARAG agreed to the FAP with minor amendments. The FAP will be finalised and circulated to members out of session.

**Action arising 7:** AFMA to circulate final HIMI FAP to members

### **Agenda item 11 – CCAMLR fisheries review meetings**

The AAD member noted that as a result of the significant additional work that was required to complete the HIMI stock assessments in 2014, a group was formed to ensure that the work was on track. The meetings were known as HIMI Fishery monthly meetings. It has been agreed that the meetings should continue in 2015 but should not be held every month and should also include discussion on other CCAMLR commitments, including discussions about Australia's involvement in CCAMLR Exploratory fisheries in the Ross Sea. Members noted that the meetings are now referred to as CCAMLR fisheries review meetings. SARAG noted



that at its meeting on 23 February 2015, the CCAMLR fisheries review group discussed and agreed to the workplan for the 2015 HIMI stock assessments. Key issues for 2015 include completing a revised HIMI Patagonian toothfish assessment, bilateral discussions on the Kerguelen Plateau, completing the Mackerel Icefish assessment, maintain the longline season extension, key bycatch assessment discussion, monitoring marine mammal interaction and supporting new and exploratory applications. Members noted that the review meeting is not a decision making body.

### **Agenda item 12 – CCAMLR CM 42-02 – Mackerel icefish move-on rule**

SARAG noted that CCAMLR Conservation Measure 42-02 (2014) specifies the catch limit for *Champscephalus gunnari* (Mackerel Icefish) by trawl fishing in CCAMLR Statistical Area 58.5.2. The CM states that if more than 100kg of icefish are taken in any haul and 10% of the catch is less than 240mm, then the fishing vessel shall move to another fishing location at least 5nm distant. Members noted that the intent of the rule is to avoid smaller icefish that have not yet spawned.

Industry members indicated that the move-on provision limits exploration of new fishing ground and requested that the limit change to 1 tonne rather than 100kg.

Members noted that there is no evidence to suggest that the fishery depletes juvenile fish. AAD agreed to analyse the available data and prepare a paper which will be circulated to SARAG. Members noted that CCAMLR would need to agree to any changes to the move-on provisions noting that in the past CCAMLR has shown a willingness to change move-on provisions .

**Action arising 8:** AAD to prepare paper on Mackerel Icefish.

### **Agenda item 13 – Gear configuration for icefish fishing**

SARAG noted that the *Heard Island and McDonald Islands Fishery Regulations 2002* specify gear limitations in the trawl sector of the HIMI Fishery. Part 4 of the Regulations, 'Use of Certain Gear', states that bobbins must be more than 520mm in diameter and rock hopper discs must be more than 400mm in diameter.

Industry members requested that SARAG discuss a possible change to the regulations, enabling different footrope configurations and gear technology improvements to be used to minimise seabed impacts.

The AFMA member noted that in other Commonwealth fisheries there is usually a maximum bobbin size not a minimum one. Members further noted that the AAD project 'An Assessment of the Vulnerability of Benthic Habitats to Impact by Demersal Gears' did not indicate that different bobbin size had different impacts

Members agreed that industry will work with the AAD to set up a plan on what data is required to do a comparison between the current gear requirements and any new configuration they wish to trial. The AFMA member agreed that the observer would collect the necessary data to conduct the comparison trial.



**Action arising 9:** Industry and AAD to set up a plan on what data is required to do a comparison between the current gear requirements and any new configuration they wish to trial.

### **Agenda item 14 – SARAG and SouthMAC in HIMI TAC setting process**

SARAG discussed the HIMI total allowable catch process timeline and agreed to hold the next meeting on Tuesday 8 September 2015 where members will be asked to critique the final draft HIMI stock assessment for Mackerel Icefish and Patagonian Toothfish. Members noted the revised stock assessment will then be presented as the Australian Government submission to the Working Group on Fish Stock assessment & CCAMLR meetings in October 2015. In November, SouthMAC will hold a teleconference (date to be confirmed) and consider the outcomes of CCAMLR for the Mackerel Icefish and Patagonian Toothfish stock assessment and prepare advice for the AFMA Commission.

Members noted that if at any time a SARAG meeting was required one can be called.

### **Agenda item 15 – Release of RSTS data**

Members were advised that a researcher at the University of Tasmania has approached AAD requesting access to some of the HIMI RSTS data. The AAD member requested SARAG's agreement to provide the data given that all stakeholders were present. The project aims to quantify and predict the distribution of fish community types and the rate of change in composition of these communities along a latitudinal gradient from the Kerguelen Plateau to Prydz Bay.

Members agreed that data could be provided as long as a confidentiality agreement is signed. It was agreed that AFMA and AAD would discuss the confidentiality agreement to ensure that industry is protected.

**Action arising 10:** AAD and AFMA to discuss confidentiality agreement before any data is released.

## **Research**

### **Agenda item 16 – Research issues**

SARAG noted that the AFMA Research Committee (ARC) met on 16 October 2014 to consider individual fishery research priorities identified for AFMA funding in 2015/16 (essential fisheries stock assessment related research). The ARC considered the draft Antarctic Fisheries Strategic Research Plan 2014/15-2018/19 noting that an annual plan would be developed and the stock assessment for the MITF (as discussed at Agenda Item 7 of SARAG 51) is to be undertaken as part of the project 2014/0820 Stock assessment and management strategy evaluation for the Macquarie Island Fishery 2015-2016.



SARAG noted that the Commonwealth Fisheries Research Advisory Body (ComFRAB) was currently considering full proposals from applicants seeking funding from the Fisheries Research and Development Corporation (FRDC). SARAG noted that the projects titled 'Consistent standards for Australian fisheries management' and 'Research to support the Upper Slope Dogfish Management Strategy' were the most relevant to the members.

### **Agenda item 17 – Five year strategic research plan**

Members noted that the Antarctic Fisheries Strategic Research Plan had been considered numerous times by SARAG in 2014. It was agreed to finalise the 5 year strategic Research Plan with the final amendments made during the meeting. AFMA agreed to circulate the final five year Strategic Research Plan.

As an outcome from the teleconference in November 2014, SARAG has agreed to develop a Antarctic Fisheries 2014/15 Annual work plan detailing research needs for the 2014/15 year. However, members noted that in 2014, as a result of the high workload required to complete the HIMI Fishery stock assessment, AAD developed a science work plan for the HIMI Fishery. The science work plan has now been extended to address science requirements for 2015 and include Australian involvement in CCAMLR Exploratory fisheries. Members agreed that an annual work plan was not required for the sub-Antarctic fisheries and instead the science work plan could be used as the annual plan under the five year Strategic Research Plan.

SARAG agreed that the long term priority for the MITF was examining the movement/recruitment between the different fishing areas at Macquarie Island.

**Action arising 11:** AFMA to circulate finalised 5 year Antarctic Fisheries Research Plan.

### **Agenda item 18 – Unicorn icefish assessment and MSE**

The AAD member provided a verbal update on the assessment and MSE of Unicorn Icefish in the HIMI Fishery. Members noted that a work plan was being developed to review all data on Unicorn Icefish to assess the stock and recommend a TAC as well as improve the move-on provisions. AAD will be writing a paper for submission to the CCAMLR Fish Stock Assessment meeting with the aim of amending the current Unicorn Icefish conservation measure.

## **Environment**

### **Agenda item 19 – Review of environmental interactions and gear loss**

SARAG noted that there had been no wildlife interactions recorded that resulted in deaths in the HIMI Fishery since the last SARAG meeting in September 2014.

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 953,580 hooks have been set with no wildlife deaths.



Members also noted that the gear loss at HIMI had significantly increased compared to the previous season but there was a slight decrease in the MITF gear loss compared to last year. There was also high gear loss in the New and Exploratory Fishery. Members noted that for the New and Exploratory fisheries and HIMI Fishery the consistently bad weather had resulted in higher than expected gear loss. Industry noted that it would be ideal in the New and Exploratory fishery if they could sink gear and then electronically activate it to surface again if ice moves in, however CCAMLR requirements for gear to be visible on the surface prevents this.

## **Other**

### **Agenda item 20 – Other business**

#### **a) Fishery status reports**

Dr Patterson advised that ABARES had begun drafting the MITF and HIMIF chapters for the 2015 Fishery Status Reports. Members noted that the Antarctic Waters chapter will not be included, but ABARES will add a Ross Sea and Amundsen Sea (CCAMLR statistical area 88.1 and 88.2) chapter in 2016 to cover the 2014/15 CCAMLR fishing season.

#### **b) Proposed external access for RAG and MAC members**

SARAG noted AFMA's intention to provide MAC and RAG members with external user access to parts of the system. Members noted that the new system will allow MAC and RAG members and observers to log on and provide comment on proposed meeting dates, agendas, meeting papers, sitting fees and travel claim forms, to review correspondence and potentially update contact and banking details online. Industry observer, Mr Arangio, sought clarification on whether observers to MACs and RAGs would be able to log on to the system.

**Actions arising 12:** Executive Officer to clarify if observers would be able to log on to the system.

### **Agenda item 21 – Next meeting**

SARAG agreed to hold the next meeting on Tuesday 8 September 2015 where members will be asked to critique the final draft HIMI stock assessment for Mackerel Icefish and Patagonian Toothfish.

The Chair thanked Mr Neville, Ms Buchanan and Ms Robertson for attending.

The meeting closed at 4.00 pm.





### Actions arising from SARAG 51

| Item | Action arising   | Responsibility |
|------|--|----------------|
| 1    | <b>SARAG 50 minutes</b> - The Executive Officer to circulate the final minutes from SARAG 50.  | AFMA           |
| 2    | <b>Research contribution</b> (from SARAG 50) - AFMA to provide information on other fisheries and the comparison of Gross Value of Production and research contribution  | AFMA           |
| 3    | <b>MITF stock assessment</b> - CSIRO to circulate the final stock assessment paper in the coming weeks   | CSIRO          |
| 4    | <b>Tagging</b> - AFMA to contact New Zealand regarding tag re-captures   | AFMA           |
| 5    | <b>MITF FAP</b> - AFMA to circulate final MITF FAP to members  | AFMA           |
| 6    | <b>MITF Season extension</b> - AFMA to inform SARAG of the outcomes of the AFMA Commissions discussions regarding the MITF season extension.   | AFMA           |
| 7    | <b>HIMI FAP</b> - AFMA to circulate final HIMI FAP to members  | AFMA           |
| 8    | <b>Mackerel Icefish</b> - AAD to prepare paper on Mackerel Icefish   | AAD            |
| 9    | <b>Gear configuration for Mackerel Icefish</b> - Industry and AAD to set up a plan on what data is required to do a comparison between the current gear requirements and any new configuration they wish to trial. | Industry/AAD   |
| 10   | <b>University of Tasmania project</b> - AAD and AFMA to discuss confidentiality agreement before any data is released.   | AFMA/AAD       |
| 11   | <b>Strategic Research Plan</b> - AFMA to circulate finalised 5 year Antarctic Fisheries Research Plan  | AFMA           |
| 12   | <b>RAG/MAC external system</b> - Executive Officer to clarify if observers would be able to log on to the system   | AFMA           |

