



Australian Government

Australian Fisheries Management Authority



Tropical Tuna Management Advisory Committee (TTMAC)

**DRAFT MINUTES
TTMAC 6
19-20 MARCH 2012
CANBERRA**



**SIXTH MEETING OF THE TROPICAL TUNA MANAGEMENT ADVISORY
COMMITTEE (TTMAC)
19-20 MARCH 2012
CANBERRA**

Agenda Item 1: Preliminaries/matters arising

1.1: Welcome and apologies

1. TTMAC Chair Catherine Barnett opened the meeting. On behalf of the MAC, the Chair congratulated Brian Jeffriess for his appointment as a Member of the Order of Australia in the 2012 Australia Day awards for his service to the fishing and aquaculture industries.

Apologies

2. Apologies were received from the recreational and charter sector invited participant, Len Olyott, and the state government invited participant, Brigid Kerrigan. Participants at TTMAC 5 were:

Chair

Catherine Barnett

David Power

Kylie Tonan

Members

Geoff Binns (industry member)

Vyt Vilkaitis

Dr Campbell Davies (research member)¹

Guests

Bill Edwards (recreational/charter member)

AAD

Gary Heilmann (industry member)

Ian Hay²

Terry Romaro (industry member)

Graham Robertson²

Trent Timmiss (AFMA member)

AFMA

Paul Williams (industry member)

David Galeano³

Paul Ryan⁴

Invited Participants

Cathal Farrell (industry)

DAFF

Anna Willock⁵

Brian Jeffriess (industry)

Claire Van Der Geest⁵

Erica Starling (industry)

DSEWPaC

Cathy Dichmont (TTRAG Chair)¹

Kate Arthur⁴

Executive Officer

Tony Kingston

Katherine Reid⁴

Observers

AFMA

Nigel Abury

Steve Auld

1: attended first day only

2: attended agenda items 4.1 and 4.2 only

3: attended agenda item 3.2 only

4: attended agenda items 4.1, 4.2 and 4.5 only

5: attended agenda items 2.4 and 2.5 only

1.2: Adoption of agenda

3. The agenda approved by the meeting is annexed as Attachment A.

1.3: Pecuniary interest declarations

4. Two changes were advised to the previous to the declarations of interest:

- i) Campbell Davies advised that his appropriate position title is Research Program Leader, Integrated Marine and Coastal Assessment and Management; and
- ii) Erica Starling advised she is no longer a Seafood CRC Board member.

1.4: Acceptance of minutes from TTMAC 5

5. In reference to paragraph 2 of the draft minutes, the Chair advised that she continues to chair the South Australian Rock lobster Industry Advisory Council.

6. The meeting approved the provisional minutes, incorporating this amendment, as a true and accurate account of the discussions at TTMAC 5.

1.5: Status of actions arising from TTMAC 5

7. The Executive Officer outlined progress on the 19 action items identified at TTMAC 5.
8. TTMAC welcomed advice from AFMA that the review of conversion factors (issue #2) is well advanced, that it is being undertaken at no additional management cost, and that a report from AFMA will be forwarded to TTRAG for consideration in coming months.

Action Item 1: AFMA to complete its report on conversion factors in the ETBF and provide the report to TTRAG for consideration

9. TTMAC noted that no discussions have been held with the Sydney Fish Market in regard to their handling of escolar (issue #3).

10. Industry members and invited participants expressed strong disappointment in the AFMA Commission's decision not to support TTMAC's request for a one-off increase in the yellowfin overcatch provision (issue #10) and felt that the Commission had failed to properly explain the rationale behind its decision. Industry members and invited participants further noted that this was the second major decision – the first being the 2011/12 ETBF TACC levels – where the AFMA Commission has not adopted TTMAC's recommendations.

- Industry participants felt that these decisions created a lot of uncertainty within the ETBF and encouraged AFMA to provide industry with clear, consistent advice as to the future direction of management arrangements in the ETBF.
- The AFMA member advised that the Commission considered the overcatch matter at the same meeting it approved the draft quota administration policy and that the Commission's decision not to increase the yellowfin overcatch provision was consistent with the thrust of the draft policy which views overcatch as impeding the quota market.
- The AFMA member also advised that the Australian Government has adopted different negotiating positions for the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC) and the Central and Western Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC), such that some of industry's perceived inconsistencies are not of AFMA's making.

11. The TTRAG Chair advised that in regard to providing TTMAC examples from other fisheries where byproduct species are included in the harvest strategy (issue #14), the harvest strategy for the intended example - the Northern Prawn Fishery – can not yet be distributed.

Action Item 2: TTRAG Chair to provide TTMAC with the NPF harvest strategy

12. AFMA advised that FRDC has not yet released the evaluation of the ETBF e-monitoring trial (issue #16). AFMA reiterated its commitment to forward the website link when the report is released.

Action Item 3: AFMA to provide link to ETBF e-monitoring report

13. With these comments, and noting that all other issues arising had either been completed or were to be considered in more detail under subsequent agenda items, TTMAC was satisfied with the treatment of the issues arising from TTMAC 5.

1.6: Correspondence/intersessional work arising between TTMAC5 and TTMAC6

14. The Executive Officer informed TTMAC of the following issues addressed intersessionally since the previous meeting:

- i) ComFRAB's decisions regarding 2012/13 ETBF and WTBF research proposals;
- ii) the AFMA Commission's response to recommendations arising from the review of arrangements for obtaining and using scientific and economic information;
- iii) AFMA's approved 2011-12 budget, budget reconciliation and levy acquittal;

- iv) AFMA's reiteration of its MAC travel expenditure policy;
- v) AFMA's granting of ETBF quota SFRs to the current holders of East Coast Skipjack fishery permits; and
- vi) advice received from ABARES of its intent to undertake an economic survey of ETBF operators in the first half of 2012.

15. TTMAC noted the status of the issues addressed intersessionally since September 2011.

Agenda Item 2: Background Information/Discussion Items

2.1: AFMA Management report on the ETBF and WTBF fisheries

16. The AFMA member informed TTMAC that:

- i) respective management guides for the 2012 season in the ETBF and WTBF have been provided to all ETBF and WTBF operators;
- ii) a project to update data on the Australian and New Zealand recreational catch of striped marlin has been completed with the resulting data provided to scientists at the Secretariat for the Pacific Community in Noumea and that a revised stock assessment for striped marlin using this data will be presented to the WCPFC Scientific Committee meeting in August;
- iii) there appears to be a continued high level of compliance by commercial operators with the principle expressed in the ETBF Code of Practice for Responsible Fishing to avoid fishing, where practical, in areas where recreational fishing tournaments are in progress;
 - the recreational/charter fishing member confirmed that current arrangements were working well and thanked the commercial industry for its support;
- iv) AFMA is coordinating two skipper education programs in the ETBF this season, targeting vessels from the Mooloolaba and Ulladulla areas. AFMA will liaise with industry to confirm appropriate timing for these programs; and that
- v) little progress has been made to resolve the long-standing issue of increasing the commercial catch limits of mahi mahi in the WTBF. Mahi mahi is currently managed by the Western Australian Government under the terms of a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the Australian Government and changing the existing commercial catch limit requires joint agreement by the Western Australian and Australian Fisheries Ministers. AFMA advised that the Western Australian Minister is not open to discussing potential changes to mahi mahi arrangements until the Western Australian and Australian Governments successfully resolve a totally separate fisheries issue in the north-west shelf.
 - In response to industry frustration over the apparent inability to resolve this issue, the AFMA member stressed the issue was beyond AFMA's control and that the desired change can only be implemented with the agreement of both the Australian and Western Australian Fisheries Ministers;
- vi) the Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities (DSEWPoC) has granted the Skipjack Fishery a 5-year approval under the WTO provisions of the EPBC Act, the best accreditation possible under the Act;
- vii) that there were about 35 longline vessels active in the ETBF in 2011-12, similar to the level of the past two seasons; and
- viii) that a letter will soon be going out to all ETBF SFR holders advising them of a plan by the NSW Department of Primary Industries to establish a working group to review existing baitfishing arrangements in NSW waters.

Action Item 4: AFMA to inform ETBF fishers of NSW plans to review baitfishing arrangements

17. The AFMA member also presented a graph comparing the holdings of ETBF yellowfin quota at the start and end of the 2011-12 season, with AFMA advising there had been around 50 permanent transfers and around 155 quota leases enacted during the season.

- TTMAC recognised the consolidation of quota holdings during the year though noted that some transactions were likely to be the result of corporate restructuring.

18. AFMA also advised that 12 boat SFRs had been surrendered, 3 from the longline sector and 9 from the minor line sector.

19. TTMAC noted the information presented by the AFMA member.

2.2: Fishery catch data – 2011 calendar year

20. TTMAC noted the updated catch estimates by species for the ETBF and WTBF sourced from both logbook and catch disposal record (CDRs) data contained in the agenda paper.

2.3: Informal report from the Research member and other TTMAC members

Research member

21. The Research updated the status of three ETBF and WTBF-related research projects:

- i) a joint ABARES/CSIRO/ACIAR project examining the stock structure of yellowfin tuna in Indonesia;
- ii) a study involving acoustic monitoring of baitfish grounds in (**Campbell, where was this one?**); and
- iii) a project supported by FRDC to update albacore biological and life history parameters, undertaken by Jess Farley, that is nearing completion, with the results to be incorporated into an updated albacore stock assessment to be considered at this year's WCPFC scientific Committee meeting.

22. The Scientific member also asked industry members to help increase the awareness of the large scale conventional tagging of yellowfin and bigeye that has been undertaken in waters off Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands in recent years and to encourage fishers to make sure they report any catch of tagged fish.

Historical ETBF catch data

23. An industry member noted that CSIRO had previously used a scale factor to improve the accuracy of historical ETBF catch data and was unsure of the extent to which this adjusted data was being used in current TACC-setting and marine bioregional planning processes. To help clarify this issue, TTMAC requested TTRAG to provide its best estimate of historical ETBF catch data.

Action Item 5: TTRAG to provide best estimate of historical ETBF catch data
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Industry

24. Industry members commented that in terms of catch, 2010-11 had been a fairly positive season with good numbers of both yellowfin and swordfish. Favourable catch rates were sustained for a considerable period of time, and generally speaking, the fish were of good size and quality.

Conservation member

25. The Conservation member advised that WWF has established positive and effective strategic market partnerships with Coles and John West (Simplot) through which independent third-party assessments are undertaken of the sustainability of their respective seafood marketing chains. The Conservation member added that other corporate groups – such as Woolworths – were developing similar relationships though not involving WWF.

26. The Conservation member noted that from a WWF perspective, such projects are designed to help the client – such as Coles – better manage potential risks in their supply

chain. It was also noted that these assessments are not a form of eco-labelling – that task being left to the retailer.

27. The Conservation member advised that in regard to fisheries environmental accreditation:
- i) the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) is the only certification recognised by WWF;
 - ii) WWF had fully-funded MSC accreditation for the Spencer Gulf prawn fishery, was contributing funding for the assessment of the blue grenadier fishery, and was co-contributing to the assessment of the Northern prawn fishery;
 - iii) WWF considers tuna to be a priority species;
 - iv) Coles has funded the pre-assessment of several Queensland fisheries;
 - v) the Fiji albacore fishery is currently undergoing assessment; and that
 - vi) the Aldi retail chain has made a commitment to only stock seafood sourced from MSC-accredited fisheries.

28. Several industry members considered the lack of an industry association made it difficult for industry to be proactive on issues such as the possible accreditation of the ETBF.

29. The Conservation member acknowledged there had been instances of incorrect media reporting concerning the sustainability of domestic yellowfin tuna but stressed that WWF was not responsible for such misinformation. The Conservation member further advised that within the next 12 months WWF would be taking active steps to highlight successful instances of fisheries management in Australia through issuing a number of positive media releases/stories and using the social media to better inform the Australian public.

30. In response to a question from an industry participant, the Conservation member advised that WWF International is involved in an ongoing project seeking to improve the environmental sustainability of the Vietnamese catfish (bassa) industry. Information regarding this project was thought to be available on the WWF International website and the Conservation member agreed to provide TTMAC with additional information should that be required.

2.4: Forthcoming WCPFC meeting

31. TTMAC received an informal report from DAFF staff regarding the issues to be discussed at the WCPFC meeting to be held in Guam in late March. TTMAC noted that the meeting would be considering, among other matters, a revised Conservation and Management Measure for skipjack, bigeye and yellowfin tuna, and the rapid growth of the albacore longline fleet based in the Pacific Island countries.

32. DAFF also reminded TTMAC that it coordinates a separate consultative process for stakeholders interested in WCPFC matters and encouraged participants to liaise with DAFF in the future on any WCPFC matters of interest.

33. TTMAC considered the update valuable and thanked DAFF staff for attending the TTMAC meeting.

2.5: Forthcoming IOTC meeting

34. Similar to the previous agenda item, DAFF staff provided an informal report on the issues to be discussed at the IOTC meeting to be held in Freemantle in late April. DAFF, in noting that the IOTC faced many challenges, encouraged WTBF stakeholders to liaise with DAFF on any IOTC matters of interest.

35. TTMAC considered the update valuable and reiterated its thanks to DAFF staff.

Agenda Item 3: Consideration/Decision Items

3.1: Overview and evaluation of the first year of quota in the ETBF

36. AFMA presented the outcomes from a recent phone hook-up involving industry members, AFMA staff and the Executive Officer to identify potential areas for improving the administration of ITQs in the ETBF.

Information on SFR holders

37. AFMA advised that the problems experienced last year in providing operators with information on ETBF SFR holders have been overcome with a public register of SFR holders readily available from the AFMA website and that contact details can be provided upon request.

Information on catch levels of quota species

38. AFMA committed to providing updated catch information for the ETBF and WTBF quota species on at least a fortnightly basis, though noting that there will be a 2-3 week lag in the timing of such data.

Action Item 6: AFMA to provide ongoing catch updates for ETBF and WTBF quota species

Multi-year TACs

39. AFMA advised that the Commission was open to investigating the possibility of a multi-year TAC – that is, a TAC set to cover a number of years.

40. Industry considered that an appropriate undercatch and overcatch provision - such as that recommended at the previous meeting - provided operators with sufficient flexibility and was far simpler and less risky than a multi-year TAC. Industry also noted that no AFMA fishery regularly operates under a multi-year TAC.

41. The Research member commented that there are differing dynamics for the various quota species such that the implications of a multi-year quota – and indeed setting an annual quota for several years in advance – will vary from species to species. The Research member also noted that an annual TAC set for three years in advance had been included as one of the potential management options in the Management Strategy Evaluation (MSE) completed for the ETBF.

42. TTMAC did not support implementing a multi-year TAC at the present time but requested TTRAG to examine the implications of setting TACs for a longer time frame – to include the two options of a multi-year TAC and an annual TAC set for several years.

Action Item 7: TTRAG to examine implications of setting TACs over a longer time-frame

Within-season quota reconciliation

43. AFMA advised that since the phone hook-up it had held internal discussions with AFMA compliance, systems and compliance staff regarding the likely implications from changing the current interpretation of the within-season quota reconciliation to a rolling 28 day basis effective from the date of each unloading. These discussions had been positive and provided there were no unforeseen administrative obstacles, AFMA expected to be able to start applying the new interpretation at some point during the current season.

44. AFMA further advised that:

- i) applying the new interpretation is expected to incur negligible additional cost;
- ii) the change is not contingent on the finalising of AFMA's quota administration policy; and
- iii) the change does not require Commission approval.

46. TTMAC noted AFMA's intent to change the existing within season quota reconciliation arrangements to a rolling 28 day basis from the date of each unload midway through the 2012/13 season.

Action Item 8: AFMA to implement revised interpretation of the 28 within-season reconciliation of overcatch

47. In response to a question from an industry participant, AFMA advised that any operator that remained in an overcaught situation at the end of the 28 day period would have their boat SFR suspended and that should the operator still be in overcaught situation at the end of the fishing year, prosecution action would commence.

3.2: TTMAC response to AFMA's draft Quota Administration policy

General comments

48. TTMAC, while welcoming the overall objectives of the draft policy of standardising management rules and improving management cost-effectiveness, questioned the practical extent to which a common policy approach can be implemented across a range of fisheries that are very diverse in nature.

49. Industry members and invited participants recalled that industry's support for introducing quota management into the ETBF was predicated on the quota management arrangements having sufficient in-built flexibility – in the form of undercatch and overcatch provisions – to cater for the operational realities of operating in a multi-species, highly variable fishery. Industry members considered that the subsequent withdrawal of these flexibility mechanisms would not only reduce the economic benefits resulting from the move to quota management but would undermine industry's confidence in AFMA and its consultative processes.

50. In terms of the quantitative cost-benefit analysis undertaken of the proposed changes, TTMAC noted:

- i) that the primary source of cost savings comes from reduced compliance costs, which under current CRIS arrangements are fully government funded;
- ii) that given that the cost-benefit analysis does not include the additional costs associated with monitoring of discarding behaviour, the proposed changes – if implemented – are likely to increase rather than reduce the management costs borne by industry; and
- iii) that the analysis does not account for the cost of any reduced catch should existing overcatch and undercatch provisions be removed.

51. With regard to examining options to improve the efficiency of the quota market, industry members and invited participants thought that these issues were generally best left to industry and the private sector to resolve rather than being a role for the industry regulator.

Specific comments

Within-season quota reconciliation

52. TTMAC expressed support for a 28-day within season reconciliation of any over-catch, provided the 28 days is interpreted as commencing from the date of each unloading.

Removal of existing undercatch provisions

53. There was strong – but not unanimous - support within TTMAC to retain the existing undercatch provisions in the ETBF and WTBF.

54. The majority of TTMAC members and invited participants did not agree with the assumption implicitly stated in the draft policy that removing undercatch provisions will make a fishery more efficient.

55. Instead, they believed that in multi-species fisheries such as the ETBF and WTBF – where some species (such as yellowfin tuna) are subject to high inter-annual variability in

abundance – a limited undercatch provision enhances an individual operator’s efficiency and hence increases the efficiency of the fishery overall.

56. In support of this argument, they noted that a modest undercatch allowance lessens the cost to operators from having uncaught quota at the end of the season. In this respect undercatch provides an incentive for operators before they go fishing to acquire/hold a little more quota than they are likely to need.

57. They also considered the retention of undercatch likely to encourage behaviour more consistent with the principles sought in the review, that is:

- i) increased quota trading; and
- ii) improved fishery compliance, in that by being more likely to hold a little more quota than actually needed, operators are at less risk of unintentionally fishing above their quota holdings.

58. Conversely, they thought that removing undercatch would increase the likelihood of operators finding themselves in an overcaught situation and needing to acquire additional quota after their fishing event.

59. The Conservation member, while agreeing with the above-stated concerns relating specifically to the ETBF and WTBF, considered the draft policy proposal in its entirety for all Commonwealth fisheries and from that perspective supported the proposed removal of undercatch provisions.

No impact on sustainability

60. TTMAC noted that with catch levels of most quota species in the ETBF and WTBF representing a relatively minor – and in some cases negligible – share of the total mortality of those stocks, maintaining a small undercatch provision raises no sustainability concerns and will have no impact on future Australian TACC decisions.

Unnecessary impact on operational flexibility

61. Industry TTMAC participants were concerned that removing the undercatch provision would reduce the flexibility currently available to operators and undermine quota values.

62. Many members and invited participants, while understanding AFMA’s desire from an administrative perspective to restrict quota trading to within the same discrete fishing year, questioned the need to rigidly apply such an approach if it resulted in curtailing a fisher’s operational flexibility.

63. Industry members also noted that in 2002, the then AFMA Board considered a modest level of undercatch an appropriate means of providing operational flexibility to the industry, despite being aware of the potential impacts of undercatch on the quota market. TTMAC did not understand what had changed since 2002 to justify reversing that decision.

20% undercatch permitted in the SBT fishery

64. TTMAC noted that notwithstanding AFMA’s intent of standardising the management rules across all quota-managed fisheries, operators in the Australian SBT fishery will have access to a 20% undercatch provision, consistent with the decision made by the Commission for the Conservation of Southern Bluefin Tuna (CCSBT), immediately creating exceptions to AFMA’s intended standardised approach.

Removal of existing overcatch provisions

65. There was strong – but again not unanimous - support within TTMAC to retain the existing overcatch provisions in the ETBF and WTBF.

66. TTMAC considered the respective arguments made in relation to undercatch were equally applicable to overcatch. The majority of TTMAC members and invited participants considered overcatch is particularly beneficial for those quota species having high inter-

annual variability in abundance. They argued that overcatch increases the likelihood of operators being able to capitalise when such species experience a good season - as occurred with yellowfin in the ETBF in 2010/11 - without raising any sustainability concerns since any overcatch has to be paid back in the subsequent year.

67. Being a multi-species fishery, they considered that in the absence of an overcatch provision, once the yellowfin TAC was approaching full utilisation operators would effectively be forced to stop fishing even though there was still uncaught quota available for other species. This would incur an economic cost to industry – in terms of foregone catch – and produce a less economically efficient outcome.

68. As with undercatch, the Conservation member appreciated the specific concerns regarding the ETBF and WTBF but from a broader Australia-wide perspective supported the proposed removal of overcatch provisions.

Problems in the availability of single-species quota

69. Experience in the initial years of quota trading in the ETBF and WTBF is that many potential sellers/lessors of quota are interested in selling/leasing their quota holdings only as a package – that is, they are unwilling to sell/lease quota on an individual species basis. This distortion to the supply of quota has a significant negative influence on quota trading as it deters potential buyers from the quota market – through increasing the cost of acquiring individual species quota and increasing the risk of fishers being left with quota of species they do not want.

70. A limited overcatch provision would assist operators overcome this current inefficiency in the quota market.

71. Some TTMAC members suggested the current ‘packaging’ of quota may diminish in the future as quota holders become more familiar with the quota market. However, for the immediate term, the availability of single-species quota is likely to remain limited.

Accounting for discards against individual quota holdings

72. In regard to the discarding of quota species, TTMAC noted:

- i) that the draft policy allows for the continued release of ‘alive and vigorous’ quota species;
- ii) that the draft policy is silent on how the landing of damaged quota species will be managed, in that the quota ramifications should a yellowfin tuna caught on a longline be attacked by a shark/whale such that only a portion of the yellowfin is actually landed are presently unclear; and
- iii) that the costs of monitoring discards in the ETBF and WTBF – which is likely to be considerable - has not been included in the cost-benefit analysis.

73. The majority of TTMAC members and invited participants thought that:

- i) the ETBF has a demonstrated history of taking strong management action for those species where discarding is an issue – such as southern bluefin tuna;
- ii) there has been a monitoring program in place for several years to monitor the discarding practices of operators from both the ETBF and WTBF, that the level of discarding is fairly stable, and that for all ETBF and WTBF quota species the level of mortality due to discarding by commercial operators is negligible relative to the other sources of mortality on the overall stock (such as catches by foreign fleets and in some cases the recreational catch) and hence is not currently incorporated into stock assessments; and that
- iii) the approach envisaged in the draft policy could be implemented should current discarding practices change to such a level that the mortality of discards was sufficient to influence stock assessment results and Total Allowable Commercial Catch decisions.

74. The Conservation member again considered the issue from the perspective of all Australian fisheries and supported the proposal outlined in the draft policy.

Take-home packs

75. TTMAC noted that the existing ETBF and WTBF arrangements require take-home packs to be accounted against quota holdings and that the draft policy seeks to bring arrangements in other fisheries to this same level.

76. An industry participant expressed frustration over the pettiness of this requirement relative to the other more significant management issues confronting the fishery industry.

Action Item 9: Executive Officer to forward TTMAC's views on the draft Quota Administration policy to AFMA by the due date of 30 March

3.3: ATBLF Ecological Risk Management (ERM)

77. AFMA presented the revised ERM draft report to TTMAC, noting that the draft incorporates comments made at TTMAC 5 and includes risk management actions specified under the Bycatch and Discarding Workplan, the Seabird Threat Abatement Plan and the Sea Turtle Mitigation Plan.

78. TTMAC proposed several changes the draft report:

- i) changing the classification of an ocean sunfish (*mola ramsayi*) in Table 2, from byproduct to bycatch;
- ii) adding a sentence after Table 3 explaining the action to be taken should a trigger level of marine turtle interaction be reached;
- iii) ensuring that the definitions, terminology and language used throughout the report are consistent; and
- iv) amending Attachment 1 to include the risk definitions used in the level 2 assessment and clarifying that a different set of definitions applies to protected species.

79. TTMAC recommended that AFMA distribute a further revision of the draft report that incorporates these suggested amendments to TTMAC out-of-session for approval.

Action Item 10: AFMA to distribute revised ERM report for out-of-session approval
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3.4: Process for reviewing the 2012/13 budget

80. TTMAC noted that AFMA will soon release its draft 2012-13 budget.

81. TTMAC also noted that with AFMA's moving towards a fee-for-service model, the costs associated with licensing, the logbook program and observers will not be included in the 2012-13 levy-base.

82. TTMAC agreed to establish a TTMAC budget sub-committee, comprising Gary Heilmann, Carl Farrell and Terry Romaro, to review the draft budget.

Action Item 11: TTMAC sub-committee to review draft 2012/13 budget

3.5: E-logs

83. AFMA advised that it intends moving the costs of the logbook program to a fee-for-service basis from 1 July 2012. AFMA further advised that electronic logbook reporting (e-logs) is estimated to be considerably cheaper than the traditional paper logbook and sought TTMAC's views on whether e-logs should be made compulsory in the ETBF and WTBF fisheries.

84. The TTRAG Chair advised that experience from another fishery where e-logs are in use indicates that, apart from the cost savings, operators have been able to access ancillary

programs helpful in the management and administration of their vessel. There have also been less data entry errors.

85. In response to a question from an industry participant, AFMA undertook to determine whether a former Australian Government requirement for government agencies/departments to maintain non-computerised alternatives of data reporting remained in force.

86. TTMAC noted that the change to a fee-for-service model applies only to the longline sector. Minor line SFR holders will be billed separately for their logbook costs.

87. TTMAC noted that by introducing a fee-service model, active fishers will bear an increased share of the logbook costs, such that the difference in levy costs borne by active fishers compared to inactive fishers will broaden.

88. TTMAC, while generally supportive of the move towards e-logs, recommended that the system remain voluntary for the present time, and agreed to reconsider the question of making e-logs compulsory in 12 months time.

Action Item 12: TTMAC to review in 2013 whether to make the use of e-logs compulsory

3.6: Setting Overcatch and Undercatch in the WTBF in the 2012/13 season

89. TTMAC noted that under the WTBF Management plan, the undercatch, overcatch and determined weight provisions for a season are required to be set in that season.

90. TTMAC recommended that a 10% undercatch and 10% overcatch provisions and a determined weight of 2000kg for all quota species be set in the WTBF for the 2012/13 season.

Action Item 13: A 10% undercatch and overcatch provision and 2000kg determined weight be set for all WTBF quota species for the 2012/13 season

3.7: E-monitoring update

91. AFMA advised TTMAC that

- i) e-monitoring has the potential to achieve substantial savings in management costs through reducing the need for at-sea observers;
- ii) e-monitoring will be supported as a voluntary monitoring option in the ETBF from 1 July 2012;
- iii) e-monitoring is already operational in the Gillnet Hook and Trap Fishery, with 100% coverage required in some areas and 10% coverage in less sensitive areas;
- iv) a fee-for-service policy is currently under development as part of an overall e-monitoring information package that will outline how observer and e-monitoring costs will be recovered from industry in 2012/13, with the package expected to be available mid-late April;
- v) a base-level of observer coverage will be required that during the implementation stage to validate the e-monitoring data but AFMA's intent over time is to reduce the level of observer coverage to zero; and that
- vi) Dr Rob Campbell (CSIRO) has compared the type of data that could be collected from using e-monitoring with the data currently collected from the at-sea observer program. The results from that analysis – which are to be considered at the next TTRAG meeting – suggest that e-monitoring, complemented by data collected through the existing port sampling program, is capable of providing most of the data currently being collected by observers;
 - the only significant gap in data collection concerns seabird interactions and such data can otherwise be collected as part of a specific research project;

92. An industry participant stressed the need to give operators an incentive to adopt e-monitoring and asked whether there would be any change from the current attribution of observer costs –80% from quota holders and 20% from boat SFRs.

- AFMA advised that incentives for industry encouraging them to shift to e-monitoring will be included in the e-monitoring information package.
- AFMA also agreed to examine the implications of changing the current method for attributing observer costs and to liaise with industry regarding this analysis.

93. An industry member questioned whether the envisaged cost savings was more a case of a cost transfer, from the levy base to individual boat owners.

Proposed 2012/13 level of observer coverage

94. AFMA advised that the intent for the ETBF in 2012/13 is to achieve an 8.5% level of observer coverage comprising:

- i) a base level to be collected using at-sea observers equal to 2% of the effort from all vessels, the costs of which will continue to be recovered through the levybase; and
- ii) an additional 6.5% to be collected using a combination of e-monitoring and observers, with 6.5% of the effort of those boats having e-monitoring equipment to be collected using the camera technology and 6.5% of the effort of those boats without the equipment to be collected using observers. The respective costs will be collected separately from each group of vessels.

95. TTMAC endorsed the proposed 2% base level of observer coverage during the implementation phase of e-monitoring with an additional 6.5% coverage to be achieved from a combination of e-monitoring and observers.

Action Item 14: An 8.5% level of observer coverage – using a combination of e-monitoring and on-board observers - to be achieved in the ETBF during the 2012/13 season

Freedom of Information requests for the release of camera footage

96. TTMAC discussed AFMA's policy regarding third party Freedom of Information (FoI) requests to access camera footage obtained under the electronic monitoring (e-monitoring) program.

97. AFMA advised that for footage obtained during the e-monitoring trials, AFMA intended to honour the signed agreements made with participating vessel owners not to release information gathered during the trials to third parties.

98. In regard to any future FoI request to access footage obtained after 1 July 2012 when e-monitoring will become supported as an ongoing data collection program, AFMA advised that the Australian Government's FoI laws have recently been changed to increase the type of information accessible under FoI requests.

99. AFMA advised that more information was needed to clarify this matter and agreed to include a section in the e-monitoring information package currently under development to explain AFMA's position in regard to responding to FoI requests for access to the camera footage.

Action Item 15: AFMA to address FoI issues in the ETBF e-monitoring information package

Agenda Item 4: Other Information/Discussion Items

4.1: 40g lead trial and SFR condition changes

100. Graham Robertson, from the Australian Antarctic Division (AAD), presented a review of recent research trialling the effectiveness of a 40g line weighting at the hook in accelerating

the sinking of the bait – and hence reducing the length of time that the bait is available for predation by seabirds.

- The trials were very successful when using dead bait, with the hook sinking nearly twice as fast as conventional line weighting. Aside from reducing seabird interactions, the 40g weighting also offers benefits in terms of improved crew safety, easier deployment, less bin tangles and lower costs.
- The trials were less successful when using live bait, it being felt that the weight was insufficient to overcome the swimming of the fish. Ongoing work is planned to examine the performance of a 60g lead weight with live bait.

101. Mr Robertson thanked industry – particularly Paul Williams and Gary Heilmann at Mooloolaba and Geoff Binns at Ulladulla – for their ongoing support of the research. Mr Robertson also advised that separate work to develop deep-water longline setting equipment is proceeding well and that a second trial of modified fisheries-ready equipment is planned to be undertaken in Uruguay later this year.

102. AFMA advised that the ETBF boat SFR conditions have been amended to include the 40g lead weight as a potential lime configuration for ETBF operators.

103. TTMAC thanked Mr Robertson for his presentation.

4.2: TAP review update

104. Mr Ian Hay, from the AAD, informed TTMAC that while the current TAP had made significant progress in reducing the rate of seabird interaction with longline fisheries, the objective of the TAP – zero seabird bycatch – had not yet been achieved such that a further TAP was required. TTMAC's views were then sought on:

- i) whether there are any additional issues that need to be included in the AAD Discussion Paper on developing a revised TAP;
- ii) an appropriate consultative mechanism to include TTMAC in the TAP revision process; and
- iii) any other matters relevant to developing a revised TAP.

105. TTMAC members and invited participants:

- i) questioned whether zero seabird bycatch was a realistic target;
- ii) wondered whether the revised TAP should be more concentrated on seabird-species specific issues rather than the current generic seabird approach;
- iii) suggested that the reaching of any trigger level of interaction should initiate some pre-determined action rather than an automatic shut-down of fishing in that area;
- iv) queried whether interactions with live birds which are subsequently released alive and vigorous should be included within the trigger levels; and
- v) agreed that the Executive Officer be the initial point of TTMAC contact during the TAP review process.

Action Item 16: Executive Officer to be contact point for AAD regarding the TAP review

106. The Conservation member advised that WWF will be making a separate submission to the TAP process, with this submission also to be made available to TTMAC. The member also noted that WWF was involved in preparing a guide to the best practice management arrangements for managing seabird interactions, this being part of a broader compendium of tuna bycatch measures that has WWF has made available to regional fisheries management organisations.

107. The AFMA member noted that current arrangements in the ETBF meet the seabird bycatch standards as specified in the WWF bycatch compendium.

108. Mr Hay thanked the ETBF industry for its help in reducing the level of seabird interactions under the past TAP and TTMAC for its constructive comments on the TAP revision. Mr Hay also encouraged TTMAC to remain engaged in the TAP revision process.

4.3: Data needs analysis and 5 year research plan

109. The TTRAG Chair informed TTMAC that ComFRAB met last week and that due to the limited size of AFMA's research fund, only those projects directly related to TAC setting have been supported. For the ETBF, this meant that the size frequency data collection work (undertaken by Kevin Williams) has been supported but that the high priority work to undertake a management strategy evaluation (MSE) for striped marlin has not been funded.

110. An industry member suggested that the project could instead be submitted to FRDC, though it was noted that FRDC does not fund tactical projects.

111. In regard to the draft 5 year plan, an industry participant suggested a need to more closely align the annual research statement with the goals, strategies and research priorities identified in the document.

112. TTMAC noted that the draft plan will be considered at the next TTRAG meeting. Following TTRAG's response, the final draft will be forwarded to TTMAC for endorsement.

Action Item 17: TTRAG to consider draft research plan
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4.4: Calculation of ETBF and WTBF fishery levies

113. AFMA presented the paper describing the respective process used to apportion the ETBF and WTBF management budgets to individual boat and quota SFR holders in each fishery. AFMA further advised that both methods had been developed in close consultation with the respective ETBF and WTBF industries.

114. TTMAC noted that both the AFMA research administration costs and the FRDC levy are attributed 100% to quota SFR holders, this being industry's preferred approach.

115. Industry supported the attribution process used by AFMA and welcomed AFMA's use of a three-installment payment plan.

4.5: Marine Bioregional Planning process

116. AFMA presented the status of the Australian Government's Marine Bioregional Planning process for the Coral Sea, Temperate East, South-West, North and North-West regions. AFMA noted that the process was being coordinated by the Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities (DSEWPaC) rather than AFMA.

117. AFMA further advised that:

- i) as a government authority, it had not submitted public submissions to DSEWPaC on the various draft reports. Instead, AFMA had provided input through separate government consultative mechanisms;
- ii) CSIRO is examining the impact of closures on TAC setting and stock assessments, though it is understood this work is of a general nature and is not looking at any specific region; and
- iii) any closures that arise from these Plans will be legislated in environmental legislation rather than in the respective fisheries management plans, with AFMA to continue managing those areas remaining open to fishing and with DSEWPaC having responsibility for managing any closed areas.

118. An industry participant expressed the understanding that DSEWPaC intends to announce final plans for all above regions in June and that while restructuring assistance is presently unresolved, the intent is to have this assistance finalised before the end of the year.

119. An industry participant expressed disappointment in AFMA's lack of advocacy for the effectiveness of current fisheries management arrangements throughout this marine planning process. The AFMA member advised that AFMA recognised the need to more proactively promote current management arrangements but also noted that the closures envisaged under the respective marine plans are not being implemented for fisheries management reasons.

120. Industry also commented on the apparent inconsistency across the different regions, with pelagic longlining not considered a concern in most regions but identified as a concern in the Coral Sea. The AFMA member explained that this was attributable to each region having different criteria identifying the areas to be protected – such that pelagic longlining is not a concern in those regions where protection of the benthic habitat is considered high priority but is a concern in the Coral Sea region where marine turtles and seabirds are a priority.

121. TTMAC requested the RAG to examine the potential impacts of proposed closures in the Coral Sea on the future application of the ETBF harvest strategy and future TACC setting.

Action Item 18: TTRAG to consider harvest strategy/TACC-setting implications of likely area closures in the Coral Sea

4.6: Process/timing for new TTMAC appointments

122. TTMAC noted that membership of the current MAC expires on 30 June and that AFMA will soon be initiating a process to appoint a MAC Chair, MAC members and MAC invited participants.

123. TTMAC recommended that the current structure of the MAC – in terms of having seven members (four with industry expertise, one with recreational/charter sector expertise, a research member and an AFMA member), five invited participants (3 with industry expertise, one with recreational/charter sector expertise and one from the state government sector) and the TTRAG Chair - be retained for the future MAC.

Action Item 19: TTRAG recommended that existing TTMAC structure be retained

Agenda Item 5: Other Items

5.1: 6 month levy acquittals

124. In presenting expenditure data for the 6 months ending 31 December, the AFMA member advised that:

- i) based on the data, ETBF expenditure for the full 12 month period is expected to be close to that forecast; and that
- ii) the overspend in ETBF licensing costs in the first 6 months is due to the number of quota transactions being higher than expected, but that the number of transactions is expected to fall in the six months January-June.

125. TTMAC noted the financial information for the 6 months to December 2011 as presented in the report.

5.2: 2012 SBT zone requirements

126. The AFMA member advised that the 2012 arrangements for the SBT zones on the east coast will be unchanged from last season. The AFMA member also advised that AFMA will convene a meeting with industry at an appropriate time in Ulladulla to explain these procedures, including the SBT catch documentation procedures.

127. An industry member commented that despite holding statutory fishing rights to operate in the ETBF fishery, the current arrangements for dealing with the SBT bycatch issue make it uneconomical for longline operators to remain in the ETBF's southern waters for much of the season. An industry invited participant suggested that cheaper management alternatives should be considered – such as the use of foreign observers, a practice currently used in New Zealand.

128. The AFMA member responded that the arrangements for ETBF operators have been relaxing over time, that the costs to longline operators of complying with the arrangements have been falling and that AFMA continues to explore further cost-saving measures.

129. Industry also noted that based on this season's observations of SBT purse seine operators in the Great Australian Bight (GAB), SBT may be arriving on the east coast a little earlier than normal this season.

130. TTMAC further noted that the likely amount of SBT quota available for use by the longline sector this season should be known in coming weeks.

Agenda Item 6: Next meeting

131. TTMAC agreed to next meet in September/October 2012.

Catherine Barnett
TTMAC Chair
30 March 2012

ACTION ITEMS ARISING FROM TTMAC 6

#	PARA	ACTION REQUIRED
1	8	AFMA to complete its report on conversion factors in the ETBF and provide the report to TTRAG for consideration
2	11	TTRAG Chair to provide TTMAC with the NPF harvest strategy
3	12	AFMA to provide link to ETBF e-monitoring report
4	16	AFMA to inform ETBF fishers of NSW plans to review baitfishing arrangements
5	23	TTRAG to provide best estimate of historical ETBF catch data
6	38	AFMA to provide ongoing catch updates for ETBF and WTBF quota species
7	43	TTRAG to examine implications of setting TACs over a longer time-frame
8	46	AFMA to implement revised interpretation of the 28 within-season reconciliation of overcatch
9	76	Executive Officer to forward TTMAC's views on the draft Quota Administration policy to AFMA
10	79	AFMA to distribute revised ERM report for out-of-session approval
11	82	TTMAC sub-committee to review draft 2012/13 budget
12	88	TTMAC to review in 2013 whether to make the use of e-logs compulsory
13	90	10% undercatch and overcatch provision and 2000kg determined weight be set for all WTBF quota species for the 2012/13 season
14	95	8.5% level of observer coverage to be achieved in the ETBF during the 2012/13 season
15	99	AFMA to address FoI issues in the ETBF e-monitoring information package
16	105	Executive Officer to be contact point for AAD regarding the TAP review
17	112	TTRAG to consider draft research plan
18	121	TTRAG to consider harvest strategy/TACC-setting implications of likely area closures in the Coral Sea
19	123	TTRAG recommended that existing TTMAC structure be retained

Tropical Tuna Fisheries Management Advisory Committee (TTMAC) 6

19-20 March 2012

AFMA Boardroom, Canberra

Commencing at 9.30am

AGENDA

- 1. Preliminaries/Matters Arising**
 - 1.1. Welcome and apologies
 - 1.2. Adoption of agenda
 - 1.3. Pecuniary interest declaration
 - 1.4. Acceptance of Minutes from TTMAC 5
 - 1.5. Actions Arising from TTMAC 5
 - 1.6. Correspondence between TTMAC 5 and TTMAC 6
- 2. Background Information/Discussion Items**
 - 2.1. AFMA Management report on the ETBF and WTBF fisheries
 - 2.2. Fishery Catch Data – 2011 Calendar year
 - 2.3. Informal report from the Scientific Member and other TTMAC members
 - 2.4. Forthcoming WCPFC Commission Meeting
 - 2.5. Forthcoming IOTC Commission Meeting
- 3. Consideration/Decision Items**
 - 3.1 Overview and evaluation of the first year of Quota in ETBF
 - 3.2 TTMAC response to AFMA's draft Quota Administration policy
 - 3.3 ATBLF Ecological Risk Management
 - 3.4 Process for reviewing the 2012/13 budget
 - 3.5 E-Logs
 - 3.6 Setting Overcatch and Undercatch in WTBF in 2012/13 season
 - 3.7 E-monitoring update
- 4. Other Information/Discussion Items**
 - 4.1. 40g lead trial and SFR condition changes
 - 4.2. TAP Review update
 - 4.3. Data needs analysis and 5 Year Research Plan (inc 2012/13 research statement)
 - 4.4. Calculation of ETBF and WTBF Fishery levies
 - 4.5. Marine Bioregional planning process
 - 4.6. Process/timing for new TTMAC appointments
- 5. Other Items**
 - 5.1 40g lead trial and SFR condition changes
 - 5.2 TAP Review update
- 6. Date and venue for next meeting**