



Australian Government

Australian Fisheries Management Authority



# Sub-Antarctic Resource Assessment Group (SARAG)

MINUTES  
TELECONFERENCE  
6 NOVEMBER 2014

## **SUB-ANTARCTIC Resource Assessment Group (SARAG)**

**CHAIR:** Professor John Buckeridge

**Date:** 6 November 2014

**Venue:** Teleconference

### **Attendance**

#### **Members**

Professor John Buckeridge

Dr Malcolm Haddon

Dr Rich Hillary

Mr Les Scott, Industry Member

Mr Martin Exel, Industry Member

Dr Dirk Welsford

Dr Philippe Ziegler

Dr Heather Patterson

Ms Jo Fisher

Ms Sarah Kirkcaldie, (Executive Officer)

Dr Jemery Day, Observer (CSIRO)

Mr Malcolm McNeill, Observer (Industry)

Mr Trent Timmiss, Observer (AFMA)

### **Introduction**

A Sub-Antarctic Resource Assessment Group (SARAG) teleconference was held on 6 November 2014.

The primary objective of the meeting was to discuss the recommended 2014 Total Allowable Catches (TACs) of Patagonian Toothfish and Mackerel Icefish in the Heard Island and McDonald islands Fishery.

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

The meeting was opened at 10.00am on 6 November 2014 by the Chair, Professor John Buckeridge.

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

Professor Buckeridge advised that he is a Professor of Natural Resources Engineering at RMIT University and has no pecuniary interest 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 Southern and Eastern Scalefish and Shark Fishery Resource Assessment Group.



Mr Scott advised that he is the Managing Director of Australian Longline P/L and Managing Director of Petuna Sealord Deepwater Fishing P/L and which holds various fishing rights in, and operates vessels in the Australian Sub-Antarctic fisheries and waters under the jurisdiction of CCAMLR. Mr Scott is also an advisor to Petuna Fisheries. Mr Scott further advised he is a member on SlopeRAG, the Sub-Antarctic demersal longline member on the Threat Abatement Plan, industry representative on the Australian delegation to CCAMLR, director to CFA and Director of 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 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 Hillary advised that he is employed by CSIRO and is the Principal Investigator of the MITF stock assessment project. He also advised that he is a member of AFMA's Southern Bluefin Tuna Management Advisory Committee (SBTMAC) and Tropical Tuna RAG. Dr Hillary advised that he has no pecuniary interests in the sub-Antarctic fisheries.

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

Dr Ziegler advised that he is employed by AAD and has been involved in the HIMI assessment this year. Dr Ziegler has no pecuniary interest in the sub-Antarctic and his salary is not connected to any research grants.

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, Fisheries and Forestry 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 financial interest in the sub-Antarctic fisheries.

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

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



Messrs Scott, Exel, and McNeill declared their interest under agenda items 3-5. The group then discussed whether Industry members needed to leave the teleconference for any agenda items; it was agreed that as their input was essential to most agenda items, they should remain in the meeting room unless a specific conflict of interest was identified, at which point these members and observer would be asked to leave the teleconference for the duration of that particular discussion/recommendation.

## **1.2 Apologies**

No apologies were received.

## **1.3 Adoption of agenda**

SARAG adopted the agenda without change.

# **Heard Island and McDonald Islands Fishery**

## **Agenda item 2 –Updated assessment of Patagonian Toothfish**

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

### Patagonian Toothfish

AAD presented two Patagonian Toothfish stock assessments models to WG-FSA: the base case model and the base case model that includes tagging data from the longline sector. WG-FSA agreed that the model used to determine the catch limit should include tagging data but with the removal of the first four years of year class strength (YCS) (1982-1985) which produced a TAC of 4,410 tonnes. SARAG noted that the WG-FSA recommendation was then supported by the CCAMLR Scientific Committee and Commission.

SARAG Members agreed to recommend to the AFMA Commission a 2014/15 TAC of 4,410 tonnes for Patagonian Toothfish.

SARAG noted that CCAMLR had identified areas where more work was still required in 2015 and this work would be discussed at the next CCAMLR Consultative Forum as well as the next SARAG meeting.

### Mackerel Icefish

SARAG noted that the Mackerel Icefish assessment was accepted by CCAMLR without change with members agreeing that the catch limit for Mackerel Icefish should be set at 309 tonnes for 2014/15 and 275 tonnes in 2015/16. Members noted that the 2015/16 catch limit was only an initial estimate and it would be updated in the 2015 stock assessment process.

SARAG agreed to recommend to the AFMA Commission that the 2014/15 TAC for Mackerel icefish be set at 309 tonnes.

SARAG noted that, during the Scientific Commission meeting, Russia withdraw an earlier intervention regarding banning bottom fishing in the HIMI Fishery.

SARAG congratulated the AAD scientists on the significant amount of work completed in 2014. In particular, members recognised the accomplishments of Drs Welsford and Ziegler



and the work they completed in 2014. SARAG noted that the CCAMLR report congratulated Australia on the work completed in 2014.

### **Agenda item 3 – TAC recommendations**

Messrs Scott, Exel and McNeill declared their interest under agenda item 3. Messrs Scott, Exel and McNeill left the teleconference and the remaining members agreed that they could all re-join the teleconference and participate in all discussions but not recommendations.

SARAG agreed to recommend the following TAC to the AFMA commission:

- Mackerel Icefish – 309 tonnes; and
- Patagonian Toothfish – 4,410 tonnes.

### **Bycatch**

Members noted that no new assessments were carried out on bycatch species in 2014 and agreed with CCAMLR's recommendation to retain the bycatch limits from the 2013/14 season for the 2014/15 season. The limits are:

- macrourids - 360 tonnes;
- unicorn icefish - 150 tonnes;
- grey rock cod - 80 tonnes;
- skates and rays - 120 tonnes; and
- all other species - 50 tonnes for each species.

## **Research**

### **Agenda item 4 – Five year strategic research plan**

SARAG reviewed the Antarctic fisheries 2014/15-2018/19 Five year Strategic Research Plan and discussed the future research needs in the fisheries.

Industry and AAD members provided comments and it was agreed that AFMA would incorporate these changes into the draft and circulate the revised Plan again before finalisation. SARAG agreed the Plan needs to include details of when the project is required to be completed. The AAD member agreed to provide details of research identified at CCAMLR 2014.

Given that a range of research needs to be addressed during the 2014/15 year, SARAG agreed that an Antarctic Fisheries 2014/15 Annual Work Plan should be developed. The annual work plan will include specific research that may not have been identified in the Five Year Strategic Research Plan.



## Other

### Agenda item 5 – Other Business

Mr Scott requested that SARAG discuss the possibility of extending the Macquarie Island Toothfish Fishery season by 2 weeks (starting 15 days earlier).

Mr Timmiss noted two issues needed to be considered:

- 1) the MITF SFR conditions state that longlining is only permitted between 1 May and 31 August. Any amendment to the longline season would require consultation with the Threat Abatement Plan for Seabirds team;
- 2) the current 2014/15 quota year, which runs from 1 May 2014 - 30 April 2015, is specified in a legislative Determination. As the quota for the current year is fully caught, a season extension would require the revocation of the existing Determination and issuing of a new Determination that defines an earlier season commencement.

Dr Haddon noted that there were no scientific implications for the stock assessment by starting the season earlier.

SARAG agreed that Australian Longline Pty Ltd should formally write to AFMA requesting a season extension. Mr Scott noted that starting the season earlier would be in line with other CCAMLR fisheries.

### Agenda item 6 - Next meeting

SARAG noted that the next meeting would be held on 24 February 2015 in Hobart to discuss, among other things, the Macquarie Island Toothfish Fishery stock assessment.

The Chair, on behalf of members formally thanked Dr Haddon for chairing the SARAG meetings in September.

The Chair thanked members for participating in this teleconference and closed the meeting at 11.30 am

