



Australian Government

Australian Fisheries Management Authority



# Sub-Antarctic Resource Assessment Group (SARAG)

MINUTES  
TELECONFERENCE  
18 SEPTEMBER 2014

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

**CHAIR:** Dr Malcolm Haddon (Interim Chair)

**Date:** 18 September 2014

**Venue:** Teleconference

### **Attendance**

#### **Members**

Dr Malcolm Haddon, Interim Chair

Mr Martin Exel, Industry Member

Mr Les Scott, Industry Member

Dr Dirk Welsford, AAD

Dr Philippe Ziegler, AAD

Ms Jo Fisher, AFMA Member

Ms Stephanie Johnson (acting Executive Officer)

Dr Heather Patterson, Permanent Observer, ABARES

Mr Trent Timmiss, Observer (AFMA)

Ms Sarah Kirkcaldie, Observer (AFMA)

Mr Malcolm McNeil, Observer (Industry)

#### **Apologies**

Professor John Buckeridge, Chair

Dr Rich Hillary, CSIRO

Dr Jemery Day, CSIRO

### **Introduction**

The Sub-Antarctic Resource Assessment Group (SARAG) met by teleconference on 18 September 2014. The primary objective of the meeting was to discuss the Heard Island and McDonald Islands (HIMI) stock assessment for 2014.

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

The meeting was opened at 2:00pm on 18 September 2014 by the Interim Chair, Dr Malcolm Haddon.

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

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 on the SESSF Resource Assessment Group; finally he is the scientific member of South MAC. Dr Haddon has no financial interest in any of these fisheries.

Mr Exel declared his interest in all agenda items. He advised that he is the General Manager, Environment and Policy, Austral Fisheries P/L. Austral Fisheries P/L owns Statutory Fishing Rights (SFRs) in the Australian sub-Antarctic fisheries and waters under the jurisdiction of Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR). Mr Exel also declared that he is the Director of the Institute of Marine and Antarctic Studies, Director



on the Commonwealth Fisheries Association (CFA), member of the South East Trawl Fishing Industry Association (SETFIA), Member of the Great Australian Bight Industry Association, Member of Coral Sea Fishers Association and Chair of the Coalition of Legal Toothfish Operators. He was not aware of any investigation or prosecution action by AFMA against his Company or of any legal action taken by his Company against AFMA.

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.

Dr Welsford advised that he is employed by the Australian Antarctic Division (AAD) and was responsible for monitoring and assessing the 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 will be 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.

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

Ms Fisher advised she is currently acting manager for Antarctic fisheries at AFMA.

Ms Johnson advised she is employed by AFMA.

## **1.2 Apologies**

Apologies were received from Professor John Buckeridge, Dr Rich Hillary and Dr Jemery Day.

## **1.3 Adoption of agenda**

SARAG members adopted the agenda with the addition of an agenda item 3.1 Southern Ocean Senate Inquiry.

## ***Agenda item 2 – Australian papers to WG-FSA-14***

SARAG discussed the following papers for submission to the CCAMLR Working Group on Fish Stock Assessment (WG-FSA) 2014.

### **2.1 An updated assessment of toothfish at HIMI**

Dr Welsford informed SARAG that the monthly review meeting for the 2014 stock assessment was held on the morning of 18 September 2014. The main conclusion was that the revised assessment incorporates the best available science to support management advice. This conclusion was echoed by Dr Haddon who stated the revised assessment sets a whole new benchmark for the HIMI assessment and there is a very strong case to support the science of the assessment.



SARAG members noted that the revised assessment for Patagonian Toothfish is very different to previous assessments and some of the fundamental assumptions have been significantly changed. Members agreed that issues raised at SARAG 50 had been addressed.

SARAG expressed their appreciation for AAD scientists and the amount of work put into the assessment over the last 12 months. SARAG also acknowledged the support provided by AAD, CSIRO, WWF, AFMA and the HIMI industry through the extension to the FRDC Kerguelen Plateau project.

## **2.2 An updated assessment of Mackerel icefish at HIMI**

SARAG noted the updated paper for Mackerel icefish at HIMI and that the amendments raised at SARAG 50 had been addressed. SARAG supported the recommended Mackerel icefish catch limit of 309 tonnes.

## **2.3 Re-estimation of inter-reader ageing variability matrix for toothfish at HIMI**

Members noted that the paper was yet to be circulated, but noted that SARAG 50 had been presented with the information to be included in the paper. SARAG supported the work presented to SARAG 50 and noted that the revised ageing matrix data had been included in the assessment supported at 2.1.

## **2.4 A description of refinements to the toothfish ageing program at AAD**

SARAG supported the paper as presented.

## **2.5 A description of results from the 2014 Random Stratified Trawl Survey**

SARAG supported the paper as presented.

## **2.6 Refined models of toothfish habitat use at HIMI**

SARAG supported the paper as presented.

## **2.7 Results of the toothfish tagging program at HIMI and a strategy for its future use in assessments**

Dr Welsford explained that longline tagging data is not yet representative of the stock due to the limited spatial distribution of tag recoveries and should not currently be included in the assessment. Collection of several more years of longline tagging data is required to improve spatial coverage of tag recoveries and improve representativeness of the tagging data. Members noted that because of the limited spatial coverage, tagging data only represents a fraction of the total stock and is therefore likely to underestimate biomass. For this reason, it was noted that results of the base case assessment supplemented by the recent tagging data was consistent with the expectations of the base case results (without the tagging data). Because the inclusion of the tagging data was known to be invalid due to its patchy coverage of the toothfish resource at HIMI, some members expressed concern over presenting the use of a tagging data scenario in the paper. AAD agreed to amend the paper to explain how the tagging data had been used in the assessment to illustrate in principle that tagging data could be included while emphasizing that currently any such results should not be used for management advice. AAD also agreed to outline the limitations of the tagging data in the section where a TAC was reported.

SARAG recommended a number of additional edits to this paper, and noted that this paper would be provided to SARAG out-of-session for consideration.

SARAG expressed thanks to AAD for the work involved in preparing this paper and for the contribution made by AFMA observers.



## **2.8 Review of the data from the season extension period in 2013/14**

SARAG supported the paper as presented.

### ***Additional papers***

The following two papers were also discussed by SARAG:

1. Management arrangements in place for Statistical Division 58.5.2 – Heard Island and McDonald Islands. Members discussed and supported this paper with a small number of edits.
2. A covering paper for the benthic impacts project, which was noted and supported.

Members agreed it is not SARAG's role to endorse papers for submission to WG-FSA. However, SARAG supported all the WG-FSA papers presented with minor amendments as discussed.

### ***Other***

#### **Agenda item 3 – Other Business**

Mr Exel provided SARAG with information on the Southern Ocean Senate Inquiry. He stated that Austral Fisheries have made a presentation to the Inquiry. The main issues that arose were to ensure that Australia's treaty obligations with France continue and to provide clarity on Illegal, Unregulated and Unreported (IUU) fishing.

Members noted that AFMA would be appearing before the Senate Inquiry on Friday 26 September 2014. Trent Timmiss, Senior Manager Tuna and International Fisheries, and Peter Venslovas, General Manager Operations Branch, would be representing AFMA.

#### **Agenda item 4 - Next meeting**

SARAG noted that the Group may need to meet via teleconference in mid-November 2014 to discuss the HIMI Fishery TAC recommendations arising from CCAMLR. The date for this meeting will be decided out-of-session.

The Chair thanked members for participating in the teleconference and closed the meeting at 3:40 pm.

