



Australian Government
Australian Fisheries Management Authority

Northern Prawn Fishery Resource Assessment Group (NPRAG)

21 March 2014
Teleconference
Minutes

ATTENDEES

Members

Ian Knuckey, Chair
Rik Buckworth, Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO)
Malcolm Haddon, CSIRO
Norm Hall, Murdoch University
Ron Earle, Industry
Brodie Macdonald, Australian Fisheries Management Authority (AFMA)

Observers

Robert Curtotti, Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics and Sciences (ABARES)
Annie Jarrett, Northern Prawn Fishery Industry (NPF)
Matt Barwick, NPF

Apology

Rodrigo Bustamante, CSIRO
Ian Boot, Industry
Michael O'Brien, Industry
Tom Kompas, Australian National University

Agenda Item 1 - Preliminaries

1.1 Welcome and apologies

The Northern Prawn Fishery Resource Assessment Group (NPRAG) Chair, Ian Knuckey, opened the meeting noting that the only item for discussion was the preliminary results of the red-leg banana prawn assessment and its implication for the harvest strategy.

An apology was received from Rodrigo Bustamante, Ian Boot, Mike O'Brien, Fiona Hill and Tom Kompas. It was noted that Brodie Macdonald was acting in the role of the AFMA member for the teleconference.

1.2 Declarations of interest

The Chair asked members to announce any declarations of interests in regards to the agenda items. Members declared their interests and these are outlined in

Table 1.

Table 1. NPRAG declarations of interest

Member	Declared Interest
Ian Knuckey	Independent Chair of the NPRAG and scientific member on the NPF management advisory committee (NORMAC). No pecuniary interest.
Rik Buckworth	CSIRO employee. Participates in projects related to the NPF that currently receive funding and will seek to receive funding in the future. Rik Buckworth excused himself while the remaining RAG members discussed his participation in the meeting and it was agreed that CSIRO staff involvement in the discussion was necessary but there was a need to consider the conflict when discussing research items.
Malcolm Haddon	CSIRO employee. Not involved in any NPF research projects. .
Ron Earle	Owner of 3 NPF vessels. The RAG agreed that all industry have lots to contribute to discussions and there was no need to exclude him from discussion of this item.
Norm Hall	Murdoch University and Western Australia Department of Fisheries employee. No pecuniary interest.
Brodie Macdonald	AFMA employee and NPRAG EO. No pecuniary interest.
Observers	
Robert Curtotti	ABARES employee who undertakes government funded research on the NPF. The RAG agreed that ABARES undertake valuable work on the NPF and that there are no specific conflicts in terms of the agenda items.
Annie Jarrett	EO of NORMAC and CEO for NPF Industry Pty Ltd (NPF). No pecuniary interest in relation to holding NPF SFRs. It was agreed that NPF makes an important contribution to meetings and an important role in research.



Agenda Item 2 – Application of the Harvest Strategy for the 2014 Joseph Bonaparte Gulf (JBG) Banana Prawn Fishery

The Chair noted that the Harvest Strategy provides clear guidelines for the opening of the fishery for red-leg banana prawns and that this does not explicitly require a recommendation from the RAG. However as a matter of process the RAG noted that the results of the assessment indicated that all Harvest Strategy requirements for the fishery to open in the first season and fish during 2014 have been met:

1. *Catch and effort information for the last two years has been used in an assessment of the fishery;*
2. *The Limit Reference Point (LRP) was not triggered during 2013.* The stock size in the last two years of the assessment was estimated to be greater than the LRP, i.e. $B_{2012}, B_{2013} > 0.5 BMSY$. The assessment indicates that stock size in 2012 and 2013 were each greater than at Maximum Sustainable Yield and very close to the biomass that would produce Maximum Economic Yield (noting that this is with wide confidence intervals);
3. *The number of fishing days in JBG was more than 100.* With 347 boat days of fishing in JBG in 2013;
4. *Mean catch rates in the period August to October were > 390 kg/boat/day.* Mean catch rates were 1083 kg/boat/day for red leg banana prawns.

The RAG noted that there were 226 boat days of effort in the period April to June, and just one boat day of effort in October, at the end of a trip conducted mostly in September. Dr Buckworth noted that there was a generally different pattern in JBG during 2013 to that seen in recent years, with a shift of effort to the first season. The RAG questioned if there may have been some data missing. Mr Barwick later confirmed with Dr Buckworth that the data was accurate and reflective of effort spent targeting tiger prawns in other areas of the fishery.

Dr Buckworth also noted that the NPF-wide fishing pattern in 2013 was different to that seen in recent years. As it was a relatively poor banana prawn year there was more fishing in the JBG in the first season. Dr Buckworth also said that this contributed to an estimated 10 percent increase in fishing power. The RAG discussed the possible causes for the estimated increase in fishing power:

1. Increasing number of vessels fishing in the JBG – the data suggested that 26 boats fished the JBG in 2013; and
2. More vessels using quad gear.

Accordingly, Dr Buckworth asked if it would be possible to find out at the pre-season briefing if vessels used quad gear and fished in the JBG.

Action item 1 – Matt Barwick to do a quick survey at the pre-season briefings to identify how many boats are using quad gear and fished in the JBG in 2013.

Dr Buckworth also outlined that the model-estimated predicted level of effort and catches for 2014 at 624 boat days and 501 tonnes respectively. Dr Buckworth noted that a similar level of catch has been predicted for the last three years.



Finally, Dr Hall questioned which selectivity period is intended to be used in the assessment as it is unclear from the Harvest Strategy flowchart. Dr Buckworth said that Selectivity Period 1 had been used for this year (where the first season is open), but that this should be made explicit in the assessment documents.

Next meeting

It was agreed that the next meeting would be held in late April to discuss the results of the tiger prawn assessment.

