



Australian Government

Australian Fisheries Management Authority



**Northern Prawn Fishery
Resource Assessment Group
(NPRAG) Meeting**

Teleconference Minutes

Date: 3 June 2015

Attendance

Name	Membership (type i.e. chair etc.)
Ian Knuckey	Chair
Rik Buckworth	Scientific Member - CSIRO
David Brewer	Scientific Member - CSIRO
Michael O'Brien	Industry Member
Phil Robson	Industry Member
Malcolm Haddon	Scientific Member - CSIRO
Shane Fava	AFMA Member
Don Bromhead	Executive Officer
Steve Bolton	Observer - AFMA
Shane Fava	AFMA Member
Renee Bowling	Observer - AFMA
Annie Jarrett	Observer - NPFI
Trevor Hutton	Observer - CSIRO
Roy Deng	Observer - CSIRO
Robert Curtotti	Observer - ABARES

Minutes

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 primary focus of the meeting was to discuss the CSIRO-led Expression of Interest "***A Management Strategy Evaluation Comparing the Value of Annual to Biennial Spawner Surveys in the Northern Prawn Fishery***" and the response to that proposal from the AFMA Research Committee.

Apologies were received from Ian Boot and Tom Kompas.

The Chair noted that NPRAG meeting minutes are now being finalized and accepted out of session hence there were no previous minutes to consider at this meeting.

1.2 Adoption of Agenda

The NPRAG adopted the draft agenda for the meeting (**Attachment 1**).

1.3 Declaration of interests

The Chair asked that any members or observers present notify the NPRAG of any changes in declared interests to those provided via email the previous week and as identified in **Attachment 2**. No changes in the declared interests were noted. The Chair then asked if there were any *conflicts of interest* relating to Agenda Item 2 (MSE Spawner Survey discussion). Conflicts of interest were noted for:



- The CSIRO members (David Brewer, Malcolm Haddon and Rik Buckworth) and observers (Trevor Hutton and Roy Deng) in the meeting. CSIRO participates in the spawner survey research and Rik Buckworth in particular, is the Principal Investigator on the research proposal to be discussed by the NPRAG.
- Phil Robson works for Raptis, a company that has been contracted in the past to provide the charter service for the spawner surveys and may provide them in future.
- Industry members and observers (Mike O'Brien and Annie Jarrett). Adoption or rejection of the MSE proposal will impact upon industry levies.
- The Chair, Ian Knuckey, who is involved in Fishery Independent Surveys in other fisheries(not the NPF). This is a conflict due to the ARC recommendation that the NPF MSE proposal be expanded in scope to other fisheries, where Dr Knuckey has FIS research interests and involvement. Dr Knuckey requested that the RAG consider whether it was acceptable that he Chair the meeting and specifically Agenda item 2 and asked that the AFMA member take over the Chairing duty at the point where the expansion of the project to other fisheries is discussed by the RAG.

Each of the above groups/individuals were required to hang up and allow the RAG time to discuss the stated conflicts and how it would be dealt with before phoning back in.

In each case, the NPRAG agreed that the participants should be allowed to participate in the meeting discussions due to their relevant expertise and capacity to contribute to discussions, providing the conflicts of interest are clearly noted in the minutes. Only the AFMA member would have remained if all members with conflicts of interest were excluded.

In relation to chairing duties, the NPRAG agreed that the AFMA member, Shane Fava, would take over the Chair's role for the discussion of whether the project scope should be expanded to other fisheries.

The NPRAG noted that there was a lack of a consistent process for discussing conflicts of interest during teleconferences (specifically), and requested that the EO/AFMA provide a summary of proper process to the NPRAG before the next meeting. It was also noted that the process would be improved if the AFMA teleconference process required that each teleconference participant records their name so the Chair and EO can hear when particular participants join or leave the teleconference.

Action item 1 – EO/AFMA to provide NPRAG a written summary of the proper process for dealing with conflicts of interest during teleconferences so that the process runs more smoothly in future meetings.

Action item 2 – EO/AFMA to determine if the AFMA teleconference provider is able to record participants names, so that the meeting is automatically notified each time a participant calls in or hangs up.



Agenda Item 2 – CSIRO Expression of Interest “A Management Strategy Evaluation Comparing the Value of Annual to Biennial Spawner Surveys in the Northern Prawn Fishery”

Dr Buckworth provided some historical background to the MSE EOI. He noted that analyses relevant to determining what frequency of spawning surveys was required for the Tiger Prawn assessment had not previously been undertaken. He noted that the analysis is intended to support evidence-based decision making and that there would be a benefit to the fishery regardless of the end conclusion. If the analysis determined that adopting biennial surveys would be associated with economic trade-offs in profitability (that are greater than the cost of the surveys) or increased uncertainty or risk associated with biological status of the stocks, then the fishery would benefit from continuing annual spawner surveys. If the analysis determined that there was no risk in moving to biennial surveys, then the fishery would gain through reduced levies. However there is also a smaller possibility that the project result might be less clear cut, in which case a level of judgement would be required in making the decision to use biennial or annual spawner surveys.

Dr Buckworth explained that an MSE is used to run repeated simulations across alternate fishery scenarios and evaluate the relative economic performance of the fishery and the frequency with which the limit reference point might be triggered (if surveys were biennial or annual). The intended analysis would be very cost effective because it will build it upon the existing MSE model (rather than developing it from scratch). He stressed that the project provides the basis for AFMA to make an evidence-based decision regarding the required regularity of the spawning surveys. He noted however that the NPRAG had previously determined that the need for the project was lower *relative* to other high priority NPF projects put forward to the ARC.

An industry member asked for clarification as to why the ARC had determined that the proposal was a high priority despite the RAG’s advice that it was of a low priority.

The RAG EO clarified that while the ARC relies heavily upon RAG recommendations when assessing EOIs, the ARC will also utilise:

- The expertise of the ARC members themselves. In this case, the ARC members recognised that there is a broader need for this type of analysis in other fisheries and funding efficiencies (across fisheries) might be gained by expanding the scope of the project to other fisheries. This was a key factor in raising the priority of the project.
- Any additional relevant information made available. In this case, information made available by AFMA (after correspondence with CSIRO) indicating that analyses relevant to determining the required frequency of spawning surveys had not previously been undertaken and hence the decision to move to biennial spawning surveys was not evidence based. This also contributed to AFMA and the ARCs conclusion that the priority of the project might be higher.

AFMA clarified that of the five proposals reviewed by the RAG, four of them were supported by the ARC to have full proposals developed. It was estimated that the total cost to industry of these four projects was \$985K. It was requested that AFMA should inform the NPRAG in future of ARC



recommendations following its review pre-proposals. In this instance, only the project PIs were informed prior to the meeting.

It is uncertain if the ARC would have given the proposal a high priority if it had not deemed it relevant to other fisheries.

An industry observer suggested that proposals considered to be a low priority by the NPRAG should not be put to the ARC in the first place, so as to ensure that only high priority projects are considered for ARC funding. However, an AFMA observer noted that while the ARC takes advice from the NPRAG, AFMA and the ARC can make decisions on research independently of the NPRAG if it feels there is a justified reason to do so.

The Chair asked RAG members to summarise their views on the proposal in light of the discussion and the information paper provided to the NPRAG prior to the meeting.

The RAG noted that while the implications of moving to biennial spawner surveys is not fully understood, the urgency for the work is not high given the very healthy current status of the fishery under an MEY target. In addition to advice provided by the NPRAG previously to the ARC that the MSE proposal was not a high priority relative to other projects that were submitted as expressions of interest, the RAG re-emphasised that there are a range of other issues (i.e. potential weaknesses or improvements required) relating to the NPF assessments which need to be reviewed, and that the relative need for the MSE work should be assessed alongside other potential assessment improvements needed, as part of a continual improvement process. To this end, the RAG had requested at the March 3-4 2015 meeting that CSIRO develop a paper outlining all required improvements to NPF assessments (including any MSE work). The NPRAG intends to review that paper at its next meeting and will use the paper to provide advice on the highest priority assessment and other research issues to be put forward in proposals to the ARC in future funding rounds. The Principal Investigator abstained from commenting, while another scientific member recognised that although it would be useful work, he was comfortable that it was not developed to a full proposal at the current time, pending the results of the prioritisation process later in the year.

The AFMA member, Shane Fava, then took over the Chairing of the meeting (noting Ian Knuckey's previously noted conflict of interest) while the NPRAG considered the ARC's recommendation to expand the scope of the project to other fisheries. Dr Buckworth explained that he had investigated this possibility via extensive consultation with scientists and managers in other relevant fisheries. The overall conclusion from those consultations was that while there was clearly a broader strategic question relating to the frequency and extent of independent surveys across numerous fisheries, there was little likelihood that the methods and code developed for the NPF MSE would be easily and cheaply transferred for use in other fisheries. The stock and fishery dynamics and assessment models in those fisheries simply differ too much to allow this. He suggested that AFMA scope a separate strategic research project to address this matter across fisheries. A scientific member supported Dr Buckworth's views and indicated that transferring code modules was not impossible but would incur a lot of work and large cost.



Dr Buckworth indicated that CSIRO intends holding a half day in-house workshop on the subject of the extent and frequency of independent surveys and may suggest to AFMA that they might look to organise a national workshop on the topic.

Ian Knuckey agreed that while the general issue was a very important one in other fisheries, it was not a high priority for the NPF and developing a combined project (with the NPF and other fisheries) may not be wise. He suggested that the NPF has a process for identifying research priorities and the current MSE proposal's priority should continue to be assessed within that framework.

Next meeting

It was agreed that the date for the next meeting would be discussed via email out of session. There was no other business and the Chair closed the meeting at 2:05pm.

Signed (Chairperson):

Date:

List of Attachments

- 1) NPRAG 3 June 2015 - Annotated Agenda
- 2) NPRAG 3 June 2015 - Declared Interests



Attachment 1

NPRAG Teleconference Agenda

3 June 2015

1:00pm – 2:00pm (Canberra time)

Phone in details

Toll Free Number: 1800 153 721

Participant PIN Code: 667768

Item	Responsibility	Paper
1. Introduction/ Meeting Management <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welcome • Adoption of agenda • Declaration of interests 	Chair	Yes
2. Spawner Survey MSE proposal <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ARC recommendation • Further background information • Advice to ARC 	CSIRO	Yes
3. Other business		No

Confirmed attendees:

*Ian Knuckey
David Brewer
Phil Robson
Mike O'Brien
Roy Deng*

*Rik Buckworth
Shane Fava
Malcolm Haddon
Don Bromhead*

Observers

: *Trevor Hutton
Rob Curtotti
Annie Jarrett*

Apologies

: *Ian Boot
Tom Kompas*



Attachment 2**NPRAG Declared Interests**

Name	Membership	Interest Declared
Ian Knuckey	Chair	Fishwell Consulting has applied (via EOI) to provide 8-10 observer days monitoring the tiger prawn fishery. Company is associated with electronic logbooks. Will review role as Chair should research applications be successful.
Rik Buckworth	Scientific Member - CSIRO	Research provider involved particularly in stock assessment research in NPF. Has in the past and may in future seek and receive funding for research in the fishery.
David Brewer	Scientific Member - CSIRO	Research provider. Has in the past and may in future seek and receive funding for research in the fishery.
Malcolm Haddon	Scientific Member - CSIRO	Research provider. Doesn't partake directly in research in the NPF however.
Michael O'Brien	Industry Member	Employee of a company that owns statutory fishing rights (SFRs) in the NPF.
Ian Boot*	Industry Member	Managing Director of Austfish, a company which operates 4 NPF vessels. Has a commercial interest in the fishery.
Phil Robson	Industry Member	Employee of A Raptis and Sons, responsible for managing 12 NPF vessels. Has provided charter for scientific surveys in NPF in the past and may in future.
Shane Fava	AFMA Member	No pecuniary interest in the fishery
Tom Kompas*	Economic Member -ANU	Research provider. Has in the past and may in future seek and receive funding for research in the fishery.
Don Bromhead	Executive Officer a/g AFMA member	No pecuniary interest in the fishery
Steve Bolton	Observer - AFMA	No pecuniary interest in the fishery
Renee Bowling	Observer - AFMA	No pecuniary interest in the fishery
Annie Jarrett	Observer - NPFI	CEO NPFI. Some research items are of relevance to NPFI
Adrienne Laird*	Observer - NPFI	Employed as contractor by NPFI.
Roy Deng	Observer - CSIRO	Research provider involved particularly in stock assessment research in NPF. Has in the past and may in future seek and receive funding for research in the fishery.



Name	Membership	Interest Declared
Trevor Hutton	Observer - CSIRO	Research provider. Has in the past and may in future seek and receive funding for research in the fishery.
Robert Curtotti	Observer - ABARES	Economics research provider. No current pecuniary interest in fishery. Potential to seek and receive funding for research in the fishery in future.
Eva Plaganyi*	Observer - CSIRO	Research provider involved particularly in stock assessment research in NPF. Has in the past and may in future seek and receive funding for research in the fishery.
Shane Griffiths*	Observer - CSIRO	Research provider. Has in the past and may in future seek and receive funding for research in the fishery.
Sean Pascoe*	Observer - CSIRO	Research provider. Has in the past and may in future seek and receive funding for research in the fishery.
Rob Kenyon*	Observer - CSIRO	Research provider particularly involved in monitoring and assessments in NPF. Has in the past and may in future seek and receive funding for research in the fishery.

*(*did not participate in the current meeting but have participated previously in 2015)*

