



Small Pelagic Fishery Scientific Panel

Meeting No. 2

Minutes

Date: 9 February 2016 teleconference

Time: 3:00 - 4:45pm EDT

Attendance

Name	Membership
Mr. Max Kitchell	Chair
Professor Caleb Gardner	Invited expert
Dr Sean Pascoe	Economic Member
Mr. Andrew Penney	Scientific Member
Associate Professor Tim Ward	Scientific Member
Ms. Sally Weekes	AFMA Member
Mr. Clayton McCloud	A/g Executive Officer

Apologies

Name	Membership
Dr Jeremy Lyle	Scientific Member

1. Preliminaries

The Chair welcomed everybody to the meeting. The Panel members declared the following interests relevant to the Small Pelagic Fishery (SPF) at the outset and during general discussions in the meeting.

Participant & Membership	Interest declared
Mr Max Kitchell, Chair	No interest, pecuniary or otherwise, in the SPF. Chair of the Southern Bluefin Tuna Management Advisory Committee and AFMA's Ecological Risk Management Technical Working Group.
Associate Professor Tim Ward	Leader of the finfish fisheries group in SARDI which undertakes research in the relation to the SPF including Daily Egg Production Method surveys. Conducts research for State fisheries and other jurisdictions. Member of South Australia Sardine Fishery Industry research/management committee. Advisor to Northern Territory on small pelagic fish and squid.

Mr Andrew Penney	Director of Pisces Australis (Pty) Ltd. No interest, pecuniary or otherwise, in the SPF.
Dr Sean Pascoe	No interest, pecuniary or otherwise, in the SPF. Employee of CSIRO which undertakes research in relation to the SPF from time to time.
Professor Caleb Gardner, Invited expert	Employee of Institute for Marine and Antarctic Studies (IMAS), no interest, pecuniary or otherwise, in the SPF. However, IMAS conducts research on a range of fisheries issues including at times the SPF.
Sally Weekes AFMA member	Employee of AFMA, no interest, pecuniary or otherwise, in the SPF.
Clayton McCloud A/g Executive Officer	Employee of AFMA, no interest, pecuniary or otherwise, in the SPF.

The Panel members adopted the draft agenda with minor amendments.

The Panel adopted the minutes from the meeting on 14 December 2015.

2. Scientific Panel's responses to matters raised in submissions and at the Stakeholder Forum

The Chair referred to the draft document “*SPF panel response to issues raised at the stakeholder forum in Hobart on 28 January*” and reiterated that the role of the Scientific Panel was to respond to matters of a scientific nature but not to fisheries management or other issues.

The Panel discussed the best course of action to respond to the scientifically-relevant issues raised at the stakeholder forum on 28 January 2016 and to the three individual written submissions. The Chair proposed to have one overall document that answered all scientific questions from the stakeholder forum and the three submissions and to use that as the basis for individual letters to the forum participants and the three stakeholders. This was agreed by all Panel members.

The Panel reviewed the draft responses outlined in the document referred to above:

1. Issues raised at stakeholder forum

1.1. Frequency and scale of DEPMs

The Panel discussed the draft paragraphs relating to the frequency of DEPM surveys and the recruitment variability used in the MSE testing. The Panel agreed that the explanation around MSE modelling and recruitment variation needed further refinement. Three paragraphs were agreed to be deleted as they didn't directly relate to the question.

Action: Prof Gardner and Assoc. Prof Ward Prof to redraft the paragraph on recruitment variation used in the MSE.

1.2. Removal of reference to localised depletion in HS

The Panel agreed that a paragraph relating to *a low risk of localised depletion* should be reinserted into the Harvest Strategy, but any reference should reflect the findings of the Expert Panel (Lack *et al.* 2014). Assoc. Prof Ward also recommended current spatial management arrangements to manage the risk of localised depletion (spreading the effort across the fishery) should be included in the paragraph.

Action: Chair to rewrite the section of the Harvest Strategy relating to localised depletion.

1.3. Spawning disruption

The Panel agreed to minor changes in this draft response including the removal of two paragraphs and removal of the reference to large-capacity nets in the question.

1.4. Marine mammal interactions

The Panel agreed on minor changes to this draft response and recommended the need to establish a separate document, such as a protected species strategy, which sets out protocols for dealing with Threatened, Endangered and Protected species (TEP) interactions at a fishery level. The Panel agreed that although the current Harvest Strategy doesn't deal with protected species, it should cross reference the document where those matters are covered under a Vessel Management Plan or will be under the proposed protected species strategy that is being developed. The Panel also reiterated that there needs to be a link between the new Marine Mammal Working Group and the Scientific Panel.

Ms Weekes noted that AFMA is currently seeking members for the new Marine Mammal Working Group. This group will be consulted on the development of any protected species strategy. Assoc. Prof Ward suggested that the group be expanded to include seabirds. Ms Weekes mentioned that this is a future option.

2. Submissions

2.1. Submission 1

Dr Pascoe recommended editing the background section of the Harvest Strategy to improve the explanation of that the removal of SPF target species has a minor impact on the ecosystem. Assoc. Prof Ward also noted the Panel's obligation to explain the factual information that harvesting small pelagic species will not have negative impacts on populations of SPF species or ecosystem function.

Action: Assoc. Prof Ward to rewrite paragraph in the background of the Harvest Strategy relating to the ecosystem impacts of harvesting small pelagic species.

Action: Assoc. Prof Ward to redraft wording in the response to Submission 1, specifically to point 6 and 16 of the latest submission.

2.2. Submission 2

This draft response related to results of MSE testing of the current proposed harvest rates in the SPF harvest strategy and that the transition of western stocks of Redbait and Jack Mackerel from Tier 2 to Tier 3 is overly conservative. The Panel agreed on minor changes to the wording of the draft response. Ms Weekes noted that these harvest rates are currently being MSE tested by Dr Beth Fulton (CSIRO), which is a recommendation of the Panel and included in the response to Submission 2.

2.3. Submission 3

The Panel agreed that Submission 3 raised no new issues and basically summarised the questions which were asked at the Stakeholder Forum.

3. Final advice regarding:

3.1 SPF Harvest Strategy

The Chair summarised the proposed changes to the Harvest Strategy that had been agreed earlier in the meeting:

- **Action:** Chair to rewrite the section of the Harvest Strategy relating to localised depletion.
- **Action:** Assoc. Prof Ward to rewrite paragraph in the background of the Harvest Strategy relating to the ecosystem impacts of harvesting small pelagic species.

3.2 RBCs for 2016-17 fishing season

The Panel agreed that there were no further changes needed to the RBCs proposed at the Panel's 14 December meeting in light of the stakeholder consultation.

4. Other business

4.1 MSE testing of Tier 3 harvest rates

Ms Weekes noted that Tier 3 harvest rates are currently being tested by Dr. Beth Fulton (CSIRO). These results will not be available before the next SEMAC, but should be available before the AFMA Commission meeting. Mr Penney reiterated that data the Panel requires from the MSE is transient time of biomass and the probability that the biomass is reaching the target reference point or limit reference point.

4.2 Research catch allowance

Ms Weekes requested a formal response from the Panel regarding research catch allowance for the 2016-17 season, noting that there is currently an expression of interest to conduct a new DEPM survey for the western stock of Jack Mackerel. The current arrangements are that research catch is voluntarily taken off quota from the operator. Assoc. Prof Ward and Mr Penney mentioned that the research allowance shouldn't be an issue as they would only require 2-3 tonnes to conduct the surveys. Assoc. Prof Ward went on to say that the real question is whether Seafish Tasmania uses the Geelong Star to conduct the survey or another vessel is chartered. The issue of research quota can be dealt with if and when the survey is approved.

4.3 Management advice

Ms Weekes asked the Panel for confirmation that additional precaution isn't required on the setting of Blue Mackerel east TAC due to uncertainty from the DEPM. The Chair did not want to reopen discussions on this and reiterated the Panel's advice from the meeting on 14 December 2015.

Ms Weekes sought advice whether there would be increased risk if step-down arrangements for the three western TACs were implemented by AFMA, noting concerns that large decreases in the west would lead to less information on these target species. Mr Penney advised caution as the MSE hadn't tested that specific change limiting rule. Assoc. Prof Ward also advised caution and to use the revised harvest rates in the Harvest Strategy.

The Chair thanked Panel members for their contributions and summarised actions arising in the meeting. The meeting was closed at 4:46pm.