

Small Pelagic Fishery Scientific Panel

Box 7051

Canberra Mail Centre ACT 2610

F2016/0198

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Dear Stakeholder Forum Attendee,

Thank you for your attendance at and contributions at the Small Pelagic Fishery Stakeholder Forum held in Sydney on 24 January.

At the conclusion of the Forum I outlined the four matters that seemed to have gained broad agreement from those stakeholders present and indicated that the Scientific Panel would consider each of these matters when we next met. The Panel subsequently met on 8 February and resolved to provide the following responses to the four matters of interest.

1. Industry interests should be reinjected into the scientific considerations early in the process

Insofar as this might have been a request for industry representation on the Scientific Panel it is not a matter that the Panel itself can determine. The Panel is not responsible for establishing its own membership, rather this is a matter for AFMA. During the course of 2017, AFMA will be reviewing the operation of the Scientific Panel at which stage the issue of representation will no doubt be considered.

It is the Panel's view, however, that the involvement of industry in the scientific process can be important to the sustainable management of the fishery, particularly to provide first hand information on fishery operational aspects that can help in the understanding of stock dynamics. In the past the most useful input from industry has been the direct collaboration with fishery researchers whose work forms the basis for the Panel's considerations. We hope that this collaboration continues. Additionally there is nothing preventing information being provided to the Panel by industry using the existing process.

2. The MSE modeling recently undertaken overestimated risk

The Panel agrees with this contention and hence chose not to use its findings in its recommendations on exploitation rates for the SPF stocks.

3. Need to explore the full mix of uses of the fishery with a view to maximizing overall community benefit.

The concern here was that neither the Panel nor AFMA have factored into their considerations the economic and social benefits of the non-commercial fishery uses of the SPF. While the Panel recognises the strong support from the recreational fishing representatives at the Forum for such work to be undertaken, for the Panel to consider taking on this task would require a change to its terms of reference (copy of the terms of reference is attached). Any such change may be considered by AFMA in its review of the Panel's

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operation later this year. As it stands though these matters are currently outside the Panel's remit.

4. Request for flexibility in the conditions to be applied to the proposed pair trawling operation.

It was asserted that conditions relevant to a large factory trawler might not be appropriate to a smaller operation and could make such an operation unviable. Specific reference was made to the high cost of observer coverage and the potential difficulty created by the one-dolphin rule.

Generally the Panel does not believe there is a scientific basis for relaxing the conditions that were applied to the Geelong Star. Both that operation and the proposed pair trawling are mid-water trawls and should be subject to the same controls

We note in regard to the recommended level of observer coverage that the pair trawler proponent, while concerned about the cost, conceded that he was willing to accept it "in the interests of transparency". On the one-dolphin rule, the Panel notes that AFMA have referred the issue of dolphin interactions to the newly-formed Marine Mammal Working Group which may result in a review of this rule.

On behalf of the Panel can I again thank you for your contributions to the Stakeholder Forum. These interactions are important to the Panel and have in the past and will in the future make for more informed recommendations from us to the AFMA Commission. If you have any questions or need additional information please contact Darci Wallis Executive Officer SPF Scientific Panel, on 02 6225 5329 or via email Darci.Wallis@afma.gov.au.

Yours sincerely



Mr Max Kitchell

Chair, Small Pelagic Fishery Scientific Panel