



Australian Government

Australian Fisheries Management Authority



# Sub-Antarctic Fisheries Management Advisory Committee (SouthMAC)

FINAL MINUTES  
TELECONFERENCE  
7 NOVEMBER 2017

## **SUB-ANTARCTIC FISHERIES MANAGEMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE (SouthMAC)**

**CHAIR:** Mr Peter Neville

**Date:** 7 November 2017

**Venue:** Teleconference

### **Attendance**

#### **Members**

Mr Peter Neville, Chair  
Dr Malcolm Haddon, Scientific Member  
Mr Malcolm McNeill, Industry Member  
Mr Martin Exel, Industry Member  
Ms Lihini Weragoda, AAD Member  
Mr Jon Bryan, Conservation Member\*  
Ms Jo Fisher, AFMA Member  
Ms Sarah Kirkcaldie, Executive Officer  
Mr Rhys Arangio, Industry observer

\*only available for a short period of time so provided brief comments on all agenda items

### **Introduction**

A Sub-Antarctic Fisheries Management Advisory Committee (SouthMAC) teleconference was held on 7 November 2017.

The primary objectives of the meeting were to:

- make recommendations on the total allowable catch (TAC) for Patagonian Toothfish as well as catch limits for bycatch species in the Macquarie Island Toothfish Fishery for the 2018/19 season starting on 15 April 2018 and 2019/20 season starting on 15 April 2019;
- make recommendations on the TACs for Mackerel Icefish and Patagonian Toothfish, as well as catch limits for bycatch species, in the Heard Island and McDonald Islands Fishery (HIMIF) for the 2017/18 season which starts on 1 December 2017; and
- discuss the outcomes of the 36<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR).

The meeting met all requirements of Fisheries Management Paper 1, including the rules for dealing with conflicts of interest.

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

The meeting was opened at 10:10am on 7 November 2017 by the Chair, Mr Peter Neville.

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



As outlined in the *Fisheries Administrations Act 1991* and AFMA Fisheries Management Paper No. 1, all members (but not permanent observers or invited participants) of SouthMAC must declare any pecuniary interest in the Fishery at the commencement of the meeting and also at the commencement of each agenda item. If a member discloses an interest in an item, the member must absent themselves from the meeting before the item is considered and the MAC must make a decision as to whether the member can participate in the discussion and in making of a recommendation or remain absent from the meeting for the item.

Mr Neville declared that he was the Principal of a fisheries consulting business (P.J.Neville & Associates) and Chair of the Northern Territory Barramundi Fishery and Chair of Fisheries Research and Development Corporation's (FRDC's) recreational fishing sub-program. Mr Neville advised that he has no pecuniary interest in the sub-Antarctic fisheries.

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, the Great Australian Bight Resource Assessment Group (GABRAG) and the scientific member on SARAG. Dr Haddon advised that he has no pecuniary interests in the sub-Antarctic fisheries.

Mr McNeill advised he is the Managing Director of Australian Longline P/L which holds various fishing rights in, and operates vessels in the sub-Antarctic fisheries and New and Exploratory fisheries under the jurisdiction of CCAMLR. Mr McNeill further advised he is a member on Sub-Antarctic Resource Assessment Group (SARAG) and board member of the Coalition of Legal Toothfish Operators (COLTO). Mr McNeill 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 Exel advised that he is the General Manager, Environment and Policy, Austral Fisheries Pty Ltd. 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 a Director of the Institute of Marine and Antarctic Studies (IMAS), member and public officer of the Commonwealth Fisheries Association (CFA), member of the South East Trawl Fishing Industry Association (SETFIA), Deputy Chair of the Great Australian Bight Industry Association and Member of Coral Sea Fishers Association. Mr Exel further advised that he is a member of the "National Benefit Assessment Panel" for the Marine National Facility (the RV Investigator). 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.

Ms Lihini Weragoda advised that she is an employee of the AAD and her colleagues conduct the HIMI stock assessment. Ms Weragoda attends international meetings related to Antarctic fisheries and no pecuniary interest in Antarctic fisheries and that her salary is not dependent on AAD, industry and other research collaborations.

Mr Jon Bryan advised he is a part-time employee of the Tasmanian Conservation Trust. Mr Bryan stated that he is a member on a number of Tasmanian fisheries advisory committees including recreational, scallop, abalone, crustacean and scalefish, board member for the Tasmanian Association for Recreational Fishing (TARfish) and recreational diving clubs but has no pecuniary interest in Antarctic fisheries.

Ms Fisher advised she is employed by AFMA and is the Manager for Antarctic fisheries and has no pecuniary interest in the sub-Antarctic fisheries.

Ms Kirkcaldie advised she is employed by AFMA, is also the Executive Officer for SARAG and Southern Bluefin Tuna MAC and has no pecuniary interest in the sub-Antarctic fisheries.



Mr Arangio advised he is employed by Austral Fisheries P/L who hold SFRs in the Australian sub-Antarctic Fisheries. He is also the Secretary of COLTO. Mr Arangio is not aware of any investigation or prosecution action by AFMA against Austral Fisheries or of any legal action taken by Austral against AFMA.

Messrs Exel, McNeill and Arangio declared their interest under agenda item 2 and 3. It was agreed that as their input was essential to most agenda items, they should remain on the teleconference for all discussions but not any recommendations.

## **1.2 Apologies**

No apologies were received.

## **1.3 Adoption of agenda**

SouthMAC adopted the agenda with the addition of the Kerguelen Plateau Symposium under 'Other Business'.



## **Macquarie island Toothfish Fishery**

### **Agenda item 2.1 – TAC recommendations**

SouthMAC noted that SARAG had discussed the Macquarie Island Toothfish Fishery stock assessment, prepared by CSIRO, at its meeting on 6 September 2017 (SARAG 56). The assessment indicated that a range of Total Allowable Catch (TAC) levels between 430 and 510 tonnes was appropriate. SARAG also discussed the spatial distribution of fishing and agreed that effort should be lowest in the Southern Macquarie Region.

SouthMAC agreed with the SARAG recommendation of a Patagonian Toothfish TAC of 450 tonnes for each of the 2018/19 and 2019/20 fishing seasons. Members further agreed to adopt the fishing strategy recommended by SARAG, whereby industry would aim to take the 450 tonnes TAC in approximately the following proportions: 250 tonnes from the Aurora Trough, 120 tonnes from Northern Macquarie Ridge and 80 tonnes from Southern Macquarie Ridge. SouthMAC noted that for operational reasons, industry may not be able to achieve this catch split.

### **Agenda item 2.2 - Bycatch limits**

Members noted that SARAG had considered the Macquarie Island Toothfish Fishery bycatch limits out-of-session and that SARAG had noted that no new assessments have been conducted since the previous season. SARAG had recommended the continuation of the bycatch limit of 50 tonnes for any single species (other than the target species) taken in the Fishery. SouthMAC supported SARAG's recommendation on bycatch limits for the 2018/19 and 2019/20 fishing seasons.

## **Heard Island and McDonald Islands Fishery (HIMIF)**

### **Agenda item 3 – Total Allowable Catch (TAC) and bycatch limit recommendations**

#### **Agenda item 3.1 - Patagonian Toothfish**

SouthMAC noted that SARAG had discussed the assessment of Patagonian Toothfish at HIMIF, prepared by AAD, at SARAG 56. The assessment recommended TACs of 3,525 tonnes for the 2017/18 fishing season and 3,525 tonnes for the 2018/19 fishing season. SouthMAC noted that SARAG agreed to small amendments to the stock assessment which were then considered and supported out-of-session before being submitted to CCAMLR XXXVI which was held in Hobart from 16 – 27 October 2017. The amendments did not change the recommended TAC.



### Agenda item 3.2 - Mackerel Icefish

SouthMAC was informed that SARAG 56 also considered an assessment of Mackerel Icefish at HIMIF, prepared by AAD. The assessment recommended a Mackerel Icefish TAC of 526 tonnes for the 2017/18 fishing year and 395 tonnes for the 2018/19 fishing year.

Members noted that the Mackerel Icefish stock assessment is likely to be updated after the Random Stratified Trawl Survey (RSTS) is completed next year. The stock assessment was submitted to the CCAMLR Working Group of Fish Stock Assessment.

SouthMAC noted that SARAG was also asked to consider, out of session, the bycatch limits for the HIMI fishery for the 2017/18 season. As no new assessments have been conducted since the bycatch limits were previously set, SARAG recommended that the bycatch limits from the current fishing season be rolled over to the coming fishing season.

SouthMAC noted that CCAMLR considers bycatch limits for the Fishery on an annual basis, and as the AFMA Commission considers CCAMLR outcomes each year, it was agreed to only recommend the Patagonian Toothfish and Mackerel Icefish TACs for one year so that the TACs and bycatch limits are considered and contained in the same Determination.

SouthMAC considered the TAC recommendations and bycatch recommendations agreed to at CCAMLR XXXVI and supported by SARAG:

#### **Mackerel Icefish**

Mackerel Icefish ( <i>Champsocephalus gunnari</i> )	526 tonnes for 2017/18
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#### **Patagonian Toothfish**

Patagonian Toothfish ( <i>Dissostichus eleginoides</i> )	3 525 tonnes for 2017/18
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#### **Bycatch Species:**

<i>Macrourus Caml</i> and <i>M. whitsoni</i>	409 tonnes
<i>M. halotrachys</i> and <i>M. carinatus</i>	360 tonnes
Unicorn Icefish ( <i>Channichthys rhinoceratus</i> )	1 663 tonnes
Skates and Rays ( <i>Bathyraja spp.</i> )	120 tonnes
Grey Rockcod ( <i>Lepidonotothen squamifrons</i> )	80 tonnes
All other species	50 tonnes (for each species)

Industry members left the teleconference and SouthMAC agreed to recommend to the AFMA Commission the TAC and bycatch catch limits outlined above.

Industry members rejoined the teleconference.

The AFMA member further noted that the 3 trawler limit currently in place in the HIMIF will also be considered by the AFMA Commission at its meeting on 23-24 November 2017.

### Agenda item 4 – Skate and ray handling and reporting



SouthMAC noted that at the SARAG meeting in May 2017 members noted that some observers had questioned the different handling practices of skates and rays between boats. At this meeting, members also noted that more harm is done if there is an attempt to remove the hook from the skates/rays as the mouth is very soft. There was agreement that it is preferable to get the skate or ray back in water even if it still has the hook in its mouth as the hook will rust out.

At SARAG's September 2017 meeting, Industry noted that skate and ray bycatch has the potential to be a 'limiter' to fishery operations, as it is not inconceivable that bycatch limits for these species may be reached, therefore requiring that fishing for the target species cease. Industry also noted that a lot of skates are caught in the icefish fishery but they may become a limiter in the longline sector.

The AFMA member explained that subsequent conversation with the AFMA bycatch team and observers indicate that the hooks may not rust out and that best practice handling needs to be revisited. . SouthMAC noted that the AFMA bycatch team is currently developing of a standard set of procedures for handling skates and rays (the guide). A draft guide will be presented to the AFMA Observer workshop (expected to be held in December 2017) and industry and AAD input to the guide will be sought. A final draft will then be presented to SARAG at its 28 February 2018 meeting. The final draft will also be presented to SouthMAC at its next meeting.

SouthMAC members requested that the guide should be consistent with CCAMLR Conservation Measures and in particular CM 33-03 *Limitation of by-catch in new and exploratory fisheries in the 2017/18 season* which states:

On all vessels, all skates and rays must be brought on board or alongside the vessel to be checked for tags and for their condition to be assessed. Recaptured tagged skates and rays ... should not be re-released. Unless otherwise specified by scientific observers, all other skates and rays caught alive and with a high probability of survival should be released alive, by vessels, by cutting snoods, and when practical, removing the hooks, and the number should be recorded and reported to the Secretariat.

SouthMAC also highlighted the need for the guide to be easily interpreted and not a judgement call by the skipper. Industry members noted that 3 skippers would be attending the Kerguelen Plateau Symposium in Hobart on 13-15 November and this may be an opportunity for AFMA to discuss the draft guide with skippers.

## **CCAMLR**

### **Agenda item 5 – Summary of outcomes of CCAMLR**

Members noted that CCAMLR XXXVI was held in Hobart from 16 – 27 October 2017, and was preceded by the meetings of CCAMLR's Working Group on Fish Stock Assessment (WG-FSA) and Scientific Committee from 16 – 20 October.

The AAD member summarised the outcomes from CCAMLR XXXVI that were relevant to SouthMAC including that:

- Australia's stock assessments for Patagonian toothfish in Statistical Division 58.5.2 was successful. WG-FSA suggested some additional work on the Patagonian Toothfish stock assessment which was carried out during WG-FSA and the stock assessment was endorsed without any changes to the original TAC recommendation;
- The Mackerel Icefish stock assessment was accepted with no changes; and
- Australia's proposals for exploratory fishing in Statistical subareas 88.1 and 88.2 and divisions 58.4.1 and 58.4.2 were successful.

The AAD member also highlighted that it was a difficult meeting with little progress made on most of the issues including:



- Australia accepted a non-compliance for the fishing vessel *Isla Eden* for a delay in reporting catch to CCAMLR. An allegations was made against Australia by one Member for illegal fishing and the Australian delegation successfully defended against this claim. However, valuable meeting time was spent discussing this and the Compliance Evaluation Procedure more broadly which detracted discussion on issues such as climate change and the East Antarctic MPA. Industry expressed concern regarding possible flow on implications for exporting product and market access;
- No compliance report was adopted by the Standing Committee on Implementation and Compliance for the first time since the Compliance Evaluation Procedure became operational in 2013;
- Despite support by most CCAMLR Members, East Antarctic MPA proposal was not successful; and
- A joint proposal by Australia and New Zealand to establish an exploratory fishery in Subarea 88.3 was not successful. The objective of this proposal was to better regulate research fishing carried out with exemptions from most conservations measures.



## **Agenda item 5.1 – Exploratory Fisheries Update**

Members noted that the TAC for the East Antarctica went up by 16% which is the maximum that a New and Exploratory TAC can increase by in one year.

Members noted that the Ross Sea MPA was discussed however agreed that the full effects of the MPA and associated Conservation Measures will not be known until it is in place on 1 December 2017.

SouthMAC noted that the CCAMLR Secretariat had advised it was seeking to put in place mechanisms to better predict when Exploratory Fisheries would close. This should enable closure notices to be issued earlier to reduce the probability of overfishing occurring. SouthMAC noted that some CCAMLR members may have set gear in Statistical Subarea 88.1 in the 2016/17 season with the knowledge that their gear was very likely to catch more fish than the remaining TAC.

## **Agenda item 6 - Summary of revised Conservation measures**

SouthMAC noted that the following are some of the key conservation measures relevant to SouthMAC which were revised at the 2017 CCAMLR meeting:

### **General**

CM 24-05 - Minimisation of the incidental mortality of seabirds in the course of longline fishing or longline fishing research in the Convention Area (new conservation measure).

### **HIMI**

CM 33-02 - Limitation of by-catch in Statistical Division 58.5.2 in the 2017/18 season.

CM 41-08 - Limits on the fishery for *Dissostichus eleginoides* in Statistical Division 58.5.2 in the 2017/18 and 2018/19 seasons.

CM 42-02 - Limits on the fishery for *Champsocephalus gunnari* in Statistical Division 58.5.2 in the 2017/18 and 2018/19 seasons.

### **East Antarctica**

CM 41-05 - Limits on the exploratory fishery for *Dissostichus mawsoni* in Statistical Division 58.4.2 in the 2017/18 season.

CM 41-11 - Limits on the exploratory fishery for *Dissostichus mawsoni* in Statistical Division 58.4.1 in the 2017/18 season.

### **Ross Sea**

CM 41-09 - Limits on the exploratory fishery for *Dissostichus mawsoni* in Statistical Division 88.1 in the 2017/18 season.

CM 41-10 - Limits on the exploratory fishery for *Dissostichus mawsoni* in Statistical Division 88.2 in the 2017/18 season.

### **Bycatch**

CM 33-03 - Limitation of by-catch in new and exploratory fisheries in the 2017/18 season.



Members further noted that the Text of the CCAMLR Scheme of International Scientific Observation was also revised but not all the changes that were recommended at the workshop held earlier in the year were included. Members noted that some important revisions were made to improve observer safety. Industry members also indicated that the high tagging rate could cause problems in the East Antarctica and Ross Sea and any issues will be fed back into CCAMLR next year.

## **Other**

### **Agenda item 8 – Other Business**

#### **Agenda item 8.1 - Kerguelen Symposium**

SouthMAC noted that the Symposium on Kerguelen Plateau Marine Ecosystems and Fisheries will be held in Hobart on 13-15 November 2017. Mr Exel noted that he will be attending the Symposium as well as Mr Rhys Arangio, Mr David Carter and 3 skippers from Austral Fisheries Pty Ltd. The AFMA member noted that she will attending and presenting on the Ecological Risk Assessment process. The AAD member noted that she would be presenting on the HIMI marine reserve expansion and Ms Gill Slocum will be presenting on the Australian-France cooperation on the Kerguelen Plateau.

#### **Agenda item 9 - Next meeting**

SouthMAC agreed to hold the next face-to-face meeting in Hobart on Thursday 1 March 2018 with a SARAG meeting held on 28 February 2017.

The Chair thanked members for participating in the teleconference and closed the meeting at 11:10 am.



## Sub-Antarctic Fisheries Management Advisory Committee (SouthMAC) – Teleconference 7 November 2017

### Agenda

**Tuesday 7 November 2017**

**10:00–11:00 am (AEDT)**

Toll free number: 1800 153 721

Participant PIN code: 184210

### Introduction

- |     |                          |       |                 |
|-----|--------------------------|-------|-----------------|
| 1.  | Preliminaries            |       |                 |
| 1.1 | Declaration of interests | Chair | For Information |
| 1.2 | Apologies                | AFMA  | For Information |
| 1.3 | Adoption of Agenda       | Chair | For Decision    |

### Macquarie Island Toothfish Fishery

- |      |                                 |      |              |
|------|---------------------------------|------|--------------|
| 2.   | TAC and bycatch recommendations | AFMA | For Decision |
| 2.1. | Patagonian toothfish            |      |              |
| 2.2. | Bycatch limits                  |      |              |

### Heard Island and McDonald islands Toothfish Fishery

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|-----|--------------------------------------|------|----------------|
| 3.  | TAC and bycatch recommendations      | AFMA | For Decision   |
| 3.1 | Patagonian toothfish                 |      |                |
| 3.2 | Mackerel Icefish                     |      |                |
| 3.3 | Bycatch limits                       |      |                |
| 4.  | Skate and ray handling and reporting | AFMA | For Discussion |

### CCAMLR

- |     |  |     |                 |
|-----|--|-----|-----------------|
| 5.  | Summary of outcomes of CCAMLR            | AAD | For Information |
| 5.1 | Exploratory Fisheries update             |     |                 |
| 5.2 | Other outcomes                           |     |                 |
| 6.  | Summary of revised Conservation Measures | AAD | For Information |

### Other

- |    |                |       |                |
|----|----------------|-------|----------------|
| 7. | Other Business | Chair | For Discussion |
| 8. | Next Meeting   | Chair | For Decision   |

