



Australian Government

Australian Fisheries Management Authority

Scallop Resource Assessment Group (ScallopRAG) Meeting 43

Draft minutes

14 March 2024

09:30-13:30

Microsoft Teams



Australian Government

Australian Fisheries Management Authority

Bass Strait Central Zone Scallop Fishery Resource Assessment Group (ScallopRAG)

Meeting 43 – 14 March 2024

Agenda

Time (AEDT): 0930 – 13:00

Location: Microsoft Teams

Chair Name: Brendan Kelaher

Meeting 43 – 14 March 2024			
Approximate time	Item	Purpose	Lead presenter
09:30 (20 min)	Agenda item 1. Preliminaries		
	1.1 Welcome and apologies	For action	Chair
	1.2 Declaration of interests	For action	Chair
	1.3 Adoption of agenda	For action	Chair
	1.4 Minutes of previous meeting	For action	Chair
	1.5 Action Items from previous meetings	For action	AFMA
09:50 (60 min)	Agenda item 2. 2024 Biomass Survey Bed Prioritisation	For advice	AFMA member
10:50 (15 min)	Morning Tea		
11:05 (30 Mins)	Agenda Item 3. Economic performance index	For discussion	ABARES/AFMA
11:35 (30 Mins)	Agenda Item 4. Bycatch and discard workplan	For discussion	CSIRO/AFMA
12:05 (25 min)	Agenda item 5. Review of scallop fishing gear	For discussion	AFCG
12:30 (25 min)	Agenda item 6. Other Business	For noting	All Members
12:55	End of meeting		

The Chair opened the meeting at 09:35.

Agenda Item 1. Preliminaries

1.1 Welcome and apologies

1. Professor Brendan Kelaher, the Chair, welcomed members, participants, and observers to the meeting and provided an acknowledgement of country.
2. The Scallop Resource Assessment Group (the RAG) members noted that the meeting was being recorded and commenced proceedings.
3. Apologies were received from Jayson Semmens, Ewan Flanagan, Matt Koopman, James Parkinson, John Cull and Stuart Richy.

4. Attendance

Members

Brendan Kelaher	Chair
Don Bromhead	Scientific member
Steve Hall	AFMA member
Alannah Wood	Executive Officer

Invited Participants

Brad Milic	Atlantis Fisheries Consulting Group
Ian Knuckey	Fishwell Consulting
Mirianna Sporic	CSIRO

Observers

Stephanie Blake	ABARES
Sally Weekes	AFMA
Angela Cao	ABARES

1.2 Declarations of interest

5. The RAG members followed the conflict of interest declarations as outlined in [Fisheries Administration Paper 12 \(FAP12\) – Resource Assessment Groups](#). Members and participants reviewed and updated the Declarations of Interest included at [Attachment A](#).
6. Ian Knuckey advised the ScallopRAG that Matt Koopman was unable to attend and that he would attend in his place. He asked that his declaration be updated to include the ongoing MSC work and that Fishwell Consulting is currently the contracted provider of the annual biomass survey.
7. Don Bromhead asked for his declaration to include his employment with ABARES.
8. The Chair acknowledged that Fishwell staff do have an interest in the biomass survey, however their expertise is crucial to the relevant ScallopRAG discussion. It was noted that Dr Knuckey will remain for the discussion and be asked to leave the meeting when ScallopRAG is making any recommendations on relevant agenda items.
9. ScallopRAG agreed that Industry members were valuable in the discussion regarding the survey bed prioritisation and that it was appropriate for them to be involved in these discussions and in providing final advice of the survey beds without any change to declarable interests.

1.3 Adoption of agenda

10. The RAG adopted the [agenda](#) as final.

1.4 Minutes of previous meeting

11. AFMA advised that the Minutes from the ScallopRAG 42 meeting on 7 June 2023 were distributed to RAG members for feedback prior to being finalised and they are available on the [AFMA Website](#).

12. The previous Minutes were adopted.

1.5 Actions arising from previous meetings

13. AFMA asked the RAG to note the following three action items from ScallopRAG 42 meeting June 2023

- That Action item 3.3 - AFMA to enquire with Fishwell on the potential for the Population Dynamics project to inform assumptions on M.
- That Action item 2.3 - AFMA and state representatives to raise/discuss the new state VMS requirement at ScallopMAC and confirm that Commonwealth Fishery (AIS) requirements including software and interface with elogs will be compatible.
- That Action item 5.4 - AFMA, the ScallopRAG Economic Member and BSCZSF industry to work together to develop a fit for purpose economic conditions index to inform management of the fishery and provide an update of progress to the next ScallopRAG meeting in 2024.

14. AFMA provided an update on the action items and asked the RAG to note:

- For Action item 3.3 from ScallopRAG 41, AFMA is still to formally approach Fishwell to seek inclusion for considering assumptions on M in its Population Dynamics project. The Scallop MSE project proposal currently being considered by the AFMA Research Committee (ARC) will test the proposed harvest control rules and the harvest strategy. It is envisaged that the MSE project will link closely with the Population Dynamics project in relation to informing appropriate assumptions on M.
- For Action item 2.3 from ScallopRAG 42, AFMA acknowledges this is incomplete, however is committed to find out more and will discuss with AFMA VMS team.
- That Action item 5.4 from Scallop RAG 42 will be discussed further in agenda item 3 where Rob Curtotti will discuss.

15. A summary of action items from this meeting is at [Attachment B](#).

Agenda Item 2 – 2024 Biomass Survey Bed Prioritisation

16. The AFMA Member introduced the Agenda Item. The RAG was asked to consider the BSCZSF Industry Co-management Committee advice and to provide advice on which scallop beds should be surveyed in 2024 biomass survey (the 2024 survey) and note the bed prioritisation guidelines. The chair thanked Fishwell, Matt Koopman and Ian Knuckey for their work on this.

17. It was noted that Jayson Semmens had reviewed the survey plan and had provided no comments.

18. The ScallopRAG noted the following:

- The Industry Co-Management Committee (the Committee) met on Friday 9 February 2024 to provide advice on scallop beds to include in the BSCZSF 2024 pre-season biomass survey (the Survey).
- The Committee provided the recommendation, that the following beds should be surveyed in 2024;
 - King Island 6
 - King Island 9
 - King Island 10
 - Three Hummock South (exploratory)
 - Three Hummock South East (exploratory)
 - King Island Lavinia (3 sites - North, East & West)
 - Apollo Bay – The Hill North
 - Flinders Island 1
 - Flinders Island exploratory South
 - Flinders Island exploratory North

19. Fishwell presented the proposed 2024 survey design, the RAG noted the following:

- The principles for prioritising survey beds;
- There is continuous data since 2015 only missing 2020 because of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- 2001 tonnes of the total 2007 tonnes logbook reported catch in 2023 (99.7 %) was taken from outside of scallop beds survey in 2023; and
- 1956 tonnes (97.5 %) was taken from western Bass Strait near King Island, with the remaining 50 tonnes (2.5 %) taken in eastern Bass Strait.

20. Noting the advice from the Committee and information from the proposed 2024 survey design, the RAG discussed the following:

- Suggestions to re-evaluating the spatial coverage of the three Lavinia sites, and to consider keeping them separate or consolidating with an additional site in the east (near Flinders Island). There was general support to combine the Lavinia north and west sites, while maintaining Lavinia east. Flinders Island North - The Sisters was suggested as a potential replacement site in the east.

21. Those members and invited participants who declared a potential conflict left the meeting while the recommendations were being formed.

22. The RAG recommended consolidating the three new proposed Lavinia beds into two and to include Flinders Island North - The Sisters. It was also recommended that if the Flinders Island exploratory sites do not yield productive scallop grounds then a replacement would be Flinders Island South – North of Bable.

RECOMMENDATION

The RAG recommended that the following beds be surveyed during the 2024 survey:

- King Island 6
- King Island 9
- King Island 10

- Three Hummock South (exploratory)
- Three Hummock South East (exploratory)
- King Island Lavinia (2 sites – North & East)
- Apollo Bay – The Hill North
- Flinders Island 1
- Flinders Island North – The Sisters
- Flinders Island exploratory South
- Flinders Island exploratory North
- Flinders Island South – North of Bable*

** Backup if Flinders Island exploratory sites don't yield a productive scallop bed*

Agenda Item 3 – Economic performance Index.

23. Economic member, Robert Curtotti, gave a short presentation introducing the initial concepts and work in developing an economic condition index (ECI) for the BSCZSF.

24. The ScallopRAG noted the following:

The importance of establishing clear economic objectives in the scallop fishery and supported examining fishing patterns across jurisdictions to inform decision-making. Dr Curtotti proposed tracking economic indicators across jurisdictions to better understand fishing behaviour more broadly.

25. The Chair highlighted the previous challenges in accessing economic data from the fishing fleet, prompting discussions on the need for clarity in defining information requirements. AFMA emphasised the importance of simplicity and efficiency in collecting economic data to inform fisheries management, and that an ECI appears to be an appropriate approach to achieve this.

Action item 1 – AFMA to organise a meeting, prior to the June RAG and MAC, with ABARES, the ScallopRAG/MAC economic member and industry to further discuss the development of an economic conditions index for the BSCZSF.

Agenda Item 4 – Bycatch and Discard workplan

26. The AFMA member advised that Stuart Richey (an apology) made comments on the ERA out of session, including

27. AFMA reiterated that a key focus for ScallopRAG is the executive summary on the first two pages, which summarises the high risk species identified in the ERA.

28. Mirianna Sporcic (CSIRO) presented the outcomes from the draft ERA recently undertaken by CSIRO, noting that:

- The ERA reporting period covers 2017 – 2021;
- Most fishing was undertaken at depths of in 24 – 100 meters with an average of 10 to 12 vessels. The annual catch ranged from 2900 – 3900 tonnes;
- The previous ERA assessment was in 2007. More bycatch but less protected were assessed in the recent ERA. This was primarily a result of different methodologies.
- 17 bycatch species were identified as high risk. Two of these were recorded to species level in the pre-season biomass survey. The other 15 species have not been recorded in the biomass survey but were expanded from higher taxonomic level group codes used for the ERA

assessment. All expanded species could not be eliminated due to lack of ecological information, however this does not rule out the chance of these being false positives in the analysis.

29. ScallopRAG noted the following:

- The RAG questioned the likelihood of detecting very small species like a 7 mm brittle star;
- issues with species list development and temporal matching between surveys and fishing seasons;
- noting the scarcity of data in the fishery on such species, the ERA model advocates for inclusivity due to uncertainty. There is however scope for expert overrides if further evidence can be provided for these species;

30. The RAG supported further discussion on identifying false positives and emphasized the importance of scientific and industry input for scrutinizing the species list and improving data collection methods, particularly regarding spatial distribution and abundance, seasonal mismatches and bycatch data.

Action item 2 – AFMA to meet out of session with industry and scientific members to discuss the high risk species identified in the recent ERA and evidence available to put forward a case to eliminate irrelevant species.

Action item 3 – AFMA to investigate when the two high risk species were caught and if it requires further analysis from CSIRO.

Agenda Item 5 – MSC update - Review of scallop fishing gear

31. Brad Milic provided an update on the progress for Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) accreditation of the fishery, including a desktop review on Alternative measures to minimise catch of unwanted target species, bycatch, TEP's, as well as interactions with benthic habitats.
32. Mr Milic noted that in recent years, both locally and internationally, there have been minimal improvements in scallop gear types. The ScallopRAG agreed none of the gear variations presented looked to be worth considering in this fishery.
33. The ScallopRAG noted the importance to optimise catch efficiency in the fishery and regularly review and discuss new gear types and other alternative measures to consider their adoption as they are reviewed.
34. AFMA noted its role in supporting MSC work and sought clarification on plans for further action, particularly regarding bycatch and discards. The ScallopRAG agreed to monitor alternative measures going forward and noted the regular review processes within the BSCZSF Bycatch and Discard Workplan.
35. Trialling electronic monitoring (EM) (i.e. cameras on discard chutes of boats to record bycatch/discards) was discussed.
36. Mr Milic supported the consideration of an EM trial, depending on costs.

Agenda Item 6 – Other business

37. The AFMA member noted that AFMA is currently running an appointment process to appoint a new economic member to the ScallopRAG and all members the ScallopMAC (for which the current term of membership will expire at the end of March 2024). It is expected this process will be finalised in next month.

Agenda Item 6.1 – Next meeting – proposed agenda

38. The AFMA member flagged the following items for the next ScallopRAG meeting to be held in early June 2024, including:

- Fishery update
- ERA results
- Pre-season survey results
- 2024 season recommendations
 - TAC
 - Closures
 - Season dates
- Research priorities
- Climate change
- Economic Index

Close of meeting

39. The Chair closed the meeting at 12:46.

DRAFT

Attachment A- register of interest

Table 1 Declared interests

Name	Membership	Declared interests
Brendan Kelaher	Chair	No interest in the fishery pecuniary or otherwise.
Jayson Semmens	Scientific member	Scallop Research Group Leader, Institute for Marine and Antarctic Studies. Organisation is known to submit research funding applications for consideration by ScallopRAG
Don Bromhead	Scientific member	ABARES Employee, on temporary transfer from AFMA. No interest in the fishery pecuniary or otherwise.
Stuart Richey	Industry member	Holds Commonwealth and State concessions.
John Cull	Industry member	Holds Commonwealth and State concessions.
Steve Hall	AFMA member	AFMA employee. No interest in the fishery pecuniary or otherwise.
Alannah Wood	Executive Officer	AFMA employee. No interest in the fishery pecuniary or otherwise.
Matt Koopman	Invited participant, Fishwell Consulting	Fishwell Consulting have undertaken the BSCZSF annual survey since 2015, this includes catch and effort for the Fishery. Fishwell also submit research funding applications and undertake research projects for Commonwealth, State and International fisheries agencies and other organisations including fishery associations and private companies. Recent projects include the Development of a methodology to validate ageing techniques for Bass Strait Scallops. No interest in any commercial fisheries.
Ian Knuckey	Invited participant, Fishwell Consulting	Fishwell Consulting have undertaken the BSCZSF annual survey since 2015, this includes catch and effort for the Fishery. Fishwell also submit research funding applications and undertake research projects for Commonwealth, State and International fisheries agencies and other organisations including fishery associations and private companies. Recent projects include the Development of a methodology to validate ageing

		techniques for Bass Strait Scallops. No interest in any commercial fisheries.
Brad Milic	Invited participant	Industry representative, Atlantis Fisheries Consulting Group
Stephanie Blake	Observer, ABARES	ABARES employee. No interest in the fishery pecuniary or otherwise.
Angela Cao	Observer, ABARES	ABARES employee. No interest in the fishery pecuniary or otherwise.

DRAFT

Attachment B- Action items

Table 3. Recommendations and action items from ScallopRAG 43

Agenda Item	No.	Recommendation / Action Item	Agency/Person Responsible	Timeframe
Recommendations				
2	1	<p>The RAG recommended that the following beds be surveyed during the 2024 survey:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • King Island 6 • King Island 9 • King Island 10 • Three Hummock South (exploratory) • Three Hummock South East (exploratory) • King Island Lavinia (2 sites – North & East) • Apollo Bay – The Hill North • Flinders Island 1 • Flinders Island North – The Sisters • Flinders Island exploratory South • Flinders Island exploratory North • * Backup if Flinders Island exploratory sites don't yield a productive scallop bed 		
Actions				
3	1	AFMA to organise a meeting, prior to the June RAG and MAC, with ABARES, the ScallopRAG/MAC economic member and industry to further discuss the development of an economic conditions index for the BSCZSF.	AFMA	Before Scallop RAG44
4	1	AFMA to meet out of session with industry and scientific members to discuss the high risk species identified in the recent ERA and evidence available to put forward a case to eliminates irrelevant species.	AFMA	Prior to ScallopRAG44
3	3	AFMA to investigate when the two high risk species were caught and if it	AFMA	Prior to ScallopRAG44

		requires further analysis from CSIRO.		
--	--	---------------------------------------	--	--

DRAFT