



Australian Government

Australian Fisheries Management Authority

Northern Prawn Management Advisory Committee (NORMAC)

Final meeting minutes

28 February 2024

Teleconference

Contents

Meeting participants	3
Agenda item 1. Preliminaries	3
1.1 Welcome and apologies	3
1.2 Declarations of interest	3
1.3 Adoption of agenda	3
1.4 Minutes from previous meeting.....	4
1.5 Correspondence sent/received.....	4
Agenda item 2. Action items	4
Agenda item 3. Tiger prawn stock assessment base case (minimum effort threshold)	4
Agenda item 4. Broodstock.....	5
Agenda Item 5. NPF Strategic Research Plan	6
Agenda Item 6. Other business	7
Next meeting.....	7
ATTACHMENT A: Declared conflicts of interest	9
ATTACHMENT B – NORMAC 88: Wednesday 28 February 2024 meeting agenda	11
ATTACHMENT C – Correspondence sent since the NORMAC 87 June 2023 meeting	12

Meeting participants

Position	Participant
Chair	John Glaister
NORMAC members	Phil Robson, Industry member Bryan van Wyk, Industry member Michael O'Brien, Industry member Ian Knuckey, Research member Geoffrey Muldoon, Environment / Conservation member Brodie Macdonald, AFMA member
AFMA Employees	Sarah Kirkcaldie (Executive officer) Darci Wallis
Observers	Denham Parker, CSIRO Roy Deng, CSIRO
Apologies	
Annie Jarrett, NPF ¹ Eva Plaganyi-Lloyd, CSIRO Ian Boot, Industry member	

Agenda item 1. Preliminaries

1.1 Welcome and apologies

The Chair opened the meeting with an Acknowledgement of Country at 1.02 pm (AEDT) on 28 February 2024.

The MAC noted that there was a quorum for the meeting as per Fisheries Management Paper 1 (FMP1).

1.2 Declarations of interest

The Chair requested that NORMAC members consider the standing table of declared interests (see **Attachment A**) and individually declare whether the stated interests are accurate, and if not, provide an update. NORMAC noted that no members had any conflicts that would require them to be excluded from any agenda items discussions or recommendations.

1.3 Adoption of agenda

The agenda was adopted with a minor change to include two items under agenda item 1 (Approval of previous meeting minutes and correspondence sent/received – see **Attachment B**).

¹ Northern Prawn Fishery Industry

1.4 Minutes from previous meeting

NORMAC endorsed the final minutes of the NORMAC meeting held on 13 June 2023.

1.5 Correspondence sent/received

NORMAC noted the correspondence since the June 2023 meeting outlined at **Attachment C**.

Agenda item 2. Action items

NORMAC noted the status of relevant action items from previous NORMAC meetings. The AFMA member highlighted that all actions had been completed except the following:

- **AFMA to investigate options to move up the NPF Tiger and Banana Prawn ERAs to much earlier than the scheduled 2027 date.** Members noted that this has been discussed with the AFMA Policy, Environment, Economics and Research (PEER) team, however, further consideration on the broader fishery priorities for ERAs is required noting the 2024/25 budget limitations. Members agreed that completing the ERAs as soon as possible is still a priority given that they are meant to be updated every five years and are used to support the fishery certification applications and also the EPBC Act² requirements. Members noted that the ERA process has been automated but noted that it is still expensive as there is still manual handling of data needs to be considered. The AFMA observer noted that the request to do the ERA earlier is also constrained by CSIRO's ability to undertake the work earlier. It was agreed that a more detailed update will be provided at the June meeting regarding the automation of the red leg banana prawn ERA.
- **NPFI/CSIRO to compile a summary of previous and ongoing research into sawfish, including mitigation.** Members noted that this item remains ongoing.

Action item 1: AFMA to provide an update on the ERA automation process and red leg banana prawn ERA to the June NORMAC meeting.

Agenda item 3. Tiger prawn stock assessment base case (minimum effort threshold)

The AFMA observer noted that the current minimum effort threshold in the NPF tiger prawn stock assessment was identified as a key issue in May 2022, as this resulted in the assessment recommending a higher TAE than recent effort levels despite the key stock status indicators signalling the need for a more conservative approach. Members noted that CSIRO provided some preliminary alternative options at the NPF tiger prawn fishery adaptation strategy workshop in February 2023, which were further developed and considered at the May and the October 2023 NPRAG meetings.

NORMAC noted that the industry proposal considered at the November 2023 NPRAG meeting, for a minimum effort threshold of 4004 fishing days.

² *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*

NPRAG confirmed its preliminary recommendation from the November 2023 meeting at the virtual February 2024 meeting, which supported a combined minimum effort threshold of 4004 days, noting:

- the combined species minimum effort threshold provides more flexibility to the bioeconomic model to determine the best path to MEY over seven years.
- the threshold should be reviewed every four years, aligned with tiger prawn assessments.
- a maximum interannual effort change penalty should be applied in the model to prevent anomalies on how the model achieves the path to MEY, noting a sensitivity test will be conducted to determine the influence of this penalty and its associated threshold level as part of the 2024 stock assessment.

The scientific member noted that the aim is to stop the model trying to take the quickest and easiest route to MEY as this may shut down fishery for a year. The Scientific member stated that this method was a good compromise and does not undermine the precautionary approach of the stock assessment.

NORMAC noted that:

- It had been a difficult process to find a balance between protecting prawn stocks and managing the economic factors to enable the fishery to keep operating in the long term, and
- The proposal of a MET of 4,004 was supported by all but one industry member of NPFI.

Recommendation:

NORMAC approved the NPRAG recommended 4004 day minimum effort threshold level.

Agenda item 4. Broodstock

The AFMA member noted that following discussions with the AFMA Compliance team in late 2023, AFMA management proposed to make the conditions applying to broodstock fishing more consistent under both permits or SFRs, as broodstock operations are very similar under both concessions.

Members noted that the condition requiring fishing under broodstock permits to cease when a cumulative total of 9,000 live *Penaeus monodon* are landed will not be applied to SFR conditions.

NORMAC noted that an aggregation of juvenile sawfish was caught in 2018 led to the inclusion of the move on requirements in the broodstock permits. The conservation member noted that ongoing research into sawfish by the NPF is crucial particularly given the evidence in a recent paper of a high return of females to the area.

Recommendations:

NORMAC approved the inclusion of the following conditions in the 2024 NPF SFR conditions to make them more consistent with the current broodstock permit conditions:

Electronic logbook (E-log) use

- *The holder must ensure that the relevant information about fish taken (fish landed, sex, retained and discarded) and other species interactions in the area of the NPF is accurately and fully recorded using electronic logbooks (ETRAWL) in accordance with the general information and instructions for completion of the logbook. In addition:*
 - a. All sawfish species caught must be photographed, including when fishery observers are on board, where it is safe to do so, using any camera such that the photos are in colour and include a date/time stamp. Photos shall show the full animal and shall be provided to NPFI at the conclusion of the trip.*

Move on requirements

- *If fishing activity results in interactions with four or more sawfish (any species of the family Pristidae) within a calendar day, the holder shall not deploy fishing gear again for at least 24 hours within three (3) nautical miles of the location where the most recent shot commenced and concluded.*

Notification and Reporting Obligations

- *The holder must give AFMA at least 24 hours notification prior to returning from any broodstock fishing trip.*
- *Notification must include the boat name, the intended port, expected time of arrival. Notification is to be made to the AFMA Regional Duty Officer on telephone number 0428 196 114.*
- *A subsequent notification must be made around, but no less than, two (2) hours from port.*

Broodstock feed

Live P. Monodon will be fed off the sorting tray or with Northern Territory squid purchased locally. The use of manufactured feed or imported seafood during the course of this operation is prohibited.

Agenda Item 5. NPF Strategic Research Plan

NORMAC noted that NPRAG considered the draft NPF five-year Strategic Research Plan 2024-28 at its meeting on 21 February 2024. The NPRAG Chair stated that last 2-3 years has seen industry under significant financial pressures due to a range of factors including; high fuel prices, lack of market and the low price of prawns. Members noted that NPRAG advice agreed that only essential research should be supported, noting the current economic climate. NORMAC agreed that the aim of any research should be to ensure that the fishery is economically viable and sustainable. Members noted that many Australian fisheries are facing the same challenges especially when competing against international imports that do not have the same environmental conditions placed on them.

The AFMA member noted that the NPF five year Strategic Research Plan was updated after the recent NPRAG meeting and a revised version was circulated to NORMAC. The key changes following the NORMAC meeting included:

- Section 5 – additional wording was included regarding the impact of climate change and fuel pressure.
- Table 3 R&D need 11 - *Continue to explore methods to improve profitability, reduce operational costs and increase revenue in the NPF* priority was increased to a high priority and updated to explicitly mention profitability.
- Table 3 R&D need 13 - *Explore options for alternative fuel sources and strategies to move towards carbon net zero* priority was increased to a medium priority.
- Minor updates to the proposed scheduling of research (Appendix 1, Table 3).

The conservation member noted that FRDC had recently put out a call for research proposals on alternative fuel and reducing the carbon footprint and this may be a useful source of funding for priority 13 under the Strategic Research Plan. The industry member noted that Austral fisheries will be travelling to America to attend a conference in March 2024 on green power in industry.

Recommendation:

NORMAC approved the five-year NPF Strategic Research Plan (2024-28).

Agenda Item 6. Other business

The conservation member questioned if by using MEY is the fishery looking to improve profitability or using it as a proxy for biomass above MSY. The scientific member noted that there is a meeting on 27 March 2024 looking at the revised Harvest Strategy guidelines for Commonwealth fisheries across Australia. The Scientific member explained that MEY was an aim of economists as to where Australian fisheries would get to and was meant to operate at fleet or fishery level not an individual level. Members noted that MEY is about fishery stocks being at a level that optimises the chance of good economical return through catch rates. However, collecting information is hard and price fluctuations makes it difficult. Members noted that even if stocks can get to BMEY the fishery can still be lacking in profitability.

The AFMA member agreed to send the conservation member the assessment and bioeconomic model papers from Tiger Prawn workshop held in February 2023.

NORMAC noted that the scientific member was involved in a process in 2005 that looked at energy efficient fishing. The scientific member agreed to circulate a paper by Dave Stirling and Laurie Goldsworthy which explored a number of options.

Action item 2: AFMA to provide the recent NPF assessment and bioeconomic model papers from the February Tiger Prawn workshop to the conservation member.

Action Item 3: Ian Knuckey to circulate the paper by Dave Stirling and Laurie Goldsworthy on energy efficient fishing to NORMAC.

Next meeting

The Chair noted that the next meeting will be held on Friday 7 June 2024 in Brisbane.

Members noted that currently, the agenda for the June 2024 NORMAC meeting includes the following key items:

- Tiger prawn stock assessment
- Ongoing species distribution sampling
- Harvest strategy review
- Update on the key research projects being undertaken
- ERA update – including the redleg ERA
- 2025-26 NPF annual research statement

The industry recommended the following additions to the June 2024 agenda:

- Update on sawfish projects (NPF projects and mitigation strategy)
- Electronic monitoring update

The Chair thanked the members and closed the meeting at 2:10 pm (AEDT).

Signed (Chairperson):

John Glaister

7 June 2024

List of Attachments

- A) NORMAC declared conflicts of interest
- B) NORMAC annotated agenda
- C) Correspondence since NORMAC 87

ATTACHMENT A: Declared conflicts of interest

Table 1: Member, invited participant and observer declarations of interest.

Participant	Declared Interest
Chair	
John Glaister	NORMAC Chair, ex-AFMA Commissioner, no pecuniary interest in the fishery.
Members	
Bryan van Wyk	Industry member – NPRAG Employed by Austral Fisheries, a company with SFR holdings in the fishery.
Ian Knuckey	<p>Positions:</p> <p>Director –Fishwell Consulting Pty Ltd</p> <p>Director –Olrac Australia (Electronic logbooks)</p> <p>Chair –Northern Prawn Fishery Resource Assessment Group</p> <p>Chair –Tropical Rock Lobster Resource Assessment Group</p> <p>Chair –Victorian Rock Lobster and Giant Crab Assessment Group</p> <p>Chair –Gulf of St Vincent’s Prawn Fishery MAC Research Scientific Committee</p> <p>Scientific Member –Gulf of St Vincent’s Prawn Fishery Management Advisory Committee</p> <p>Scientific Member –Tropical Tuna Resource Assessment Group</p> <p>Scientific Member – SESSF Resource Assessment Group</p> <p>Member –The Geelong Agri Collective</p> <p>Fishwell current/recent projects:</p> <p>FRDC 2023-063 Design of a fishery independent longline survey for chondrichthyans in Northern Australia</p> <p>Australia Bay Queensland Gulf of Carpentaria Developmental Fin Fish Trawl Fishery</p> <p>Tasmanian Seafoods Design of a fishery independent survey for NT Sandfish</p> <p>FRDC 2022-007 Trials of oceanographic data collection on commercial fishing vessels in SE Australia</p> <p>Pilbara scalefish Management options to reduce mortality of breached indicator species</p> <p>Leichhardt Salt Impact Assessment of the Eramurra Solar Salt Project: Commercial and Recreational Fisheries</p> <p>NSW Fisheries Developing a harvest strategy framework for Aboriginal Cultural Fishing</p> <p>DAWE Project Multi-sector fisheries capacity building</p> <p>AFMA 2023- Annual monitoring, reporting and assessment of SPF marine mammal interactions, including effectiveness of mitigation measures</p> <p>WAFIC Project Strategic Review of Western Australia’s Shark Fisheries</p> <p>AFMA 2023-0807 Bass Strait Scallop Fishery Survey – 2024</p>

Participant	Declared Interest
	FRDC 2019-027 Improving and promoting fish-trawl selectivity in the SESSF and GABTS FRDC 2018-021 Development and evaluation of SESSF multi-species harvest strategies Traffic Project Shark Product Traceability Sea Cucumber Ass. Design and implementation of various sea cucumber dive surveys.
Brodie Macdonald	Employed by AFMA, Senior Manager – Northern Fisheries. No interest, pecuniary or otherwise
Geoffrey Muldoon	Employed by World Wide Fund for Nature (WW) Australia, Senior Manager, Blue Foods No interest, pecuniary or otherwise
Michael O’Brien	Commercial fishing licence holder in the NT Demersal Fishery General Manager, Australia Bay Seafoods Pty Ltd FRDC Seafood Industry Safety Initiative (SISI), Member Stay A Float trusted Advocate
Phil Robson	Industry member – NPRAG Employee of A Raptis and Sons, responsible for managing NPF vessels & an NT demersal fish trawler. Has provided charter for scientific surveys in NPF in the past and may in future
AFMA	
Darci Wallis	AFMA member – NPRAG Employed by AFMA, Manager of Northern Prawn Fishery. No interest, pecuniary or otherwise
Sarah Kirkcaldie	Employed by AFMA. No interest, pecuniary or otherwise.
Observers / Presenters	
Denham Parker	Employed by CSIRO. Research provider. Member of a research body providing scientific advisory services to the fishery management. May in future seek and receive funding for research in the fishery.
Roy Deng	Employed by CSIRO. Research provider. Member of a research body providing scientific advisory services to the fishery management. May in future seek and receive funding for research in the fishery.

ATTACHMENT B – NORMAC 88: Wednesday 28 February 2024 meeting agenda

Time: 1300 to 1530 AEDT

Time	Item	Purpose	Presenter
1300	1. Preliminaries 1.1 Acknowledgment of Country, welcome and apologies 1.2 Declarations of interest 1.3 Adoption of Agenda 1.4 Minutes from previous meeting 1.5 Correspondence	For action	Chair (20 mins)
1320	2. Actions arising from previous meetings	For noting	AFMA (10 mins)
1330	3. Tiger prawn stock assessment base case (minimum effort threshold)	For approval	AFMA (30 minutes)
1430	4. Broodstock SFR conditions	For decision	AFMA (30 mins)
1500	5. NPF Strategic Research Plan	For decision	AFMA (15 minutes)
1515	6. Other business		AFMA (10 mins)
1525	7. Next meeting	For decision	AFMA (5 mins)
1530	<i>End of Meeting</i>		

ATTACHMENT C – Correspondence sent since the NORMAC 87 June 2023 meeting

Date – emailed to members	Subject (sender)	Purpose
28 June 2023	2024-25 Research Statement (Sarah Kirkcaldie)	To seek NORMAC comments on the 2024-25 Research Statement.
4 July 2023	Draft NORMAC 87 minutes (Sarah Kirkcaldie)	To seek comments from NORMAC on the draft NORMAC 87 minutes.
4 July 2023	Reminder 2024-25 Research Statement (Sarah Kirkcaldie)	To seek NORMAC comments on the 2024-25 Research Statement.
6 December 2023	Final report – NPF tiger prawn fishery adaptation strategy workshop (Cate Coddington)	To provide NORMAC with the final report from the NPF Tiger Prawn Fishery Adaptation Strategy workshop (FRDC project 2022-096).
21 December 2023	Possible dates for NPRAG/NORMAC meetings in February 2024 (Sarah Kirkcaldie)	To gauge NORMAC members availability for a joint NPRAG/NORMAC meeting in February 2024.
10 January 2024	Call for AFMA MAC & RAG Chairs and Members (Sarah Kirkcaldie)	To note that applications to become NPRAG and/or NORMAC members must be submitted to AFMA by 30 January 2024.
15 January 2024	Update on February 2024 NPRAG/NORMAC meetings (Darci Wallis)	To advise NPRAG/NORMAC that the February 2024 meetings will now be virtual.
29 January 2024	Call for AFMA MAC & RAG Chairs and Members (Sarah Kirkcaldie)	To remind members that applications to become NPRAG and/or NORMAC members must be submitted to AFMA by 30 January 2024.
1 February 2024	MAC and RAG Chair letter: Trial of the draft Climate Risk Framework (Sarah Kirkcaldie)	To provide an update on the work that AFMA has been undertaking to integrate climate change impacts into the management of Commonwealth fisheries including a draft AFMA Climate Risk Framework.