



Australian Government

Australian Fisheries Management Authority

Northern Prawn Management Advisory Committee (NORMAC)

Final meeting minutes

13 June 2023

Teleconference

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Meeting participants

Position	Participant
Chair	John Glaister
NORMAC members	Gregory Albert, Industry member Ian Boot, 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
Invited participant	Annie Jarrett, NPFI ¹
AFMA Employees	Sarah Kirkcaldie (Executive officer) Darci Wallis
Observers	David Carter, NPFI Andy Prendergast, NPFI Phil Robson, NPFI Brandon Meteyard, NPFI Norm Peovitis, NPFI
Apologies	
	Arthur Raptis, Industry member

Agenda item 1. Preliminaries

a. Welcome and apologies

The Chair opened the meeting at 2.05 pm (AEST) on 13 June 2023.

Members welcomed Geoffrey Muldoon (conservation member) and Bryan van Wyk (industry member) to their first NORMAC meeting as members. The AFMA member explained that long term industry member David Carter had resigned and thanked him for his significant contribution to the committee over many years and members agreed that there would be a more formal recognition at the next face to face meeting.

b. 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. The AFMA member noted that all industry members have conflicts of interest under agenda items 2 and 4 and it was agreed that industry members could be present for discussion but not the recommendations under these agenda items. The scientific member requested that at the next

¹ Northern Prawn Fishery Industry

NORMAC meeting that AFMA provide clear advice regarding having a quorum for the meeting if all industry members need to leave the meeting for a recommendation.

c. Adoption of agenda

The agenda was adopted without change (see **Attachment B**).

Agenda item 2. Tiger Prawn TAE

The AFMA member noted that at the 2022 May NPRAG and NORMAC meetings, there was considerable discussion on the recommended TAE for the tiger prawn season, resulting in the decision to reduce the effort in the 2022 tiger prawn season by between 10-20% (from the average nominal effort for the past 5 years, 2017-2021 inclusive). This was achieved through the early closure of the 2022 tiger prawn season on 1 November 2022 and a transfer of effort to the Joseph Bonaparte Gulf redleg banana sector of the fishery. Part of this decision included a recommendation, endorsed by both NPRAG and NORMAC, that the stock assessment be undertaken again in 2023. NORMAC noted that NPRAG met again on 15 July 2022 and recommended that the additional tiger prawn assessment not be undertaken in 2023 due to the economic situation in the fishery and that there was a number of research projects underway that would benefit the next stock assessment.

Members noted that as the 2023 stock assessment was not undertaken, the May 2023 NPRAG meeting considered the updated catch, effort and recruitment indices when discussing the tiger prawn TAE. NORMAC noted the update from the NPRAG Chair (scientific member) on the deliberation which had taken place at the RAG. Members noted that NPRAG supported maintaining the 2022 recommendation of a 10-20% cut in effort (as nominal days) relative to the recent five-year average for the years 2017-21 (inclusive) noting that:

- while the recruitment indices for both tiger prawn species have increased based on the results of the 2023 pre-season survey, these remain below the long-term average and just above the long-term average for grooved tiger prawn and brown tiger prawn respectively;
- double the planned reduction in effort was achieved in the Gulf of Carpentaria during 2022 through the early closure of the tiger prawn season and the transfer of effort into the Joseph Bonaparte Gulf for redleg banana prawns (the expected 16% reduction was 30.8% as there was a greater transfer of effort into the JBG);
- the impact of fuel costs has been lessened as the fuel price has decreased by one third since the RAG considered the TAE for 2022; and
- it was agreed to run the tiger prawn assessment in 2024.

The NPFI invited participant noted that last year NPFI agreed to reduce the 2022 tiger prawn season by one month, with a fixed closing date of 1 November to achieve the 10- 20% effort reduction recommended by NPRAG and NORMAC. Members noted that 511 actual effort days went into the JBG red leg fishery in 2022 – this resulted in an overall effort reduction in the 2022 tiger prawn fishery of 30.8% which was almost double the estimated 16.65% effort prediction. In 2023 industry again agreed to operationalise the RAG recommendation noting that there is no new stock assessment and the fishery has not met the triggers in 4 out of the last 5 years for tiger prawns.

Based on the 2022 experience, NPFI agreed that it was reasonable to recommend a 2023 tiger prawn season closing date based on the minimum of 4784 days (available under 1 Nov closing

date) and to add back the equivalent of 511 JBG effort days (2022 actual JBG effort). NPFI noted that this would achieve a 9.98% effort reduction on tiger prawns and requiring a fishery closing date of 10 November 2023.

Industry members left the teleconference and the remaining members discussed the TAE recommendation. Members agreed to support the approach presented by NPFI and endorsed closing the tiger season on 10 November 2023 noting this would result in an effort reduction of approximately 9.98%. NORMAC noted the current unusual circumstances and requirement to go outside the Harvest Strategy when setting the 2023 TAE. Members expressed their concern with using an ad hoc approach the last two years to set the TAE and agreed that an updated stock assessment in 2024 will allow the TAE to be set under the Harvest Strategy next year. NORMAC thanked NPFI for the precautionary approach and for operationalising NPRAG advice and recognised the significant economic impact on industry by closing the season early.

Industry members were admitted back into the teleconference and were informed of the recommendation.

Recommendation: NORMAC supported the proposal by NPFI to reduce the effort in the 2023 tiger prawn season by approximately 10% and endorsed the early closure of the 2023 tiger prawn season on 10 November 2023.

Agenda item 3. Broodstock catch limits

NORMAC noted that the annual 9,000 individual supply limit of *Penaeus monodon* has been in place since 2017. When last considered in 2021, it was recommended that the harvest limit be maintained until an updated stock assessment is completed (scheduled for 2024).

The AFMA observer noted that the AFMA Commission at its 76th meeting on 10-11 May 2021, agreed to maintain the catch limit, as per NPRAG (February 2021) and NORMAC (February 2021) recommendations, while promoting a strong focus on data collection and monitoring in accordance with the precautionary principle. Members noted that this included the need for annual monitoring of total catch (5-year running average) against the two different model estimates of MSY to assess possible risk to stock sustainability until another assessment is undertaken.

NORMAC noted that NPRAG, at their meeting in May 2023, recommended that the individual supply limit for *P. monodon* be maintained at 9,000 in the NPF for both 2023 and 2024; noting that this is unlikely to present a risk to stock sustainability and the demand for broodstock is low. Members further noted that move-on provisions for Sawfish permit condition (operators must move more than three nautical miles (for 24 hours) if four or more sawfish are caught in a single shot) will remain in place.

Recommendation: NORMAC supported the 9,000 limit for 2023 and 2024 noting that it is unlikely that it will be reached.

Agenda item 4. NPF Management Plan

The AFMA member noted the proposed amendments to the *Northern Prawn Fishery Management Plan 1995* (the NPF Plan) to make it contemporary and easier to interpret in the context of current management of the fishery and also give effect to the agreed policy change to remove the minimum holding of gear SFRs against Class B (boat) SFRs. NORMAC noted that that subsection 23A(1), relating to the issuing of permits, was originally removed in the draft amendment but now will be retained as it is required to issue carrier boat permits in the fishery. NORMAC endorsed the Exposure draft of *Northern Prawn Fishery Management Amendment (2023 Measures No. 1) Plan 2023*.

NORMAC noted that in accordance with subsection 17(2) of the *Fisheries Management Act 1991*, the draft amendments to the NPF Management Plan were released for a 42 day consultation period that ended at 5pm on 31 May 2023 and no comments were received.

Members noted that the final amended Plan will now be considered by the AFMA Commission on 5-6 July 2023. The AFMA member explained that if the Commission approves the amendment, the Chief Executive Officer will sign the amendment and the signed copy and other relevant documents will be provided to the Assistant Minister for consideration.

Agenda Item 5. Other Business

The NPFI invited participant noted that two sawfish projects have been granted funding:

- A Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) funded project (\$90,000) to reduce sawfish and seasnake bycatch through gear modifications. Members noted that this project has started and will be completed in 2025.
- A Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW) Threatened and Migratory Species Fisheries Bycatch Mitigation Program funding for a project which includes on water gear mitigation and data collection which will be starting in the next 6 months. Industry expressed their gratitude for the significant funding from DCCEEW.

Members noted that two other projects a Fisheries Research and Development Corporation (FRDC) project estimating Narrow Sawfish (*Anoxypristis cuspidata*) abundance using close kin mark recapture and a NPFI sawfish tagging project will be completed in the next 2-3 years. NORMAC acknowledged that sawfish projects costing approximately \$3 million have either commenced or are about to commence which show industry's significant commitment and willingness to collaborate to address the concerns.

NPFI noted that the MSC reassessment is close to finishing with the public report out for comment with objections closing on 14 June 2023. Members noted that peer review concerns included white banana prawns (which will need to be addressed over next 4 years) and a new sawfish condition.

The Chair thanked NPFI for update.

Next meeting

The Chair noted that the next meeting will be organised out-of-session. The Chair thanked the members and closed the meeting at 3:13 (AEST).

Signed (Chairperson):

John Glaister

19 July 2023

List of Attachments

- A) NORMAC declared conflicts of interest
- B) NORMAC annotated agenda

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	
Greg Albert	Works for a company that holds NPF Statutory Fishing Rights (SFR).
Ian Boot	Industry member – NPRAG Managing Director of Austfish, a company that operates NPF vessels. Has a commercial interest in the fishery. NPF broodstock permit holder. Participates in scampi fishing.
Bryan van Wyk	Industry member – NPRAG Employed by Austral Fisheries, a company with SFR holdings in the fishery.
Ian Knuckey	Positions: Director –Fishwell Consulting Pty Ltd Director –Olrac Australia (Electronic logbooks) Chair –Northern Prawn Fishery Resource Assessment Group Chair –Tropical Rock Lobster Resource Assessment Group Chair –Victorian Rock Lobster and Giant Crab Assessment Group Chair –Gulf of St Vincent’s Prawn Fishery MAC Research Scientific Committee

Participant	Declared Interest
	<p>Scientific Member –Northern Prawn Management Advisory Committee Scientific Member –Gulf of St Vincent’s Prawn Fishery Management Advisory Committee Scientific Member –Tropical Tuna Resource Assessment Group Scientific Member – SESSF Resource Assessment Group Councillor –Victorian Marine and Coastal Council Member –The Geelong Agri Collective</p> <p>Fishwell current/recent projects: DAWE Project: Multi-sector fisheries capacity building AFMA 2022-:Annual monitoring, reporting and assessment of SPF marine mammal interactions, including effectiveness of mitigation measures AFMA 2020-0807: Bass Strait Scallop Fishery Survey – 2020-22 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. Australia Bay: Queensland Gulf of Carpentaria Developmental Fin Fish Trawl Fishery</p> <p>Expert Witness: Gladstone Harbour development impacts</p>
Brodie Macdonald	<p>Employed by AFMA, Senior Manager – Northern Fisheries.</p> <p>No interest, pecuniary or otherwise</p>
Geoffrey Muldoon	<p>Employed by World Wide Fund for Nature (WW) Australia, Senior Manager, Blue Foods</p> <p>No interest, pecuniary or otherwise</p>
Michael O’Brien	<p>Commercial fishing licence holder in the NT Demersal Fishery General Manager, Australia Bay Seafoods Pty Ltd FRDC Seafood Industry Safety Initiative (SISI), Member NTRAC member NORMAC Member NPF Stay A Float trusted Advocate</p>
Arthur Raptis	<p>NPF Statutory Fishing Right (SFR) holder</p>
Invited Participants	
Annie Jarrett	<p>CEO – NPFI MSC – Asia Pacific director Commonwealth Fisheries Association Director</p>

Participant	Declared Interest
	Chair – Australian Council of Prawn Fisheries (ACPF) Member of the FRDC selection panel Invited participant - NPRAG No pecuniary interests Represents the interests of industry.
AFMA	
Sarah Kirkcaldie	Employed by AFMA. No interest, pecuniary or otherwise.
Observers / Presenters	

ATTACHMENT B – NORMAC 87: 13 June 2023 meeting agenda

NORMAC Tele/videoconference

Tuesday 13 June 2023

2:00 pm – 3:30 pm (AEST)

Title	Presenter	Outcome
1. Preliminary Business 1.1 Chair's opening remarks 1.2 Adoption of agenda 1.3 Declaration of interests	Chair	For noting
2. Tiger prawn TAE <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provide ADVICE on the TAE for the 2023 season to the AFMA Commission 	AFMA	For recommendation
3. NPF Management Plan <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NOTE the comments received on the proposed amendments during the public comment period • ENDORSE the final amended Plan • NOTE that the final amended Plan will now be considered by the AFMA Commission 	AFMA	For endorsement
4. Broodstock catch limits	AFMA	For recommendation
5. Other business		