



Australian Government

Australian Fisheries Management Authority

Small Pelagic Fishery Resource Assessment Group (SPFRAG) Meeting 07

Meeting minutes

12 June 2024

Microsoft Teams

Attendees	Membership
Max Kitchell	Chair
Tim Ward	Scientific Member
Andrew Penney	Scientific Member
Simon Boag	Industry Member
Gerry Geen	Industry Member
Prof Caleb Gardner	Economic Member
Vacant	Recreational Member
Anissa Lawrence	Conservation Member – <i>Attended late</i>
Steve Hall	AFMA Member
Yvette Lamont	Executive Officer
Matt Koopman	Fishwell Consulting (Marine Mammal Project)
Tony Muollo	<i>Observer – SPF Concession holder</i>
Sally Weekes	<i>Observer - AFMA</i>
Anna Willock	<i>Observer - AFMA</i>

Day 01

12 June 2024

Approximate time	Item	Purpose	Lead presenter
10:00 (20 min)	Agenda item 1. Preliminaries	For Noting	Chair
10:20 (60 min)	Agenda item 2. Harvest Strategy Review	For Advice	AFMA/Tim Ward
11:20 Morning Tea Break (15 mins)			
11:35 (45 mins)	Agenda item 3. Review of spatial management grids	For Advice	AFMA/Tim Ward
12:20 (45 min)	Agenda item 4. Bycatch and Discard Workplan 4.1 Action items resulting from ERA	For noting	AFMA
13:05 Lunch Break (30 mins)			
13:35 (45 mins)	Agenda item 6. Research Priorities	For Advice	AFMA
14:20 (30 mins)	Agenda item 7. SPF Harvest Strategy Update	For Noting	AFMA/IMAS

Day 01			
12 June 2024			
Approximate time	Item	Purpose	Lead presenter
14:50 (15 mins)	Agenda item 10. Other Business	For Noting	Chair
15:05	Meeting Close		Chair

The Chair opened the meeting at 10:00am AEST.

Agenda item 1. Preliminaries

1.1 Welcome and apologies

1. The Chair welcomed members and observers and opened the meeting with an Acknowledgement of Country.
2. The Chair raised concerns over the vacant Recreational Member position with AFMA responding that a recruitment round had taken place with no applicants.

<i>SPF RAG Members</i>	
Max Kitchell	Chair
Tim Ward	Scientific member
Andrew Penney	Scientific member
Simon Boag	Industry member
Gerry Geen	Industry member
Caleb Gardner	Economic Member
Anissa Lawrence	Conservation member
Steve Hall	AFMA member
Yvette Lamont	Executive officer
Invited Participants	
Matt Koopman	Fishwell Consulting (Marine Mammal Project)
Observers	
Tony Muollo	SPF Concession holder - Observer
Sally Weekes	AFMA Observer

Anna Willock	AFMA Observer
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1.2 Declarations of interest

3. RAG members followed the conflict of interest declarations as outlined for [Resource Assessment Groups - Fisheries Administration Paper 12](#). Members and participants reviewed and updated the Declarations of Interest included at [Attachment A](#).
4. Regarding potential conflicts with agenda items, the following interests were declared:
 - Simon Boag declared an interest in Agenda items 2 (Harvest Strategy) and 3 (Review of Spatial Management Grids).
 - Tony Muolo declared an interest in Agenda items 2 (Harvest Strategy) and 3 (Review of Spatial Management Grids)
 - Tim Ward declared an interest in Agenda item 5 (Research Priorities).
 - Caleb Gardner declared an interest in Agenda item 5 (Research Priorities).
5. The RAG agreed that Simon and Tony should participate in the discussion for agenda items 2 and 3, however should not take part in the formation of any recommendations for these items.
6. The RAG agreed that Tim and Caleb should participate in the discussion for agenda item 5, however not take part in the formation of any recommendations for this item.

1.3 Adoption of agenda

7. The RAG agreed to adopt the agenda.

1.4 Minutes of previous meeting

8. The RAG noted the final minutes of the SPFRAG meeting are available on the [AFMA website](#).

1.5 Actions arising from previous meetings

9. The RAG noted the action items from previous meetings and the updates provided by the AFMA member.
10. Actions arising from this meeting (SPFRAG 06) can be found at [Attachment B](#).

Agenda item 2 – Harvest strategy review

11. The AFMA member introduced the agenda item noting:
 - SPFRAG’s previous support for the development of HCRs with consideration of the Harvest Strategy limit and target reference points and consider whether the current reference points are appropriate for these species.
 - Due to the timeframes for MSC conditions, this project is industry funded and is being undertaken by IMAS, for which Dr Tim Ward will provide an overview.
12. SPFRAG noted an update on the project supporting a review of the Harvest Strategy, including the proposed inclusion of explicit harvest control rules (HCRs) that reduce exploitation rates as the spawning biomass declines towards a point where recruitment may be impaired

Recommendation 1: SPFRAG supported the inclusion of HCRS into the Harvest Strategy, based on some minor amendments being made to the text of the draft Harvest Strategy.

Agenda item 3 – Review of spatial management grids

13. The AFMA member introduced the agenda item noting the 2,000 tonne catch limit was implemented in 2015 to reduce the risk of localised depletion (and its impact on central place foragers).
14. AFMA is seeking advice regarding the ongoing need for the spatial management grids in the SPF and asked SPFRAG to consider;
 - the background for implementing catch limits for spatial management grids in the SPF
 - the instances over recent fishing seasons where SPF operators have either exceeded the 2,000 tonne spatial grid limit or have had to move on from a particular grid to avoid exceeding the limit.
 - the economic impact of these catch limits on operators, industry asked that their ongoing application be reviewed by SPFRAG.
15. SPFRAG noted that the risk of localised depletion remains low, there is no strong reason to retain catch limits for the purposes of minimising localised depletion, and there is scope for the annual stock assessment to identify any risks around localised depletion that would trigger appropriate management action if required.

Recommendation 2: SPFRAG recommended the removal of the current catch limits applied to spatial management grids.

Agenda item 4 – SPF Bycatch and discard workplan

16. The outcomes of the updated ERA for the purse seine sector of the SPF were presented to SPFRAG at its meeting in December 2023. SPFRAG members have since provided comment out of session on the ERA outcomes.
17. SPFRAG provided comments on the draft ERA that related to a better understanding of interactions with marine mammals within the sector including recommendations for increased observer coverage and for the review and update of the SPF purse seine Code of Practice
18. AFMA intend to update the Workplan to reflect the recommendations made by SPFRAG and will seek SEMAC endorsement of the draft ERA report so it can be finalised.

Recommendation 3: SPFRAG endorsed the draft ERA report for finalisation.

Agenda item 5 – Research priorities

19. AFMA introduced the agenda item, seeking advice from the RAG on annual research priorities, including providing feedback on:
 - the draft 2025-26 Annual Research Statement and;
 - research scopes for the proposed research priorities for funding in 2025-26;
20. The RAG discussed the following projects, funding sources and priorities and recommended research priorities for funding consideration by AFMA or FRDC in 2025-26 (see Table 1):

Title	Priority/rank	Feasibility
Monitoring & assessment of SPF quota species under the SPF Harvest Strategy 2025-26 to 2027-28	Essential	High
Daily Egg Production Method (DEPM) Surveys (Redbait East)	Essential	High
Can the SPF be moved closer to MEY by addressing barriers to higher catch	Medium	Medium
Age and growth of Blue mackerel off eastern Australia and New Zealand	N/A	N/A
	*RAG removed from ARC funding (project scope to be redeveloped). To seek funding from a research institution as an honours/PhD project	

21. The SPFRAG agreed to support the two research priorities (*Monitoring and assessment SPF quota species* and the *DEPM survey for redbait east*), that are to be considered by the ARC for funding in 2025-26. RAG comments were recorded in the respective assessment forms attached to the agenda paper for the ARC's consideration.
22. The SPFRAG supported one newly identified research priority, (*Can the SPF be moved closer to MEY by addressing barriers to higher catch*) which had a low cost and medium priority. The processing stakeholder in the SPF has shown an interest in a business model for fishing in the western zone and industry was seeking recommendation on fisheries management given the uncertainty around TEP interactions.
23. SPFRAG commented on the ability to complete the *Age and growth of Blue mackerel off eastern Australia and New Zealand* project under the current scope due to the high cost. The scientific member suggested a rewrite of the scope, this project was identified for inclusion in future research plans with a medium priority.
24. The research priorities will be developed into detailed scopes for further review by SEMAC and SPFRAG before being considered by the ARC in September 2024 as part of AFMA's annual call for research.
25. Fishwell provided the RAG with an update on the marine mammal project noting the inclusion of confidential data and commercial in confidence information.
 - The project involves a detailed examination of marine mammal interactions using all sources of data available to identify factors that are common between interactions, that could be used to identify potential technical/operational improvements; and
 - Assist in the development of more informative reporting of interactions, and a way of analysing each interaction on a case-by-case basis.

Agenda item 12 – Other business

26. No other business from participants.

Close of meeting

27. The Chair thanked attendees for their contribution and closed the meeting at 14.35 AEDST.

Attachment A - Register of interest

Table 2. Members, invited participants and observers declarations of interests.

Name	Membership	Declared interests
Max Kitchell	Chair	No interest, pecuniary or otherwise, in the SPF. Chair of the Southern Bluefin Tuna Management Advisory Committee.
Tim Ward	Scientific Member	Institute Marine and Antarctic Studies, University of Tasmania, Associate Professor, Fisheries Scientist AFMA Research Projects (SPF Monitoring, Blue Mackerel Spawning Fraction II, Jack Mackerel), Principal Investigator Natural Environment and Resources, Tasmania (Developmental Tasmanian Sardine Fishery), Scientific Advisor, Principal Investigator FRDC Tasmanian Sardine Fishery DEPM project South Australian Marine Scalefish Fishery Management Advisory Committee, Independent Conservation Scientist, Member GAB MAC, Independent Conservation Scientist, Member SARAG, Scientific Member. Updated details email 16 May 2024.
Andrew Penney	Scientific Member	Director of Pisces Australis (Pty) Ltd which has a potential interest in research in relation to the SPF.
Simon Boag	Industry Member	Industry member on SERAG and SEMAC Executive Officer, SPFIA. SPFIA engages researchers to undertake projects relevant to the SPF. Undertakes contracts as an independent consultant. Declared 11 June 2024.
Gerry Geen	Industry Member	No interest, pecuniary or otherwise, in the SPF no changes 6 June 2024.
Caleb Gardner	Economic Member	No interest, pecuniary or otherwise, in the SPF. Employee of Institute for Marine and Antarctic Studies (IMAS), which conducts research on a range of fisheries issues including at times the SPF, no change 5 June 2024.
Anissa Lawrence	Conservation Member	No interest, pecuniary or otherwise in the SPF. Director of TierraMar Ltd (trading as OceanEarth Foundation) Chair, Ocean Future Fund Inc. Independent consultant Undertakes contracts for several Conservation NGOs, government departments, non-government agencies and the private sector on a range of fishery related matters

		Conservation member on SPFRAG, SEMAC, SHARKRAG, Spencer Gulf Prawn Trawl RSC and the South Australian Rock Lobster MAC. Advised no changes 16 May 2024.
Steve Hall	AFMA Member	AFMA – Manager, Small Pelagic, Squid and Scallop Fisheries. No interest pecuniary or otherwise.
Yvette Lamont	Executive Officer	AFMA – Senior Management Officer, Small Pelagic Fishery. No interest pecuniary or otherwise.
Matt Koopman	Fishwell Consulting	Fishwell Consulting undertake research funding applications and research projects for Commonwealth, State and International fisheries agencies and other organisations including fishery associations and private companies. I have no interest in any commercial fisheries.
Ian Knuckey	Fishwell Consulting	Fishwell Consulting undertake research funding applications and research projects for Commonwealth, State and International fisheries agencies and other organisations including fishery associations and private companies. I have no interest in any commercial fisheries.
Tony Muollo	SPF Concession holder	Managing director of; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Three Friends Fishing Pty Ltd – fishing vessel operating in SPF • Three Friends Quota Holdings – Quota owner in SPF • Muollo Fishing Pty Ltd – Fishing vessel operating in SPF and quota owner Declared 2 May 2024.
Sally Weekes	AFMA Observer	AFMA – Senior Manager, Demersal and Midwater Fisheries. No interest pecuniary or otherwise.
Anna Wilcock	AFMA Observer	AFMA – Deputy Chief Executive Officer. No interest pecuniary or otherwise. Declared 5 June 2024.

Attachment B- Action items

Table 3. New action items from SPFRAG06

1.1 Table 2. Previous action items

Complete/Redundant		Underway	Yet to start	Pending	
Meeting No.	Item No.	Action Item	Agency/Person Responsible	Status	
7	4	SPFRAG endorsed the draft ERA report for finalisation.	AFMA/CSIRO	AFMA to progress through MAC and relevant channels to document sign off.	
7	3	SPFRAG recommended the removal of the current catch limits applied to spatial management grids.	AFMA	AFMA to progress this recommendation through internal process.	
7	2	SPFRAG supported the inclusion of HCRS into the Harvest Strategy, based on some minor amendments being made to the text of the draft Harvest Strategy.	AFMA/IMAS	IMAS to incorporate changes into the HS and progress Stage 2 of the project – MSE testing.	
6	1	AFMA to provide a copy of IMAs and distribute to members	AFMA	Emailed to members 16 May 2024;	

				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MAB which included the IMAs at Section 7.2 • SPF conditions 2024-25 which included the IMAs at condition 28-34.
6	2	AFMA to clarify with observers and EM when 'Shark mixed' classification is used during reporting.	AFMA	Observer and EM team confirmed that 'shark mixed' is only used if it was not possible to ID to species.
6	3	Prof. Caleb Gardner and Simon Boag to compile a scope for the proposed research project <i>Barriers to investment in the Small Pelagic Fishery</i>	Members	UPDATE
6	4	A/Prof. Tim Ward and Andrew Penney to compile a scope for a proposed research project to improve understanding of <i>age growth dynamics and biological variability of the Australian population of Blue mackerel.</i>	Members	UPDATE