



Australian Government

Australian Fisheries Management Authority

Meeting of the Tropical Tuna Management Advisory Committee (TTMAC)

FINAL RECORD

TTMAC 30

27 AUGUST 2024

TROPICAL TUNA MANAGEMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE (TTMAC) MEETING DETAILS

Chair: Mr Anthony Hurst, Chair

Date: 27 August 2024

Meeting: 30

Venue: Videoconference, via MS Teams

Attendance: All members attended the meeting virtually.

Meeting Participants:

Name	Position
Members	
Ashley Williams	Research Member
Adam Whan	Industry Member
Daryn Logan	Industry Member
David Ellis	Industry Member
Terry Romaro	Industry Member
Glen Holmes*	Conservation Member
Grahame Williams	Recreational Member
Lara Ainley	Acting AFMA Member
Elissa Mastroianni	Acting Executive Officer
Invited Participants	
Ian Bladin	Recreational Invited Participant
Dan Casement	Industry Invited Participant
Observers	
Wez Norris^	AFMA CEO

Apologies:

Selina Stoute – AFMA Member

* Absent for Agenda Items 5 through 9 inclusive.

^ Present for Agenda Item 3 only.

1 Preliminaries

1.1 Welcome and apologies

The thirtieth meeting of the Tropical Tuna Management Advisory Committee (TTMAC 30) was opened at 9:30 am on 27 August 2024 by the Chair, Anthony Hurst. The Chair welcomed members, invited participants and observers to the meeting and:

- a) made an Acknowledgement of Country;
- b) noted an apology for the meeting from AFMA Member Selina Stoute and attendance of Lara Ainley as the acting AFMA member and Elissa Mastroianni as TTMAC Acting Executive Officer; and
- c) advised members the meeting would be recorded to assist with the preparation of the meeting record. The recording will be deleted once the record is finalised.

1.2 Declaration of interests

The MAC noted the standing declaration of interests and provided updates as necessary. Updated declarations of interest area at **Attachment 1**.

The MAC agreed that all meeting participants could be present for discussion, advice and recommendations for all agenda items. Should a direct personal conflict arise, this would be addressed during discussion of that item.

1.3 Adoption of agenda

The MAC adopted the agenda with no amendments (**Attachment 2**). Throughout the meeting the order of agenda items was revisited to ensure presenters had sufficient time for breaks and to meet the availability of participants.

1.4 Actions arising from previous meetings

The MAC noted the current status of action items from previous meetings (**Attachment 3**):

- The MAC noted that Action Items 1 (Review of EM documents) and 2 (catch weights for WCPFC) remained of ongoing priority.
- Action Item 3 (pulse events) would be considered complete following discussion of overcatch and undercatch provisions at Agenda Item 5.
- Action Item 4 (Coral Sea Zone hook trial data) would be removed as completed, noting the topic would be discussed further under Agenda Item 3.

1.5 Out of session correspondence

The MAC noted the out of session correspondence between TTMAC 29 and TTMAC 30 as detailed **Table 1**.

Table 1. Correspondence provided to TTMAC members since TTMAC 29

Date	Description
13 November 2023	Notification of agreement/determination by the AFMA Commission to the following documents: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• ETBF (Fishing Season and Total Allowable Commercial Catch) Determination 2024• ETBF (Overcatch and Undercatch) Determination 2024• WTBF Total Allowable Commercial Catch Determination 2024
17 January 2024	Application reminders for Chair and Members positions for TTMAC. Closing 30 January.
19 January 2024	Follow up request for comment on the swordfish CKMR research proposal.
10 April 2024	Notification to members of incoming TTMAC Chair, Anthony Hurst. Acknowledgement of time and service of outgoing TTMAC Chair, Catherine Sayer.

21 June 2024	TTMAC consultation regarding date setting for TTMAC30.
5 July 2024	TTMAC consultation regarding date setting for TTMAC31.

2 Member updates

Industry members and invited participants update

The MAC noted the following updates from the industry members and invited participants:

- The input costs of fishing operations (including fuel, wages, electricity and gear) continue to rise while the price of fish remains low, putting pressure on the profitability of both the Eastern Tuna and Billfish Fishery (ETBF) and Western Tuna and Billfish Fishery (WTBF). Access to services, such as tradespeople and slips for vessels, are also a challenge.
- Overlapping regulatory requirements (including from AFMA, the Australian Maritime Safety Authority and Biosecurity) remain a source of increasing costs and burden for industry.
- Storage and freight costs have increased, with concurrent decreases in availability. Combined with unfavourable exchange rates, this has limited the ability to economically and profitably access international markets.
- Some businesses and operators have been innovative by looking to value-add to their products. This includes entering the canned market and diversifying products to include tuna steak and smoked products. Sustainability continues to enable a premium price, although competition with cheaper international products is becoming a challenge.
- Volumes of catch have been good, especially for yellowfin tuna and southern bluefin tuna, but surplus supply in the domestic market has dampened prices.
- Although economic data is collected and reported by ABARES, operators often do not have time to provide information as they travel down the coast, and aggregate economic data does not capture the nuances of individual operations and economic stresses.

Recreational fishing member and invited participant update

The MAC noted the following recreational fishing updates, in addition to the written update provided at **Attachment 4**,:

- The New South Wales (NSW) tournament season will start in September. Grahame Williams will provide a list of game fishing tournaments for distribution to commercial operators.
- The light tackle season in North Queensland (QLD) has not seen many juvenile blue or black marlin. Heavy rainfall from cyclone Jasper in December as well as unusual northerly currents may be affecting fish availability.
- The heavy tackle season in QLD is looking good. The weaker Australian dollar has likely driven a higher level of international interest and bookings.

Scientific member update

The MAC noted the following update from the scientific member:

- The Western Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC) Scientific Committee met in August 2024 and considered stock assessments for south pacific albacore and southwest striped marlin.
- The south pacific albacore assessment was positive, indicating the stock is not overfished and not subject to overfishing.
- The striped marlin stock assessment had some data and technical issues, so there was a request to have that assessment updated and presented at a later date.

Conservation member update

The MAC noted the following update from the conservation member:

- There is some concern in the conservation community around the number of leatherback turtle interactions, particularly during the last season (2023).
- An update was sought on the Ecological Risk Assessment (ERA) for the ETBF and WTBF. The AFMA member confirmed that draft ERA reports have been received for both the ETBF and WTBF. AFMA and the RAG believe that further consideration is required, and AFMA is liaising with CSIRO to coordinate this. The MAC will consider these results subsequently.

AFMA management update

The MAC noted the following AFMA management updates, in addition to the written update provided at **Attachment 5**:

- Pacific bluefin tuna numbers have been increasing in the ETBF, and Australia's current 10 t limit will be reviewed and considered by the WCPFC Commission in December. Industry members confirmed that the number of pacific bluefin tuna have increased in catches, while sizes of individual fish have decreased. This pattern has also been observed in New Zealand.
- AFMA confirmed that comment had been received from Tuna Australia regarding proposed amendments to seabird conditions.

3 Update: Coral Sea Hook Trial

The MAC discussed the progress to date of the Coral Sea Hook Trial (the trial) and noted that the trial had already been extended for two years, subject to further review and data requirements. The MAC noted that the tropical tuna resource assessment group (TTRAG) had recommended a research project designed to analyse the trial data and determine how much additional sampling may be required to assess the impact of increased hook numbers per shot on blue and black marlin interactions. However, this was not supported by industry due to cost on the ETBF levy base, especially considering the benefit of this research would be limited to the few coral sea permit holders who are actively fishing. The RAG advised that although the low absolute numbers of marlin interactions were not a cause for concern for their members, they were unable to resolve the scientific questions regarding marlin interactions, nor were they able to provide scientific advice on this matter with the data currently available. The MAC noted AFMA's position that the trial would end as planned on 31 December 2024 given the circumstances.

The scientific member noted that the specific scientific question the RAG was tasked with answering was whether you can detect a change in interactions with increased hooks, not whether the 500-hook limit was appropriate. There is little justification for extending it again without the ability to resolve the scientific questions at the heart of the trial.

However, AFMA is open to considering future proposals on this issue (supported by appropriate structure, planning, and resourcing) should any be put forward.

The MAC considered the history and context of the original 500 hook limit in the coral sea zone. The 500-hook limit was implemented to address a resource sharing issue. The limit was originally established in the mid-1990s as a compromise between the recreational and commercial fishing sectors to avoid exclusion from the Coral Sea in its entirety. Reducing the soak time associated with sets, by limiting the number of hooks, was intended to increase survivability of blue and black marlin. Since that time there have been major changes in the operating environment of the fishery including a reduction in fishing effort, improvements in monitoring, and changes in gear.

The MAC noted that industry members were of the view that the long term management of the fishery should include an increase in the number of hooks per shot, for reasons of economic improvement and efficiency. This is especially the case in light of the challenging conditions described under industry updates in Agenda Item 2.

The MAC also noted concern from the conservation and recreational members regarding marlin interaction rates under increased hook limits and the ability to make permanent changes based on the current trial data without the recommended analysis. The conservation member also queried the impacts on other non-target species and noted that the full results of the trial were not yet available as it is ongoing. The recreational member and invited participant reiterated concern with latent effort in the fishery. These members indicated that they may be comfortable supporting an extension of the trial should there be a clear demonstration, through relevant analysis, of the time, structure and requirements necessary to inform permanent changes.

AFMA management highlighted the sensitivity of blue and black marlin from a resource sharing perspective, and the subsequent need to be able to make decision with the best possible certainty.

The MAC acknowledged the current economic pressures in the fishery, and the impact this would have on presenting future proposals. The MAC agreed that it may be useful for members to see some economic data for the Coral Sea Zone, given the emphasis on economics in the discussion.

AFMA reiterated a willingness to consider alternative proposals and consider pathways forward should industry propose any. The MAC noted the onus is on industry to propose any alternatives. The AFMA CEO indicated a willingness to engage directly with industry alongside Tuna Australia and the AFMA Tropical Tuna team should this prove useful.

The Chair thanked the meeting participants for their views and productive discussion this topic.

4 Modified Swordfish Harvest Strategy

Research Member Ashley Williams presented the results of re-testing the modified swordfish harvest strategy to extend its application for 2025, 2026 and potentially 2027. The MAC noted:

- The modified harvest strategy (the modification) was originally implemented to account for extreme undercatch situations and avoid unnecessarily reducing the recommended biological commercial catch (RBCC). It was tested assuming the extreme undercatch ended in 2024.
- CSIRO have re-tested the modification assuming undercatch extended to 2027. This testing included a range of scenarios, including low recruitment periods, to ensure that the modification would still meet its 2012-2015 average CPUE target.
- Results showed the modification still meets the objectives of the harvest strategy and is robust to extreme undercatch situations extending through to 2027. The spawning biomass and TACCs remained stable or increased.

The MAC noted that the swordfish harvest strategy is currently being reviewed and that the modification is considered an interim approach until the review is complete. The Research Member confirmed that the model accounts for the uncaught volume of fish and would indicate an increase in TACC if appropriate. The Research Member also confirmed that an asymmetric change-limiting rule (to ensure that percentage TACC decreases could be proportionally increased) will be included in management strategy evaluation (MSE) testing for the review of the harvest strategy.

The MAC noted that TTRAG 38 recommended applying the modification when setting the swordfish TACC for 2025.

The MAC agreed that extending the modified swordfish harvest strategy was appropriate, notwithstanding the contextual impact which the 2025 WCPFC swordfish stock assessment and any information on stock structure would have on the application of the harvest strategy and TACC recommendations.

The MAC recommended extending application of the modified swordfish harvest strategy through to 2027, if necessary, and agreed it would be applied when providing TACC advice for the 2025 season.

5 Multi-season TACC Setting Procedure

AFMA Management presented a draft total allowable commercial catch (TACC) setting procedure for tropical tunas (albacore, bigeye and yellowfin) in the ETBF to determine TACCs for three seasons in a single decision. The MAC noted that there has been ongoing discussion through the RAG towards moving towards setting multi-season TACCs for tropical tuna species. For clarity, AFMA confirmed that swordfish (with its own harvest strategy) and striped marlin (with its constant catch indicator approach) are not included and the current annual process would be maintained for these species. A similar procedure for the WTBF will be brought to the MAC at a later date.

Industry members queried whether this would constrain development in the fishery, while noting that the annual review process should be able to pick up on any potential industry expansion or development. The procedure retains flexibility to make changes on an annual basis, should there be advice which suggests this is necessary.

The MAC acknowledged the longstanding stability of ETBF TACCs and noted the views of industry members that the procedure is unlikely to bring specific benefit, with increased flexibility for the fishery is the key priority for future development.

AFMA highlighted that there were administrative and research efficiencies to be gained, and that these efficiencies, rather than increasing flexibility, are the intended purpose of the multi-season TACC setting procedure. The MAC agreed that increased flexibility through overcatch and undercatch provisions would be discussed further under Agenda Item 6.

Overall, the MAC supported implementing the multi-season TACC setting procedure for tropical tunas in the ETBF. The MAC also noted that pending consideration by the AFMA Commission, the intention is for the MAC to conduct a full review of indicators and provide advice for three years at TTMAC 31 in October.

6 Overcatch and undercatch

The MAC acknowledged that pulse events, when the abundance of a species is episodically high, and the need for flexibility to capitalise on them when they occur, have been discussed for a number of years. The MAC discussed whether increasing the overcatch and undercatch provisions from 10% to 20% for yellowfin tuna would enable increased flexibility for industry to utilise pulse events, noting this option has been proposed in the past by industry.

The MAC noted that TTRAG has considered options to detect and manage pulse events. The Research Member confirmed that there is no real scientific way to arrive at a better option than increasing the overcatch and undercatch limits for yellowfin tuna, and that there was no sustainability or scientific concerns identified by the RAG associated with this option. Other MAC members agreed that this was a good approach from a management and flexibility perspective.

Industry members, however, identified the 28-day reconciliation period as a key barrier to flexibility. The MAC noted that the 28-day reconciliation period is an AFMA policy and would require a review if it were to change.

The MAC requested that a member of the AFMA policy team attend the next MAC meeting to provide some additional clarity and context around the specific policy purpose for which the 28-day reconciliation policy was originally implemented.

Action

A member of the AFMA policy team to attend TTMAC 31 to provide background and context on the policy position for the 28 day reconciliation period.

the MAC recommended increasing the overcatch and undercatch limits for yellowfin tuna to 20% with this action in mind.

The MAC also suggested that this be consistent across all other species, except for striped marlin due to concerns raised by the Recreational Member.

the MAC requested that TTRAG consider and provide advice on increasing the overcatch and undercatch limits for all other species except striped marlin, noting that the RAG had only considered yellowfin tuna when providing their original advice.

Action

TTRAG to consider and provide advice on increasing overcatch and undercatch for all other species, except striped marlin, at their next meeting.

7 Research Priorities

The MAC noted the TTRAG's recommendation to include in the 2025/26 ETBF and WTBF Annual Research Statement is a project on close-kin mark recapture (CKMR) for broadbill swordfish connectivity and stock structure, including the option for striped marlin to also be included. The MAC recalled that this project had been previously supported by the RAG, MAC and FRDC but that the call for research did not receive any applications last year.

The MAC agreed that striped marlin should be included in the study, noting that there may be a cost efficiency in the order of 50 per cent to be gained from carrying out CKMR analysis for two species at the same time. There would also be a timing advantage if the project covered broadbill swordfish and striped marlin concurrently, rather than sequentially, noting that the project might take up to five years.

The MAC noted that this project is a desktop scoping study only. The full-scale genetic sampling and analysis would need to be conducted in conjunction with broader WCPFC research and would likely take several years, although information may be available incrementally as the project progressed.

The MAC supported the CKMR project for broadbill swordfish connectivity and stock structure for inclusion in the Annual Research Statement. The MAC did not suggest any additional research priorities to be included in the Annual Research Statement.

The MAC further discussed the interplay between the ERA and Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) certification and noted that although both assess ecological risk in some way, MSC assessors also consider the ERA results when assessing fisheries. The MAC also noted that the export approvals tied to the ERA process under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (EPBC Act), are matters for discussion with the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW).

8 TTMAC Priorities and Meeting Schedule

The MAC noted the intention to have a standing agenda item that summarises and plans priority topics for TTMAC consideration. The MAC discussed and agreed to the priorities for upcoming meetings identified in **Table 2**.

Meeting	Proposed Agenda Items
TTMAC 31 17 October 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Consider updated data summaries and indicators for the ETBF and WTBF and note the latest WCPFC stock assessment results.• Finalise TACC advice for the ETBF and WTBF 2025 fishing seasons.• Consider updated seabird interaction report.• Review and consider draft ERA results for ETBF and WTBF, if available• Consider information from a member of the AFMA Policy, Environment, Economics and Research (PEER) team on the policy purpose for the 28-day reconciliation period.
TTMAC 32 April 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review Cost Recovery Impact Statement (CRIS) and draft AFMA budget• Consider relevant TTRAG outcomes
TTMAC 33 TBC 2025	TTMAC/AFMA to advise on priorities for TTMAC consideration in 2025, noting AFMA's proposal to move to setting multi-season TACCs which includes changes to the frequency of reviewing fishery indicators and providing TACC advice.

The MAC agreed that the possibility for discussing the Coral Sea Hook Trial would remain open in October 2024, pending progress on any additional proposals, and as an overall priority (see **Attachment 6**). The MAC agreed to retain all other priorities identified in **Attachment 6**.

The MAC agreed TTMAC 31 would be held in person in Sydney, on 17 October 2024.

9 Other Business

There was no other business identified for the meeting. The Chair closed the meeting at 15:42pm.

Attachment 1 – Declarations of interest

Name	Role	Declared Interests
Anthony Hurst	Chair	Currently doing some work for Victorian Fisheries Authority on carp control in freshwater rivers, lakes and wetlands. No pecuniary interests in tropical tuna.
Selina Stoute	AFMA member	Apology
Lara Ainley	Acting AFMA member	Employee of AFMA, which includes a salary. Manager of the tropical tuna fisheries. No pecuniary interest in tropical tuna fisheries.
Ash Williams	Research member	Employee of CSIRO, no pecuniary interest in Australian tropical tuna fisheries. Is the PI for the project on Data Management, Assessment and implementation of Harvest Strategy for Australia's Tropical Tuna and Billfish Fisheries.
Adam Whan	Industry member	ETBF SFR holder. Owner of vessels, quota and a factory in Mooloolaba.
Grahame Williams	Recreational member	Past President of the Game Fishing Association of Australia, Treasurer and Records Officer of the NSW Game Fishing Association and Game Fishing Association Australia Executive Officer. No pecuniary interests in tropical tuna fisheries. Member of the NSW Recreational Fishing Trust. NSW Minister for Fisheries Special Advisory Council – RF NSW.
Daryn Logan	Industry member	Part owner and sole Director of Sniper fishing Pty Ltd, an ETBF vessel operator and quota SFR holder. Board Member of Tuna Australia.
Glen Holmes	Environment/Conservation member	Employee of Pew Charitable Trusts, no pecuniary interest in Australian tropical tuna fisheries.
David Ellis	Industry member	Is currently the CEO of the industry association, Tuna Australia which includes a salary paid by industry. Is the PI on the following projects: -FRDC Project 2020-041. Improving the effectiveness, efficiency and safety of mitigation tools for protected species interactions in the Eastern Tuna and Billfish Fishery -FRDC Project 2021-078. Improving the management of wildlife interactions in pelagic longline fisheries -FRDC Project 2021-063. Future Proofing: Integrating community quota, product supply, product innovation and market diversification in Australia's Tropical Tuna Industry.
Terry Romaro	Industry Member	Director of a company that owns Eastern Tuna and Billfish Fishery (ETBF) boat statutory fishing rights (SFRs), minor line SFRs, ETBF longline SFRs, Western Tuna and Billfish Fishery (WTBF) boat SFRs, WTBF longline SFRs, Western Skipjack Tuna Fishery (WSTF) purse seine permit, Small Pelagic Fishery (SPF) purse seine, mid-water trawl SFRs, and SPF quota SFRs. Shareholder of a company that owns shares in a proposal to fish with foreign longliners in the WTBF. Industry member on Southern Bluefin Tuna (SBT) and Tropical Tuna MAC, Invited participant for TTRAG, and industry representative at the Commission for the Conservation of SBT (CCSBT) & IOTC. Invited participant for squidRAG and squid SFR holder. Director of a company who owns a fish processing facility in Port Lincoln, & a Director of Tuna Australia.
Elissa Mastroianni	Acting Executive Officer	Employee of AFMA, which includes a salary. Member of the tropical tuna fisheries team. No pecuniary interest in tropical tuna fisheries.
Dan Casement	Invited Participant	Incoming Chief Executive Officer of Australian Southern Bluefin Tuna Industry Association.
Ian Bladin	Invited Participant	President of the Game Fishing Association of Australia, Director Australian Recreational Fishing Foundation, former Queensland charter boat owner.
Chad Lunow	Invited Participant	Apology
Wez Norris	Observer	CEO of AFMA, which includes a salary. No pecuniary interest in tropical tuna fisheries.

Attachment 2 – Adopted Agenda

Tropical Tuna Management Advisory Committee

Meeting 30

27 August 2024

Online Meeting – 27 August 2024 – 09:30 to 16:00 AEST		
09:30-10:00	<ol style="list-style-type: none">Preliminaries<ol style="list-style-type: none">Welcome and apologiesDeclaration of interestsAdoption of agendaActions arising from previous meetingsOut of session correspondence (<i>taken as read</i>)	Chair/AFMA
10:00-10:30	<ol style="list-style-type: none">Member updates<p>Industry, recreational fishing and scientific members are invited to provide an update to TTMAC. AFMA Management have provided a written update.</p>	Members
10:30-11:15	<ol style="list-style-type: none">Update: Coral Sea Hook Trial<p>TTMAC to note recent updates on the Coral Sea Hook Trial including the intention to cease the trial on 31 December 2024.</p>	AFMA
BREAK (30 mins)		
11:45-12:45	<ol style="list-style-type: none">Modified Swordfish Harvest Strategy<p>TTMAC are asked to provide advice on the extension of the modified swordfish harvest strategy through to 2027.</p>	AFMA/CSIRO
12:45-13:45	<ol style="list-style-type: none">MYTACC Procedure<p>TTMAC are asked to provide advice on a procedure that proposes a 3-year multi-season TACC approach, supported by a fishery indicator review approach.</p>	AFMA
13:45-14:30	<ol style="list-style-type: none">Overcatch and undercatch<p>TTMAC are asked to provide advice on increasing the ETBF undercatch and/or overcatch limits for yellowfin tuna, as a mechanism to manage pulse events.</p>	AFMA
BREAK (30 mins)		
15:00-15:30	<ol style="list-style-type: none">Research Priorities<p>TTMAC are asked to provide advice on research priorities to be included in the 2025/26 ETBF and WTBF Annual Research Statement.</p>	AFMA
15:30-15:45	<ol style="list-style-type: none">Next meeting and priorities<p>Provide advice on key priorities for the short to medium term; and agree on a date for the next meeting.</p>	Chair
15:45-16:00	<ol style="list-style-type: none">Other Business<p>Members will be invited to raise any other business agreed by the Chair.</p>	Chair

Attachment 3 – Current status of action items

Item	Meeting raised	Action	Responsibility	Status
1	TTMAC 27	AFMA will review EM discussion documents for reference to the amortisation of capital costs EM equipment.	AFMA	NOT YET ACTIONED: AFMA has not been able to review EM discussion documents associated with costings, due to competing timeframes for agenda items. AFMA is aiming to present an update on the Data Transformation Program and latest EM program of works at a future meeting.
2	TTMAC 28	AFMA to check the catch weights submitted for WCPFC to ensure weights are accurate.	AFMA	IN PROGRESS: CSIRO, AFMA and ABARES have been working with WCPFC Scientific Pacific Community (SPC) on the history of reported catch data and mismatches and changes over time. AFMA is aiming to present an update on the outcomes at a future meeting.
3	TTMAC 28	AFMA to convene a working group to discuss management possibilities of utilising pulse events within the fishery.	AFMA	IN PROGRESS: TTRAG (TTRAG38, July 2023) agreed to consider greater flexibility and the potential change in the TACC approaches for YFT. Results of this work, based on cumulative catch were presented to TTRAG (TTRAG40, March 2024) and the issue is further discussed in Agenda Item 5. AFMA ask TTMAC to consider if this action item is complete or still ongoing?
4	TTMAC 29	AFMA will seek to provide 2023 month by month Coral Sea Zone Hook Trial data to the recreational sector in time for a meeting on 28/29 October 2023, noting that this data will be incomplete as the season is not yet concluded and therefore should not be compared to previous years data.	AFMA	COMPLETE: AFMA sent email (27/10/23) to Recreational member and invited participant providing an update of the trial to date and links to Coral Sea Zone hook Meeting group meeting summaries and 2023 discussion document, noting 2023 data incomplete until season end however will be reviewed in February 2024 by Working Group. A discussion paper for the Coral Sea Zone hook trial, updated to include the 2023 fishing season, is available online.

Attachment 4 – Recreational fishing update

Provided by: Grahame A Williams, OAM

Position on TTMAC: Recreational/Charter Fishing Member

General Update: **Fishing area from QLD border to VIC border in Commonwealth Waters 2024.**

Fishing this past year has been very good and all clubs running Sanctioned Tournaments had a good turnout of boats and anglers. The number of NSWGFA clubs is 23 with 3127 anglers registered & affiliated with NSWGFA and GFAA.

For the information of all the total membership of GFAA at end of 2023 financial year was 7560 affiliated members with 81 clubs.

NSWGFA ran the Interclub State Championships this year on the last week-end in February 2024 out of Port Stephens with 91 Boats and 482 anglers. A good successful 3 day tournament even though 1 of the days was rough weather so on that day only approximately 50% of the fleet went to sea. Overall there were a good number of fish.

Number of fish T&R in the tournament was 141 of which 86 were Marlin, made up of 32 Black, 9 Blue and 45 Striped. Captured & weighed was a total of 14 of which 1 was a Black, 3 were Blue Marlin and 1 was a Striped, 2 Yellowfin Tuna, 3 Mahi Mahi and 4 large Sharks.

The week-end before the local club Newcastle & Port Stephens GFC ran their Shootout Tournament with 121 boats entered. Also plenty of fish with a total of 193 fish T&R and 8 captured and weighed. Of the 193 T&R were 162 Marlin of which 83% were striped. There were 5 marlin weighed and 3 large sharks. The heaviest Marlin was a 194.3kg Blue caught on 15kg line, a very impressive capture. The other northern clubs also had successful tournaments with good numbers of fish.

The central clubs from Central Coast down to Wollongong all ran good tournament from January through till end of April. All had good numbers of boats entered and good fishing results for all.

The Southern waters from Shellharbour down to Eden also produced good numbers of fish between January and April. Again plenty of Marlin, however the mix of Marlin was predominantly Striped Marlin which is usual for these waters each year.

Yellowfin Tuna have been scarce again this year. A few good size fish turned up off Sydney in June and July, mainly around 45-80kg fish. SBT also turned up off Sydney around the same time with some very good size fish captured, in fact 1 caught early July was 124kgs and another weighed 108kg. Plenty were also between 40-65kgs. The southern clubs also had reasonable numbers of SBT, however the fish caught south of Sydney were smaller in weight.

I mentioned in my 2023 update the greatest threat to game/charter and general recreational fishing in many areas of Commonwealth Waters in Australia is the current government's plans for Offshore Wind Farms. The current 2 declared areas in the NSW are in deep water and will have to be floating wind farms and also floating sub-stations which are still in the experimental design stage.

These 2 Offshore wind farms will have wind towers 268m high with blades 118m long. These areas will have exclusion zones around hundreds of towers so we will lose very productive fishing areas. The Hunter declared area is right in the middle of the best game/charter and general recreational fishing area in Australia, in fact it

will destroy the Port Stephens/Newcastle/Lake Macquarie fishing area, let alone destroy and kill many protected sea birds and affect whale migrations as well as other marine animals.

The 2024-25 tournament game fishing season starts in September and will again run through to end of May 2025. Hopefully weather permitting we will have another good season with plenty of fish.

Happy to answer any questions.

Regards to all,

Grahame.

Attachment 5 – AFMA management update

1. AFMA's Lara Ainley (Manager) and Elissa Mastroianni (Senior Management Officer) joined the Tropical Tuna team at the start of this year. AFMA also welcomes a new TTMAC Chair, Anthony Hurst, and several new TTMAC members.
2. AFMA have been in discussions with the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water regarding the export approval conditions pertaining to the ETBF and WTBF Ecological Risk Assessments (ERAs), and have received agreement on amendments to these conditions; extending the date for publication of both finalised ERA reports until 19 February 2025. Draft ERA reports for both the ETBF and WTBF are currently being considered by TTRAG.
3. At its 28th session the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC) adopted management procedures for both skipjack tuna and broadbill swordfish. These are positive outcomes for Australia and marks the IOTC as the first Regional Fisheries Management Organisation to have two tuna management procedures (skipjack and bigeye) and a swordfish management procedure in place.
4. The IOTC previously adopted [Resolution 23/08 On Electronic Monitoring \(EM\) Standards For IOTC Fisheries](#) includes an obligation for Australia to submit a Vessel Monitoring Plan (VMP) by 1 July each year for all vessels registered to the IOTC. AFMA has prioritised this work for longline vessels that are actively fishing in the IOTC area and are working with industry to develop the VMPs. AFMA expects such requirements to expand in the future, including to other RFMOs that utilise EM, as minimum data standards continue to be reviewed.
5. Following discussion at TTRAG 40, AFMA's position on the Coral Sea Zone Hook Trial is that the trial will end, as scheduled, on 31 December 2024. AFMA will provide additional information under Agenda Item 6.
6. AFMA have proposed amendments to concession conditions relating to when a vessel is required to apply additional seabird mitigation and have sought feedback from both the ETBF and WTBF industry. The changes maintain the original intent of the conditions but will allow for clearer interpretation and understanding of when additional mitigation measures will be required. To date, no feedback on the proposed changes have been received. AFMA still intends to conduct a broader scale review and reform of the seabird management conditions in the future when resources permit.
7. Catches of Pacific Bluefin Tuna (PBT) this season are again high and have exceeded Australia's 10 t allocation (14 t as of August 2024) under [CMM 2023-02](#). AFMA have amended concession conditions to require fishers to release PBT which are alive and vigorous once the 10 t limit is exceeded. This approach aims to balance meeting Australia's international obligations while allowing fishers to retain valuable fish which are already dead. Higher than average catches are likely driven by the recovery of the stock. It is expected that Australia (in a whole of government approach) will pursue amending CMM 2023-02 and the 10 t limit.

Attachment 6 – TTMAC ongoing priorities

Priority	Description	MAC advice, progress and updates
Provide advice on TACCs	<p>This is a key standing priority for the RAG. The Commission has agreed a process for monitoring and providing advice on TACC in the ETBF and WTBF comprising a mix of an indicator and harvest strategy approach.</p> <p>Undertaking the analysis necessary to support the RAG advice is included in the current CSIRO project, which will need to be included in the research priorities for 2026/27 (to be discussed in July 2025).</p>	<p>TTMAC should note that AFMA has proposed an approach to move to setting multi-season TACCs which includes changes to the frequency of reviewing fishery indicators and providing TACC advice.</p>
Review the Swordfish Harvest Strategy	<p>The Swordfish Harvest Strategy Review commenced in 2023 as part of the current CSIRO project.</p> <p>This is in line with the ETBF Fishery Management Strategy commitment to reviewing the harvest strategy 3 years after implementation to assess if the harvest strategy is functioning in a manner consistent the results of the MSE and CHSP requirements and at the same time providing settings that meet AFMAs objectives and industries preferences of stability/reactivity.</p>	<p>TTRAG41 (July 2024) have endorsed a workplan for MSE testing of options to inform the review throughout 2024, 2025 and 2026.</p> <p>TTMAC will consider results and recommendations from the MSE work and the review as required and as available.</p>
Review the process for recommending TACCs for tuna species.	<p>Consideration of whether the process/analysis for recommending TACCs for tuna species could be refined.</p>	<p>TTMAC should note that AFMA has proposed an approach to move to setting multi-season TACCs which includes changes to the frequency of reviewing fishery indicators and providing TACC advice.</p> <p>Pending advice, TTMAC may reassess the status of this priority.</p>
Review impact of international fisheries on the fish resources.	<p>This has been a standing priority for the RAG and MAC and is included in the current CSIRO project.</p>	<p>This priority relates to the ongoing ‘evaluation’ of impacts of international fisheries on the fish resources as opposed to a unique review.</p> <p>TTMAC should note that AFMA has proposed an approach to move to setting multi-season TACCs which includes changes to the frequency of reviewing fishery indicators and providing TACC advice.</p> <p>Pending advice, TTMAC may reassess the status of this priority.</p>
Coral Sea Hook Trial	<p>TTMAC to provide advice and oversight, where appropriate, on the Coral Sea Hook Trial to ensure an informed management decision can be made.</p>	<p>TTMAC should note the updates on this priority, provided in Agenda Item 6, including the intention for the trial to end 31 December 2024.</p>

Priority	Description	MAC advice, progress and updates
Ecological Risk Assessment and response	The Wildlife Trade Operation approval is subject to conditions that by 19 February 2025 AFMA must publish updated Ecological Risk Assessments for the ETBF and WTBF.	<p>TTMAC should note the extended timeframe in the revised WTO conditions.</p> <p>TTRAG40 (March 2024) considered the draft ERA ETBF and, noting the results, later additional information provided by ABARES and the draft WTBF ERA (July 2024).</p> <p>An ERA working group may be convened later in 2024 to go through the results and process in detail.</p>
Performance review of seabird management arrangements	The Seabird TAP is currently under review. AFMA will need to assess its management arrangements against any changes to the Seabird TAP that might be agreed following the review. In preparation and consistent with good practice, AFMA will seek advice from both the RAG and MAC on the performance of current seabird management arrangements.	<p>TTMAC should note that this is supported as a priority by TTRAG.</p> <p>Further advice is expected from AFMA on the need for specific MAC advice, informed by work planned to review the performance of seabird management arrangements.</p>
Climate Adaptation program – Ecosystem Status Report	<p>The ultimate objective of the AFMA’s Climate Change Adaptation program is to ensure climate change information is incorporated into fisheries management advice and decisions in AFMA’s Commonwealth fisheries.</p> <p>The Climate Change and Ecosystem Status Report will become part of the fishery indicators review cycle.</p>	<p>TTMAC should consider climate information as available.</p> <p>TTMAC should note that AFMA has proposed an approach to move to setting multi-season TACCs which includes changes to the frequency of reviewing fishery indicators and providing TACC advice.</p>