



Australian Government

Australian Fisheries Management Authority

MEETING RECORD

**Meeting of the Tropical Tuna
Management Advisory Committee (TTMAC)
TTMAC 31**

17 OCTOBER 2024

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Meeting details

Chair: Anthony Hurst

Date: 17 October 2024

Meeting: 31

Venue: Video conference via MS Teams

Attendance: All participants attended the meeting virtually.

Participants:

Name	Position
Executive Officer	
Shayer Alam	AFMA Senior Management Officer
Members	
Adam Whan	Industry Member
Ashley Williams	Scientific Member
Daryn Logan	Industry Member
David Ellis	Industry Member
Grahame Williams, OAM	Recreational member
Terry Romaro, OAM	Industry Member
Lara Ainley	Acting AFMA Member; Manager, Tropical Tuna
Observers	
Sally Troy	AFMA Commissioner
Sevaly Sen ¹	AFMA Commissioner
Elissa Mastroianni	AFMA Senior Management Officer

Apologies:

Glen Holmes – Environment/Conservation member

Dan Casement – Invited Participant

Ian Bladin – Invited Participant

Selina Stoute – AFMA Member

¹ Joined the meeting 11:50 am.

1. Preliminaries

1.1 Welcome and apologies

The thirty-first meeting of the Tropical Tuna Management Advisory Committee (TTMAC 31) was opened at 9:30 am on 17 October 2024 by the Chair, Anthony Hurst, with an Acknowledgement of Country Statement. The Chair welcomed all attendees, members and observers to the meeting, noting apologies. The Chair also advised members that the meeting would be recorded to assist with the preparation of the meeting record, and that the recording would be deleted once the meeting record is finalised.

1.2 Declaration of interests

The MAC noted the standing declarations of interest and provided updates, as necessary. The updated declarations of interest are at **Attachment 1**.

The MAC agreed that industry members and invited participants held potential conflicts of interest with Agenda Items 4.1 ETBF: TACCs, overcatch and undercatch and 4.2 WTBF: TACCs, overcatch and undercatch. The MAC agreed that industry members and invited participants should be part of these discussions and contribute to the collective advice that TTMAC provides to the AFMA Commission advice, unless the Tropical Tuna Resource Assessment Group (TTRAG) advice was fundamentally challenged. In forming this view, TTMAC members noted that the MAC conducts its discussions and provides advice within the context of the established fishery harvest policies and management strategy, the TTRAG's scientific assessments and the Commission's ultimate role to make fishery management decisions.

1.3 Adoption of agenda

The MAC adopted the agenda as written (**Attachment 2**) and noted a request from an industry member to discuss the Coral Sea hook trial at Agenda Item 6 Other Business.

The MAC noted a clarification to the procedure of adopting the meeting record from previous meetings. Prior to publication on the AFMA website, the meeting record, once cleared by meeting participants, should be approved by the Chair to ensure a true and correct reflection of the meeting outcomes.

1.4 Actions arising from previous meetings

The MAC noted updates on actions arising (**Attachment 3**) and discussed the following:

- action items: 1. review of electronic monitoring (EM) documents, 2. catch weights for the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC), and 4. the 28-day reconciliation period policy, remain ongoing.
- action item 5 for TTRAG to consider and provide advice on increasing overcatch and undercatch for all other Eastern Tuna and Billfish Fishery (ETBF) species, except striped marlin, is complete with advice provided in the members updates and to be discussed further under Agenda Item 4.1.

1.5 Out of session correspondence

The MAC noted the out of session correspondence (**Attachment 4**). There were no questions from members on correspondence.

2. Member Updates

AFMA presented relevant management updates highlighting recent decisions by the AFMA Commission on adopting the ETBF multi-season TACC (total allowable commercial catch) setting procedure for tropical tunas and the extension of the modified swordfish harvest strategy through to 2027.

The MAC noted that the management of pulse events remains a key issue for industry and discussed the need for greater flexibility, including flexibility in the current 28-day quota reconciliation period and consistency in the overcatch and undercatch limits across all ETBF quota species.

Industry members highlighted further concerns regarding the current operating environment, which puts many fishers under additional pressure.

AFMA noted that the relevant policy (FMP 10 – Managing undercatch and overcatch of quota) is due to be reviewed and would provide an opportunity for industry and the MAC to seek consideration of these issues. The recreational member reiterated that if considering changes to the overcatch and undercatch limits, that changes to that for striped marlin should not be supported. The Chair suggested that industry may develop a paper that discusses pulse events, overcatch and undercatch, quota reconciliation and the need for greater flexibility, which could inform the policy review; and that AFMA include the consideration of these issues within the scope of the review.

Action

AFMA to confirm the scope and expected timeframe of the proposed policy review; and whether the scope can include consideration of the discussed issues (pulse events, overcatch and undercatch, quota reconciliation and the need for greater flexibility).

Action

Industry members to develop a paper that discusses pulse events, overcatch and undercatch, quota reconciliation and the need for greater flexibility, which could inform the policy review.

The MAC noted further updates from members including:

- There may be greater risk of seabird interactions with the proposed development of offshore windfarms off the Western Australian coast. The Western Tuna and Billfish Fishery (WTBF) industry member questioned that seabird interactions with fishery vessels may be given decreased focus within this changing context.
- The recreational member noted good catches of southern bluefin tuna and yellowfin tuna off the east coast during the winter season and that the sector is getting ready to start the new season.
- The scientific member noted that the annual science meeting of the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC) would occur in December 2024 and will expect to run two new management procedures for bigeye tuna and broadbill swordfish. There will also be a new stock assessment for Yellowfin tuna for consideration.

3. WTBF multi-season TACC setting procedure

AFMA presented the draft WTBF multi-season TACC setting procedure for consideration by the MAC. The procedure outlines an approach to determine the TACC for all WTBF quota managed species for three seasons in a single decision and provides a framework to review fishery indicators.

The MAC noted that, in line with the [procedure adopted for the ETBF](#), TTRAG provided support and endorsement for the draft WTBF procedure at their meeting in September 2024 (TTRAG 42).

The MAC noted continued concern from industry regarding Australia's yellowfin allocation under Australia's whole of Government position and national obligations to the IOTC. The MAC acknowledged advice from TTRAG that even if the yellowfin tuna allocation were increased to its previous level of 5,000 t, the sustainability impact on this stock from fishing in the WTBF would be negligible.

Maintaining flexibility within the procedure was important to industry members. For clarity, the AFMA member confirmed that the procedure retains flexibility to make changes within the three-year period, should there be advice which suggests this is necessary, including changes to Australia's obligations or whole of Government position with respect to IOTC.

The MAC considered delaying implementation of the procedure for a year to better align with IOTC procedures and decisions on total catch limits, which may influence TACC setting in the WTBF (i.e., running the management procedures for bigeye tuna and broadbill swordfish). The MAC noted this but preferred to implement the procedure for the upcoming 2025/26 WTBF fishing season, noting the flexibility in the procedure would allow reconsideration of decisions should Australia's obligations to the IOTC necessitate it.

Overall, the MAC supported and endorsed the draft WTBF multi-season TACC setting procedure for all four quota species in the WTBF. The MAC agreed that the procedure is appropriate and recommended it be adopted and implemented from the 2025/26 WTBF fishing season onwards.

4.1 ETBF: TACCs and overcatch/undercatch

AFMA presented the outcomes of TTRAG meetings in July and September 2024 discussing ETBF fishery indicators, TACC advice and advice on overcatch and undercatch. The MAC discussed the advice for ETBF quota species and noted the following key points:

- The stock status of all species remains as not overfished and not subject to overfishing, except for striped marlin which is considered close to being overfished and overfishing may be occurring (based on the 2019 stock assessment). The WCPFC Scientific Committee (SC 20) did not adopt the 2024 striped marlin stock assessment due to ongoing data uncertainties.
- TTRAG considered fishery indicators, including economic and climate indicators, and provided advice on the recommended TACCs for ETBF tropical tuna species (albacore, bigeye and yellowfin), to be applied for the following three fishing seasons, which remain unchanged.
- The recommended TACC for broadbill swordfish, to be applied for one fishing season, remained unchanged following the application of the modified swordfish harvest strategy.
- The recommended TACC for striped marlin, to be applied for one fishing season, remained unchanged following the constant catch approach.
- Current economic operating conditions in the ETBF are below average, noting a decrease in the fishery gross value of production (GVP) since 2015-16.
- The [2024 climate and ecosystem status report](#) for the ETBF did not highlight any major concerns that would affect the TACC recommendations.
- TTRAG recommended that the overcatch and undercatch limits for yellowfin tuna in the ETBF be increased to 20% to provide greater flexibility for industry to utilise pulse events but did not recommend a similar increase for other species on the basis that pulse events of other species had not been sufficiently investigated.
- Catch of southern bluefin tuna (SBT) has increased steadily in the ETBF which has led to reduced targeting of other quota species (e.g., the tropical tunas). The shift in fishing effort and economic impact on the ETBF must be considered as part of the annual economic indicator report.
- In considering the application of the striped marlin constant catch approach and the additional indicators, the MAC confirmed that there had been no major changes in targeting, no major increase in catch, and no current desire by industry to increase the catch of striped marlin. The MAC further noted some evidence of recruitment pulses (increased numbers of smaller sized fish) which should continue to be monitored by TTRAG.

Following TTRAG advice ([TTRAG 42](#), September 2024), the MAC confirmed that there was no additional advice or indications to suggest that the ETBF TACCs, overcatch and undercatch recommendations would

not be appropriate for the upcoming fishing seasons. The MAC further noted industry’s desire to see the swordfish TACC increase back to 1,400t.

Overall, the TTMAC supported the TTRAG recommendations for TACCs, overcatch and undercatch for the ETBF 2025, 2026 and 2027 fishing seasons, as summarised below.

Table 1. Tropical tuna TACC recommendations for the 2025, 2026 and 2027 ETBF fishing seasons.

Quota species	TACC recommendation (tonnes)	Overcatch and undercatch
Albacore tuna	2,500	10%
Bigeye tuna	1,056	10%
Yellowfin tuna	2,400	20%

Table 2. Broadbill swordfish and striped marlin TACC recommendations for the 2025 ETBF fishing season.

Quota species	TACC recommendation (tonnes)	Overcatch and undercatch
Broadbill swordfish	1,047	10%
Striped marlin	351	10%

4.2 WTBF: TACCs and overcatch/undercatch

AFMA presented the outcomes of TTRAG meetings in July and September 2024 discussing WTBF fishery indicators, TACC advice and advice on overcatch and undercatch. The MAC discussed the advice for WTBF quota species and noted the following key points:

- TTRAG provided TACC advice for WTBF quota species for the upcoming 2025/26 fishing season, and for the following 2026/27 and 2027/28 fishing seasons, pending decision from the AFMA Commission on the WTBF multi-season TACC setting procedure.
- TTRAG considered fishery indicators and provided advice on the recommended TACCs for WTBF quota species to be applied for the following fishing season, which remain unchanged.
- The IOTC will run management procedures for bigeye tuna and broadbill swordfish at the upcoming scientific meeting (December 2024), which may result in new resolutions on catch limits that may impact Australia’s domestic management arrangements.
- Industry members expressed concern regarding the recommended TACC for yellowfin tuna, noting that TTRAG had advised that if the yellowfin tuna allocation were increased to its previous level of 5,000t, the sustainability impact on the IOTC stock from fishing in the WTBF would be negligible. This issue remains a key concern for the WTBF industry.

Following TTRAG advice ([TTRAG 42](#), September 2024), the MAC confirmed that there was no additional advice or indications to suggest that the WTBF TACCs, overcatch and undercatch recommendations would not be appropriate for the upcoming fishing seasons.

Overall, the MAC supported the TTRAG recommendations for TACCs, overcatch and undercatch for the WTBF 2025/26 fishing season, as summarised below, and agreed that these management arrangements could apply for the 2026/27 and 2027/28 fishing seasons as well.

Table 3. TACC recommendations for the 2025/26 WTBF season.

Quota species	TACC recommendation (tonnes)	Overcatch and undercatch
Bigeye tuna	2,000	10%
Broadbill swordfish	3,000	10%
Striped marlin	125	10%
Yellowfin tuna	2,000	10%

5. TTMAC Meeting Schedule and Priorities

The TTMAC noted the current priorities and issues for TTMAC consideration over the short to medium term, and noted there had been no changes since the previous meeting and discussion in August 2024 (TTMAC 30).

The TTMAC also noted that the issue of the coral sea hook trial remains a priority for industry

The AFMA member noted that their team will undertake some planning in late 2024 once all key decision-making for the tropical tuna fisheries have been finalised; and will be in a better position to provide an update to TTMAC on the planning for meetings in 2025.

TTMAC members indicated a preference for the next TTMAC meeting to be held in-person in Sydney, pending AFMA's advice on its forward work program for the tropical tuna fisheries and associated consultation requirements.

6. Other Business

The TTMAC noted the request from an industry member to discuss an update on the Coral Sea hook trial. Tuna Australia are working with industry operating in the Coral Sea Zone and are developing further proposals to undertake hook trials that maximise operational efficiency; and requested support from TTMAC to maintain the current arrangements (due to end on 31 December 2024) while a new proposal is developed, and resources are secured.

The TTMAC further noted from AFMA that, for clarity, any future proposals for trials would be implemented under scientific permits, rather than through amended fishing conditions.

The TTMAC advised that consultation with TTRAG and TTMAC on the proposal and methodology for a further Coral Sea hook trial would be necessary, noting the potential interactions with recreational fishing, environmental considerations and continued low commercial fishing effort in that sector of the fishery. The recreational member did not support extending the existing trial but supported the idea that a new proposal could be evaluated by TTMAC. They suggested that the process should involve the Coral Sea Hook Trial Working Group and consider comments from the scientists. The TTMAC acknowledged that review of a future proposal may occur out of session, noting the limited time for a proposal to be developed before the current hook trial ends in December 2024.

No other items of other business were raised.

The Chair thanked members for their contributions throughout the year and closed the meeting at 01:50 pm.

Attachment 1. TTMAC 31 participants declared interests.

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.
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.
Ashley 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.
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: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 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, OAM	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) &

Name	Role	Declared Interests
		IOTC. Invited participant for squidRAG and squid SFR holder. Director of Tuna Australia.
Shayer Alam	Executive Officer	Employee of AFMA, which includes a salary. Senior Management Officer in the tropical tuna fisheries team. No pecuniary interest in tropical tuna fisheries.
Observers		
Sevaly Sen	Observer	AFMA Commissioner
Sally Troy	Observer	AFMA Commissioner
Elissa Mastroianni	Observer	Employee of AFMA, which includes a salary. Senior Management Officer in the tropical tuna fisheries team. No pecuniary interest in tropical tuna fisheries.

Tropical Tuna Management Advisory Committee

Meeting 31

17 October 2024

Online Meeting

09:30 to 14:00 AEST

09:30-10:00		
09:30-10:00	1. Preliminaries 1.1 Welcome and apologies 1.2 Declaration of interests 1.3 Adoption of agenda 1.4 Actions arising from previous meetings (<i>taken as read</i>) 1.5 Out of session correspondence (<i>taken as read</i>)	Chair
10:00-10:30	2. Member updates By exception - members are invited to raise any questions regarding updates which were circulated ahead of the meeting.	Members
10:30-11:30	3. WTBF multi-season TACC setting procedure TTMAC are asked to provide advice on the draft WTBF multi-season TACC setting procedure.	AFMA
11:30-12:00	BREAK (30 mins)	
12:00-13:30	4.1 ETBF: TACCs and over-under catch TTMAC are asked to provide advice on the TACC, overcatch and undercatch for the upcoming fishing season/s. 4.2 WTBF: TACCs and over-under catch TTMAC are asked to provide advice on the TACC, overcatch and undercatch for the upcoming fishing season/s.	AFMA
13:30-13:45	5. Next meeting and priorities Provide advice on key priorities for the short to medium term; and agree on a date for the next meeting.	Chair
13:45-14:00	6. Other Business Members will be invited to raise any other business agreed by the Chair.	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. No further progress since TTMAC 30.
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. No further progress since TTMAC 30.
3.	TTMAC 28	AFMA to convene a working group to discuss management possibilities of utilising pulse events within the fishery.	AFMA	COMPLETE: 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 4. AFMA ask TTMAC to consider if this action item is complete or still ongoing?
4.	TTMAC 30	A member of the AFMA Policy, Environment, Economics and Research (PEER) team to attend TTMAC 31 to provide background and context on the policy position for the 28-day reconciliation period.	AFMA	IN PROGRESS: An update has been provided in the Member Updates agenda item at this meeting.
5.	TTMAC 30	TTRAG to consider and provide advice on increasing overcatch and undercatch for all other species, except striped marlin, at TTRAG 42 meeting.	AFMA	COMPLETE: TTRAG42 considered the action from TTMAC. TTRAG42 noted that data supporting pulse events for yellowfin tuna have been investigated, which lead to the position to increase overcatch and undercatch as a means to provide greater flexibility to utilise pulse events. TTRAG42 noted that they

Item	Meeting raised	Action	Responsibility	Status
				could not provide further advice for other species until the data supporting pulse events for these species have been investigated.

Attachment 4. Correspondence provided to TTMAC members since TTMAC 30 (27/08/2024).

Date	Description
6 th September 2024	Additional consultation regarding the date setting for TTMAC31
27 th September 2024	TTMAC 30 draft meeting record circulated to members for comment
1 st October 2024	TTMAC 31 draft agenda and member update template circulated. Members were invited to provide a written update for TTMAC 31.