



Australian Government

Australian Fisheries Management Authority

South East Management Advisory Committee (SEMAC) Meeting 54

Meeting minutes

11 July 2024

MS Teams

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South East Management Advisory Committee (SEMAC)

Meeting 54– 11 July 2024

Agenda

Time (AEST): 09:30 -15:45

Location: MS Teams

Acting chair: Dr David McGlennon

Day 1: 11 July 2024 / 09:30 – 15:45

Time	Item	Purpose	Presenter
09:30	1. Preliminaries a. Acknowledgement of Country, Welcome and apologies, Declarations of interest b. Adoption of Agenda c. Minutes from previous meetings d. Actions arising from previous meeting	For Noting	Chair / Rebecca Jol (20 min) 0930-0950
09:50	2. Manager's Update (taken as read)	Noting/questions	Sally Weekes (15 mins) 0950-1005
10:05	3. Member Updates (taken as read)	Noting/questions	SEMAC members (25 mins) 1005-1030
10:30	Break 15 mins		
10:45	4. SPF Harvest Strategy Review update	For Advice	Dr Tim Ward (45 mins) 1045-1130
11:30	5. Review of spatial management grid catch limits in the SPF	For Advice	Yvette Lamont (30 mins) 1130-1200
12:00	6. Research Priorities SESSF, SPF	For Advice	AFMA (90 mins) 1200-1330
13:30	Break 30 mins		
14:00	7. Protected Species Updates and Management Arrangements	For Advice	Managers (45 mins) 1400-1445
14:45	8. SPF Purse Seine ERA	For Advice	Yvette Lamont (20 mins) 1445-1505
15:05	9. EM Trial Project	For Noting	Tamre Sarhan (20 min) 1505-1525
15:25	Other Business	Noting/Questions	(10 mins) 1525-1535
15:35	Review of action items	For Advice	EO (5 mins) 1535-1540
15:40	Next Meeting/Meeting Close	For Noting	Chair (5 mins) 1540-1545
15:45	End of Day		

The Chair opened the meeting at 09:30 hr AEST.

Agenda item 1. Preliminaries

Welcome and Apologies

1. Dr David McGlennon, the Chair, welcomed members to the meeting and made an Acknowledgement of Country paying his respects to this country's First People and Traditional Custodians of the land throughout Australia.
2. The SEMAC members noted the Acknowledgement of Country, that the meeting was being recorded and commenced proceedings.
3. Participants and apologies:

Table 1. SEMAC 54 Participants and Apologies.

Members	Position
Dr David McGlennon	Chair
Ms Rebecca Jol	Executive Officer
Ms Sally Weekes	AFMA Member
Dr Sarah Jennings	Economic Member
Ms Anissa Lawrence	Conservation member
Mr Kyriakos Toumazos	Industry Member
Mr Gerry Geen	Industry Member
Mr John Harrison	Recreational Member
Invited Participants	Organisation
Dr Tim Ward	UTAS
AFMA Employees	Role
Dr Mark Grubert	Manager – Trawl Fisheries
Ms Cate Coddington	A/G Manager – Gillnet, Hook and Trap
Ms Michelle Henriksen	Senior Management Officer – Gillnet, Hook and Trap
Ms Yvette Lamont	A/G Manager – Scallop, Squid and Small Pelagic Fisheries
Mr Tamre Sarhan	A/G Senior Manager – Electronic Monitoring
Observers	Organisation
Ms Katrina Marchant	AFMA Graduate
Nathan Jackson	Senior Management Officer – Trawl Fisheries
Apologies	Organisation
Dr Paul McShane	Scientific member
Mr Will Mure	Industry member
Mr Simon Boag	Industry member
Mr Steve Hall	AFMA

Declarations of Interest

4. SEMAC members noted the conflicts of interest requirements as outlined in [AFMA's Fisheries Management Paper 1](#). Members and participants updated their declarations of interest as shown in the Preliminaries paper and discussed specific conflicts of interest with agenda items prior to the meeting.
5. An updated table of declared conflicts of interest is provided in [Attachment A](#).
6. SEMAC noted that
 - Industry member Kyri Toumazos declared a potential conflict for the research priorities, agenda item 6.
 - Industry member Simon Boag declared a potential conflict for agenda items 4 to 8 prior to the meeting and had advised the Chair that he may not be able to attend the meeting.
7. SEMAC agreed that if any potential conflicts arise, they should be managed before any recommendations are made.

Adoption of agenda

8. SEMAC noted the updates made to the agenda and adopted the agenda that was presented as final.

Minutes of previous meeting

9. SEMAC noted that the minutes of the SEMAC 52 and SEMAC 53 meetings held in February and April 2024, respectively, were cleared by SEMAC out of session and have been posted on the AFMA website

Actions arising from previous meetings

10. A consolidated list of action items from previous SEMAC meetings was circulated to members prior to the meeting. Members noted progress against action items in the update provided by the Executive Officer.
11. The Chair sought clarification on the following action: **AFMA to seek advice from SERAG on the timeframe required to obtain sufficient data to assess the status of Western Orange Roughy stock and determine sustainable harvest levels**. SEMAC noted that Paul Burch will present the results of his data-limited Orange Roughy model testing to the SESSFRAG Chairs' meeting in early 2025. A timeline for Western Orange Roughy assessment will be developed thereafter.

Agenda item 2. Manager's Update

12. A written update was provided to SEMAC members on key management issues since the meeting in April 2024.
13. The update was taken largely 'as read' with the following points discussed in detail:

School Shark CKMR assessment

- Clarification was sought on the ageing issues that are delaying the school shark CKMR stock assessment until 2025. SEMAC noted that vertebral ageing methods proved to be problematic with high testing error. Epigenetic ageing is being investigated as a potential alternative. However, the need to develop this technique have resulted in a one-year delay in the planned delivery of the school shark CKMR model update.
- An Industry member acknowledged that developing an alternative index of abundance for school shark is key. However, they also expressed disappointment with the slow progress on the update to the school shark assessment.

- Regular monitoring through first-shot survey methods was discussed as a possible assessment method worth revisiting.
- SEMAC agreed that these issues should be discussed by SharkRAG.

Agenda Item 3. Member Updates

14. The MAC noted the updates provided (in writing) by Industry members Simon Boag (Atlantis Fisheries Consulting Group) and Kyri Toumazos ([Appendix B](#)). No further comments were noted.

Economic Working Group Update

15. The MAC noted the update provided by Sarah Jennings on the Economic Working Group, which met on 19 June 2024 to discuss how RAGs and MACs can better provide advice on fishery economic risks.

- The Commission, RAGs and MACs will consider a general economic conditions paper every six months compiled by Economic Working Group members.
- AFMA will develop instructions for the provision of economic risks/impact of advice provided by each RAG and MAC. The economic members of the consultative committees are to provide economic commentary on proposed management arrangement changes considered by the RAGs and MACs.

Agenda Item 4. SPF Harvest Strategy Review

16. Dr Tim Ward (IMAS) provided SEMAC with an update on the project supporting a review of the Harvest Strategy for the SPF, including development of Harvest Control Rules and Management Strategy Evaluation (MSE) testing. Advice from SEMAC is sought on the adoption of the proposed HCR.

17. SEMAC noted:

- The timing of the review relates to a condition on the MSC accreditation of the fishery which requires explicit decision rules that reduce the exploitation rate as the biomass declines towards the point where recruitment may be impaired.
- MSE testing of the revised Harvest Strategy will be undertaken during 2024-25.
- It is critically important for the fishery that the MSC condition is met because the main market for this fishery is an Aquaculture Stewardship Council (ASC) accredited industry and they will only accept product from MSC certified fisheries.
- SPFRAG supported the proposed amendments to the Harvest Strategy at its June 2024 meeting.

18. A copy of the revised harvest strategy was provided to SEMAC prior to the meeting, outlining the changes proposed and noting the inclusion of the 'hockey stick' control rule (Figure 1).

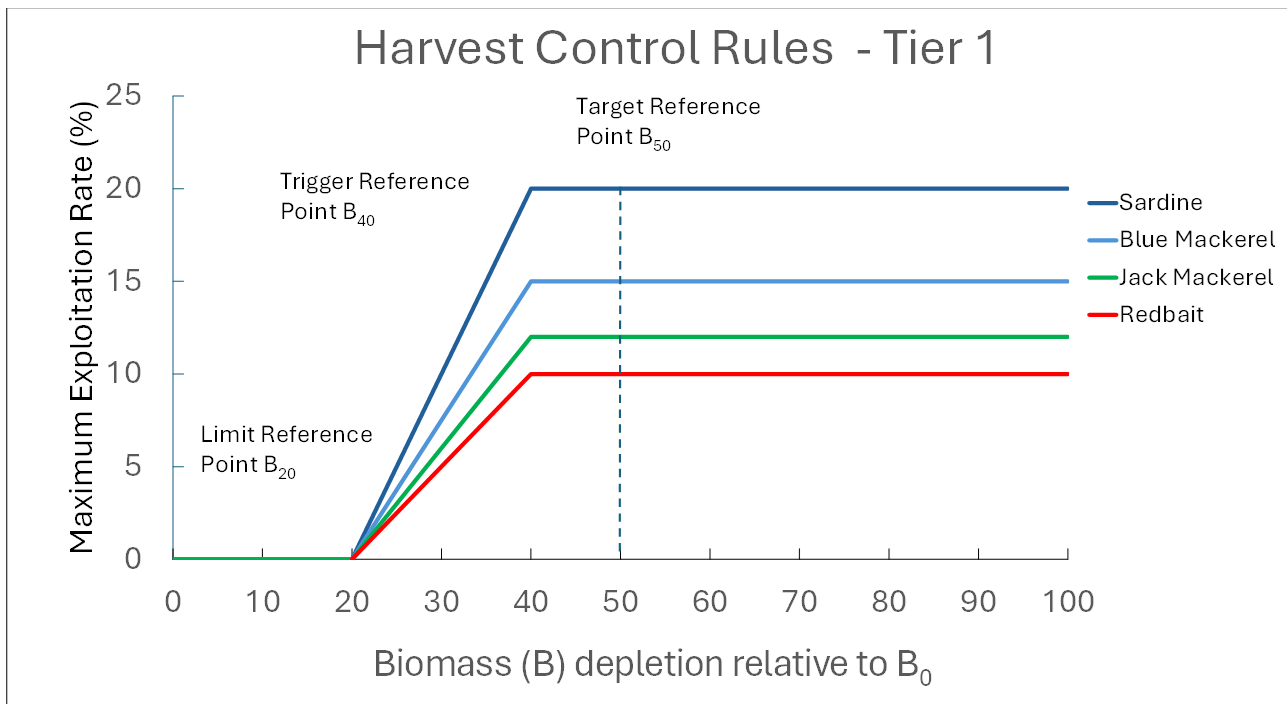


Figure 1. Hockey Stick Rules for linearly reducing exploitation rates if spawning biomass reduces towards the point where recruitment may be impaired.

19. SEMAC discussed the following points:

- The 'hockey stick' rule adds a major layer of precaution to to what is an already very precautionary harvest strategy.
- The MSE testing still to be undertaken will test whether the current reference points are appropriate for these species noting that target reference points are much higher for these species internationally.

20. SEMAC noted the written comments provided by Scientific member (Paul McShane) and Industry member (Simon Boag), in support of the amendments to the SPF Harvest Strategy ([Attachment C](#)).

21. SEMAC supported the proposed changes to the SPF Harvest Strategy and the inclusion of HCRs that reduce exploitation rates as the limit reference point is approached.

Agenda Item 5. Review of Spatial management grid catch limits in the Small Pelagic Fishery (SPF)

22. This item was introduced by AFMA seeking support from SEMAC to remove the grid catch limits in the SPF.

23. SEMAC noted SPFRAG supported the remove the current catch limits and that the original reason for their implementation was to address uncertainty regarding the impact on central placed foragers. SEMAC noted that the catch grid were supported by recreational fishers as they went some way to reducing the perceived impact of the commercial fishing on their catch rates, albeit not the reason they were introduced.

24. SPFRAG have monitored for evidence of localised depletion annually via review of catch rates by grid by month, over the last decade and found no discernible trends in catch rates.

25. SEMAC noted that there have been several instances during 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 and that this has economically impacted the operator as it

has caused disruption to fishing operations and ongoing management resources to monitor compliance.

26. SEMAC discussed the following points:

- Caveats around the recommendation from SPFRAG was that annual reporting as part of the existing monitoring process for the fishery will continue to provide a process for detecting any potential localised depletion effects, noting that the monitoring over the last decade has shown no evidence of localised depletion or cause for concern.
- The climate change impacts and trajectories for SPF species is low or steady for most species.
- Anecdotal reports from Industry suggest that the South Australian sardine stocks are getting stronger rather than weaker. Results from the South East Australia Marine Ecosystem Survey (SEAMES) support these reports, with results showing that small pelagic species are more abundant now than they were in the 1990s.
- SEMAC noted that the best way of managing and mitigating risks to climate change and rapidly changing environments is through exploitation rates and catch limits at the fishery level.
- The recreational member affirmed that the recreational sector is likely to object to these decisions and highlighted the importance of having a targeted communication strategy to support AFMA's recommendations.

27. SEMAC supported the recommendations to remove the current catch limits applied to spatial management grids in the SPF subject to ongoing monitoring and the development of a communications strategy for targeted consultation with the recreational community.

Agenda Item 6. Research Priorities, SESSF & SPF

28. SEMAC noted the updates to the 2025-26 annual research statements for the SESSF and SPF and associated research scope forms.

29. SEMAC acknowledged the written comments provided to the committee from the scientific member Dr Paul McShane and Industry member Mr Simon Boag, in support of the research priorities ([Attachment C](#)).

30. SEMAC reviewed and approved the 2025-26 Annual Research statements and associated research priorities identified for the SESSF and SPF.

Agenda Item 7. Protected Species Interaction

31. AFMA presented the annual update on protected species interactions in the respective fisheries including reported interactions by Commonwealth fishing boats.

32. SEMAC noted:

- AFMA has developed automated data dashboards to produce the data imagery used in the summaries.
- That SEMAC (at its July 2023 meeting) requested that AFMA provide more detailed summary reports on TEP species interactions to assist making informed recommendations regarding potential emerging issues.

33. SEMAC provided the following comments on the summary reports for consideration:

- When evaluating the number of seabird interactions, consider where seabird nesting colonies occur and the season in which the interactions has occurred noting that an increase in interaction activity is likely to coincide with peak breeding periods.
- Seabird identification improvements can be achieved by updating the seabird identification resources.
- If possible, report the albatross interaction data at the species level for a more detailed assessment.
- When comparing sectors, indicate the percentage of EM coverage for each sector and note the level of confidence in each sector across separate graphs.
- When looking at the cluster heat maps for *Pinnipeds* (Figure 17 of the agenda paper 6), SEMAC recommended that AFMA differentiate seals and sea lions in data reporting due to differing geographical distribution and conservation status. Combining this data can be misleading and caution was advised when comparing certain species.
- To include both interaction and life status data in the reporting.

34. SEMAC noted that seabird identification requirements for fishers (i.e., holding a specimen up to a monitor) have been put on hold, due to the current avian influenza outbreak.

35. SEMAC noted that the development and distribution of best practice factsheets and operational guidelines for seabird bycatch are highlighted as an action item for the GHAT bycatch and discard workplans currently being reviewed.

36. SEMAC was satisfied with the level of information provided confirming that the data summaries presented are clearly showing the trends at the appropriate level required to support the MAC identify any potential issues.

37. The following action was agreed:

Action 1: AFMA to investigate the reason for a high proportion of protected shark species interactions that occurred between 2019-2023 in the Gillnet and Shark Hook Sector fishery (as shown in Figure 15 of the 'Protected Species' paper).

Agenda Item 8. Ecological Risk Assessment (ERA) for the Purse seine sector of the Small Pelagic Fishery (SPF)

38. SEMAC noted the following points:

- That the updated ERA for the purse seine sector of the SPF that was recently completed by CSIRO and that SPFRAG endorsed it.
- That no species or ecological communities were identified as being at high risk in the purse seine sector of the fishery.
- That the purse seine sector is a small fishery consisting of a few small boats that target sardines and operate primarily in state waters in northern NSW. Only around 120 tonnes of the sardine TAC (8,060 t) are caught in Commonwealth waters.
- A trial of a smaller, less expensive, and smaller camera systems on lower effort vessels is about to commence. If the trial is successful, this type of fishery might be suitable for this type of camera system as achieving on-board coverage is difficult in this sector for logistical reasons. SEMAC discussed:

- Globally, purse seine fisheries are known to interact with marine mammals. For this reason, some members expressed concern that the methodology of the ERA does not account for a fishing method that is ranked as high risk to some species or species groups, particularly cetaceans.
- That there is insufficient observer coverage in the sector to have confidence in the result, particularly marine mammals.

39. SEMAC supported the endorsement of the purse seine ERA report subject to the following caveats:

That the ERA report needs to:

1. explicitly outline the uncertainty in the outcomes due to limited/zero independent monitoring in the fishery during the years included in the report, and
2. acknowledge that several international purse seine fisheries interact with cetaceans, and that the SPF operates in an area that cetaceans are known to occur (and has previously reported interactions).

40. Further, SEMAC, noted that there had been a change in the risk assessment methodology, and identified a broader issue relating to the methodology and how risk is assessed in circumstances where there is limited independent monitoring.

41. SEMAC recommended that the ERA working group consider how risk is assessed when there is limited independent monitoring.

Agenda Item 9. Electronic Monitoring Trial

42. SEMAC noted the progress of the Electronic Monitoring (EM) trial in the CTS:

- Four vessels are participating in the EM trial. The vessel owners will provide feedback during the trial, to assist in AMFA policy decisions.
- Hardware procurement and installation is underway, with vessel-specific EM systems successfully installed on three of the vessels. An alternative EM system provider will be trialled on the fourth vessel, installation is scheduled for late July to early August 2024.
- Two vessels are participating in an EM trial within the Murray Dogfish closure. Footage review to date indicates that EM is a promising monitoring tool. The feasibility of this as a permit condition will be assessed at the end of the trial.

43. SEMAC discussed the following points:

- finding solutions for reducing discards opens potential markets for underutilised species.
- there is potential to build on the learnings of EM operations in other international trawl fisheries.
- the protection of EM data is a fundamental component of the EM program.

Action 2: AFMA to provide SEMAC with the EM privacy impact statement when it is available.

Other Business

44. SEMAC noted that the Australian Marine Conservation Society (AMCS) has released an endemic Shark and Ray report, which will be discussed at the next SharkRAG.

Review of Action Items and Recommendations

45. SEMAC reviewed the action items and recommendations from the meeting (Actions are listed in [Attachment D](#)).

Next Meeting

46. The next meeting is scheduled for early November 2024, tentative date is the week starting the 10th with a date to be set in the following weeks.

Close of meeting

47. The Chair thanked the MAC for their contribution and closed the meeting at 14:28 PM.

Attachment A - Register of Interests

Members	Declared interests - Last updated: July 2023
Mr Barry Windle	Acting Chair - No interest pecuniary or otherwise
Ms Anissa Lawrence	No pecuniary interest Director of TierraMar Ltd Independent consultant Undertakes contracts for a number of Conservation NGOs, government departments, non-government agencies and the private sector on a range of fishery related matters Conservation member on SharkRAG, SPFRAG, SEMAC, Spencer Gulf Prawn RAC and the South Australian Rock Lobster MAC Chair of Ocean Future Fund Inc.
Mr Gerry Geen	No pecuniary interest. Industry member of SPFRAG
Mr Will Mure	Sole Director of Mures Fishing P/L Commonwealth fish receiver permit Tasmania fish processing licence Scalefish hook boat SFR, SEQ Quota Holding Permits, Auto longline fishing permit High Seas permit Blue eye trevalla SFRs, Ling SFRs, Ribaldo ITP Mixed species Individual Transferable Quotas (ITQs) and SFRs Member of various fishing related associations including Seafood Industry Australia (SIA), South East Trawl Fishing Industry Association (SETFIA), Southern Shark Industry Alliance (SSIA), Tasmanian Seafood Industry Council (TSIC) Industry member on SERAG
Dr Paul McShane	Chair of SERAG and a member of SEMAC and SESSFRAG. No pecuniary interest in the SESSF. Principal of Global Marine Resource Management Pty Ltd. Adjunct Professor (Fisheries and Aquaculture) College of Science and Engineering, James Cook University.
Dr Sarah Jennings	Economics member on SERAG and SESSFRAG. Economics coordinator, FRDC Human Dimensions Sub-Program. Member of AFMA Economics Working Group. Independent economics consultant.

	No pecuniary or other interest.
Mr John Harrison	Recreational member of SEMAC Safety Legislation and Cost and Charging Arrangements.
Mr Simon Boag	Industry member on SERAG. Executive Officers to SETFIA, SSIA, SPFIA, Commonwealth Scallop and Eastern zone rock lobster SETFIA and SSIA receives funding from AFMA to complete projects under co-management agreements. Undertakes contracts as an independent consultant.
Mr Kyriakos Toumazos	CEO (South Australian Northern Zone Rock Lobster Fishermen’s Association Inc.); Director of Southern Sea Eagles Pty Ltd; Director of Southern Fisheries Pty Ltd; Director Health Balance Pharmacies Pty Ltd; Member South Australian Boating Facility Board; Member of SharkRAG and SEMAC (AFMA); Member of AMSA Regional Safety Committee; Director Southern Shark Industry Alliance; Director PACK Investments Pty Ltd; Director Cruickshank’s Corner Developments Pty Ltd; Director Cruickshank’s Corner Commercial Pty Ltd; Director Seafood Industry Australia;
Ms Sally Weekes	AFMA Demersal and Midwater Senior Manager – AFMA SEMAC member – no interest pecuniary or otherwise.
Invited participants	
Dr Tim Ward	Utas – Member of several AFMA committees. Conducts research on SPF. No interest, pecuniary or otherwise.
Executive Officer	
Ms Rebecca Jol	AFMA – Senior Management Officer, Demersal and Midwater Fisheries. No interest pecuniary or otherwise.
AFMA Attendees	
Dr Mark Grubert	Employed by AFMA, South East Trawl & Great Australian Bight Trawl Manager – no interest, pecuniary or otherwise.
Ms Cate Coddington	Employed by AFMA, A. Manager- Gillnet, Hook and Trap (GHAT) and High Seas (SPRFMO) Fisheries, – no interest, pecuniary or otherwise.
Ms Yvette Lamont	Employed by AFMA Senior Management Officer-Gillnet SPF, Scallop and Squid – no interest, pecuniary or otherwise.
Mr Tamre Sarhan	Employed by AFMA. Acting Senior Manager Electronic Monitoring program. No pecuniary or other interest.
Ms Michelle Henriksen	Senior Management Officer – Gillnet, Hook and Trap. No pecuniary or other interest.
Ms Katrina Marchant	AFMA Graduate. No pecuniary or other interest.
Nathan Jackson	Senior Management Officer – Trawl. No pecuniary or other interest.

Attachment B – Agenda 3 - Member Industry Update Summaries

SETFIA

GENERAL

- Fuel prices has eased a little but still well above the long -term CPI-adjusted expected rate.
- Price/demand for fresh fish the lowest ever believed to be impacted by cost of living (and interest rates).
- ORS E MSC about to enter the final objections period.
- Blue grenadier MSC audits passed.
- SPF MSC audit about to occur.

SPATIAL SQUEEZE

- Industry is thankful for the correction of the eastern boundary of two rebuilding closures.
- The Illawarra wind zone has been declared and covers 50% of the royal red prawn fishery (MSC accredited). The zone is the most distant in Australia (proposed or declared) starting at 20km or c130m and extending into 1,000m. The leading proponent announced their intention to withdraw the morning after given the shape and position of the zone. Consulting received was 65% opposed. The summary of consultation received noted that a constant theme about fishing was that the arrays would provide conservation benefits to fish stocks. The industry is disappointed that DCCEEW chose to cite this isolated statement, and we do not believe this in any way to be consistent with public sentiment about wind farms. When the Australian Government criticises commercial fishing, it reflects badly on the industry, on seafood and on the Government itself. The statement has been raised with DCCEEW.
- The Southern Ocean wind zone was declared and has no impact on trawl. It does cover a small amount of shark which in a 1,500t fishery is potentially significant.
- As vessels are being pushed out of historical fishing areas, they are making mistakes with closures and marine parks (tow issues in the last few months). SETFIA will consider a briefing for all crew.

TRAWL

- Trawl catches have been good. Significant amount of mirror dory about.
- Five freezer vessels arriving in the next few weeks (4 grenadier, 1 roughy).
- 4 west coast Tasmania grenadier vessels will participate in CSIRO's acoustic survey.
- The Explorer will undertake a SETFIA-led, ARC funded, AOS survey of the eastern roughy zone.
- Western orange roughy research program progressing well but is weather dependant. The program is fishing inside the Murray Dogfish Closure with good catches and ZERO upper-slope dogfish (and EM review). Sampling rate is ok. There will be little fresh orange roughy from the eastern zone this year given there is a survey planned there. This should positively impact western orange price in the fresh market.
- Crew continue to be difficult to source.
- Eastern ling was significantly under-caught last year, c75% the lowest ion 6 years. The new system involves quota owners (not SETFIA determining which vessels catch the 32% portion of their global quota that is nominally "eastern" quota. The system is easier to manage, arguably fairer, has received some criticism because there were significant re-adjustments. The under-catch occurred because catches vs allocations are not monitored by a central authority – the system relies on vessels and quota owners striking a commercial agreement and then changing this if the vessel is likely to not catch the fish. Note too that there are less vessels and that the major ling catching trawler has retooled and is now seining (given fuel costs).

SHARK

- Catch rates continue to be excellent but reductions in gummy quota (closure to target and adjustment to allow for less school shark quota due to additional catches in WA) will reduce revenue by 10%.

- The fishery is moving closer and closer to unprofitability.
- Industry is thankful to AFMA for convincing SA to adopt complimentary management arrangements supporting low school shark catch and less gummy. Industry continues to ask AFMA about WA's increased school shark catches and how AFMA and WA intend to align their management.

SPF

- Catches as always are excellent.
- A few (2) recent dolphin interactions.
- Fishwell project has plotted interactions, and rate, over time and found significant reductions noting that the rate (interactions/tonne) is by far the lowest ever.
- The association has funded UTAS who are completing a review of the harvest strategy, of the need for localised depletion grids, and about the life history variables of blue mackerel.
- Localised depletion grids, quota stocks, the need to supply a factory, Winter shutdowns and the avoidance of fishing tournaments (now less so dolphin interaction triggers) is a complicated mix of arrangements.

Kyri Toumazos (Industry member)

- The shark catches throughout the fishery are extremely productive and well above average.
- Eastern Bass Strait has been as good as we have seen in the last twenty years.
- South Australia cannot reach its full potential as we are avoiding many areas where School and Gummy shark are mixed.
- The abundance of School shark is increasing year by year and its operationally more and more difficult.
- With the reductions in quota the lease prices for the quota have increased. It is now \$5/kg of Gummy Shark and up to \$6/kg for School Shark
- The price of the shark has not increased at all and in many instances has even decreased as the economy is suffering.
- The Fishery is extremely disappointed the way 2024/25 quota settings were played out. Collateral damage to States is not something that is easily absorbed.
- Further to that extremely disappointing that CSIRO are not able to run the Close Kin genetic assessment and there is a further 1-year delay in that assessment.
- If we cannot resolve this matter the fishery will continue to be limited.

John Harrison (Recreational Member)

- 'No new information or requests for clarification of minutes or action items in relation to recreational fishing matters from SEMAC deliberations.'

Sarah Jennings (Economics member)

- The Economics WG has been informally brought together again - My understanding is that it will now be used by AFMA as an ad hoc reference group.
- I attended a short online meeting a couple of weeks ago where AFMA sought input from the group regarding feedback to the Commission from MACs and RAGs about economic considerations of its recommendations. The focus/discussion was largely related to RAGs, but this may have reflected the group present.
- I have not seen draft minutes, but informally my take on the outcome was:
 - AFMA will lead the development of a template for reporting/monitoring relevant general economic indicators/information (e.g. exchange rates, input costs) that will be circulated to all RAGs and MACs (probably bi-annually);

- The Commission would like to receive more explicit information from economics members on economic consequences/risks of recommendations made by RAGs and MACs. It was acknowledged that this will not apply to many recommendations, where none are expected. It was also made clear that this would be brief and that there was no expectation that this would be based on formal analysis or research, and in most cases would merely indicate the nature of consequences / risks that might arise. It was my understanding from the meeting that AFMA would be developing/providing a proforma for this to be reported/recorded.
- This process is cast very much in the context of the Commission/AFMA dealing with economic risk, and that once implemented an assessment will be made as to whether a more formal economic risk assessment process is required.

Attachment C – Member submissions

Members unable to attend the 54th SEMAC meeting were asked to provide written comments on all advice items prior to the meeting. The following extracts were provided by Simon Boag and Dr Paul McShane respectively.

Simon Boag, Agenda 4. Harvest Strategy Review

SPFIA engages Atlantis to run their association and to run their MSC certification.

The certification is required because the fish meal processed from the SPF is sold to a feed manufacturer who supply salmon feed companies. The salmon growers will only buy MSC feed given their ASC status, so the MSC certification is critically important.

The SPF fishery is still recovering from the loss of customers following the emergency closure a few years ago (dolphins). Some customers transitioned to Chilean meal given the supply and country risk is lower than Australia and have never returned. This makes MSC certification even more important.

The MSC standard (v2) requires that fisheries have harvest strategies that manage stocks on/around reference points. The SPF harvest strategy applies an exploitation rate and takes that portion of the biomass. As the time interval between biomass surveys extends this rate reduces (if surveys are not completed) through tier 1, 2 and 3 to 25% of the highest rate possible. This is risk-catch-cost at its best and sees the eastern SPF stocks at tier 1, and the western at tier 3.

However, it is possible that multiple biomass surveys could find less and less fish and that the harvest strategy as it stands just fishes the same portion of the biomass and it could theoretically reduce the biomass down and down through MSY and B_{lim} .

SPFIA engaged Dr Ward to complete a review of the strategy. He will explain what he is proposing but essentially it is that rather than reduce the exploitation rate based on the time interval between surveys, that the exploitation rate would reduce with biomass with particular emphasis (changes) at MSY and B_{lim} . The proposal would see the SPF harvest strategy become more like the SSSF harvest strategy.

Enjoy Dr Ward's presentation.

Simon Boag - Agenda 6. Research Priorities SSSF, SPF

With regard to 6 I make the following comments:

- B. I am concerned that we are developing guidelines for low recruitment but accept that this has been occurring in the RAG. It makes sense to obtain expertise, but I am shocked at the \$200,000 proposal.*
- C. I support ongoing blue grenadier surveys provided that the cost is levied 100% to that quota.*
- E. Support the continued DEPMs for only the eastern stocks. SPFIA wants to keep eastern stocks at tier 1. SPFIA does not wish to undertake and work on western stocks and are happy for those to sit at tier 3. I remain concerned about conflicts with the SPFRAG and research providers. It is critical that the IP for these surveys (the methodology) is in the open domain. DEPMs are also covered in 25/26 SPFIA ARC funding.*
- G. I have a conflict because somehow there was an SPF RAG item for Caleb Gardner and I to make this proposal. The research is not critical.*

Further to my industry update (where I forgot to cover this) it would be worthwhile for the MAC to understand the current Department review of the Cwth harvest strategy. There are real concerns here including a proposal to move MEY from 48 (sometimes 40) to 50 for unknown reasons. It seems a meaningless tweak that will lower all quotas and significantly impair balance sheets in an already pressured industry. It is important too that the review is not a reallocation to indigenous and recreational anglers. Dan understands the process very well. Thanks, Simon

Paul McShane (4th July 2024). Scientific member input to SEMAC 54.

I am sorry that I can't join you in person for the meeting. The following addresses proposed changes to the SPF Harvest Strategy and Research priorities for ARC (AFMA funding). I will be further discussing SESSF research priorities at the forthcoming RAG Chairs meeting.

SPF Harvest Strategy

The Harvest Strategy applicable to species harvested as part of the Commonwealth small pelagic fishery (SPF) has been revised (from the 2008 version) and updated to better align to the Commonwealth Harvest Strategy policy (HSP). Notable changes include allowance for uncertainty reflecting formal assessment frequency and incorporation of new harvest control rules (HCRs) that reduce the exploitation rate as the biomass approaches the point at which recruitment may be impaired (reflecting management strategy evaluation MSE). The MSE responsive to establishment of economically and ecologically optimal biomass levels incorporate economic and ecological inputs (which relate to the economics of the fishery and potential climate change effects). This approach is consistent with the HSP and target reference points based on maximum economic yield (MEY). Economic considerations also influence total catches relative to species-specific TACCs and this is the subject of a research proposal (to be discussed later).

The main species harvested in the SPF include sardines, jack mackerel, blue mackerel, red bait. All are short-lived fast-growing species highly responsive to changes in the environment (particularly primary and secondary productivity). Abundance of individual species is therefore highly variable. Furthermore, catches in the SPF vary often substantially under catching relative to the TAC. Target biomass levels B 50 (50% of unfished biomass) are conservative. Biomass is estimated by a fishery independent daily egg production method (DEPM). Again, this method of estimation of spawning stock biomass is conservative as the spatial extent of the stock is greater than the area typically covered in DEPM surveys. A tiered approach exists with discounts applied to species-specific exploitation rates relative to the frequency of DEPM surveys. This tiered approach should be well known to MAC members. Annual assessments of fishery-dependent data (i.e. log book catch records) are required for Tier 1.

A trigger point of B 40% applies to linearly reduce the exploitation rate to ensure that the biomass of each species remains above the limit reference point of B 20% (with reasonable probability).

All in all, the changes to the SPF harvest strategy are consistent with the HSP, the biology of target species, and consideration of economic and ecological factors that influence the viability of the fishery. I therefore support the changes made.

Research Priorities

SESSF: SERAG has discussed and recommended the listed research proposals as high priorities: low recruitment projections and acoustic surveys Blue Grenadier. There is also a priority research project extending the recently completed multi-species harvest strategy to policy implementation. However, this is under consideration for FRDC funding. As SERAG Chair I endorse the recommended priorities.

SPF. I support the two essential proposals as they are fundamental to assessment and harvest strategy input.

The economic barrier proposal is a lower priority but appears well targeted given potential to improve the economic viability of the SPF. Attempts at value adding for the SPF have been ill fated: the current end use of fish food or bait in the SPF exemplifies quantity over quality.

Attachment D - Action items

Table 2. Actions from SEMAC 54

Agenda Item	No.	Recommendation	Agency/Person Responsible	Timeframe
8	1	To draft caveats for the committee's endorsement of the Purse Seine ERA report.	Anissa Lawrence & Sally Weekes	Before the next SEMAC meeting
7	2	AFMA to investigate the reason for a high proportion of protected shark species interactions that occurred between 2019-2023 in the Gillnet and Shark Hook Sector fishery (as shown in Figure 15 of the Protected Species paper).	AFMA	SEMAC (July 2025)
9	4	AFMA to provide SEMAC the EM privacy impact statement when it is available.	AFMA	SEMAC 55 Managers Update

Table 3. Recommendations from SEMAC 54

Agenda Item	No.	Recommendation	Agency/Person Responsible	Timeframe
5	1	If grid catch limits and move-on rules are to be removed from the SPF, this should be accompanied by a communication strategy targeting the recreational sector.	AFMA	