



# TTRAG 43, 29 January 2025 Meeting Record

Teleconference via Teams  
13:00 – 15:12 hrs (AEST)

## Agenda:

1. Welcome, apologies, and conflicts of interest	Chair
2. Coral Sea Hook Trial Proposal	Tuna Australia
3. ERAs: way forward	AFMA

### Agenda item 1. Welcome, apologies, and conflicts of interest

1. The meeting started by the chair by acknowledging the traditional custodians of the land and welcoming the participants to the meeting.
2. The following participants attended the meeting: Cathy Dichmont, Chair; Lara Ainley, AFMA member; Robert Curtotti, Economic member; Pavo Walker, Industry member; Julian Pepperell, Scientific member; Ian Knuckey, Scientific member; David Ellis, Invited Industry participant; Terry Romaro, OAM, Invited Industry participant; Shayer Alam, AFMA Executive Officer.
3. The following apologies were noted: Selina Stoute, Elissa Mastroianni, and Ash Willaims
4. The following participants declared conflict of interests:
  - David Ellis – CEO of Tuna Australia and Co-Investigator of the proposed Coral Sea Hook Trial project
  - Terry Romaro, OAM – Director of Tuna Australia
5. All conflicts were acknowledged and, since the meeting focused on seeking feedback, it was agreed that all participants should engage in the discussions in their entirety.

### Agenda item 2. Coral Sea Hook Trial Proposal

6. David Ellis, CEO Tuna Australia, provided an overview of the proposed research project, which will be developed and implemented in collaboration with Kylie Scales, Principal Investigator, University of the Sunshine Coast. The following points were highlighted:
  - The research will adopt a robust scientific approach, collecting data over three years as part of a PhD thesis chapter.



- Data collection will involve the use of up to 1,250 hooks, with the last 500 hooks set (and the first 500 hooks hauled) serving as a control group, during the non-spawning season of blue and black marlins when these species are less abundant.
7. The RAG appreciated the proposal, noted that AFMA had provided some feedback, and that the proposal will also be considered by TTMAC. The RAG further noted that this could become standard procedure for future research applications for scientific permits.
  8. The RAG emphasised the importance of maintaining confidentiality when using and storing data for this research. The RAG considered the potential risk that the project may not yield sufficient data but noted that the method and analysis is structured to maximise as best as possible potential data-poor conditions; and that data availability is only a risk to the success of the research.
  9. The RAG discussed the need for species triggers under a scientific permit to mitigate and manage risks to protected species, specifically blue and black marlin. The RAG acknowledged that more hooks would increase the risk of protected species interactions and considered the potential impact on the research should triggers be reached. The RAG noted that increased risks on protected species may impact the progress of this research but acknowledged that AFMA has an obligation to manage such risks.
  10. The RAG discussed the benefit of reviewing progress throughout the research and maintaining a level of flexibility (regarding risks on protected species) to support the project; and suggested the proposal could strengthen the information to be reported to the RAG to allow any concerns to be addressed.
  11. The RAG discussed potential pseudo-replication in the methodology, noting that “control” and “treatment” hooks would be on the same shot. The RAG acknowledged that the project was designed in this way to account for a low data situation.
  12. The RAG highlighted that the success of the research (in terms of getting enough data and meeting the project objectives) is the responsibility of the project and not of TTRAG or AFMA.
  13. Julian Pepperell expressed interest in the project and was encouraged to contact the principal investigator.
  14. The RAG briefly discussed some broader objectives that may be supported by this project including tagging marlin to better measure survivability and using EM footage to support data collection, noting the additional resources and funding will be required.

## Outcomes

15. In considering the proposal to be a valuable opportunity to study the effects of increasing hook numbers of pelagic longlines on blue and black marlin, the RAG supported the research proposal and expressed enthusiasm for the forthcoming results.



### Agenda item 3. ERAs: way forward

16. AFMA presented an overview of the Ecological Risk Assessment (ERA) process to date for the ETBF and WTBF ERAs, including a summary of the key results, highlighting:
- Previous TTRAG advice that several data gaps may be resolved with additional information to strengthen the ERA.
  - That the additional information, provided by Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics and Sciences (ABARES), suggested that the overall risk score may change/reduce for only a few of the identified high-risk species; and that AFMA would need to develop an ERM anyway.
  - There will be an additional cost (\$9.5k) to revise both ERAs and incorporate the additional information.
17. The RAG discussed a number of concerns regarding the overall ERA process, specifically the lack of consultation/development on the changed methodology; the late delivery of draft reports; the residual risk analysis process; and the need to find additional funding to complete the work.
18. Noting these concerns, the RAG resolved that it will be important to collate relevant feedback on the overall ERA process during a future RAG meeting.
19. The RAG discussed industry concerns regarding the upcoming WTO condition deadline – to have completed the ERAs by 19 February 2025 – and the potential risk to both fisheries that the WTO accreditation may be revoked. AFMA noted that the Department are aware of the status of the ERAs, have received draft reports already and have been kept up to date on progress. AFMA further highlighted that the WTO condition asks for completed ERAs to be submitted, rather than published, and does not include completing the ERM by the deadline.
20. The RAG further considered the possibility of including the updated results (incorporating the additional information) with the ERM development, which may incur a reduced cost.

### Outcomes

21. Noting the current time constraints, the RAG agreed that the draft ERA reports be finalised as complete and progress with the development of the ERM response.
22. The chair thanked all participants for attending and contributing to the meeting and closed the meeting at 3:12 pm.