

Marine Scalefish Fishery Management Advisory Committee

Out of Session (OOS) Meeting #10 – 1 August 2025

The Marine Scalefish Fishery Management Advisory Committee (MSFMAC) held an OOS meeting on 1 August 2025 via online video conference call. The meeting considered South Australian Research and Development Institute (SARDI) Advice for development of the draft Snapper Rebuilding Plan (SRP).

Snapper Rebuilding Plan

The MSFMAC considered SARDI advice on the scientific modelling projections of Snapper biomass under six potential management scenarios. The second stage modelling used reference periods of recruitment that corresponded to a time when biomass and egg production were at a lower level. The MSFMAC discussed the key points.

- The biomass projections demonstrated that increases in biomass were heavily dependent on episodic recruitment events and that exploitation, even at very low levels, significantly prolonged the estimated time to rebuild to the biomass limit. The projected recovery times, particularly for the Spencer Gulf/West Coast (SG/WC) stock were concerning.
- For the SG/WC stock, only one management scenario tested (zero fishing mortality) resulted in the projected biomass reaching the biomass limit (B_{est20}) by 2050.
- For the Gulf Saint Vincent (GSV) stock, five management scenarios tested resulted in the biomass reaching the biomass limit by 2050 (means between 2038-2047).
- Any level of exploitation will impact recovery time frames.
- The new Snapper Stock assessment due later this year may provide updated projections of Snapper stock recovery time frames.
- Neither the biomass projections discussed nor the expected updated projections in the next Snapper Stock Assessment report (to be completed by November 2025) account for the impacts of the Harmful Algae Bloom (HAB) experienced since March 2025.
- There is a level of inherent uncertainty in the modelling projections together with uncertainties of recruitment and the impacts of the HAB.

The MSFMAC recommended that PIRSA/SARDI effectively communicate the results from the scientific modelling to stakeholders broadly.

The MSFMAC discussed scientific advice provided by SARDI regarding Snapper reproduction and key aggregation sites to inform potential seasonal and spatial spawning closures, noting the Scientific Subcommittee's strong support for closures. **The MSFMAC recommended that the scientific advice provided by SARDI should be considered by PIRSA, including consideration of when and how seasonal and spatial closures would apply, when developing the draft SRP for stakeholder consultation.**

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The MSFMAC further considered specifying a timeframe for rebuilding Snapper stocks to above the biomass limit reference point, in line with the harvest strategy framework. **The MSFMAC recommended the retention of a timeframe for the rebuilding of the stock to B_{20} in the Snapper Rebuilding Plan, yet there were mixed views on whether the timeframe be model-based or biologically based (informed by mean generation time).**

The MSFMAC discussed whether any fishing could be allowed before the biomass was estimated to have rebuilt to the limit reference point, that is between B_{est15} and B_{est20} and under what circumstances fishing could be contemplated.

- Some members supported consideration of opening fishing at B_{est15} if a strong year class was evident and modelling was undertaken to understand the impact of fishing on recovery, in this situation there may be support for retention of small amounts of Snapper caught as bycatch.
- Some members requested that a bycatch TAC include consideration of allowing for targeted fishing for recreational sectors provided reporting arrangements are in place and catch is monitored.
- A bycatch TAC may be cost prohibitive for MSF fishers (cost to catch vs value of catch)
- Some members did not support fishing below B_{est20} as remaining closed supported a faster rebuilding trajectory. The biomass projections suggest a long time for stock rebuilding and that any fishing mortality extends this time period.

The MSFMAC considered a decision rule matrix presented by PIRSA which incorporated both recruitment and biomass performance indicators that could be incorporated into the Snapper Rebuilding Plan. The MSFMAC noted a similar approach was applied in the PIRSA Black Bream Recovery Strategy.

The MSFMAC recommended that the matrix concept be incorporated in the draft Snapper Rebuilding Plan developed for stakeholder consultation noting that further consideration of management actions applied in the matrix, under different performance indicators was required.

The MSFMAC will receive the draft Snapper Rebuilding Plan at the commencement of targeted stakeholder consultation and would meet following consultation to consider an updated draft for endorsement.

Harmful Algae Bloom

The MSFMAC received an update on the HAB Fisheries Research Program noting that priority research activities have been identified, and a more detailed research plan is being developed in consultation with key stakeholders, SARDI and external scientists.

The MSFMAC discussed the application of exceptional circumstances as described in the MSF Management Plan with respect to managing fish stocks, noting data interruptions and impacts on data resulting from HAB would be contemplated in considering the application of exceptional circumstances.

The MSFMAC noted a need to consider the impacts of HAB and what evidence and information would be needed to inform TACC setting and information from HAB research projects and ecosystem research will be relevant to these considerations. This will be a consideration for the next MSFMAC meeting.

Any other business

The MSFMAC noted a brief update on the Salmon Management Review and noted stakeholder feedback has been consolidated to inform a further discussion document which is being developed by PIRSA.

The next MSFMAC meeting was expected to be held in September 2025 to consider the draft SRP following stakeholder consultation, with a final date to be confirmed out-of-session.

Dr Ilona Stobutzki

Chair of the Marine Scalefish Fishery Management Advisory Committee