

Marine Scalefish Fishery Management Advisory Committee

Meeting #1– 10 December 2021

The Marine Scalefish Fishery Management Advisory Committee (MSFMAC or 'the Committee') held its first meeting on 10 December 2021 via online video conference call.

The MSFMAC includes 13 members: Shannon Cornelius and Craig Fletcher as representatives from the commercial Marine Scalefish Fishery, Emily Rowe as representative of the rock lobster industry, Marilyn Nobes as representative of the Charter Boat Fishery, Dr Paul Rogers as one of two representatives of the recreational fishing sector, Dr Julian Morison as independent economist, Dr David Smith as independent fisheries scientist, Dr Jonathan Smart as fisheries science expert from the South Australian Research and Development Institute (SARDI), Keith Rowling as fisheries management expert from the Department of Primary Industries and Regions (PIRSA), and myself as Independent Chair. Three positions on the Committee are yet to be filled however further work is being undertaken to recruit appropriate people for these roles, which include: a second representative of the recreational fishing sector, a conservation representative and Aboriginal traditional fishing member.

The Committee discussed the draft Terms of Reference and noted that the MSFMAC had been established by the Minister for Primary Industries and Regional Development ('the Minister') under the *Fisheries Management Act 2007* to provide advice to the Minister on the day-to-day management for the commercial marine scalefish, charter boat, recreational and Aboriginal traditional fisheries (the shared access fisheries), including on the performance of the shared access fisheries against the obligations established under the Management Plan for the South Australian Commercial Marine Scalefish Fishery ('the Commercial MSF Management Plan').

The Committee discussed its involvement in the review and development of other fishery management plans, such as the Management Plan for the South Australian Charter Boat Fishery and Management Plan for Recreational Fishing in South Australia. Whilst the MSFMAC would be expected to provide advice on these other plans as a key stakeholder and through statutory requirements, its emphasis would be on the Commercial MSF Management Plan and members expected the MSFMAC would be integrally involved in the review and development of that plan. Noting this, the Committee agreed to update its Terms of Reference to better reflect this, with edits to be finalised via correspondence following the meeting.

The Committee also discussed the draft Meeting Procedures and noted the importance of effective consultation and engagement with the various sectors and stakeholders to ensure the Committee operated efficiently and produced sound advice. Members sought to clarify the role that individual MSFMAC members should play versus the role of PIRSA. Noting that membership of the MSFMAC was expertise based, the Committee agreed that sector feedback to and from the MSFMAC would be facilitated through consultation between PIRSA and the relevant industry/sector peak bodies,

and where relevant, industry/sector peak bodies would be invited to present advice from their sectors, and observer attendance was also possible. To better reflect the role of PIRSA to facilitate consultation, the Committee agreed to make changes to the draft Meeting Procedures which would be finalised via correspondence following the meeting.

The Manager Fisheries Reform, PIRSA, had prepared a presentation outlining the post-reform landscape of the commercial Marine Scalefish Fishery (MSF) which was delivered by the Secretariat and noted by the Committee. The presentation outlined that the commercial MSF had undergone the largest fishery reform in the State's history with significant changes implemented on 1 July 2021. The reforms were designed to improve the long-term sustainability of MSF stocks and profitability of businesses that depended on them. Key reforms implemented included:

- The removal of 100 licences from the fishery through a Voluntary Licence Surrender Program;
- The introduction of four regional management zones;
- The introduction of a total allowable commercial catch (TACC) and individual transferable quota (ITQ) management system for the four priority species; King George Whiting, Snapper, Southern Garfish and Southern Calamari;
- The separation of the Sardine and Vongole fisheries from the MSF;
- The removal of unnecessary rules and regulations – red tape – to increase efficiencies of fishing business.

Work was also ongoing on various matters including:

- Red tape reduction.
- Cost-effective compliance, research and management
- Revision of the Commercial MSF Management Plan

MSFMAC members raised several queries and comments related to the new arrangements. It was suggested that an unrestricted quota trading system may have impacts on the owner-operator dynamic of the fishery. It was noted that quota trading was being monitored by industry and PIRSA, but was not currently being considered by the MSFMAC. Whilst quota trading was unrestricted between MSF licence holders, it was noted there were restrictions for the rock lobster industry.

As the reform of the commercial MSF had substantially changed the operational dynamics and management arrangements of the fishery, including development of a draft tiered management framework (TMF) to guide decision making on the research and management needs of different stocks in the fishery, there was a need to consider the future science and research program for the fishery. The SARDI fisheries science expert provided a presentation outlining the state of main stocks in the fishery, current science program and key research needs which was noted by members. The key research needs that had emerged included:

- Better recreational fishing data
- Improved Calamari assessment program
- Improved commercial Catch Per Unit Effort (CPUE) time series
- Estimating Recommended Biological Catches (RBCs) for Tier 2 stocks

Management arrangements for the recreational and charter fisheries for Snapper in the South East

The PIRSA fisheries management expert provided an overview of current management arrangements for the recreational and charter fisheries for Snapper in the South East, noting that MSFMAC advice had been sought from the Minister on ongoing / future arrangements. Most recent

management arrangements had included a total allowable recreational catch (TARC) which had been managed by mandatory reporting for the recreational sector and the use of harvest tags for the charter boat sector. A daily bag limit of one Snapper per person per day applied to both sectors and the seasonal closure that had previously been in place between November and February had been removed for the 2021/22 year.

PIRSA had received proposals for future management arrangements from the Minister's Recreational Fishing Advisory Council (MRFAC) and the Charter Boat Association of South Australia (CBASA) and these had been shared with the MSFMAC. Considering combinations of the two proposals, PIRSA had proposed four options for consideration by the Committee.

The representative of the Charter Boat Fishery outlined that tags were not being fully utilized by the charter sector due to logistical issues with working in the South East and difficulties in trading tags between operators. To help utilize their share of a TARC, CBASA had recommended to not use tags going forward and to revert to a bag limit of 1 large and 3 small Snapper per person per day.

The representative of the recreational fishing sector noted that the MRFAC had recommended removing the TARC and was supportive of the current bag limits and retaining mandatory catch reporting through the smart phone 'app'. The recommendation to remove the TARC had been proposed due to concerns around a 'race to fish' associated with an Olympic-style TARC and associated safety issues.

It was noted that if the charter sector was to operate under a TARC without harvest tags, an increase in reporting requirements in addition to existing monthly logbook reports would be important to understand the real time catch, similar to the recreational sector reporting through the recreational fishing 'app'.

Members discussed the merits of the proposals put forward and the related options and agreed to recommend the following option to the Minister, as part of a trial with potential to consider possession limits at a later stage, should there be need to address issues associated with an Olympic-style TARC:

Management arrangements to apply to both sectors

- Snapper fishing for recreational and charter boat fisheries continues to be managed by a TARC for the 1 July 2021 to 30 June 2022 period, to be set and allocated consistent with the approach applied to set the most recent TARC.
- The snapper fishery for the recreational or charter sector will be closed if its share of the TARC is reached prior to 30 June 2022.
- Consistent with previous management arrangements, a minimum size of 38 cm to apply to both sectors

Management arrangements for the Recreational Fishery

- Consistent with the 1 July to 31 October 2021 fishing period, a daily bag limit of 1 fish per person.
- Consistent with the 1 July to 31 October 2021 fishing period, a boat limit of 3 when there are three persons or more fishing on the boat.
- Continued mandatory reporting through the recreational fishing app or Fishwatch.

Management arrangements for Charter Boat Fishery

- A daily passenger limit of 1 large (>60 cm) and 3 small (38-60 cm) Snapper per person with no boat limit.

Forthcoming issues

Members noted key upcoming issues the Committee would likely need to provide advice on, including:

- Approval and application of the draft Tiered Management Framework (TMF)
- Review of the commercial MSF Management Plan
- Harvest strategy development
- TACC/TARC/TAC setting
- Development of new commercial MSF Management Plan
- Research priorities
- Results of the current recreational fishing survey
- Arrangements to minimise bycatch and post capture mortality of vulnerable species in the fishery

Members discussed these and also shared the respective priority issues of the sectors accessing the shared fishery which included: access to bait species such as Australian salmon and Southern Calamari, structure of licence fees across sectors, allocations of various species, sector recognition, sector catch accountability, science needs for key species including Snapper, investor impacts, and management arrangements for all tier 1 species. The Committee noted these and considered that several of them would be addressed within the development of a new commercial MSF Management Plan.

Considering the need to provide advice on various catch limits in advance of 1 July 2022 and need to progress discussions on harvest strategies and application of the TMF in the short-term, the MSFMAC agreed to establish an MSFMAC Science Sub-committee to meet in the coming months. It was agreed that members of the Sub-committee would be nominated out of session and would meet in advance of the next MSFMAC meeting.

The next MSFMAC meeting will be held in early April 2022 with a final date to be confirmed out of session.

Amanda Vanstone

Chair of the Marine Scalefish Fishery Management Advisory Committee