

Marine Scalefish Fishery Management Advisory Committee

Out of Session (OOS) Meeting – 27 November 2025

The Marine Scalefish Fishery Management Advisory Committee (MSFMAC) held an OOS meeting on 27 November 2025 via online video conference call. The meeting considered the Algal Bloom Fish Recovery Program, Algal Bloom Fisheries Research Program and application of exceptional circumstance. The MSFMAC also considered stock assessment implications resulting from the algal bloom together with Total Allowable Commercial Catch (TACC) setting considerations. The draft Snapper Rebuilding Plan was considered following targeted stakeholder consultation.

Algal Bloom

The MSFMAC received updates from Prof Gavin Begg on the Algal Bloom Fish Recovery Program initiatives announced on 23 October 2025 noting we are in unprecedented times with the algal bloom. Some members expressed concerns that the MSFMAC had not been engaged with respect to the consideration of the temporary management arrangements. The MSFMAC noted there had been a need for government to respond swiftly to the scientific advice, but additional information would have supported members' communication with stakeholders.

SARDI provided an update on the Algal Bloom Fisheries Research Program with the MSFMAC noting that the results to date from the rapid stock assessments for some species are concerning, particularly in the Gulf St Vincent. The MSFMAC noted that voluntary catch reporting through the Recreational Fishing App and enhancements enabling Fisheries Officers to record recreational catch information would improve recreational data collection in support of monitoring the impacts of the algal bloom.

Noting that exceptional circumstances had been declared by PIRSA with respect to the impact of the algal bloom in the Gulf St Vincent and Kangaroo Island Fishing Zone, the MSFMAC discussed stock assessment implications. Exceptional circumstances had not been declared for the Spencer Gulf Fishing Zone thus far, as algal bloom impacts had been less severe in that region. The MSFMAC noted that application of exceptional circumstances could result in a departure from decision rules in the MSF Harvest Strategy.

Provisional model outputs from the Stock Synthesis 3 modelling framework are intended to be delivered in 2026 for King George Whiting and Southern Garfish and outputs from this and previous modelling approaches should inform management arrangements for 2026/27. The MSFMAC noted that in considering the impacts of the algal bloom, the integrated assessment would include a two-step process: hindcasting and then integrating the algal bloom impacts.

Snapper Rebuilding Plan

The updated draft Snapper Rebuilding Plan was considered by the MSFMAC following integration of feedback from targeted stakeholder consultation. Most members supported both temporal spawning closures and proposed spatial closures around key habitats. Members discussed the distance options associated with proposed size of the spatial closures and requested clarification on the rationale for the proposed size, and if there is scientific information available to guide the size of the closures. Due to time constraints, some elements of the updated draft Snapper Rebuilding Plan were deferred for consideration at the next MSFMAC meeting.

Other Business

Representatives from the MSF raised concerns regarding relay (relocation) of aquaculture oysters from algal bloom closed areas to the West Coast. It was questioned whether the MSFMAC had a role in providing advice to government on this matter and if there was any information that could be shared with the MSFMAC.

MSFMAC members held a short discussion regarding the Salmon Management Review with a member advising that it is a priority issue for the recreational fishing sector. The MSFMAC noted that the Salmon management arrangements review was being progressed where resources were available, noting that the response to the algal bloom impacts on fish stocks had been a priority. The MSFMAC noted a relevant FRDC report was currently out for review with a February 2026 due date.

The next MSFMAC meeting was expected to be held in early 2026 with a final date to be confirmed out-of-session.

Dr Ilona Stobutzki

Chair of the Marine Scalefish Fishery Management Advisory Committee