



Outcomes

Meeting	Spanner Crab Harvest Strategy Working Group		
Meeting Number(s)	1	Date	1 October 2021
Location	Online	Time	0930-1330
Members	Independents: James Findlay (Chair), Julian Morison (Economist), Jeremy Prince (Scientist) Industry: Andrew Rigby, John Joblin, Ian McRae, Gary Bordin, Mitchel Sanders (Commercial Fishing NSW Advisory Council – CommFish NSW), Tricia Beatty (Professional Fishers' Association) DPI Fisheries Manager: Veronica Silberschneider DPI Fisheries Scientist: Daniel Johnson		
Executive Officers	David Kirby, Nicholas Sarapuk		
Permanent Observer	Nancy Trieu, QLD Department of Agriculture & Fisheries		
Observers	DPI: Rowan Chick, Ashley Fowler		
Prepared by	David Kirby & Nick Sarapuk		

Agenda Item	Issue	Notes & Actions
1.	Welcome and introduction	<p>1.1 Welcome and introduction</p> <p>The Chair opened by acknowledging the Traditional Custodians of the lands on which group members were meeting, paying respects to their Elders past, present and emerging. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the meeting were also acknowledged and welcomed. The Chair then welcomed all members of the group.</p> <p>1.2 Apologies and recognition of observers</p> <p>No apologies were received. The permanent observer from QLD DAF was recognised, as were the two DPI scientists noted above.</p> <p>1.3 Confirmation of Agenda</p> <p>The Agenda for the meeting was accepted without modification.</p> <p>1.4 Introduction of Members</p>

		<p>The Chair asked members and observers to introduce themselves.</p> <p>1.5 Declaration of Pecuniary Interests</p> <p>This was compiled by DPI and circulated before the meeting. Jeremy Prince informed the group that he worked as a consultant through a private company and would provide details to DPI. No other updates were provided.</p> <p>1.6 Terms of Reference for this HSWG</p> <p>The Terms of Reference were circulated again prior to the meeting. The group was reminded that these would govern the proceedings, and that the group itself is a sub-committee of CommFish NSW.</p>
2.	Purpose, scope and timeline (WP-01-01)	<p>DPI presented Working Papers WP-01-01 and WP-01-02.</p> <p>The co-management aspect of harvest strategy development was emphasised as a guiding principle, so stakeholders can discuss and decide on management measures for the stocks they harvest. DPI must ensure that harvest strategies are consistent with their responsibilities under the <i>Fisheries Management Act 1994</i> and other relevant legislation and policy, notably the NSW Fisheries Harvest Strategy Policy & Guidelines.</p>
3.	Harvest Strategy Structure (WP-01-02)	<p>A timeline for developing the Spanner Crab Harvest Strategy was proposed. Although this group has a two-year lifespan, it should focus on harvest strategy development over the next 6-8 months, as this will be followed by a review and approval process that may take up to 6 months. This timetable would ensure the harvest strategy is in place before the 2023/24 TAC determination.</p> <p>A suggested structure for the Spanner Crab Harvest Strategy was presented, consistent with the policy and with other NSW fisheries draft harvest strategies developed to-date. This structure provides a 'rolling agenda' for this and future meetings. The harvest strategy document will be drafted as the group progresses, using text from working papers and from discussion and decisions by the group.</p> <p>Action</p> <p>The group endorsed the proposed structure and timeline.</p>
4.	Fishery Description and Characterisation	<p>DPI presented Working Paper WP-01-03.</p> <p>The NSW Spanner Crab (<i>Ranina ranina</i>) fishery is a single-species fishery that is a component of the Ocean Trap and Line Share Management Fishery (OTLF). The main features of the spanner crab fishery are:</p>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The fishery has two management zones, northern and southern. Minimum shareholdings are required in each zone to be eligible for an endorsement. • The majority of the commercial catch is taken in the northern zone, which also has the most shareholders. • Other controls in the fishery include fishing gear controls and limits on the number of dillies able to be deployed, spatial and temporal closures, no take of egg-bearing females, minimum size limit, and boat capacity restrictions. • Introduction of a single catch quota management system commenced for both northern and southern zones on 1 July 2018 with a Total Allowable Catch (TAC) of 169t for 2018/19. The TAC for 2021/22 is 140t. <p>Additionally:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is low incidental catch of spanner crabs, mainly by the Ocean Trawl Fishery, and estimated at less than 1% of total Spanner Crab landings. • In the Ocean Trawl Fishery a 10kg trip limit for Spanner Crab applies and taking Spanner Crab from 21 October in any year to 20 January in the next year is prohibited. • Recreational fishers are subject to a daily and possession limit of 10 Spanner Crabs per person. However, recent recreational fishing surveys did not report any catch of Spanner Crabs. Aboriginal harvest for Spanner Crab in NSW is also thought to be negligible. • The same size limit applies to all sectors. <p>Discussion</p> <p>It was noted that fishing operations have changed over time to accommodate transport to markets and market days, resulting in fewer days worked and reduced hours/day. A greater proportion of the catch is made up of larger Spanner Crabs. Fishers that are multi-endorsed may target other species if conditions and/or prices are good. Bottom temperature and rain can affect catch rates. Trawlers going out after floods sometimes trawl up baskets of dead crabs and it is assumed that the crabs can't breathe through the mud. Industry emphasised the strong impact that freshwater events have on catches. Spanner Crab does not survive freshwater and so whenever there is a flood or a large rain event, catches have always been impacted.</p>
--	--	--

4.	NSW Stock Assessment	<p>DPI presented Working Paper WP-01-04.</p> <p>Spanner Crab is currently assessed as <i>Sustainable</i> for the NSW component of the stock. The assessment uses a weight-of-evidence approach, including; standardised commercial catch rates and an index of relative abundance from annual fishery-independent surveys. Nominal catch rates have been above long-term averages for the past two years, with average catch per net lift in NSW around twice that in QLD. However, when compared to the peak in 2016, standardised catch rates have declined by almost 40%.</p> <p>Given the small proportion (<15%) of total landings taken in NSW it is unlikely that fishing in NSW is having a detrimental effect on the entire East Coast stock. It is unknown if the NSW Spanner Crab fishery is harvesting from a small amount of fast-growing animals or a large amount of slow-growing ones. The degree to which exploitable biomass in NSW is dependent on recruitment from QLD is unknown.</p> <p>Previous studies investigating mortality of undersize, discarded Spanner Crabs reported significant rates of mortality due to disentanglement: 60-70% of crabs with one or more dactyli removed died within 50 days, whilst 100% of crabs which lost whole limbs (after being pulled off nets) died after eight days. To evaluate population effects of mortality due to disentanglement it would be necessary to estimate annual fishery-wide discard rates. Reducing this mortality may increase fishery production.</p> <p>Discussion</p> <p>When moving to quota management industry were mindful of handling practices and didn't want to increase or encourage poor handling, therefore the limit on the number of dillies able to be used remains in place. Estimating discards has been discussed but it is difficult to require counting of discards on all vessels. Some fishers have agreed to trial on-board cameras to estimate discards: using gridded sorting trays under cameras could be very useful. The cost of the fishery independent survey (FIS) was queried, along with the costs/benefits of other options for fishery monitoring, to inform what could be incorporated in the harvest strategy. More comprehensive commercial catch data could be most informative. It was noted by the Industry that, in reviewing the catch and effort graphs, there were significant drops in catches during documented large floods on the Clarence and Richmond Rivers (feeding into important Spanner Crab grounds), specifically early 2013 and later as 2014/15.</p>
----	----------------------	--

Next meeting: The group will meet again in 29 October.