

Minutes

Meeting	Spanner Crab Harvest Strategy Working Group		
Meeting Number(s)	2	Date	29 October 2021
Location	Online – MS Teams	Time	9:30am – 13:30pm
Members	<p>Independents: James Findlay (Chair), Julian Morison (Economist), Jeremy Prince (Scientist)</p> <p>Industry: Andrew Rigby, John Joblin, Ian McRae, Gary Bordin, Mitchell Sanders (Commercial Fishing NSW Advisory Council – CommFish NSW), Tricia Beatty (Professional Fishers' Association)</p> <p>DPI Fisheries Manager: Veronica Silberschneider</p> <p>DPI Fisheries Scientist: Daniel Johnson</p>		
Executive Officers	David Kirby, Nicholas Sarapuk		
Permanent Observer	Nancy Trieu, QLD Department of Agriculture & Fisheries		
Observers	DPI: Rowan Chick, Ashley Fowler		
Apologies	Nancy Trieu (QLD) (Permanent observer), Mitch Sanders		
Prepared by	David Kirby & Nick Sarapuk		

Agenda Item	Issue	Notes & Actions
1.	Welcome and introduction	<p><u>1.1 Welcome and introduction</u></p> <p>The Chair opened by acknowledging the Traditional Custodians of the lands on which Working 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.</p> <p><u>1.2 Apologies and recognition of observers</u></p> <p>Apologies were received from Nancy Trieu (QLD) and Mitch Sanders.</p> <p><u>1.3 Declaration of pecuniary interests</u></p> <p>Jeremy Prince informed the Working Group that he worked as a consultant through a private company and would provide details to DPI before the next meeting. No other updates were provided. The Chair</p>

		<p>encouraged members to stay up to date and declare any changes in their pecuniary interests prior to each meeting.</p> <p><u>1.4 Previous Meetings Minutes</u></p> <p>Industry members requested that the impacts of heavy rainfall/flooding events that may impact catch and effort be included in the previous meeting outcomes to better reflect discussions. It was agreed that text would be provided to DPI executive officers for inclusion into the Minutes, following agreement of the Working Group.</p> <p><u>1.5 Confirmation of Agenda</u></p> <p>The Agenda for the meeting was accepted without modification.</p>
2.	Brief update on NSW Harvest Strategy Policy & Guidelines, and harvest strategies for other NSW fisheries	<p>DPI Fisheries provided the following update:</p> <p>NSW Fisheries Harvest Strategy Policy & Guidelines – These were endorsed by the Minister for Agriculture and Western NSW, following public consultation and revision.</p> <p>Trawl Whiting - A draft NSW Trawl Whiting Harvest Strategy (TWHS), developed by the TWHS Working Group is now open for public consultation on the DPI website until 31 October 2021. Following consideration of feedback and whether changes are required to the draft harvest strategy by the Working Group, the next steps are seeking endorsement from CommFish NSW, followed by adoption from the Minister of Agriculture and Western NSW.</p> <p>Rock Lobster – A draft NSW Lobster Harvest Strategy has also been developed and will be open for public comment next week. Following the close of public consultation, the same steps will apply as for the TWHS.</p> <p>Mulloway – The first meeting of the Mulloway Harvest Strategy Working Group is scheduled for 15 November 2021.</p> <p>Discussion</p> <p>It was noted that DPI has invited relevant jurisdictions (e.g. AFMA, Qld) and fishing sectors (recreational, Aboriginal cultural fishing) to participate in harvest strategy development in NSW to date. The Working Group briefly discussed the topic of NSW commercial fishers holding endorsements/authorities in other jurisdictions such as QLD or the Commonwealth. DPI noted that it is not a requirement for industry to disclose this information to the department.</p>
3.	Harvest Strategy development	<p><u>3.1 Aspirations for fishery</u></p> <p>Commercial fishing members were invited to share their short term and long-term goals for the Spanner Crab Fishery.</p>

	<p>Discussion</p> <p>Industry noted they wanted a sustainable fishery into the future, with consistent high catch rates year-on-year, with a preference for larger size crabs. They also noted that they were generally happy with the existing management arrangements for the fishery.</p> <p>External influences such as weather, currents, inconsistency in the size of crabs, distribution and market prices were all factors noted to impede the above. Years with low rainfall were always considered more favourable. Industry members noted that some spanner crab fishers have diversified businesses and move between spanner crabbing and trawling, trapping or line fishing (among others) for seasonal species or market incentives.</p> <p>There is often variability in the volume of catch, size of crabs and distribution in the NSW fishery, with similar patterns displayed in the Queensland fishery. In NSW, large (11.5cm – 12.5cm) to extra-large (>12.5cm) Spanner Crab were generally considered to have higher market value both in local markets and the Sydney Fish Market, leading to a preference for large/extra-large crabs. Smaller crabs were noted to suit the Chinese market. The approximate Spanner Crab market price has a range of \$10 - \$20 per kg.</p> <p>Catch in the range 200 – 400kgs/day was considered ‘very good’, an average daily catch considered to be around 100 – 200kgs/day; and catch below 40kgs/day considered poor. Industry estimated approximately 40% of the fleet actively travelled outside of their home port to target Spanner Crab, whereas the remaining 60% operated from their home port.</p> <p>It was mentioned that Spanner Crab quota trades at approximately \$4 - \$5 per kg. Trading of quota was considered relatively easy and available for some members, while others considered trading difficult. Quota usage was usually higher in the first half of the quota season from July to November/December.</p> <p><u>3.2 Spanner crab Harvest Strategy</u></p> <p>DPI provided a potential Goal, Strategic Objectives and Operational Objectives for the Spanner Crab Harvest Strategy as a starting point for discussions.</p> <p><i>3.2.1 Goal</i></p> <p><i>To contribute, in cooperation with Queensland, to maintaining a robust and sustainable Spanner Crab stock to support a profitable commercial fishery, with social, cultural and economic benefits to the community.</i></p> <p><i>3.2.2 Strategic objectives</i></p>
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	<p>Existing strategic or long-term objectives taken from the Ocean Trap & Line (OTL) Fishery Management Strategy (FMS) and Share Management Plan (SMP) were presented.</p> <p><i>3.2.3 Operational objectives</i></p> <p>Operational objectives were presented for discussion. The Working Group may refine or change these as the harvest strategy development process continues.</p> <p>Discussion</p> <p>There were no objections from the Working Group on the potential Goal, Strategic Objectives and Operational Objectives. It was noted that measuring operational objectives that include economic return from the Fishery is difficult given current available indicators. Gross value of production (GVP) was not considered an ideal measure of economic performance for the Fishery. DPI Fisheries advised that BDO EconSearch Pty. Ltd. was undertaking work to produce an annual time series of economic and social indicators for NSW commercial fisheries. This would be provided to the working group for discussion when available. The Working Group noted that a better understanding of the number and size of crabs discarded during fishing operations could also be a valuable indicator. DPI noted a current pilot study trialling electronic monitoring in the Fishery using onboard cameras.</p> <p><i>3.2.4 Monitoring and Assessment, and development of potential indicators</i></p> <p>The current data sources available for the Fishery were introduced to the Working Group including the general logbook data (electronic, paper), real time quota reporting (electronic) and the Fishery Independent Survey (FIS). DPI noted that there is currently a review underway on how NSW commercial catch and effort data is collected.</p> <p>The main data uncertainties surrounding the Spanner Crab assessment were presented to the Working Group, including discarding and mortality estimates, connectivity with the QLD stock (currently being investigated), environmental influences, the size-structure of the commercial catch, and representativeness of length-frequency data from fishery-independent surveys. The latter point was corroborated by the industry member who completes the fishery-independent survey in two zones. Potential monitoring options and research priorities to help address these uncertainties were discussed. The choice of monitoring options to address uncertainties is likely to depend on the future management objectives of the fishery and sources of available funding. Potential primary and secondary indicators were presented to the Working Group for consideration. Primary indicators included standardised catch rates (catch per day) of Spanner Crabs by commercial fishers (sCPUE) and of legal-size crabs (number per</p>
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		<p>groundline) from the FIS in NSW waters. Both these primary indicators are used in the Queensland Spanner Crab Harvest Strategy.</p> <p>Discussion</p> <p>Discussions centred on what additional information could be captured for use in the scientific assessment such as obtaining information on higher grading (e.g., only keeping large and extra-large crabs). It was noted that recent recommendations from the Total Allowable Fishing Committee included recording discarding during fishing operations, improving catch reporting, and handling practices. Industry also reiterated the need to ensure best handling practices were used in the fishery. Potential improvements to the NSW Spanner Crab assessment identified during an external review of the NSW assessment (Birch and Dowling 2021) will be discussed at future meetings.</p>
4.	Summary of draft NSW Trawl Whiting harvest strategy	To assist the working group's understanding of harvest strategy development, DPI Fisheries provided a summary of the draft NSW Trawl Whiting Harvest Strategy as an example.
5.	Other Business	<p>Proposal from industry to consider amending the male fishing closure for the current 2021/22 season was raised to the Working Group and DPI.</p> <p>Discussion</p> <p>There were diverse views for this proposal among working group members. DPI advised the working group that this was being considered as part of the Business Efficiency Program.</p> <p>The Chair noted that this issue could be suited to a co-management approach.</p>

Next meeting: The Working Group will meet on the 11th March 2022.