

Minutes

Meeting	Spanner Crab Harvest Strategy Working Group		
Meeting Number	6	Dates	21st October 2022
Location	Online via Microsoft Teams Meeting	Time	09:00 - 14:00
Members	<p>Independents: James Findlay (Chair), Julian Morison (Economist), Jeremy Prince (Scientist)</p> <p>Commercial Fishing Representatives: Andrew Rigby, John Joblin, Ian McRae, Gary Bordin,</p> <p>Mitchell Sanders (Commercial Fishing NSW Advisory Council – CommFish NSW), Tricia Beatty (Professional Fishers' Association)</p> <p>DPI Fisheries Manager: Darren Reynolds</p> <p>DPI Fisheries Scientist: Daniel Johnson</p>		
Apologies	Darren Reynolds and Ian McRae		
Observers	Samantha Miller (DAF QLD), Nicholas Giles (DPI), Rowan Chick (DPI), Ashley Fowler (DPI), Josh Cansdell (DPI), Shane McGrath (DPI)		

Agenda Item	Issue	Notes & Actions
1.	Welcome and Introduction	<p>1.1 Acknowledgment of country</p> <p>The Chair opened by acknowledging Traditional Custodians and paying respects to Elders past, present and emerging.</p> <p>1.2 Apologies and Recognition of Observers</p> <p>The Chair welcomed all Working Group members and meeting guests and noted apologies from Darren Reynolds and Ian McRae.</p> <p>1.3 Confirmation of Agenda</p> <p>The meeting agenda was accepted.</p> <p>1.4 Declaration of pecuniary interests</p>

		<p>Updates to the register of pecuniary interests were confirmed.</p> <p>1.5 Minutes of the previous meeting</p> <p>The previous meeting minutes were adopted without amendment.</p>
<p>2.</p>	<p>Review of Developing Draft Spanner Crab Harvest strategy</p>	<p>DPI presented the draft harvest strategy, and the working group reviewed the changes that have been adopted since the last meeting. The meeting focused on further discussion of harvest strategy components and finalising the draft harvest strategy for public comment.</p> <p>Discussion</p> <p>Strategic and Operational Objectives</p> <p>The members discussed the strategic objectives and agreed to amendments to better reflect the intentions of the strategy. The members agreed on similar strategic objectives to the Trawl Whiting Harvest strategy, with amendments strengthening focus on maintaining sustainability, and further reflecting the interests of recreational fishers and Aboriginal people in operation of the strategy. The operational objectives were also amended to clarify the target objective reference level of 48% of unfished biomass, and limit reference level of 20% of unfished biomass.</p> <p>The members also agreed that, in practical terms, the spanner crab stock biomass should be maintained “around” the target of 48% of the unfished biomass instead of “at” the target of 48%.</p> <p><i>Indicators</i></p> <p>Members then discussed the indicators selected to measure fishery performance against the respective reference levels, with these also providing the basis for the function of decision rules.</p> <p>The draft reference levels for indicators have been chosen to represent longer-term averages for the indicator data, with indicators benchmarked using two-year averages to provide stability to annual fluctuations.</p> <p>The members agreed that the target pooled index of 1 is suitable as it’s an average of the standardised Catch per Unit Effort (CPUE) of 2.19 kg/net lift and a standardised catch rate (crabs per groundline) of 10.489 legal sized spanner crabs from the NSW and QLD independent fishery survey, noting confirmation subject to further evaluation of the survey time series. These reference points are</p>

		<p>determined as a proxy for the target reference point of 48% of the unfished biomass.</p> <p>QLD Fisheries also confirmed support to share the joint Queensland/NSW independent fisheries survey data for calculating the reference level and final MSE modelling.</p> <p>The members then discussed the trigger limit and agreed that a standardised CPUE trigger limit of 1.6 kg/net lift average over 2 consecutive years was preferable as it is more conservative when compared with setting a lower trigger limit of 1.4kg/net lift, noting that the fishery has never been below 1.4kg/net lift. The group also agreed with the standardise CPUE limit reference point of ≤ 0.8 kg/net lift as a proxy for 20% of the unfished biomass, noting that this would be a point where the fishery required decisive protection, also being a point below where fishery economics would be severely degraded.</p> <p>The working group again recognised that the spanner crab harvest strategy assessment period needs to be well-defined to ensure the most complete information is used to assess the performance of the fishery. The group recommended that moving to and integrating real-time reporting systems for catch and effort (including grid location data) in the future would assist in ensuring catch and effort data is current and accurate.</p> <p><i>Decision rules</i></p> <p>Members continued the discussion of draft decision rules with a focus on the value of stock abundance relative to the harvest strategy reference points. The draft decision rules are intended to be responsive to fishery performance with members showing support for smaller proportional adjustments of either an increase or decrease of TAC to avoid potentially unexpected or large changes.</p> <p>The discussion progressed through a draft decision rule structure which defines actions both above and below the trigger reference point. Management responses included; no change to the TAC, changes to TAC not exceeding 10/20-tonne maximums, maximum and minimum TAC's, and changes to TAC relative to trending indicators over three successive years, with all concepts supported. The group also tested various scenarios with the draft decision rules and available data. The members also agreed that the fishery rebuilding closure should be implemented when the CPUE was less than 0.800 kg/net lift averaged over two consecutive years.</p>
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<p>3.</p>	<p>Management Strategy Evaluation</p>	<p>DPI finalised decision rule flow chart (or decision tree) following feedback from the previous meeting, the flow chart provides a graphical representation of the formal decision rules and the application of those rules.</p> <p>DPI guided the working group through potential scenarios that included the conditions where the TAC should increase, decrease or be maintained at its current level over the following year/s.</p> <p>Discussion</p> <p>Similar to the previous meeting the working group examined scenarios based on historical fishery data, including periods of high, low and moderate CPUE of commercial catch.</p> <p>The working group discussed the logic of the decision rules within the flow chart and made some minor wording adjustments.</p> <p>There was also discussion around data sharing to support further MSE evaluation concurrently with the draft's public consultation to support final MSE evaluation, noting that extensive MSE has already been undertaken in developing the similar Queensland harvest strategy, and MSE outcomes for the NSW spanner crab harvest strategy should not be vastly different.</p>

<p>4.</p>	<p>Other Business and Next Meeting</p>	<p>The group also discussed the potential for a co-management approach between commercial fishers and DPI regarding a flexible spawning closure period. The discussion focused on potential mechanisms for commercial fishers to inform the department if they think the closure should be either delayed or postponed due to the number of berried females and the condition of the stock, noting that further discussion will be required separate to the work of the HSWG.</p>
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The next meeting is proposed for an in-person meeting on the 20th of January 2023.