

OCEAN HAULING MANAGEMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE

MEETING OF 15 February 2008 CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT

The Ocean Hauling Management Advisory Committee (OHMAC) held its first meeting for 2008 on 15 February 2008 at the Cronulla Fisheries Centre. A summary of the main issues discussed is as follows: -

NSW DPI research strategic plan

The Committee was of the opinion that the "Biology and fisheries of yellowtail kingfish and yellowfin tuna" was not a research priority for the ocean hauling fishery while the proposal to "Collect historical/anecdotal information from older fishers regarding the biology and fishery of yellowtail scad" may need to receive higher priority as it is fisher age dependant. Further the Committee would welcome further monitoring of target species, those species under a recovery program and other species of concern as well as by-catch assessments.

Marine Park Zoning review processes and consultation

The Committee proposes to make a submission on this issue as part of the Jervis Bay Marine Park review and agreed that it should be drafted by the Chairperson for consideration by OHMAC as an out of session item before submission.

Update on access to NSW bait fish resources

The Committee expressed the view that DPI should develop a policy for these permits that allows those currently eligible to continue to operate while they remain in the industry, noting that eligibility is not transferable. Further that DPI should develop a discussion paper outlining potential options within the current share structure for authorising access to the bait resource for own use.

PAB net mesh size and Sandy Sprat harvest report

The Committee recommended that the current regulations should be amended to allow use of 11mm minimum mesh size netting in a PAB net and that there was no need for a minimum mesh in the purse seine net unless significant catches of sandy sprat (other than live bait) occurs. The Committee noted proposals from EGMAC to amend the regulations to allow commencement of targeted harvesting of juvenile sandy sprat and similar species marketed as "Whitebait" or "Nanata" in estuarine waters. The Committee was concerned with the potential impacts of harvesting the resource before maturity and expressed the view that as a general principle access should be consistent when harvesting the same resource in ocean and estuarine waters.

Eastern Sea Garfish Recovery Program

The Committee noted the progress of the recovery program and reports indicating that the sea garfish stock has not recovered significantly. The Committee also generally supported proposals by the Estuary General Management Advisory Committee to recommence harvesting in some estuarine waters under conditions similar to those in place for ocean waters.

Weekend closures for the general purpose net and PAB net in the south of the State, and public education on the Ocean Hauling Fishery.

Industry members of OHMAC expressed a desire for clause 12 of the Fisheries Management (Ocean Hauling Share Management Plan) Regulation 2006 regarding weekend and public holidays to be modified for all regions. OHMAC preference would be the complete removal of the clause, while a less preferred position would be to allow access during non school holiday periods in November and February restriction removed and/or on isolated beaches. The MAC was advised that a proposal to remove the restrictions entirely was unlikely to receive support from the recreational fishing or other sectors utilising beaches during holiday time. OHMAC noted that significant consultation occurred prior to the implementation of these restrictions approximately 15 years ago however industry members believe that changes in available areas due to Marine Parks and reduced availability of transport to get fish to market warrant these restrictions being reviewed. The Committee request that DPI develop an options paper on this issue to be taken to ACORF for comment.

Noting the importance of public education about the fishery, the Committee recommends that industry develops an ongoing communication strategy, including production of pamphlets for distribution, website, media releases and co-ordinated support from local councils.

For a full summary of the outcomes from the combined Ocean Hauling MAC meeting, please contact Mr David Makin, Fisheries Manager (Ocean Haul), on (02) 9527 8556 or via email david.makin@dpi.nsw.gov.au.

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Chair, OHMAC