Torres Strait Scientific Advisory Committee

Meeting No. 62

MINUTES

14-15 October 2013

CHAIR: Mr Ian Cartwright



**AGENDA**

1. **Meeting Administration**
   1. Preliminaries - Acknowledgement of Traditional Owners/Chairs Opening Remarks/Meeting attendance/Declaration of Interests/Apologies
   2. Review and Adoption of Agenda
   3. Correspondence
   4. Ratification of TSSAC 61 Minutes
   5. Action Items from TSSAC 61
2. **2012/13 Research Project Update**
   1. Torres Strait Research Repository (CSIRO)
   2. Targeted Indigenous Community Consultation in the Torres Strait (De Fries)
3. **2013/14 Research Project Update**
   1. Smart phone technology for remote data collection in the Torres Strait Traditional Inhabitant finfish fisheries (UTAS)
   2. Characterization of Traditional subsistence Fisheries in PNG Treaty Communities Project (CSIRO)
   3. Tropical Rock Lobster Stock Assessments/Surveys (CSIRO)
   4. Bech-de-Mer Identification Guide (CSIRO)
4. **TSSAC Processes**
   1. Budget
   2. Research pre-proposals assessment
      1. Habitat assessment for green turtles and dugongs using satellite/GPS tracking
      2. Empowering Torres Strait Islanders in the optimal harvest of coral trout
      3. Exploring innovative co-management options for high value fisheries in PNG Treaty Villages
      4. Tracking value chains of commodities from illegal and unregulated PNG fisheries
      5. Improved TSPF profitability and pathways for a sustained flow of TSPF benefits to Torres Strait Island Communities.
      6. Adaptation of Torres Strait communities to climate change impacts on fisheries
      7. Management Strategy Evaluation to support Torres Strait lobster research
      8. Defining the aggregating and movement behavior of Spanish mackerel to inform future fisheries allocation and sustainable fishing
5. **Other business**
   1. Turtle and Dugong (verbal)
   2. Update from PZJA Forums (verbal)
   3. Confirmation of TSSAC No. 63

Individuals wishing to attend the meeting as an observer are required to contact the Chair, Mr Ian Cartwright: c/o TSSAC Executive Officer – Alicia Sabatino (Alicia.sabatino@afma.gov.au) to notify of your desire to attend.

ATTENDANCE – TSSAC #62 (14 & 15 October 2013)

The following members and observers were in attendance at TSSAC No. 62:

### Members & Observers

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Name** | **Role** | **Declaration of Interest** |
| Mr Ian Cartwright | Chairperson | Consultant, AFMA Commissioner |
| Mr Shane Fava | AFMA Representative | AFMA Fisheries Manager, Torres Strait |
| Ms Alicia Sabatino | Executive Officer (AFMA) | AFMA Fisheries Officer, Torres Strait |
| Dr Michael O’Neill | Scientist | Agri Science QLD, QDAFF |
| Dr Roland Pitcher | Scientist | CSIRO Researcher |
| Dr Stephen Newman | Scientist | WA Fisheries Scientist |
| Ms Sevaly Sen | Social/Economics Member | Consultant |
| Mr. Tom Roberts | Fisheries Queensland Representative | Fisheries Management Officer, QDAFF |
| Miss Mariana Nahas | TSRA representative | Fisheries Project Manager, TSRA |
| Mr. Kenny Bedford | TSRA, Portfolio representative for Fisheries | Traditional Inhabitant Representative |
| Mr. Tony Vass | Industry Representative | Ex Mackerel Licence Holder |
| Mr. Mike Passi | Indigenous Fisheries Advisory Committee (IFAC) | Traditional Inhabitant Representative |
| Mr. Kiwat Lui | Indigenous Fisheries Advisory Committee (IFAC) | Traditional Inhabitant Representative |
| Mr. Damian Miley | TSRA, Program Manager (Environmental Management), Land and Sea Management Unit. | TSRA,Program Manager, Land and Sea Management Unit. (Phoned in on the 16th October 2013) |

DECISION RECORD – TSSAC #62 (14 & 15 October 2013)

**1.4** The committee **AGREED** to accept the minutes of TSSAC No. 61 as a true and accurate record of the meeting.

**1.5** The committee **NOTED** the completion of the Action Items from TSSAC Meeting 61.

**2.1** The Committee **NOTED** the completion of the Torres Strait Marine Research Repository research project.

**2.2** The Committee **NOTED** the completion the Targeted Indigenous Community Consultation in the Torres Strait research project.

**4.2.5** The committee **AGREED** to recommend that one pre proposals application is forwarded to the Torres Strait Prawn Management Advisory Committee (TSMAC) for discussion.

**4.2.8** The committee **AGREED** to invite the Principal Investigator (PI) of the following research pre proposal application to submit a full research proposal for consideration by the TSSAC at its next meeting:

* Defining the aggregating and movement behavior of Spanish mackerel to inform future fisheries allocation and sustainable fishing (Andrew Tobin)

Action Items – TSSAC #62 (14 & 15 October 2013)

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| No. | Action Item | Agenda no. | Champion | Due date |
| 1. | The TSSAC agreed for AFMA to update and circulate budget on a regular basis. | 1.5 | AFMA | Ongoing |
| 2. | Include the entry of projects into the Torres Strait Marine Research Repository as part of the contract between AFMA and PI’s. | 2.1 | AFMA | Ongoing |
| 3 | AFMA to write to Tonya van der velde seeking a clear step by step guide for researchers to enter reports into Torres Strait Marine Research Repository. | 2.1 | AFMA | Before the next TSSAC meeting (March 2014). |
| 4 | Circulate Spatial Element Component to the Committee. | 3.1 | AFMA | 2 December 2013 |
| 5 | AFMA to ask PI to present a PowerPoint presentation on Final application | 3.1 | AFMA | 2 December 2013 |
| 6 | AFMA to circulate PI’s presentations to the TSSAC that was presented at the Torres Strait Treaty Cycle meetings. | 3.2 | AFMA | 27 November 2013 |
| 7 | AFMA to generate a set of research priorities for the Turtle and Dugong Fisheries. | 5.1 | AFMA | 20 January 2014 |
| 8 | AFMA to develop Terms of Reference for the Turtle and Dugong SAG meeting to be held in February/March 2014. | 5.1 | AFMA | 12 February 2014 |
| 9 | AFMA to confirm participants/membership for the T & D SAG and WG meeting in February 2014. | 5.1 | AFMA | 12 February 2014 |

**MINUTES**

Agenda Item 1.1 Preliminaries - Acknowledgement of Traditional Owners/Chairs Opening Remarks/Meeting attendance/Declaration of Interests/Apologies

The Chair welcomed TSSAC members and acknowledged traditional owners. The Chair also welcomed new attendees, advised members to sign the declaration of interest and detailed meeting apologies.

Agenda Item 1.2 Review and Adoption of Agenda

The agenda was adopted by the Committee with no changes.

Agenda Item 1.3 Correspondence

The committee **NOTED** that there had been no correspondence received since the last meeting.

Agenda Item 1.4 Ratification of TSSAC 61 Minutes

The committee **AGREED** to accept the minutes of TSSAC No.61 as true and accurate record.

Agenda Item 1.5 Action Items from TSSAC 61

Shane Fava from AFMA provided the committee with an update of the completed and ongoing action items from the last TSSAC meeting. This included discussed regarding the turtle and dugong review process and that the TSRA is supportive of the TSSAC approach including the establishment of a Traditional Fisheries Working Group. There was also discussion regarding the review process the TSRA is conducting regarding the establishment of the Turtle and dugong community based management plans. It was noted by the group that this is an open tender process, Stephen Newman suggested Paul Joseph may be a suitable candidate to conduct such a review.

*Action Item 1, The TSSAC agreed for AFMA to update and circulate the Torres Strait research budget on a regular basis.*

**Agenda Item 2 2012/13 Research Project Update**

**Agenda Item 2.1 Torres Strait Marine Research Repository (CSIRO)**

The Committee **NOTED** the completion of the research repository project and provided positive comments with regards to the project and the tight timeframe in which it was completed. There was discussion regarding the updating of the research repository and who would be made responsible for updating. Roland Pitcher from CSIRO suggested that it should be made compulsory that PI’s must input reports to the research repository and it should be an agreement within their contract. Roland Pitcher then gave an example and said if PI’s did not upload their research final payments could be delayed. The chair mentioned another way to go about this is to set funds aside each year for Tonya Van der velde to update the research repository. AFMA agreed to ask Tanya to provide an easy to follow step by step guide on how to upload reports.

*Action Item 2- Include the entry of projects into the Torres Strait Marine Research Repository as part of the contract between AFMA and PI’s.*

*Action Item 3 - AFMA to write to Tonya van de velde to provide SOP on how to upload reports.*

**Agenda Item 2.2 Targeted Indigenous Community Consultations in the Torres Strait**

The Committee **NOTED** the completion of the Targeted Indigenous Community Consultation in the Torres Strait, Shane Fava went on to mention that any further comments on regarding this project would be welcomed and could be provided to the PI if necessary.

Shane Fava then thanked the committee for reviewing the final reports out of session. It was noted that the project did experience some delays that were out of the PI’s control but the end result was delivered successfully. The TSSAC Chair highlighted that comments relating to this projects were all reasonably positive. However it was noted that there wasn’t enough scientific content included and report was lacking key objectives. There was also limited discussion regarding the layout of the report jumping between background and discussion with no clear structure. There was also a lack of detail describing the methods of consultation and how the PI gathered community perceptions.

The group noted a key outcome from the report was that the objectives and recommendations be delivered to the PZJA for consideration. Michael O’Neil and Shane Fava noted that paragraph 3 in summary needs rewording: “decline in total GVP and participation” and delete “cost of management”.

**Agenda Item 3 2013/14 Research Project Update**

**Agenda Item 3.1 Smartphone technology for remote data collection in the Torres Strait Traditional Inhabitant finfish fisheries (UTAS)**

##### The Committee **NOTED** that the Principal Investigator (PI) successfully completed all the required milestones for the 2012/13 component of the project. It was noted that this is the second year of the project and there were questions raised about the spatial elements to be included in the data gathering phase. Shane Fava reassured the committee that the comments were taken back to PI.

##### *Action Item 4 Circulate Spatial Element Component to the Committee.*

##### Shane Fava mentioned that the PI met with Erub Island fishers and discussed the use of the application in the Finfish fishery in June 2013. During this phase the mobile phone application package and associated software were also being developed.

##### The next financial milestone is schedule for the 28 February 2014 and includes the implementation of the mobile phone application and collation of initial catch data.

*Action Item 5 AFMA to ask PI to present a PowerPoint presentation on Final application.*

**Agenda Item 3.2 Characterization of Traditional subsistence Fisheries in PNG Treaty Communities Project (CSIRO)**

##### The Committee **NOTED** the update of the Characterisation of the Traditional Subsistence fisheries in PNG Treaty Communities project and that the PI has actively engaged with the PNG treaty communities and governing agencies (particularly during the recent series of Torres Strait Treaty Cycle meetings).

##### The Committee also noted that the Principal Investigator (PI) successfully completed all the milestones for the 2012/13 component of the project and addressed all criteria raised by TSSAC members throughout the process. The final progress report for the 2012/13 financial is currently overdue and the PI has advised AFMA that she will submit progress report in by the end of the week.

##### The next financial milestone is scheduled for 1 February 2014; this includes the completion of further household and creel surveys and development of focus group reports.

*Action Item 6 AFMA to circulate PI’s presentations to the TSSAC that was presented at the Torres Strait Treaty Cycle meetings.*

**Agenda Item 3.3 Tropical Rock Lobster (TRL) Stock Assessments/Surveys (CSIRO)**

##### The TSSAC to **NOTED** the update of the 2013/2014 Tropical Rock Lobster (TRL) Surveys and Stock Assessments project and that the PI has successfully completed the surveys and analysis for the 2013 TRL Surveys and Stock Assessments. The PI has provided survey results to the Tropical Rock Lobster Resource Assessment Group (TRLRAG). Shane Fava stated that the PI undertook the survey in intense and poor weather conditions. Due to the weather implication it may have effect on the TAC for next year.

**Agenda Item 3.4 Bech de Mer Identification Guide**

The Committee **NOTED** the progress of the Bech-de-Mer Guide. Tim Skewes presented a sample of the guide at the recent Hand Collectable Working Group (HCWG) meeting which were followed by discussions about identifying species Tim Skewes will come to the Torres Strait once the draft guide is completed to undertake limited consultation. It was mentioned that the community felt that the key element was ensuring that there is community involvement. TSRA representative Ms Mariana Nahas asked if there would be sufficient time for community consideration and comments on a draft guide. Shane Fava advised that there will be sufficient time for community consideration of the draft guide during the comment period.

**Agenda Item 4 TSSAC Processes**

Agenda Item 4.1 Budget

The Committee **NOTED** the status of the budget for both the 2013/14 and 2014/15 financial years primarily discussing funds currently committed to research projects. A spreadsheet detailing the milestone payments for each project and annual funding commitments was distributed to the Committee for review. Ms Sevaly Sen asked if there was room in the Budget under sitting fees to have a meeting on Thursday Island. Shane Fava said that there could be the opportunity in having one on Thursday Island preferably in line with the completion of a number of projects at the end of this financial year. AFMA has agreed to look into options into having a meeting at the end of the next financial year on Thursday Island.

*Action Item 1, AFMA will send out a regular Budget update to the Committee out of session.*

Agenda Item 4.2 Research Pre Proposals

The Committee assessed eight pre-proposals applications for Torres Strait research in the 2014/2015 financial year;

* + 1. **Habitat assessment for green turtles and dugongs using satellite/GPS tracking**

The Committee **NOTED** that the proposal primarily required greater detail on the practical and statistical reasons for the set number of tags being used and the areas being targeted. The committee also deemed that there were uncertainties about the basic operation details of the tags, including the costs of each tag, longevity and what data they could record. There were also discussions by the group regarding the clarity of the objectives and that they did not fully align with the proposal outcomes. It was decided that a statement was required that linked how the use of satellite tags will provide data to improve survey/stock assessment estimates.

The committee questioned the level of detail provided on feasibility and methodology of tagging each animal.

In summary the Committee noted that it would continue to liaise with the Torres Strait Regional Authority on the priority need for this type of research.

Mr Damian Miley from the TSRA, Land and Sea Management Unit (LSMU) joined the meeting via teleconference to provide comments on previous work that was conducted by Helene Marsh. The Committee asked Mr Miley if the amount of Turtle and Dugong being tagged would be reasonable for a conclusion to be drawn regarding stock status estimates and the success rate of animals being caught. Members were also concerned that animals would experience injury during the process of tagging. Mr Miley assured the committee that no harm to animals would take place and there were special techniques that were used to capture the animal. Mr Miley pointed out the techniques being holdfast and rodeo techniques. 1. The Holdfast technique and 2. Harnessing of the animal and attaching a floating device. Mr Miley reassured the Committee that the harvest of Turtle and Dugong continues to be an extremely sensitive topic in the Torres Strait and all measures are being taken to manage this.

The Chair congratulated Damien Miley on the recent winning of the national Banskia Award for the Land and Sea Management Unit .Mr Miley thanked the TSSAC for its continued support and then left the meeting.

The Committee did not approve the pre proposal application be recommended for progression towards the full proposal stage. The Committee will be happy to revisit the pre proposal in a years’ time when there is more information on the issues identified above, including in relation to the statistical significance and methodology.

* + 1. **Empowering Torres Strait Islanders in the optimal harvest of coral trout**

Shane Fava said that the PI has engaged with Communities regarding the pre proposal application during his last visit, noting that the project would be of greater priority when there is a higher participation level from traditional inhabitants in the fishery.

The committee did not view the pre proposal as a priority given the low participation rate as a result the pre proposal was not recommended to progress towards the full proposal stage.

Ms Mariana Nahas from the TSRA said that relating to objective one (socio economic) TSRA has had previous projects that looked into spatial elements side of fishery and is unsure if it will provide any further benefit. Ms Nahas went on to say that the TSRA is looking at an action plan for the finfish fishery and mentioned that there was an overlap to what the TSRA are already looking at doing in terms of capacity development.

* + 1. **Exploring innovative co-management options for high value fisheries in PNG Treaty Villages**

The Committee **NOTED** that there are uncertainties as to how the project will benefit Torres Strait Communities and this was not made clear from the objectives section of the application and it required greater detail. The Committee discussed the relevance of the topic and that it lacked strong alignment with the 2013 TSSAC Annual Operational Plan.

The Committee suggested that the Primary Investigator should liaise with the Papua New Guinean National Fisheries Authority (NFA) regarding potential investment in such a proposal and recommended that AFMA write a letter to the NFA supporting project and outlining the existing established relationships with the people of PNG and NFA.

The Committee noted that the PI should progress the proposal further to the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade as it is better dealt with by them.

* + 1. **Tracking value chains of commodities from illegal and unregulated PNG fisheries**

The Committee **NOTED** there is a significant degree of overlap with current research in the area of traditional/subsistence fishing in Treaty Villages and that the project is too compliance driven to align with the TSSAC Annual Operational Plan priorities. There was considerable discussion regarding the limited path for implementation of research outcomes.

The Committee suggested that the Primary Investigator should liaise with the Papua New Guinean National Fisheries Authority (NFA) regarding potential investment in such a proposal and recommended that AFMA write a letter to the NFA supporting project and outlining the existing established relationships with the people of PNG and NFA.

The Committee did not approve the pre-proposal application be recommended for progression to the full proposal stage.

* + 1. **Improved TSPF profitability and pathways for a sustained flow of TSPF benefits to Torres Strait Island Communities**

The Committee **NOTED** the potential linkages of the pre-proposal application to the recent research completed by Anthony DeFries and the scope for further progress in the area. There was discussion by all members as to how an investigation into the flow of benefits to Torres Strait Communities would help increase the level of industry participation in the Torres Strait Prawn fishery and whether this fits the priority needs as detailed in the TSSAC Annual Operational Plan.

There were also mixed views regarding the potential outcomes from the project other than it being a general scoping study seeking community feedback on a subject matter that clearly does not have support in communities as demonstrated by Anthony DeFries research.

The Committee were unable to support the development of the current pre-proposal application based on the level of ambiguity relating to the flow of benefits to communities and how this will assist in increasing participation levels in the fishery and uncertainty as to what role marketing strategies would play in the development of this proposal project (does this relate to community benefits/access to product or general strategies for marketing product and social licence).

The TSSAC recommended that given the current low effort levels in the Torres Strait Prawn fishery that the pre-proposal application is forwarded to the Torres Strait Prawn Management Advisory Committee (TSPMAC) for consideration and review focusing on the potential for community engagement, communication and extension to give islanders a better understanding of the fishery.

* + 1. **Adaptation of Torres Strait communities to climate change impacts on fisheries**

The Committee assessed the proposal and noted that the project builds on the previous Climate Change Project conducted by the PI. The committee did not consider the project as a high priority at the point of time as no red flags have been raised in previous climate change research for the Torres Strait’s commercial fisheries. The committee highlighted that there is a future need for climate change research but at this time the TSSAC is happy with the previous work done to date and will continue to monitor this area of research.

The Committee did not approve the pre-proposal application be recommended for progression to the full proposal stage.

* + 1. **Management Strategy Evaluation to support Torres Strait lobster research**

The Committee **NOTED** the pre proposal application and there was general consensus that there would be minimal benefits from further Management Strategy Evaluation research to support the Tropical Rock Lobster fishery based on the level of uncertainty over future management arrangements (input/output controls). It was also noted that there had been limited change to the fishery since the recent Management Strategy Evaluation project and that the potential changing ownership environment following the recent Sea Claim decision may impact this on the structure and operation of the fishery

In making this recommendation the Committee also took into consideration the priorities for Torres Strait research and the funding commitment already in place for Tropical Rock Lobster research. The Committee noted that the priority for this research may alter in the future and that AFMA will be recommending the TSSAC to review the proposal.

The Committee discussed Objectives two and three of the project (impact and mitigation of discarding and high grading; and local depletion impacts) in light of discussions that took place in recent TRL forums and the priority that was placed on these two issues, also noting that research has already been funded in both of these areas.

The Committee did not approve the pre-proposal application be recommended for progression to the full proposal stage.

* + 1. **Defining the aggregating and movement behavior of Spanish mackerel to inform future fisheries allocation and sustainable fishing**

The TSSAC discussed the pre proposal application at length and agreed that it met the priority criteria for the finfish fishery. The Committee noted that the PI will need to take into consideration a number of points when developing the full proposal including previous stock assessments conducted by Michael O’Neil and sample size alternatives for the fishery. There was also prolonged discussion regarding the use and relevance of stock genetics, with a view that this approach should be considered by the PI.

The Committee also suggested that the PI should provide detail of community engagement; and investigate options for co-funding with NFA.

The Committee recommended the pre proposal application be progressed for funding to the full proposal stage.

**Agenda Item 5 Other Business**

**Agenda Item 5.1 Turtle and Dugong (Verbal)**

Shane Fava provided a verbal update to the Committee regarding the current status of a turtle and dugong review. Shane Fava confirmed that there are allocated funds set aside to undertake further research in the Turtle and Dugong area.

*Action Item 7, AFMA will need to generate a set of research priorities.*

The TSSAC discussed the establishment of a Turtle and Dugong Scientific Advisory Committee (SAG) that would align with a Traditional Fisheries Working Group (TFWG), yet to be established. The SAG could be responsible for providing scientific advice to a TFWG. The roles of the Traditional Fisheries WG will be to identify research priorities for Turtle & Dugong.

The committee mentioned that it would be relevant to have a SAG meeting a day before the Traditional Fisheries WG this will allow for direct linkage between the SAG and Traditional Fisheries WG.

The committee considered that the establishment of a SAG would require further discussion with other agencies, including the TSRA but was generally supportive of the formation of a Traditional Fisheries working group.

Shane Fava advised the TSSAC that AFMA will need to confirm participants and the Terms of reference before the meeting in February 2014 and further discussions will take place with other agencies including the TSRA.

*Action Item 8, AFMA to discuss the establishment of a Traditional Fisheries WG and SAG with other agencies, including the TSRA.*

**Agenda Item 5.2 Update from PZJA Forums**

The Committee **NOTED** the update from;

*Tropical Rock Lobster Working Group*

The TSRA Board member Kenny Bedford provided the TSSAC with the plain English version relating to the recent Native Title decision. The paper was provided to the committee to inform them on the current status so that the TSSAC can provide clear scientific advice relating to Research in the Torres Strait.

Agenda Item 5.4 Confirmation of TSSAC No. 63

TSSAC meeting 63 will held at the end of February early March set dates are yet to be confirmed. It was also noted that there is a possibility of having the June meeting on Thursday Island.