



Australian Government
Australian Fisheries Management Authority

Torres Strait Hand Collectables Working Group

**September 2019
Out of Session**

Summary of member comments

Note all meeting papers and minutes
are available on the PZJA webpage:

www.pzja.gov.au

Executive Summary

Hand Collectables Working Group (HCWG) members were asked to provide advice on two out of session papers, and note the updates provided on the implementation of the harvest strategy and a future black teatfish opening in two additional papers. Meeting papers were circulated via email on Monday 16 September 2019 and comments were able to be submitted until close of business Monday 30 October 2019.

Member comments were provided to AFMA via email, and over the phone in discussion with the HCWG Executive Officer. A summary of all comments provided on the out of session papers are summarised in the tables below. Where applicable, AFMA have provided additional comments in response.

Members were broadly supportive of the proposed change to the catch based decision rule within the draft Beche-de-mer Harvest Strategy (agenda item 1). Some specific additions to the text of the rule were suggested to provide additional clarity as well as the inclusion of a schematic diagram to help illustrate the application of the rule. AFMA agrees these suggestions are useful and will look to incorporate them in future revisions of the harvest strategy, including a schematic diagram illustrating the application of the catch-based decision rule when managing a small TAC overcatch. However, these will not be available in time for PZJA consideration of the final draft BDM HS.

The prioritisation and desirability of proposed research projects was broadly agreed on by members. Some members suggested providing additional clarity to the project objectives and component tasks of the project aimed at understanding critical uncertainties for Torres Strait BDM species and processing methods, and to bring forward the indicative timeline for when the project is expected to be carried out to 2020-21. Additional suggestions were made in relation to other proposed projects and AFMA considers that these comments will be useful to inform future discussions on research priorities at subsequent in-session Working Group meetings. Based on the above mentioned comments, the amended Hand Collectable Fisheries Five Year Research Plan 2020/21 – 2024/25 will be submitted to the Torres Strait Scientific Advisory Committee (TSSAC) for their consideration in November 2019.

No major concerns were raised in relation to the updates to the draft Beche-de-mer Harvest Strategy implementation, or to the update on a future black teatfish opening.

Agenda Item 1 - FOR ADVICE

Proposed change to the draft Beche-de-mer Harvest Strategy Catch Based Decision Rule

Working Group member	Member Comments	Additional AFMA Comments / Notes
Anne Clarke, Chair	No comments provided.	n/a
Tim Skewes, Scientific member	Supported. Notes that there may be some confusion regarding the cumulative catch rule only applying in situations where the overcatch in any one year does not exceed 20% - however, I think this will be fine when the decision rules are read together (and sequentially).	Agree, the funding for understanding conversion ratios should be in 2020/21 year column and will be adjusted in Table 1 of the Research Plan.
Steve Purcell, Scientific member	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Point #2 could be more specific to say “catches in a calendar year exceed the annual TAC”. Point #3: “pause fishing” seems an odd way to write this. What about “impose a temporary 1-year closure to the fishery”? Point #4: Tim explained this over the phone, and it was still difficult to grasp. Would be good if you can provide a schematic diagram to help illustrate the process. That would also help to visualise the likely problem of being able to adjust “the TAC in the next full fishing season” when the lag in being able to calculate the catches is many months into the year. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> These are useful editions that can be incorporated into future revisions of the harvest strategy. As above (1). Agree. A schematic diagram would be useful. AFMA will work on developing a diagram for future HCWG consideration however it will not be available in time for PZJA consideration of the final draft BDM HS.
Michael Passi, Traditional Inhabitant Member, Kemer Kemer Meriam	Supportive of the change to the low tier catch based decision rule.	Comments provided over the phone on Friday 27 September

Working Group member	Member Comments	Additional AFMA Comments / Notes
Frank Loban, Traditional Inhabitant Member, Maluialgal	No concerns raised.	Comments provided via email on Monday 30 October.
Maluwap Nona, Traditional Inhabitant Member, Gudumalulgal	No comments provided.	n/a
Patrick Bonner, Traditional Inhabitant Member, Kulkalgal	Supportive of the change to the low tier catch based decision rule	Comments provided over the phone on Friday 27 September 2019.
Tony Salam, Traditional Inhabitant Member, Kaiwalagal	No comments provided.	n/a
Allison Runck, Torres Strait Regional Authority (TSRA)	Supported. The proposed changes to the Harvest Strategy seem sensible to manage the risk to species but also the need to regularly adjust TAC's.	Comments provided via email on Thursday 26 September 2019.
Danielle Stewart, Fisheries Queensland	No comments provided	n/a

Agenda Item 4 - FOR ADVICE

Five Year Fishery Research Plan 2020/21 - 2024/25

Working Group member	Member Comments	Additional AFMA comments / Notes
Anne Clarke, Chair	No comments provided.	n/a
Tim Skewes, Scientific member	Supported. However, suggest the conversion ratios work be funded in the 2020/21 financial year.	Agree, the funding for conversion ratios should be in 2020/21 year column and will be adjusted in Table 1 of the Research Plan.
Steve Purcell, Scientific member	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Stock surveys are really good. The price tag seems very reasonable, as these can be quite costly to run and costly in time to manage, analyse and write-up the data (I see there is CSIRO in-kind). 2. The Five Year Fishery Research Plan lists as a Key Issue: "Assessing of socio-economic value of beche-de-mer, trochus and pearl shell fisheries in the Torres Strait". This research would complement the stock surveys, and could provide data to inform other information needs, such as an estimate of discards, and better understanding of value chains and the role of women in fisheries. In fact, the socioeconomic surveys of fishers can be just as informative as the underwater population surveys for understanding stocks and trends in abundance (I could give plenty of examples). The proposed project and objectives could be broader than just promoting social and economic benefits. For the Proposed Project, I suggest "Assessing socioeconomics of the hand collectable fisheries to inform fishery management and development", and for the objective and tasks, "Conduct a socioeconomic study of fishers to 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The funding listed against the stock survey priority is only part of the money committed to this project. A further \$207,641 is committed in the 2019/20 financial year. Apologies, this may be confusing as the detail on the 2019/20 FY is not listed. 2. These are useful suggestions. Given there is only limited funding for the 2020/21 FY for urgent tactical projects, and the HCWG identifying that the curryfish conversion ratio is the key priority – AFMA considers these comments will form a very useful basis for exploring this further when the Working Group meets again to discuss research priorities for the 2021/22 financial year. 3. Agree. AFMA will amend the text to specify that this project is referring to curryfish species and to be funded in the 2020/21 year. 4. Noted. Will be good to discuss further when the Working Group meets again to discuss 2021/22 research priorities later in 2020.

Working Group member	Member Comments	Additional AFMA comments / Notes
	<p>better understand fishing, catches, perceptions and value chains". I agree that this is Essential, and would argue that it should be ranked as high as the stock surveys. Can you inform me about the "Themes"? Would be better to have this done in the next two coming financial years - it seems far too important to wait 3 years.</p> <p>3. Specifying which species for the research on conversion ratios would help. The 15th Meeting records say that a knowledge gap is curryfish species. Other species for this study? The study should be small, and even suitable for a Masters student, which can be cost-effective. Could that be earmarked for 2020/21?</p> <p>4. For the last project on biological parameters, I disagree that it should be "Difficult to cost due to lack in feasible methodologies". There are methods now available for estimating growth, age at maximum size, mortality—for some species—and breeding seasonality for most other species. These studies could also be good postgraduate student projects. I agree that this is desirable and not essential.</p>	
Michael Passi, Traditional Inhabitant Member, Kemer Kemer Meriam	Supported and agrees with the importance of understanding conversion ratios for curryfish. Would like to understand whether other industry or community members could be involved.	Comments provided over the phone on Friday 27 September
Frank Loban, Traditional Inhabitant Member, Maluialgal	Agree with current rankings for projects.	Comments received via email on Monday 30 October 2019.
Maluwap Nona, Traditional Inhabitant Member, Gudumalulgal	No comments provided.	n/a

Working Group member	Member Comments	Additional AFMA comments / Notes
Patrick Bonner, Traditional Inhabitant Member, Kulkalgal	Supportive of prioritising a dedicated project to understand conversion ratios for curryfish species. Would like to explore ways that MyPathways could assist or be involved.	Comments provided over the phone on Friday 27 September 2019
Tony Salam, Traditional Inhabitant Member, Kaiwalagal	No comments provided.	n/a
Allison Runck, Torres Strait Regional Authority (TSRA)	Agree with ranking and desirability of research priorities.	n/a
Danielle Stewart, Fisheries Queensland	No comments provided.	n/a

Agenda Items 2 and 3 – FOR INFORMATION

Formal HCWG advice was not sought on OOS agenda items 2 and 3 as these were for information only, however some members did provide general comments.

Working Group member	Agenda Item 2 BDM Harvest Strategy Implementation	Agenda Item 3 Black Teatfish update	Additional AFMA comments / Notes
Anne Clarke, Chair	No comments provided.	No comments provided.	n/a
Tim Skewes, Scientific member	Noted.	Noted. Pleased to see the update will still achieve the objectives of the BTF opening. There will be some fishery in 2020; it will be during the TRL fishery; there will be more information from the survey; and there is ample time for consultation.	n/a
Steve Purcell, Scientific member	Noted.	Noted. Since the “earliest opportunity for an opening is June 2020”, this will pretty closely coincide with implementation of the CITES Appendix II listing of black and white teatfish. Clarity about the non-detriment findings are needed, and I note your email advising that AFMA will keep the Working Group informed. A further requirement is to verify that the animals have been “legally sourced”. Advice on what, exactly, that comprises would be welcome too (e.g. if the TAC has been exceeded, is the product no longer legally sourced?).	Noted. Agree that absolute clarity about the non-detriment finding requirements are critical. It is expected AFMA will understand more about this requirement in time for the next HCWG meeting when further advice on a black teatfish opening arrangements is to be finalised.

Working Group member	Agenda Item 2 BDM Harvest Strategy Implementation	Agenda Item 3 Black Teatfish update	Additional AFMA comments / Notes
Michael Passi, Traditional Inhabitant Member, Kemer Kemer Meriam	Noted.	Noted. Agree that it is important to ensure all the necessary tools are in place first to ensure that future openings can occur.	Comments provided over the phone on Friday 27 September
Frank Loban, Traditional Inhabitant Member, Maluialgal	No comments provided.	No comments provided.	n/a
Maluwap Nona, Traditional Inhabitant Member, Gudumalulgal	No comments provided.	No comments provided.	n/a
Patrick Bonner, Traditional Inhabitant Member, Kulkalgal	Noted. Very pleased to see the harvest strategy come together and be implemented for next the 2020 fishing season. Understand that TACs under the harvest strategy will be implemented but new minimum size limits will not.	Noted. Supportive of the opportunity for PZJA Traditional Inhabitant reps to seek community views and input on the black teatfish opening and limitation of fishing participation.	Comments provided over the phone on Friday 27 September 2019.
Tony Salam, Traditional Inhabitant Member, Kaiwalagal	No comments provided	No comments provided.	n/a
Allison Runck, Torres Strait Regional Authority (TSRA)	No comments.	Noted. TSRA supports an opening as soon as feasible but recognise that is preferable to do it in a way that provides the best	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comments received via email on Thursday 26 September 2019. • AFMA response provided via email on Thursday 26 September 2019.

Working Group member	Agenda Item 2 BDM Harvest Strategy Implementation	Agenda Item 3 Black Teatfish update	Additional AFMA comments / Notes
		<p>opportunity for it to be an ongoing fishery.</p> <p>Question asked about the daily reporting requirements, and if this is proposed to be implemented under the revised instrument. It is understood from previous discussions there is a definite need to have daily reporting but TSRA does not recall the discussion about a regulatory change to enforce this.</p>	<p>AFMA Comment on Agenda Item 3</p> <p>The daily reporting requirements would not be imposed through the new Management Instrument, but rather through licence conditions under the Fish Receiver System. The new Instrument would be used to enforce the black teatfish TAC and would provide the mechanism to require licence holders to cease fishing once the TAC is reached following formal notice from AFMA.</p>
Danielle Stewart, Fisheries Queensland	No comments provided.	No comments provided.	n/a