



Australian Government
Australian Fisheries Management Authority



**HAND COLLECTABLE WORKING GROUP
MEETING NO. 4
27-28 JULY 2010**

TORRES STRAIT HAUS, THURSDAY ISLAND

MINUTES

CHAIR: MR KENNY BEDFORD

AGENDA

1 Meeting Administration

- 1.1 Ratification of TSHCWG No. 3 (AFMA)
- 1.2 Actions Items from TSHCWG No. 3 (AFMA)

2 Research

- 2.1 Sandfish Survey results (CSIRO)
- 2.2 2009 surveys of Hand Collectables in eastern Torres Strait (CSIRO)
- 2.3 Proposed Trochus Survey (CSIRO)
- 2.4 Research priorities for Torres Strait Hand Collectables (AFMA)

3 Community Based Harvest Strategies

- 3.1 *'Livelihood benefits of co-management of hand collectable fisheries in the Torres Strait'* (MTSRF – Alifereti Tawake)
- 3.2 Sea cucumber and Trochus ranching (CSIRO)

4 Compliance

- 4.1 Foreign compliance update (AFMA)

5 Reports

- 5.1 TSSAC update (AFMA)
- 5.2 Yorke Island Sponge Farm Update (TSRA)
- 5.3 Strategic Assessments of Beche de mer and Trochus (AFMA)

6 Other business

- 6.1 Okinawa Pearls (TSRA)
- 6.2 Indigenous Fisheries Centre of Excellence
- 6.3 HCWG Chairperson
- 6.4 Date for next meeting



The following members and observers were in attendance at HCWG No. 4:

Members

Name	Role	Declaration of Interest
Mr Kenny Bedford	Chairperson	Consultant
Mr Paul Seden	Executive Officer (AFMA)	Senior Fisheries Management Officer, Torres Strait
Dr Annabel Jones	AFMA Member - Thursday Island Fisheries Manager	AFMA Thursday Island Manager
Mr Nathan Pearson	Warraber CFG	TIB licence holder
Mr Denis Passi	Mer CFG	
Mr Gavin Mosby	Masig CFG	
Mr Henry Savage	Erub TO	Nominated member
Mr Neville Nakata	TSRA	TSRA CFG Coordinator
Mr Grant Leeworthy	Tasmanian Seafoods	Buyers boat license holder
Mr Nyall Ledger	TVH BDM Fisher	TVH BDM Fisher, buyers boat license holder
Mr Tim Skewes	CSIRO	Researcher
Mr Shane Fava	Fisheries Queensland (Phone linkup)	Fisheries Management Officer

Observers

Name	Role	Declaration of Interest
Mr Alifereti Tawake	PhD Candidate (Researcher)	
Mr Chris Parry (*)	AFMA Foreign Compliance	
Mr Chris Calogeras	C-AID Director	
Mr Henry Savage	Traditional Owner Erub	

Apologies

Name	Role
Mr Lyndon Peddell	QDPI & F Compliance

(*) ATTENDED DAY TWO ONLY



DECISION RECORD – HCWG NO. 4

- 1.1.1 The HCWG agreed that the minutes from HCWG meetings No. 3 were an accurate record of the meeting and were ratified with minor amendments.
- 2.1.1: The HCWG agreed to support development of a project proposal for a 5t experimental commercial take of Sandfish by CSIRO with assistance from TSRA and AFMA. This proposal should be provided to the Torres Strait Scientific Advisory Committee (TSSAC) for consideration.
- 2.2.1 The HCWG agreed to endorse the recommendations provided in two reports being Torres Strait Hand Collectables: 2009 Survey: Sea Cucumber, and Torres Strait Hand Collectables: 2009 Survey: Trochus by Skewes *et al.* (2010).
- 2.3.1 The HCWG agreed to support a proposed research project for a dedicated Trochus survey of Torres Strait and requested CSIRO to develop a proposal for consideration by the TSSAC.
- 3.2.1 The HCWG agreed to support, in principle, development of a research proposal to investigate ranching of hand collectable fisheries species included in Harvest Strategy for Trochus and Sea Cucumber.
- 6.3.1 The HCWG agreed to recommend to the PZJA that Mr Kenny Bedford be appointed as interim chair of the HCWG until such time a permanent chair is identified.

ACTION ITEMS

			Agenda Item	Due Date
1.	CSIRO to develop a research proposal for an experimental commercial take (5t) of Sandfish with assistance from TSRA and AFMA. This proposal should be provided to the Torres Strait Scientific Advisory Committee (TSSAC) for consideration	CSIRO Tim Skewes AFMA TSRA	2.1	Nov 2010
2.	CSIRO to include the suggested amendments to the Decision Support Tool and provide an updated program to stakeholders before the next HCWG.	CSIRO Tim Skewes	2.2	Mar 2011
3.	CSIRO to develop a research proposal for a dedicated Trochus survey of Torres Strait for consideration by the TSSAC.	CSIRO Tim Skewes	2.3	Sep 2010
4	AFMA and TSRA to hold a workshop, including all relevant CFG groups in the Torres Strait, to plan for development of Harvest Strategies for Trochus and Sea Cucumber for the remaining relevant Torres Strait communities.	AFMA, TSRA members	3.1	Dec 2010
5.	The HCWG agreed to support, in principle, development of a research proposal to	AFMA	3.2	Nov 2010



	investigate ranching of hand collectable fisheries species included in Harvest Strategy for Trochus and Sea Cucumber.			
6.	AFMA to communicate to the Traditional Inhabitants Meeting the HCWG support of the closure of the PNG Sea Cucumber Fishery	AFMA	4.1.	Oct 2010
7.	AFMA to write a letter to Kailag Enterprise expressing support for the project and the community economic development that the project could bring.	AFMA/ PZJA	5.2	Nov 2010

Meeting start: 11.10am

Agenda Item 1: Meeting Administration

1.1 Ratification of HCWG No. 3 meeting records (AFMA)

Decision 1.1: The HCWG **AGREED** that the minutes from HCWG meetings No. 3 were an accurate record of the meeting and were ratified with minor amendments.

1.2 Actions Items from HCWG No. 3

The group noted that the action items from HCWG No. 3 have been executed.

Agenda Item 2: Research (AFMA)

2.1 Sandfish survey results

Tim Skewes presented interim results from the Sandfish abundance survey on Warrior Reef. The surveys results indicate some recovery of Sandfish with records of greater numbers of larger and smaller individuals. The survey also identified potential uncertainty in the estimates of stock abundance due to difficulties of the survey techniques recording burrowed Sandfish.

CSIRO proposed an experimental fishing program for 5 ton of Sandfish at Warrior Reef: The catch rates from this experimental catch would be compared to the visual survey results and past catch rates. The project will also facilitate community involvement in monitoring stocks and further stock recovery.

The HCWG supported the proposed experimental fishing program, however wanted additional management measures covered in the proposal including:

- Demonstration that there was low risk of harvest in excess of the 5t TAC, eg a limit on the number of tenders and the number of days of fishing;
- Transparency of the processes for all Traditional Inhabitants;
- Community education and interviews on past fishing effort;
- Implementation of relevant data sheets.

Decision 2.1.1: The HCWG **AGREED** to support development of a project proposal for a 5T experimental commercial take of Sandfish by CSIRO with assistance from TSRA and AFMA. This proposal should be provided to the Torres Strait Scientific Advisory Committee (TSSAC) for consideration. (**ACTION ITEM 1**).



2.2 2009 surveys of Hand Collectables in eastern Torres Strait

Tim Skewes gave an overview of the final reports from the research project “Sustainable Harvest Strategies for the Torres Strait Hand Collectables.”

Sea cucumber populations were surveyed at 113 sites in east Torres Strait during March 2009. Trochus was also surveyed at the same time at the same sites with only 12 sites recording Trochus.

Annual Total Allowable Catch (TAC) recommendations for Torres Strait beche-de-mer species provided in Skewes *et al.* (2010) are as follows.

Species	Proposed TAC (t)	Current TAC (t)
Black teatfish	25	0
White teatfish	15	15
Prickly redfish	20	20
Deepwater redfish	25	80*
Surf redfish	0	0
Blackfish	5	80*
Other species	80 [†]	80*

* Currently fished as “other species” TAC = 80 t

[†] But with a 5 t trigger limit that will initiate species review.

CSIRO also recommend that a trigger limit of 5t per year be implemented for all species that do not have a species specific TAC. Exceeding the trigger limit will result in a review of the catch data for that species, and a recommendation for future exploitation levels and/or data requirements for that species.

The group discussed concerns with the re-introduction of a TAC for high valued species such as Black Teatfish with the current non-compulsory reporting of harvest by TIB sector. Traditional Inhabitant representatives acknowledged that compulsory reporting needed to be in place before reopening these species to a commercial TAC to reduce risk of overexploitation.

The HCWG recommended that the work by Alifereti Tawake in development of Community Based harvest strategies for Warraber and Erub will be a necessary requirement for all communities prior to/or in conjunction with reconsideration of TAC’s and compulsory reporting.

Trochus stocks were assessed as being stable or increasing in abundance, however, there were questions raised as to the precision of the abundance estimate for Trochus due to the cryptic nature of Trochus and the survey techniques used being focused on beche de mer. Further discussion on future research was discussed at Item 2.2.

A number of recommendations from CSIRO with regard to Trochus was discussed and adopted by the HCWG as per Skewes *et al.* (2010).

Decision 2.2.1: The HCWG **AGREED** to endorse the recommendations provided in two reports being Torres Strait Hand Collectables: 2009 Survey: Sea Cucumber, and Torres Strait Hand Collectables: 2009 Survey: Trochus by Skewes *et al.* (2010).

A beta version of a Decision Support Tool was demonstrated to the group. The Decision Support Tool is designed to illustrate and collate information on Trochus and Sea cucumber densities, identifying reefs and reefs habitats to assist development of spatial management



strategies. The HCWG indicated that the Decision Support Tool will assist in the Community Based Harvest Strategies development.

The HCWG noted the progress in development of the Decision Support Tool and provided the researcher with a number of suggestions to improve the tool. The group requested that the tool be further developed with addition of titles, home reefs, different fisheries boundaries, log book boundaries and trigger points.

Tim Skewes agreed to include the suggested amendments in the Decision Support Tool and provide an updated program to stakeholders before the next HCWG. **(ACTION ITEM 2).**

2.3 Proposed Trochus Survey

CSIRO Tim Skewes discussed a proposed research survey for Trochus in Torres Strait. The proposed research project would carry out a survey of Trochus in Torres Strait using amended survey techniques with dedicated searching for Trochus allowing stock abundance estimates to be made with a greater degree of precision.

The outputs from this project will aid management of the Trochus fishery, in particular the appropriateness of the current 150t TAC. The specific objectives of the proposed project are:

- To assess the size, status and spatial structure of Trochus stocks in Torres Strait.
- To determine a sustainable TAC for Trochus in Torres Strait based on survey data.
- To record data including shell weight (animals in and out) and shell size, to evaluate and strengthen current Trochus stock formulations.

CSIRO Tim Skewes added that CSIRO had concerns on the reported coral bleaching and the environmental impacts bleaching may have on the Trochus habitat.

Decision 2.3.1 The HCWG **AGREED** to support a proposed research project for a dedicated Trochus survey of Torres Strait and requested CSIRO to develop a proposal for consideration by the TSSAC. **(ACTION ITEM 3)**

2.4 Research priorities for the Torres Strait Hand Collectables (AFMA)

HCWG noted the Hand Collectable fisheries research priorities included in the 2010 Annual Operational Plan and the request from the TSSAC to review these. The HCWG acknowledge the research priorities for hand collectables and provided no further comment on those included in the 2010 Operational Plan for Torres Strait Fisheries.

3.1 'Livelihood benefits of co-management of hand collectables fisheries in the Torres Strait' (MTSRF – Alifereti Tawake)

Mr. Tawake provided an update on the 'livelihood benefits at the community level of co-management in hand collectable fisheries' project.

The surveys, planning workshops and consultations have been conducted with community members from Erub and Warraber and are being drafted into Community Based Management Harvest Strategies.

Communities have indicated that a spatial management approach to effective fisheries co-management was preferred with 'home reef' areas to be managed through close arrangements with the community ('informative'¹ management) whilst outside the home reefs, management would be more 'advisory' in nature.

¹ See minutes from HCWG No. 3 for a description of Informative and advisory management. Minutes can be viewed at www.pzja.gov.au/committees/working/tshcwg/tshcwg_meeting_4/attach_1_1.pdf



Ranching or 'garden' areas was raised by communities as a priority area for replenishing stocks and providing economic opportunities. This initiative was identified as an area for further investigation as a research proposal by CSIRO as discussed in Agenda Item 3.2.

Both communities agreed on the management strategies included in the draft community based harvest strategies:

- Hookah bans
- Seasonal closures during spawning period
- Reef closure for stock enhancement
- Rotational based harvesting
- Individual reef and traditional boundary zones TACs
- Restocking no-take zones with hatchery-reared juveniles (very expensive and limited to Sandfish only at present);
- Aggregating remnant wild individuals in no-take zones; and
- Development of small enterprises to rear wild-caught sea cucumbers in simple sea pens, or dedicated mudflats and reef areas, to the size above sexual maturity that optimizes earnings

The HCWG agreed that extension of Community Based Harvest Strategies to all Torres Strait communities was a major undertaking and would require a dedicated person to ensure completion. The HCWG felt that a consultant to develop Harvest Strategies for the remaining relevant Torres Strait Communities would be required to develop community based harvest strategies with the remaining relevant communities.

Representatives from Masig, Poruma and Iama agreed to nominate their communities for development of a Community Based Harvest Strategy for their hand collectable fisheries.

The HCWG agreed to hold a workshop, including all relevant CFG groups in the Torres Strait, to plan for development of Harvest Strategies for Trochus and Sea Cucumber for the remaining relevant Torres Strait communities (**ACTION ITEM 4**) including:

- Proposal for a funded position to recruit a consultant to develop Harvest Strategy for Trochus and Sea Cucumber for the remaining relevant Torres Strait communities.
- Management strategies/rotation closures.
- Produce a suitable species guide to facilitate the collection of accurate fishery catch data.
- Implement co-management harvest strategies with Island communities that limit effort pulses, mitigate localised depletion and collect fishery and fishery-independent data

3.2 Sea Cucumber and Trochus ranching (MTSRF – Alifereti Tawake)

Mr. Tawake discussed the inclusion of Trochus and Sea cucumber ranching in the Community Based Harvest Strategy. Erub and Warraber Island communities have identified reef areas and lagoons to set aside as 'reef gardens' to restock wild Sea cucumbers and Trochus as part of their community based harvest strategies. The assumption is that aggregating spawning adults or mother stocks to enhance reproduction and to supply recruits to nearby reefs can help fast track stock recovery.

There was an interest by the communities for a business plan to commence a small hatchery to rear spat from brood stock to restock nominated reefs. However, Tasmanian Seafood's, Grant Leeworthy, indicated that a hatchery was very expensive and may not be economically viable.



HCWG generally felt that the concept of gardening/ranching will provide flow on benefits in the communities.

The Warraber community has identified Bet Reef and the Erub (Darnley) community has identified Gasir Lagoons and Patened Reef as reef gardens for trial restocking high value species such as Sandfish from surrounding reefs.

Decision 3.2.1 The HCWG **AGREED** to support, in principle, development of a research proposal to investigate ranching of hand collectable fisheries species included in Harvest Strategy for Trochus and Sea Cucumber (**ACTION ITEM 5**).

4.1 Foreign Compliance update (AFMA)

AFMA Compliance (Torres Strait) provided HCWG with a report on foreign compliance activities in Torres Strait with relation to Torres Strait Hand Collectable Fisheries.

Since the commencement of the closure AFMA has closely monitored the activities of fishers on the PNG side of Warrior Reef. To date there has been no evidence of any sea cucumber harvesting taking place. Recent communications with Daru based fisheries officers also supports that no large scale harvesting has taken place on the PNG side.

The Daru court has prosecuted 84 fishermen over the past 4 years with breaches for illegal sea cucumber catches. It is understood that each fishermen prosecuted were fined on average 600 Kina.

HCWG voiced their support for the NFA closure of the PNG Sea Cucumber Fishery and requested that this be raised at upcoming meetings with PNG.

AFMA was requested to communicate to the Traditional Inhabitants Meeting the HCWG support of the closure of the PNG Sea Cucumber Fishery (**ACTION ITEM 6**).

5.1 TSSAC update

HCWG noted the major outcomes from TSSAC No.52.

5.2 Yorke Island Sponge Farm Update

TSRA provided HCWG with an update of the progress of the Yorke Island Sponge Farm.

Researchers continue to investigate the number and distribution of sponges in the local area as well as factors that influence sponge grow out, including disease. Overall this information will assist Torres Strait communities to sustainably farm bath sponges.

TSRA indicated that the sponge farm is regularly frequented by commercial traffic. With the substantial amount of investment in the water around Masig (Yorke) and potential new aquaculture sites yet to be surveyed in the region the potential damage by commercial traffic when anchoring near the site is a concern.

The HCWG agreed to write a letter to Kailag Enterprise expressing support for the project and the community economic development that the project could bring. (**ACTION ITEM 7**)

5.3 Strategic Assessments of Torres Strait Beche de mer and Trochus Fisheries

The HCWG noted the progress made towards meeting DEWHA recommendations included in the Strategic Assessments for Torres Strait Sea cucumber and Trochus.



6.1 Okinawa Pearls Update

Mr. Bedford gave a briefing on a second visit by delegates of Okinawa Pearls, Japan and their interest in setting up a pearl farm in the vicinity of Erub. The visitors said the waters of the region were good for growing pearls and the Torres Straits was a 'marketable name'. The visit also provided an opportunity for stakeholders to investigate joint venture opportunities.

A small Torres Strait Islander delegation also visited the Ryuku Pearl Company operation in Japan as a familiarisation tour prior to six Torres Strait Islander trainees spending two months with the Ishagaki Island pearl industry later in the year.

The HCWG noted the update on the progress of Okinawa Pearls interest in pearl farms around Erub.

6.2 Indigenous Fisheries Centre of Excellence.

Chris Calogeras Director of C-AIDS Consultants informed the HCWG of a FRDC funded projects to investigate the feasibility of an Indigenous Fisheries Center of Excellence. The centre would be a one stop on-line hub to address fisheries developments, extensions and enquiries for Indigenous fisheries initiatives in Australia.

The aim of the centre was not to re-create existing research and training infrastructure, but to utilise and group existing services for Indigenous people wanting training and development in all areas of the fisheries. The Consultant noted the views of the HCWG members with regard to the opportunities for Torres Strait Islanders in such a centre.

HCWG noted the Indigenous Fisheries Center of Excellence program and the potential benefits it has for economic development in Northern and regional Australian.

6.3 HCWG Chairperson

The issue of a permanent chair for the HCWG was continued on from discussions at HCWG No. 3. Kenny Bedford agreed to Chair this meeting (HCWG Meeting No. 4) as interim Chair but could not accept a position as permanent chair at this time.

The Group discussed the need to recommend to the PZJA a permanent chairperson. Members indicated that Kenny Bedford's portfolio may be construed as a conflict of interest while presiding as the TSHCWG chair.

Mr Kenny Bedford agreed to sit as the current chair until he is replaced.

Decision 6.3.1 The HCWG **AGREED** to recommend to the PZJA that Mr Kenny Bedford be appointed as interim chair of the HCWG until such time a permanent chair is identified.

6.4 Date for Next Meeting

A meeting date for next meeting was not set.

Meeting Closed: 3.35pm

