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Torres Strait Prawn Management Advisory Committee (TSPMAC)

MINUTES

TSPMAC 9

8-9 DECEMBER 2009

NORTHERN FISHERIES CENTRE CAIRNS

CHAIR: Mr. Jim Gillespie



Queensland
Government



**TORRES STRAIT PRAWN
MANAGEMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING No. 9
8-9 December, 2009: Commencing at 9:00 am
Venue: Northern Fisheries Centre - 38-40 Tingira Street, Portsmith, Cairns**

Preliminaries – Chairs opening remarks/Adoption of Agenda/Disclosure of Interests/Apologies

AGENDA

1 Meeting Administration

- 1.1 Ratification of TSPMAC No. 8 meeting record (AFMA)
- 1.2 Ratification of OOS TSPMAC meetings and OOS decisions (AFMA)
- 1.3 Actions and/or business arising from previous TSPMAC meetings (AFMA)

2 Reports

- 2.1 Industry update – 2009 to date (Industry)
- 2.2 2009 Observer program update (AFMA)
- 2.3 Observer coverage – CMO program and traditional inhabitant observers (AFMA)
- 2.4 Compliance report - Season update on activities (QB&FP)
- 2.5 Environment report (AFMA)
- 2.6 Report from the 2009 Australian/PNG bilateral fisheries meeting (DAFF)
- 2.7 Recent financial and economic performance in the TSP fishery (ABARE)
- 2.8 Data preliminary analysis of trends in 2009 catch and effort data (QPIF research)

3 Research

- 3.1 Future funding for research and stock assessments (QPI&F)

4 Management

- 4.1 progress on finalizing 2010 TAE (DAFF)
- 4.2 FMI implementation and Management Plan amendments – Update (DAFF)
- 4.3 TSPF Harvest Strategy (AFMA)
- 4.4 External leasing – survey results and update (QPI&F)
- 4.5 Ghost nets and marine debris
 - 4.5a - and project funding (TSRA)
 - 4.5b - Industry code of conduct (AFMA)
- 4.6 AQIS quarantine database (DAFF)
- 4.7 Sponge Farm (TSRA)
- 4.8 sponge farm – managing risk (TSRA)
- 4.9 VMS – what can and can't VMS be used for? (QPI&F)

5 Finances

- 5.1 2010 season levies
 - 5.1a – final levies for the 2010 season (AFMA)
 - 5.1b – update on implementation (DAFF)

6 Other business

- 6.1 Dates for next meeting

Individuals wishing to attend the meeting as an observer are required to contact the Chair (Mr. Jim Gillespie: care of Lisa Cocking, TSPMAC Executive Officer; lisa.cocking@afma.gov.au) notifying him of your desire to attend.

DECISION RECORD - TSPMAC 9

1.1.1 The TSPMAC **AGREED** to adopt the minutes from the TSPMAC 8 meeting held on June 16-17, 2009.

1.2.1 The TSPMAC **AGREED** to adopt the minutes and decision records of the out of session TSPMAC teleconference's held on 10 August and 26 August 2009 (Attachment 1.2A).

1.3.1 The TSPMAC **NOTED** the information updates provided regarding the action items from previous TSPMAC meetings.

2.1.1 The TSPMAC **NOTED** the Industry report provided verbally in respect of the 2009 Torres Strait Prawn Fishery, both the season to date and an outlook.

2.2.1 The TSPMAC **NOTED** the activity in the observer program in the fishery for the 2009 season.

2.3.1 The TSPMAC **NOTED**

(a) the letter which was sent to DEWHA noting AFMAs intention to change the way observer coverage in the TSPF is described to a percentage of effort instead of a number of days.

(b) the information provided on CMO and traditional inhabitant observer programs.

(c) that it is not considered cost effective or practical to implement a CMO or traditional inhabitant observer program at this time in lieu of the reducing the existing program.

(d) that traditional inhabitants are encouraged to apply for the AFMA observer or casual observer program.

2.4.1 The TSPMAC **NOTED**:

(a) the Domestic Compliance Report for the period February 2009 to October 2009.

2.5.1 That TSPMAC **NOTED**:

a) The environment update provided at Attachment 2.5A detailing the environment related issues the fishery will need to focus on over the coming months

b) the recommendations of the strategic assessment report;

c) the current status of the Ecological Risk Assessment Process for the TSPF;

d) the protected species interactions for the 2009 season and that it is not an offence to interact with a protected species in the TSPF however is an offence not to report these interactions;

e) information about Marine Bioregional Planning (MBP) in the regions adjacent to the TSPF noting the MBPs are not applicable to Torres Strait Fisheries;

f) other information on projects conduct by AFMA's Environment Section.

2.6.1 The TSPMAC **NOTED** the draft outcomes of the 2009 Australia-PNG bilateral fisheries meeting.

2.7.1 The TSPMAC **NOTED** the summary within TSPMAC paper 2.7 of results from ABARE's most recent survey of the Torres Strait prawn fishery.

2.8.1 That the TSPMAC **NOTED** the preliminary information presented on the trends in the 2009 catch and effort data compared with earlier years.

3.1.1 The TSPMAC **NOTED**:

- (a) the current status and arrangements for funding Torres Strait Prawn Fishery (TSPF) research;
- (b) comments provided by the Torres Strait Scientific Advisory Committee regarding TSPF research; and
- (c) the Strategic Research Plan for Torres Strait Fisheries research.

3.1.2 The TSPMAC **DISCUSSED**:

- (a) research priorities for the TSPF.
- (b) the viability of previously identified funding sources and new research funding avenues for the TSPF.

3.1.3 The TSPMAC **RECOMMENDED** we put a business case together for the funding of routine scientific work that considers using savings from reducing observer coverage or the 25% management costs attributed to the PNG allocation.

4.1a The TSPMAC **NOTED** the progress on finalising the Torres Strait Prawn Fishery 2010 Total Allowable Effort.

4.2 The TSPMAC **NOTED** the progress on amending the Torres Strait Management Plan 2008 and the implementation of the five Fisheries Management Instruments.

4.3.1 The TSPMAC **NOTED**

- (a) the progress on the development of the TSPF Harvest Strategy.
- (b) the three possible options presented in this paper from which the TSPF Harvest Strategy can be developed.

4.3.2 The TSPMAC **DISCUSSED** the three possible options presented in this paper from which the TSPF Harvest Strategy can be developed.

4.3.3 The TSPMAC **RECOMMENDED** that the TSPF Harvest Strategy background section includes explicit information explaining that although the harvest strategy is set with an MEY target, it is still set to ensure that the fishery is sustainable and there is no sustainability risk to the stock.

4.3.4 The TSPMAC **RECOMMENDED** that PZJA agencies will report on the Harvest Strategy annually to the TSPMAC and PZJA when the updated data for the prawn handbook is provided by Fisheries Queensland assessment and monitoring unit.

4.3.5 The TSPMAC **RECOMMENDED** that the TAE for the fishery continues to be set at 9200 days for the maximum period allowable under the management plan (currently 3 years) unless research triggered under the Harvest Strategy identifies the need for alternate arrangements or the PZJA has concern about the status of the stock.

4.3.6 The TSPMAC **RECOMMENDED** that option 3 as presented in TSPMAC 9 paper 4.3 be used to develop the Harvest Strategy for the fishery, which includes:

- a) A Target reference point (B_{targ}) of B_{34} (which is $1.2 B_{\text{msy}}$ or B_{28})
- b) A limit reference point (B_{lim}) of B_{20} as defined in the stock assessment model
- c) a trigger point for commencing research where if **≥ 4000 days** of TAE has been utilised or **680 tonnes of Tiger Prawns** are caught or **620 tonnes of Endeavour Prawns are caught** within a season, for two consecutive years (note: the same trigger must be triggered for the two consecutive years)
- d) if the trigger is reached then commence;
 - i. research which will entail an update of the stock assessment and bioeconomic modelling by the PZJA agencies;
 - ii. reconvene Harvest Strategy Working Group to oversee the research and further development of the Harvest Strategy;
 - iii. Estimate B_{mey} using the additional research
 - iv. Revisit target and limit reference points and trigger points and develop decision rules for setting the TAE using the new research outputs and current status of the fishery and social environment in which it operates (including decisions rules around what we do when stock assessments are undertaken and when they aren't undertaken)
- e) If less than **1000 days** of the TAE has been utilised during any one season then consult industry about the possibility of suspending the fishery for a number of years which will reduce levies and have less financial pressure on industry to request advice on the future management arrangements of the fishery.

4.3.7 The TSPMAC **RECOMMENDED** that option three only be undertaken under the proviso that PZJA agencies undertake actions to determine potential ways to improve profitability in the fishery.

4.3.8 The TSPMAC **RECOMMENDED** that PZJA agencies will determine which mid year trigger points are used in other fisheries to monitor the stock status and determine if one is suitable of the TSPF.

4.3.9 The TSPMAC **AGREED** that assessment of whether the trigger has been reached should be undertaken using VMS data at the end of each

fishing season on 1 December and this data be presented to the MAC regardless of its outcome.

4.4.1 The TSPMAC **NOTED**:

(a) that previous correspondence indicated industry support for the introduction of external leasing in the Torres Strait Prawn Fishery (TSPF) was divided;

(b) that a survey was sent out to TSPF licence holders on 4 September 2009 requesting input on a proposal to formalise external leasing arrangements in the TSPF (Attachment 4.4A);

(c) that TSPF licence holders were advised that all non-responses to the survey will be viewed as being in support of formal external leasing arrangements for the TSPF;

(d) the summary report from the external leasing survey including stakeholder comments (Attachment 4.4B);

4.4.2 The TSPMAC **DISCUSSED** the results obtained from the survey and the role external leasing will have (if any) in the TSPF; and

4.4.3 The TSPMAC **RECOMMENDS** based on survey results, that PZJA agencies should determine a process for formalising external leasing in the TSPF and implement it.

4.5.1 The TSPMAC **NOTED** the progress in addressing the issue of marine debris on the seabed adjacent to Kodall Island.

4.5.2 The TSPMAC **NOTED** the progress on the development of the industry code of conduct for responsible disposal of marine debris.

4.5.3 The TSPMAC **DISCUSSED** the content of the draft code of conduct for responsible disposal of marine debris in the TSPF and made recommendations of changes for the next draft.

4.6.1 The TSPMAC **NOTED** advice provided by AQIS about considerations to be addressed as part of writing an informal draft submission to AQIS to commence gaining approval to import prawns caught in the PNG Area of jurisdiction of the Torres Strait Protected Zone.

4.6.2 The TSPMAC **AGREED** that TSPMAC industry members will address the questions outlined in TSPMAC paper 6.2 working with AFMA as part of gaining approval from AQIS to import prawns caught in the PNG Area of jurisdiction of the Torres Strait Protected Zone.

4.6.3 The TSPMAC **AGREED** that this issue is of less priority than other issues in the fishery and will be addressed as soon as possible when other higher priority issues such as the Harvest Strategy have been completed.

4.7.1 The TSPMAC **NOTED** Kailag Enterprise sponge aquaculture farm at Massig Island; and its proximity to areas of shipping activity.

4.8.1 The TSPMAC **NOTED**:

- a) The report on the marine incident that occurred adjacent to the sponge farm; and
- b) The offences and penalties as set out in the Queensland Fisheries Act 1994, and the Penalties and Sentences Act 1992, in relation to interference with aquaculture activities.

4.8.2 The TSPMAC **DISCUSSED** the available options to formally protect the safety of employees and infrastructure of the Kailag Enterprises sponge aquaculture farm and prevent further incidents involving Torres Strait Prawn fishery vessels including the following suggestions:

1. Development of a fisheries management notice (FMN) for areas set aside as sponge farm leases which could include:
 - i. requirements for stowing gear in; and/or
 - ii. prohibiting the cartage of all TS prawn species
2. Establishment of an alternative anchorage zone for prawn trawlers that frequently utilise the Kodall area (crabpot) for anchorage.
3. Establishment of fishing and anchorage exclusion zones in areas around Masig and Kodall islands.

4.8.3 The TSPMAC **RECOMMENDED** that AFMA and TSRA liaise with MSQ to determine the process that would be required for placing channel markers to guide vessels into the crab pot.

The TSPMAC **AGREED** look at the process required to place channel markers in the area adjacent to the sponge farm to safely guide vessels to the crab pot to help prevent further incidents involving Torres Strait Prawn fishery vessels on the sponge farm.

4.9.1 The TSPMAC **NOTED**:

- (a) how the Vessel Monitoring System (VMS) is used in the Torres Strait Prawn Fishery (TSPF), including how fishing days are defined;
- (b) the operational role and limitations of VMS, including data usage and availability;
- (c) that VMS may assist in marine emergency situations but cannot be relied on for use as marine safety device;
- (d) that in line with the Commonwealth Privacy Act 1988 VMS data cannot be distributed beyond the managing authority if it can be used to identify individual trawl tracks and/or individual vessel movements if they are complying with enforceable legislation;
- (e) the beneficial nature of VMS data when used as an aid for assisting in QB+FP breaches;

(f) that VMS data cannot be used to enforce or monitor any voluntary agreements or closures that are not legally enforceable.

5.1.1 The TSPMAC NOTED:

(a) The final combined AFMA and QPIF budget for the TSPF has been calculated using the cost recovery impact statement 2004.

(b) A minor change in the draft levies from what was presented at the TSPMAC OOS teleconference on 26 August 2009 from \$4189.45 to \$4229.06 per licence cost and a change of \$27.58 to \$27.23 per unit cost.

(c) That a minimal change in the total TSPF cost recovered budget that was presented at the TSPMAC OOS teleconference on 26 August 2009 from \$502,038 to \$502,040 for the 2010 fishing season.

5.1.2 The TSPMAC NOTED the progress on finalising the 2010 fishing levies for the Torres Strait Prawn Fishery.

6.1.1 The TSPMAC RECOMMENDED that AFMA and TSRA liaise with MSQ to determine the process that would be required for placing channel markers to guide vessels into the crab pot.

The following members and observers were in attendance at TSPMAC OOS 10 August 2010.

Members	Permanent observers
Chair – Mr Jim Gillespie	PNG – Mr Lester Baule (day 2 only)
AFMA and EO – Ms Lisa Cocking	
QPIF – Mr Ian Jacobsen	
QPIF – Mr Eddie Jebreen	
AFMA – Mr Stan Lui	
Scientific member – Mr Clive Turnbull QPIF	
Industry – Ms Kylie Paulsen	
Industry – Mr Marshall Betzel	Observers
Industry – Mr Chris Bourke	Industry – Mr Rusty
Industry – Mr Ron Earle	ABARE - Mr Chris Perks
CFG – Mr Gavin Mosby	MSQ – Kevin Schindler
CFG – Mr Francis Pearson	
TSRA – Mr Neville Nakata	

PRELIMINARIES

Welcome

Mr Jim Gillespie, the TSPMAC Chair opened the meeting at 9:00am and welcomed the new member non-traditional inhabitant industry member Ms Kylie Paulsen to the MAC. Mr Gillespie thanked the members for taking the time to attend the meeting. The Chair noted apologies from CFG representative Mr Charles David, DAFF and BRS.

Declaration of interest

The Chair invited members to advise of any potential conflicts of interest that haven't been discussed at past meetings.

Mr Paulsen explained that she is the part owner of two TSPF licenses. Further she works for the grains research and development corporation which is a statutory authority. This is not a conflict of interest however could be a perceived conflict of interest for some operators.

Mr Bourke explained that he represents a number of vessels working in the Torres Strait but does not hold any licenses as he works in the processing and marketing component of the fishery.

MEETING ADMINISTRATION***Ratification of meeting minutes***

The TSPMAC adopted the minutes of the 8th meeting of the TSPMAC as well as minutes from the 10 and 26 August out of session meetings. Mr Jacobsen asked that one amendment be made to the 10 August out of session meeting to change the attendees to include himself and instead of Eddie Jebreen from QLD Fisheries.

Actions arising

The Executive Officer presented the actions arising from previous meetings and asked that relevant TSPMAC members and observers to provide the TSPMAC with the progress on their respective action items.

Action reference number	Action	Date item was added	responsibility	Status
TSPMAC OOS 260809 1	Present the table detailing the budget spilt between license and unit levies at the next TSPMAC meeting.	TSPMAC OOS 260809	AFMA	Complete. See table 1.3A. The TSPMAC were happy with the budget splits.
TSPMAC OOS 260809 2	Investigate the possibility of cancelling levy fees in relation the vessel Dynasty which sank in April 09 in the Torres Strait.	TSPMAC OOS 260809	QPI&F	Complete. After investigations PZJA agencies determined it would be possible to postpone the payment of fees for a 12 month period to ease the immediate pressure on license holders, however the fees could not be waived. This is consistent with the process used in the QLD east coast fisheries.
TSPMAC OOS 100809 1	Distribute draft industry letter regarding external leasing to TSPMAC industry members for comment.	TSPMAC OOS 100809	QPIF and EO	Complete. sent out for comments on 11 August 2009.
TSPMAC 8.1	DAFF and TSPMAC EO to draft a letter to AQIS on behalf of the TSPMAC Chair which	TSPMAC 8	DAFF and TSPMAC EO	No longer an action item. This action item has been replaced by TSPMAC 9 action X AQIS have

	will inform them of the starting date of next season and ask whether their quarantine database will be up and running by the start of the season. The letter should also request that if possible, it would be useful for the system to be in by 1 March 2010 if not by end of 2009.			provided a series of questions (see TSPMAC 9 paper 4.6) which need to be addressed before cross jurisdictional fishing will be considered.
TSPMAC 8.2	DAFF to update the PZJA historic decision record with new PZJA decisions as they are made and provide to AFMA intermittently for updating on the PZJA website.	TSPMAC 8	DAFF	No longer an action item. DAFF have decided that future decisions will be available in the PZJA decision records which are available from the PZJA website. The historic decision record will be used for historic decisions however will not be updated with new decisions.
TSPMAC 8.3	AFMA to upload the PZJA historic decision record to the PZJA website	TSPMAC 8	AFMA	Ongoing. DAFF will provide a completed decision record in the future as they would like to wait until a whole of PZJA decision record is produced, not just prawn.
TSPMAC 8.4	AFMA to liaise with TSPMAC industry members regarding a CMO program to develop an agenda item for presentation at	TSPMAC 8	AFMA	Incomplete. After reviewing the decisions regarding a CMO program when the observer program was first implemented, it

	TSPMAC 9.			was decided that this is not a feasible option for cost savings. Further, there is no budgeted funding at present to training CMOs.
TSPMAC 8.5	AFMA to explore the methods that could be used to place traditional inhabitant observers in the TSPF including legislative	TSPMAC 8	AFMA	Complete. Traditional inhabitants are encouraged to apply for the AFMA observer and casual observer program if they are interested in this work. See TSPMAC 9 paper 2.3 for more information.
TSPMAC 8.6	TSRA to investigate the interest from Islanders in being a part of an observer program	TSPMAC 8	TSRA	Complete. CFGs spoke with some traditional inhabitants and there is currently little interest, mainly due to the long time periods required to be at sea.
TSPMAC 8.7	TSRA to liaise with CFGs to review list of species of interest and observer program objectives in general and provide comments to AFMA.	TSPMAC 8	TSRA	Complete. a species of interest list has been provided by TSRA and passed on to the observer program manager for inclusion in data collection next season. TSRA have also informed AFMA that CFGs are happy with the objectives discussed at TSPMAC 8.
TSPMAC 8.8	QPIF to draft a letter to DEWHA regarding the level of observer coverage in the	TSPMAC 8	QPIF	Complete. a letter was sent from AFMA to DEWHA on 9 November 2009. See TSPMAC 9 paper 2.3

	TSPF, explaining that the current percentage of effort is on par with other Australian Fisheries and explaining that we are undertaking a process to increase temporal and spatial coverage of observers to improve data collection. The letter should be sent to the EO for distribution to the MAC OOS for comment.			for more details.
TSPMAC 8.9	AFMA to draft a letter to industry asking them to commit to taking observers	TSPMAC 8	AFMA	Incomplete. considering the low amount of effort and higher priority work in the fishery. This was not completed. AFMA will undertake this for next season.
TSPMAC 8.10	determine if costs can be rolled over into the next season if they don't use all of their days.	TSPMAC 8	AFMA	Complete. Budgeted costs directly related to days at sea such as salaries for casual observers and at sea allowance can be rolled over as a surplus into next years budget. However there are a number of costs associated with permanent staff and overheads which are based on the calculated budget. Savings are not associated with this portion of the budget, as staff etc are required, regardless of

				whether all the budgeted days are utilised.
TSPMAC 8.11	TSPMAC industry members to write a letter to TSPF license holders explaining the need to increase observer uptake spatially and temporally throughout the fishery in an attempt to reduce the number of actual observed fishing days whilst maintaining statistically robust data collection.	TSPMAC 8	TSPMAC industry members	Complete. letter was sent on 22 July 2010 to all TSPF license holders.
TSPMAC 8.12	QPIF to undertake a review of the level of effort and efficiency of the compliance program and develop an options paper for presentation to the PZJA Standing Committee.	TSPMAC 8	QPIF	Complete. Paper presented at Standing Committee on 19 August 2009.
TSPMAC 8.13	The TSRA to develop a paper for TSPMAC 9 detailing the home reef areas which they would like excluded from fishing and providing detail of the past agreements which were made between CFGs and TSPF industry members and where these agreements were made.	TSPMAC 8	TSRA	Incomplete. This paper was combined into the sponge farm paper and the issue is being progressed. See TSPMAC 9 paper 4.8 for more information.

TSPMAC 8.14	QPIF to determine whether VMS can be used to see who is fishing in the home reef areas and who this information can be provided to.	TSPMAC 8	QPIF	Complete. VMS cannot be used for this purpose. It can be used to enforce closures etc that are in legislation, however VMS data and plots are not even released to PZJA agency staff due to confidentiality laws. Due to the small number of vessels operating in the fishery, it is can be possible to determine which vessels are evident from VMS plots.
TSPMAC 8.15	QPIF to liaise with Mr Harris to determine whether funding can be sourced from the CRC for TSPF research needs.	TSPMAC 8	QPIF	Ongoing. CRC funding can be sought through member organisations of the Australian Seafood CRC. If QSIA successfully join the Australian Council of Prawn Fishers (ACPF), funding can be sought from the CRC.
TSPMAC 8.16	AFMA to determine whether an investment warning is still required for the fishery and the methods of lifting it.	TSPMAC 8	AFMA	Incomplete. PZJA agencies are trying to determine the process for lifting the investment warning in the fishery.
TSPMAC 8.17	AFMA management to liaise with the observer section to get a report on the bycatch that is caught in the TSPF.	TSPMAC 8	AFMA	Ongoing. TEDs were introduced into the fishery in 2002 and vessels had already commenced implementation in 1998. BRDs were compulsory from 2004. As such the MAC should consider

				whether a report on bycatch is going to be useful. It will not show the effect of TEDs and BRDs and reductions in bycatch. Further reductions in bycatch can be taken as a positive or negative as it could mean the biomass has decreased or that bycatch is reducing due to fishing practices
TSPMAC 8.18	AFMA to assess whether a summary of bycatch data can be put in the TSPF handbook for the 2010 season.	TSPMAC 8	AFMA	Ongoing. AFMA observers are currently compiling some data which can be provided in the 2010 TSPF handbook.
TSPMAC 8.19	the information from NPF HS be considered and presented to the next MAC	TSPMAC 8	AFMA	Incomplete. Considering the development of the Harvest Strategy AFMA decided it would not be useful to provide this information.
TSPMAC 8.20	The AFMA economist to attend the next TSPMAC meeting to provide information on the economics of the TSPF.	TSPMAC 8	AFMA	Complete. Mr Galeano attended TSPMAC 9.
TSPMAC 8.21	PZJA agencies to develop an article to distribute positive information regarding the TSPF including bycatch reduction for presentation in forums including the TSRA newsletter, the QSIA news	TSPMAC 8	AFMA & QPIF	Incomplete. The MAC needs to discuss again what information should be included in this document, as bycatch data will not be that useful (as per action 8.17 above).

	letter and the Torres News.			
TSPMAC 8.22	AFMA to develop a letter to license holders informing them of the process being undertaken to develop the HS and HSWG industry members	TSPMAC 8	AFMA	Incomplete.
TSPMAC 8.23	EO to distribute the TSPMAC chairs summary to all TSPF license holders via email as a preference as well as posting it on the PZJA website.	TSPMAC 8	TSPMAC EO	Complete. Email was distributed to the majority of TSPF license holders (emails are not available for all) with chairs summaries attached for TSPMAC 8 and the two August OOS chairs summaries.
TSPMAC 8.24	QPIF and AFMA develop a letter for distribution to industry which will include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) information on the current external leasing arrangements and their risks; b) how formal leasing arrangements would be facilitated by PZJA agencies; c) a questionnaire asking if license holders are for or against external leasing and stating that a lack of response will 	TSPMAC 8	QPIF	Complete. Sent out 4 September, responses were due 1 October. See TSPMAC 9 paper no. 4.4 for more information

	be considered a vote for external leasing.			
TSPMAC 8.25	AFMA to liaise with TSPMAC industry members to develop the draft code of conduct for circulation OOS and then approval at the next TSPMAC.	TSPMAC 8	AFMA	Complete. The code of conduct was distributed to industry for comment in November. See TSPMAC paper 4.5b for more information.
TSPMAC 8.26	PZJA agencies to liaise with TSRA regarding developing a funding proposal for scoping the level of marine debris in the TSPF and costs of removal. The proposal will include a two tiered study: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • scoping the extent of trawl rubbish; and • removing the trawl rubbish. 	TSPMAC 8	TSRA & QPIF	Complete. Funding has been sourced and a scoping study is being undertaken in February by QLD Fisheries research in consultation with TSRA. A report from this study will be provided by May 2010. See TSPMAC paper 4.5a for more information.
TSPMAC 8.27	AFMA to liaise with QPIF to get comments on the BRD survey	TSPMAC 8	AFMA	Complete. comments were provided
TSPMAC 8.28	AFMA to get a small number of industry members to complete the survey to see whether it is user friendly, make appropriate amendments and then distribute the survey to TSPF	TSPMAC 8	AFMA	Complete. The survey was distributed to TSPMAC industry members and Winston Harris on 4 November for distribution to some industry members for consideration. AFMA are awaiting comments.

	license holders			
TSPMAC 8.29	TSPMAC industry members to write a brief report from industry regarding the MAC for the EO to distribute.	TSPMAC 8	TSPMAC industry	Complete. letter was combined with action 8.11 above and sent on 22 July 2009.
TSPMAC 8.30	TSPMAC executive officer to liaise with TSRA regarding the development of a full paper regarding the sponge farms for the next TSPMAC meeting.	TSPMAC 8	TSPMAC EO	Complete. see TSPMAC 9 agenda item 4.7 for more information.
TSPMAC 8.31	TSPMAC industry members to include information regarding the sponge farm in the industry report from the TSPMAC.	TSPMAC 8	TSPMAC industry	Complete. Information was included in the report. See 8.29 and 8.11 above.

Action reference number	Action	Date item was added	responsibility	Status
TSPMAC OOS 070509 1.3	TSPF Industry members to develop a proposal for Government to pay 25% (the PNG portion) of the budget which benefit this sector of the fishery.	TSPMAC OOS 070509	Industry	Incomplete. Industry members would still like to develop a paper and may do it for TSPMAC 10.
TSPMAC OOS 070509 1.5	AFMA to provide a summary of some comments from other MACs regarding the CRIS at TSPMAC 8.	TSPMAC OOS 070509	AFMA	Incomplete. Comments cannot be provided at this time as the process is still pending.
TSPMAC	TSPMAC to undertake an annual self assessment	TSPMAC 6	TSPMAC	Ongoing.

6.3	against PZJA indicators outlined in PZJA FMP No. 1 (May 2008).			Self assessment is not thought to be appropriate at this time considering the change over of MAC members. The MAC agreed to conduct a self assessment at TSPMAC 10 in May 2010.
TSPMAC 6.7	The TSPMAC Executive Officer to ask industry representatives if they would like any other fishery specific objectives to be considered for the TSPF observer program.	TSPMAC 6	TSPMAC EO	Complete. Industry members commented that no more objectives are desired.
TSPMAC 6.15	DAFF to determine whether PNG caught product will need to be clearly marked with the jurisdiction in which it was caught.	TSPMAC 6	DAFF	Replaced by action item 9.26. This action item is awaiting finalisation of import rules by Biosecurity Australia and AQIS. These rules cannot be finalised until the TSPMAC provides responses to certain questions from AQIS (see TSPMAC paper 4.6)
TSPMAC 6.16	DAFF to draft a letter to AQIS on behalf of the TSPMAC Chair which will inform them of the starting date of next season and ask whether their quarantine database will be up and running by the start of the season. The letter should also request that if possible, it would be useful for the system to be in by 1 March if not by end of 2008.	TSPMAC 6	DAFF	Replaced by action item TSPMAC 8.1.
TSPMAC 6.18	AFMA to work with the TSRA and AFMA communications section to consider a method of disseminating the information from Mr Turnbull and Dr Pitcher's reports to the indigenous sector.	TSPMAC 6	AFMA	Incomplete. This has not been a priority in the fishery at present.
TSPMAC 6.29	AFMA to apply a 3 tiered approach to the TED, BRD and try net survey, which includes; 1. sending out surveys to all licenses holders and wait	TSPMAC 6	AFMA	Ongoing. This has been decreased in the work priority list as due to other critical issues. However

	<p>two weeks for a response;</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">2. following up surveys with a phone call offering phone surveys;3. QB&FP and AFMA observers to conduct surveys whilst in the field.			<p>AFMA is finalising the BRD survey and will undertake the survey in early 2010.</p>
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The TSPMAC discussed action item 2 from TSPMAC OOS 260809 where it was asked if any relief could be provided from levies for the vessel Dynasty, who's crew were lost this season. Mr Jacobsen from QLD Fisheries explained that after assessing a number of options, it would need to keep management consistent with the East Coast Trawl Fishery, where fee payment is postponed for 12 months in certain circumstances, however fees won't be waived completely. This relieves some pressure for levy payment.

Mr Chris Bourke asked if the Posidon which sank this year will also be eligible for this. Mr Jacobsen explained that requests for relief will need to be assessed on a case by case basis. Ms Kylie Paulsen suggested that there should be a consistent policy developed to deal with this so all vessels are treated the same. Mr Jacobsen explained that it is difficult to develop a formal policy for this, as the situation is assessed on a case by case basis and it would be difficult to define officially which personal circumstances should receive relief. Mr Jacobsen also pointed out that some people in no boat status may ask for relief and claim extreme personal circumstances, so it would be difficult to draw a distinct line between cases.

Mr Ron Earle pointed out there are also budgetary issues when people don't pay their levies as the unpaid levies must still be recovered. As such if it is made a formal policy, we would need to assess the effects of this and how unpaid levies would effect the remainder of industry. As levies would still be paid albeit just late, it wouldn't have a permanent effect on the fishery, however agencies would need to determine what the effects would be if a formal policy was implemented. Mr Betzal questioned whether no boat license holders have asked for levy relief because they are not fishing. Mr Jebreen explained that some license holders had however all levies have now been paid in full. Ms Paulsen reiterated that there could probably be a broad overarching policy that could cover it. Mr Jebreen commented that he isn't sold either way yet whether we should develop one or not.

Community Fisher Group representative Mr Francis Pearson questioned how many boats are currently still under the water in the Torres Straits. Mr Jacobsen explained there were three and one has been recovered, however the other two are too deep for retrieval. Mr Mosby asked if it is possible to get information on the vessels that have sank since 1999, as they want to know the number that have sunk, the number that have been recovered and the number that are still on the bottom. The Chair commented that we can ask Marine Safety QLD tomorrow as they will be coming in to answer questions about the fishery.

REPORTS

Agenda Item 2.1 Industry report

The Chair explained that at each MAC, industry members are invited to provide an industry update on the fishing season, including information on catch rates, compliance issues and general information on how they fishery is going.

Industry members provided the following summary of the fishery for the 2009 season:

- there are still minimal license holders operating (6-9 vessels at a time) in the fishery at present as costs are too high compared to revenue.
- There is still a lack of infrastructure to support the industry and fear motherships could be completely withdrawn if effort doesn't increase.
- Catch rates have been quite good for vessels who are choosing to work. As such there seems to be a problem with marketing rather than the resource.
- There is starting to be an increase in tiger prawns and decrease in endeavour prawns being caught.
- Production out of the fishery has been great however the prawns being caught in the fishery are not the prawns which are on high demand in Australia. The tiger prawns in Torres Strait are smaller than other fisheries meaning there is less demand. Further they can't be left to grow up and harvest them at a larger size as they have left the fishery by this point. This issue is compounded by the fact brown tiger prawns are smaller than the grooved tiger prawns caught in the NPF.

Mr Earle explained that he hasn't had a vessel in the straits since March so can't comment on fishing since then. He added he believes we are over managing the fishery which is going to drive it to extinction. Ms Paulsen commented that they haven't fished in the Torres Straits all season, however the people she has spoken to have commented that it is not economical to fish this year.

Mr Bourke commented that the increased number of no boats is a concern (approximately 1/3 of licenses) as it doesn't help with the productivity of the stock. He explained that most of the fishermen he represents are of opinion you need to work an area to increase its productivity. He added that the projected catch data is also of concern, which showed a steady decline in catch over future seasons. Ms Cocking explained that it is important to note that although the projected catch data is concerning, this is total catch for the fishery and is based on the current pattern of fishing, where there are minimal vessels fishing this season. If operators start fishing again, catch will obviously increase so a large part of this projected catch is related to fishers behaviour. The catch data is not saying that there is a problem with the health of the prawn stock.

Mr Earle discussed what he expects to occur in the future for this fishery. He commented that fuel is likely to gradually increase over the next 12 months and doesn't see an increase in prawn sale price occurring and asked for Mr Bourke's opinion. Mr Bourke commented that he doesn't like to predict what will happen in the market, however in the past there have been huge increases in profits when the export market improved and this could happen at any point. He explained that Japan still seeks brown tiger for the colour however the size of TSPF prawns doesn't always meet their need. He added that this year they are after 12/13's which fits the TS prawn catch. Mr Bourke explained that the problem is that we are catching it at the wrong time as prawn are caught early in the season, then they aren't sold until the end of the

year. Prawn demand decreases a lot as the product gets older (approximately 3 months).

Ms Paulsen questioned if anyone knows about the prawn marketing campaign Jim Foggerty is running with funding from FRDC as we may be able to get into this campaign. The MAC discussed that it is non specific prawn marketing. Ms Paulsen commented that she is going to talk to Mr Foggerty about it.

ACTION: Ms Paulsen to get more information from Jim Foggerty of FRDC regarding the prawn campaign and see if it is possible to extend it to the TSPF.

Agenda Item 2.2 Summary from the 2009 observer program

Ms Cocking presented the paper on observer coverage in the TSPF for the 2010 season. She explained that 86 fishing days were observed and this is 4.9% of the actual days fished to 11 November (1749). Mr Earle commented that although not many vessels took observers again this year, the observer coverage reflects the minimal number of boats that were actually fishing this year.

Agenda Item 2.3 Observer coverage – CMO program and traditional inhabitant observers

Ms Cocking explained a letter was sent to DEWHA on 9 November informing them of AFMA's intention to change the level of observer coverage in the TSPF to be expressed as a percentage of cover rather than 180 nights, so it can be changed with changes to effort. She explained that they have not received a response and this is just the first step in the process. They now need to determine how the level of observer coverage in a given season will be set (i.e. on last years effort levels). Mr Earle questioned if we could base it on the past years effort and discussed that if we did this, and effort was in fact more that year than we budgeted for, we could make up the observer days in the next years budget. That way although it won't necessarily match up perfectly in one season, it will balance out over a few seasons and still achieve our specified coverage level.

Ms Cocking explained that the only requirement for observer coverage under the WTO is that we need to have a robust level of coverage. She added that this is hard to quantify. The MAC suggested using a three year average. Mr Earle reiterated the need to reduce costs such as this or we aren't going to have a fishery left to manage.

The MAC went on to discuss the possibility of a crew member observer program or traditional inhabitant observers. Ms Cocking explained that the action item relating to this was developed as a potential method for reducing the costs of observing in the TSPF. The MAC had hoped that by having CMOs or traditional inhabitant observers, they would be able to reduce the number of scientific observer days in the fishery. Ms Cocking explained that after discussing this possibility with other sections that have CMO programs,

these programs are used to provide additional data for the fishery. Scientific observer days are not decreased if these programs are implemented, as such savings would not be made. She explained that CMO and traditional inhabitant observer programs would require training which was costed at approximately \$60 000 for 20 people a number of years ago. Costs would have increased since this time.

Mr Earle questioned if any of the CMOs on Northern Prawn Fishery (NPF) are also operating on TSPF vessels, as they would already be trained and may be able to provide us with additional valuable data.

Ms Paulsen questioned if we can get more up to date cost comparisons as costs will have changed for all three programs (scientific, traditional inhabitant and CMO). AFMA explained that we can calculate up to date costings however it will take additional resources, so is this a priority the MAC wants time put into at the moment when we won't be looking to implement a program at this point anyway. The MAC agreed there was no need to get up to date costings at this time and we can do this if we want to implement a program in the future.

ACTION: AFMA to determine whether there are any CMOs from the NPF fishing in the TSPF that can collect additional data.

Agenda Item 2.4 Compliance report

Mr Bob Russell from the QLD Boating and Fisheries Patrol provided an update on the compliance operations for the fishery. He explained that 8 seas days are targeted per month and 111 at sea days have been achieved so far in this fishery, with 24 more days forecast before the end of February 2010.

Mr Russell explained that there are ongoing problems with vessel producing documentation when requested, including master fishermen's licenses, vessel safety manuals and vessel authorities. He explained that it often takes vessel operators an hour to find all of the documentation required, which means compliance officers have to be on vessels for a greater period of time, which is problematic for operators and wastes compliance officers time. When operators have all of their documentation in one folder, it takes only a few minutes to do an inspection.

Industry members noted that compliance officers have been very lenient with this issue, but ask that industry ask their operators to get this information into order. The MAC agreed that industry need to try to improve the organisation of their paperwork and TSPMAC include this information in their MAC letter, including the benefits that it will bring by reducing the amount of time compliance officers are on board.

ACTION: TSPMAC industry members to include a section in their MAC letter relating to the need to improve orderliness of paperwork on board vessels.

Agenda Item 2.5 Environment report

Ms Cocking explained that the AFMA environment section provide an environment report that provides updates on environmental initiatives occurring in the fishery.

Ms Cocking discussed the strategic assessment of the fishery and the recommendations that the fishery needs to continue to be aware of, including the need to develop a harvest strategy within 12 months from February 2009, and continue to pursue a reduction in interaction and catch of bycatch. Mr Lui went on to discuss to progress on the development of the ecological risk assessment of the fishery. He explained that they are still trying to determine which list is most relevant for use in the fishery, and that we would be completing the ERA in 2010.

Ms Cocking discussed the protected species interactions that are occurring in the fishery. She explained that 99% of interactions occur with seasnakes, and there have been no sygnathid reports, despite sygnathids being reported in adjacent fisheries. She reiterated that it is an offence not to report interactions with protected species, however is not an offence to interact with them if fishing in accordance with the legislation of the fishery. Ms Cocking suggested that TSPMAC industry members converse with their counterparts to ensure they are aware that interactions with sygnathids need to be reported.

ACTION: TSPMAC industry members to include in their industry MAC letter, the need to report the catch of sygnathids in the TSPF as they are a protected species.

ACTION: AFMA to determine if there are better species ID sheets as the images in these sheets are not adequate for identification.

ACTION: Fisheries QLD to liaise with the TSRA to get photos to identify a ray found by CFGs

Ms Paulsen asked what the financial implications of the ERA process are. Mr Lui commented that there will be costs however we aren't aware of what these will be as yet.

Agenda Item 2.6 Report from the 2009 Australian/PNG Bilateral fisheries meeting

Mr Lui explained that in DAFF's absence, he has been asked to present their papers including Agenda Item 2.6. He commented that there was a fisheries bilaterals meeting in Madang in September this year where PNG agreed to offer the PNG days for use by Australian operators again for 2010 season. Australia accepted PNGs offer however acknowledged we may not give the effort out to operators in 2010.

He explained that the meeting facilitated discussions about home reef identification and aquaculture sites and wanted cross boarder fishers to recognise the importance of these areas to Traditional Inhabitants. This meeting was held due to concerns raised by Traditional Inhabitants that cross-

endorsed vessels are currently allowed to fish anywhere in the TSPZ. As such, CFGs have previously commented that the TSPMAC/PZJA need to ask that cross-endorsed PNG vessels respect the Island communities and their infrastructure.

Agenda item 2.7 Recent financial and economic performance in the TSPF

Mr Chris Perks from ABARE gave a short presentation on the current economic performance for the TSPF.

He explained that ABARE conduct regular economic surveys as part of their fisheries survey program. He explained that data for this survey was collected in 2008/09 for the 2006/07 and 2007/08 financial years and represented 26 and 31 percent of operators that fished in these seasons respectively.

Both boat level financial performance and fishery level economic performance (net economic returns) are calculated from these surveys. Average boat cash income, which is cash receipts minus cash costs, increased from -\$29 000 in 2006/07 to \$6,000 in 2007/08. Overall net economic return for the fishery including management costs has continually declined since 2000 until reaching a minimum of -\$4.7 million in 2006/07. In 2007/08 overall net economic return for the fishery increased to -\$2.7 million (albeit remaining in negative) before decreasing to approximately -\$3.3 million in 2008/09.

When comparing costs and revenue for the 2006/07 and 2007/08 seasons, revenue increased by approximately \$140 000, however this isn't taking into account the depreciation of their assets. Further, calculating actual costs can be difficult, as there are opportunity costs to consider. This is the amount of money that is being lost by not sitting in the bank creating interest and includes total management costs including government contributions.

Mr Perks explained that costs in the fishery haven't fallen as fast as revenues have, resulting in the negative economic returns. Some of the drivers of low economic performance are:

- Fuel costs, with increases of ~\$130 000. TSPF fuel costs don't track exactly with increases in diesel costs and 36-42 percent of costs in the fishery are attributed to fuel in the TSPF.
- international competition and exchange rate. Vanumai prawns have a huge impact on the international prawn market. As such a large portion of the market is made up for Vanumai, they really effect the price that people are willing to pay for other prawns.

Mr Perks explained that the main factors effecting the economics of the fishery are external and thus aren't changeable by industry.

Ms Paulsen questioned if there has been any modelling of fuel costs into the future and the effects this will have on real costs in all agricultural and rural industries. She asked if this information could be provided to her.

ACTION: ABARE to provide information on the future projected fuel prices and their potential effects on agricultural and rural industries.

ACTION: ABARE to provide the fisheries status report for distribution to the MAC members.

Agenda Item 2.8 Data and preliminary analysis of trends in 2009 catch and effort data

Mr Clive Turnbull presented some data from the preliminary analysis of catch and effort data for the fishery for the 2010 season.

Mr Turnbull explained that catches are well below historic levels and maximum sustainable yield levels which is due to low effort levels in the fishery this season. He added that tiger prawn catch rates (CPUE) are the on highest record which is again due to very low effort and fishers targeting tiger prawns. The fact that catch is greater than MSY and there is a high CPUE suggests a high biomass level of tiger prawns.

Mr Turnbull explained that endeavour prawn catch is much lower than average due to low effort and fishers focusing on tiger prawns rather than endeavour. He added that endeavour prawn CPUE is slightly lower than average which may be due to increased targeting of tiger catch, however endeavour biomass levels are probably about average.

Mr Bourke questioned whether the stock is more productive if they are fishing than not, as this is what the operators of the fleet he manages suggest. Mr Turnbull explained that with some effort, there is less competition between the recruits however there are still enough recruits being supplied to the fishery. He also explained that some species are more productive in a turbid environment such as where fishing occurs.

Mr Earle asked if we have the same stock assessment on the endeavours. Clive explained it is similar, however the stock assessment is more difficult as endeavour prawns are a secondary target species so it is difficult to tell the effects of whether a species is being targeted during fishing or not. As standardised catch rate information is used in stock assessments, you can't separate tiger and endeavour effort to standardise the effort for the assessment.

RESEARCH

Agenda Item 3.1 research funding

Mr Jacobsen spoke about research funding in the TSPF. He explained that in the past, the ongoing research requirements for the fishery such as summarising data for the TSPF handbook and providing information for reporting against the strategic assessment report for the fishery had been funded from a number of sources including QLD Fisheries, DAFF through funding for the spatial management research project and the TS Cooperative Research Centre (CRC). He explained that this fund has now ceased and it is

necessary to find funding elsewhere. A proposal was put to the Torres Strait Scientific advisory committee however was knocked back considering it didn't have clear objectives to meet one of the research objectives outlined in the paper.

He explained that funding could be sought through the seafood CRC however you need to be a member in order to apply for funding. He explained that QSIA are in the process of becoming a member. Mr Jacobsen also discussed the possibility of recovering some costs of research through the levies. He explained that Commonwealth managed fisheries pay a 0.025% of GVP research levy which provides the funding for FRDC to fund projects. These fisheries can then apply for funding from FRDC. The amount of levy would be approximately \$25 000 for the TSPF.

ACTION: Executive Officer to send the strategic research plan to MAC members.

ACTION: AFMA to send to the MAC, a list of members of the SAC, the research budget and where the SAC obtain their money from.

Mr Jebreen went on to explain that there are two aspects to the research budget. Firstly, we need to find funding to pay staff to do the routine data analysis in the fishery for the prawn handbook. Second is funding for stock assessments and research, which is an additional cost to the routine work that is required.

Mr Bourke commented that cutting the observer costs in half would provide savings that could then be spent on this.

The MAC discussed that we need to start by determining what we need in terms of research and how much it costs. Ms Paulsen commented that we need a business case to explain how much different components of the fishery research cost so we can then work out where funding can come from.

The TSPMAC RECOMMENDED we put a business case together for the funding of routine scientific work that considers using savings from reducing observer coverage or the 25% management costs attributed to the PNG allocation.

ACTION: Fisheries QLD to put together a business case for the funding of routine scientific work that considers using savings from reducing observer coverage or the 25% management costs attributed to the PNG allocation.

MANAGEMENT

Agenda Item 4.1 TAE setting

Mr Lui discussed the process that was used to set the TAE for the 2010 fishing season. He explained that there had been some concern from some operators that providing PNG days free of charge to licence holders as was

done in 2009, or providing them at a cost through the levies is undermining the leasing market which now exists under the plan. PZJA agencies believe that in order to allow people the opportunity to generate income from fishing days they are not using, we need to allow the leasing market to develop which cannot be done well when we are providing PNG days to operators. Further, due to the minimal number of people taking up PNG days in the past, and the lack of effort in the fishery, there is not much demand for PNG days. and the consideration that give they were having a negative effect on people that were trying to internally leasing fishing nights.

Mr Earle questioned how many days the PNG portion contribute to. Mr Turnbull explained that they have 2,333 units under the management plan.

Agenda Item 4.2 Management plan amendments

Mr Lui informed the MAC that an inadvertent error occurred in the title of the Torres Strait Prawn Fishery Management Plan dating it 2008 instead of 2009. This needs to be amended however will not be done until 2010. If the minute is put up to the Minister now, it would get approved as the 2009 Plan in 2010 and have the same problem. He added that the Fisheries Management Instruments will be implemented at the same time as the management plan is updated, and all references to the management plan within the instruments will be changed to account for the change in title.

Industry expressed concern with the costs associated with doing this. Ms Cocking explained that the costs would be covered by DAFF.

Agenda Item 4.3 TSPF Harvest Strategy

Mr Stanley Lui of AFMA presented the paper on the TSPF Harvest Strategy. He explained that Government officers from the HSWG had met a number of times since the last meeting to develop the three options outlined in this paper before taking them to the whole working group for consideration yesterday. The meeting included representatives from Qld Fisheries, AFMA, QLD research and monitoring and industry (Mr Marshall Betzall, and Mr Trevor Credetten a proxy for Mr Steve Murphy).

Mr Galeano gave a brief explanation of maximum economic yield (MEY). He explained that MEY revolves around the biomass level that maximises the difference between total fishing revenue and total costs. He explained this using the illustrative example in the following table.

	Biomass target 1	Biomass target 2
Biomass	B40	B50
Catch	500t	400t
Catch rate index	0.8	1.0
Effort	625	400

In this example the higher catch of biomass target 1 will result in higher total fishing revenue. However, the lower biomass of biomass target 1 results in lower catch rates and consequently significantly more effort is required to take the total catch. Consequently total fishing costs would be significantly higher

under a harvest strategy with biomass target 1. In this example, catch under biomass target 1 is 25 per cent higher than the catch of biomass target 2 but fishing effort is 56.25 per cent higher. Whether or not this increase in fishing effort results in an increase in fishing costs greater than or less than the increase in fishing revenue depends on fish prices and fishing costs. That is whether the biomass target 1 or biomass target 2 is preferred will depend on fish prices and fishing costs. MEY is simply determining the biomass target that maximises the difference between total fishing revenue and total fishing costs.

Mr Galeano emphasised that this is a simple illustrative example and that in a real fishery things are more complicated. He also noted that in a real fishery the data required to determine the trade off in revenues and costs (i.e. the data in the above table) would be generated from a stock assessment model.

Mr Earle expressed concern that fisheries aren't that simple and he has concern about trying to manage a fishery based on economics when there are so many constantly changing variables within a fishery. Ms Paulsen pointed out that Government place restrictions on management which prevent industry from being able to maximise their economic returns and manage their own economics well.

Mr Galeano explained that fishery managers will construct a cost effective bioeconomic model to determine the biomass associated with MEY. He explained this will be a much smaller and cheaper process than that undertaken in the northern prawn fishery (NPF). He also acknowledged Mr Earle's concern regarding how costly the process of implementing MEY was in the NPF and that such expenditure in the Torres Strait prawn fishery could not be justified based on the lower value of the fishery. Mr Galeano also explained that sensitivity tests are an important component of bioeconomic models to determine by how much the optimal biomass size (i.e. MEY) changes given changes to parameters such as fish prices and fishing costs. He also noted that it may be preferable to choose a biomass target

Mr Jebreen added that QLD and Commonwealth Government have committed to having a harvest strategy based on MEY and are not likely to implement a harvest strategy that does not address the economics of a fishery.

Mr Galeano went on to briefly explain the three harvest strategy options within the paper.

Option 1. TSPF Harvest Strategy based on maximum economic yield using the proxy of 1.2 B_{msy}.

Under this option the long term target for the fishery would be 1.2 B_{MSY} (B₄₈ if the default for B_{MSY} of B₄₀ is used). This is the proxy in the Commonwealth Harvest Strategy Policy which is used when a bioeconomic model is not available. In this option, the PZJA would determine a process where by the annual TAE will be reduced by increments annually until the target biomass level is achieved. The length of time to reach the target and the reduction each year would be decided with advice from the HSWG and TSPMAC.

Benefits

Choosing this option will ensure the TSPF Harvest Strategy adheres to the Commonwealth Harvest Strategy Policy.

Risks/issues

The long term TAE and catch associated with a biomass target of $1.2 B_{MSY}$ is lower than the current effort cap and catch. Therefore, regardless of the length of time taken to reach the target a reduction in the long term TAE will occur. This will inevitably result in a reduction of individuals' effort allocations. Operators have the option to enter the market to lease effort units. While this is a cost to the individual leasing in the effort, this is balanced by the revenue received by the entitlement holder leasing effort units.

In the current season, fishing effort is very low (approximately 2,600 days as of 2 December per VMS data). Effort was also relatively low in 2008 and 2007. Associated with these lower levels of effort have been significantly higher catch rates. Despite these higher catch rates there is a significant amount of unused effort. Therefore given the current economic circumstances facing the fishery and the biology of the stock B_{MEY} is likely to be higher than the current biomass level. Consequently under option 1 (where the target biomass is less than the current biomass level) there is a risk that economic returns will not be improved.

Option 2. TSPF Harvest Strategy based on an estimated maximum economic yield

As outlined above, it is likely that based on the current economic circumstances facing the fishery and the biology of the stock, B_{MEY} is likely to be higher than the current biomass level. Without an updated stock assessment it is currently not possible to determine this level. However, the current biomass is estimated to be at around 70 per cent of virgin biomass. Therefore the harvest strategy could target a biomass level somewhere between B_{70} and B_{100} in order to improve catch rates further.

Benefits

This option adheres to the Commonwealth Harvest Strategy Policy and provides the highest chance that net economic returns will be maximised.

Risks/issues

This option will involve a significant reduction in the TAE for the fishery (that is, lower than the long term TAE under option 1). This will inevitably result in a reduction of individuals' effort allocations. Operators have the option to enter the market to lease effort units. While this is a cost to the individual leasing in the effort, this is balanced by the revenue received by the entitlement holder leasing effort units.

Given the high current biomass and catch rates in the fishery, further improvements to catch rates are limited. Therefore there is a risk that based on current economic circumstances and the biology of the fishery, that significant net economic returns are simply not available even at higher biomass and catch rates.

Option 3. TSPF Harvest Strategy based on maximum economic yield using a proxy but updated if a trigger point(s) is reached

This option has a long term target of reaching B_{MEY} . However, this option proposes that the fishery continue to operate within a TAE of 9,200 days until a trigger is reached (e.g. effort level, catch level or catch rate or some combination) that will activate further research to estimate B_{MEY} . The trigger should be discussed by the HSWG and MAC (e.g. reaching 4000 days of effort for two consecutive years) and monitoring of logbooks etc. will need to continue to monitor any changes to the stock which may occur due to environmental circumstances etc.

Benefits

Using this option, the increased level of effort can justify an increase in levies to support and fund further research. This research will be primarily to conduct an updated stock assessment and calculate B_{MEY} .

Setting a longer term target of B_{MEY} but continuing to operate at the present time with a TAE of 9,200 and using triggers before making changes provides the fishing industry with some certainty for the foreseeable future and minimises changes in the current economic climate. It provides a path to get to B_{MEY} but recognises that the fishery needs to improve its catch rates before implementing further changes. It also allows for a reassessment of the path at the trigger points.

Risks/issues

The main risk of this option is that the stock is fished down to levels lower than the actual B_{MEY} level that is eventually estimated. If this occurred, larger reductions in the TAE would be required to rebuild the stock to B_{MEY} . To provide some mitigation of this risk will require appropriate and sensitive trigger points.

He explained that under option 3, once an accurate value for B_{MEY} is known, we could reassess the limit and target reference points to ensure they are set at the correct level.

Mr Lui explained that option three was the recommended option from the Torres Strait prawn Harvest Strategy Working Group. Mr Jebreen explained that there were caveats associated with recommending option 3 in that it will not improve the economic situation for the fishery in the short to medium term.

As such, a recommendation for option three would include a caveat that PZJA agencies also commit to addressing ways of improving the profitability of the fishery, such as external leasing, relaxing the 20m boat rule or allow bigger nets etc. These changes to management arrangements would also encourage investment in the fishing through becoming more profitable. Mr Neville Nakata of the TSRA said if we relax the 20m boat rule then there is likely to be more effort from the large gulf boats which may bring bigger nets. He thinks we should leave some management arrangements the same as they are. Mr Nakata questioned why the HSWG was pushing for option 3 so much. Mr

Jebreem explained that we would be monitoring the stock to make sure we weren't over fishing so this isn't a concern. Ms Cocking added that if we introduce one management arrangement such as allow larger boats into the fishery, we would change other ones to ensure that effective effort did not change, such as making one day fishing a larger vessel equate to two days.

Mr Jacobsen added that we are trying to minimise the risk of the fishery collapsing as effort is slowing decreasing because it is not economical to fish in the fishery at present. Options 1 and 2 will put additional strain on the fishery which PZJA agencies think is unwise given the current economic environment. Option 3 is trying to get a balance of economics while still ensuring we are fishing sustainably.

Mr Credetten an industry observer explained that having bigger nets rather than bigger vessels would allow current fishermen to fish again. Ms Paulsen expressed concern with allowing larger vessels into the fishery as she felt we should be supporting the current industry to fish again rather than letting external operators into the fishery. AFMA commented that it is Governments responsibility to support both license holders that are currently fishing and ones that aren't. They added that making external leasing more accessible will allow people not fishing to get some return on their asset. Further, allow large vessels into the fishery will make external leasing more accessible to more operators. Ms Paulsen commented that we need to liaise further abroad to see the impacts on current operators.

Mr Jebreen explained that the principal reason for these discussions was to identify what we (the TSPMAC and the PZJA) could do with the current management arrangements to help stimulate the fishery. Mr Jebreen clarified this statement though, by advising the MAC that whilst the PZJA are endeavouring to reduce TSPF levies, the abolishment or removal of TSPF levies is not an option. As such, the TSPMAC should focus on other management arrangements e.g. reviewing the 20 m boat rule etc. In addition to this, the MAC was informed that any examples put forth should only be viewed as suggestions (including removing the 20 m boat rule) and that the PZJA was in no position to decide upon these matters at the MAC meeting. Consequently, we will need to consider a number of options and flesh them out with pros and cons, and consult widely with industry and other stakeholders before any are implemented.

The MAC discussed the concerns of some of the industry members regarding increasing availability to the fishery to external operators decreasing the value of their asset. Mr Galeano explained that if effort and profitability of the fishery were to improve then asset values will increase as demand is greater for a profitable asset.

Mr Paulsen expressed concern that the lateness of the paper has not given the MAC enough time to consider the Harvest Strategy and consult with their constituents properly and questioned why the timeframe is so tight. Ms Cocking explained that under the management plan, the HS must be developed by 31 December 2009.

Mr Nakata questioned what would happen to the stock if latent effort is taken up in the fishery. At that point, the MAC was informed that effort in the fishery is well below the allowable TAE of 9200 units which is capped under the management plan. The MAC was further advised that the TAE was based on MSY for the fishery and that this figure had previously been discussed and agreed to by the PZJA (including the TSPMAC). Given this, the uptake of latent effort will not pose a sustainability risk to the fishery as it has already been accounted for in the TAE. It was also noted that next year operators will only be able to fish the 6867 Australian days so the PNG 2333 days will act as an additional buffer.

ACTION: TSPF Harvest Strategy background section to include explicit information explaining that although the harvest strategy is set with an MEY target, it is still set to ensure that the fishery is sustainable and there is no sustainability risk to the stock.

The TSPMAC RECOMMENDS that the TSPF Harvest Strategy background section to include explicit information explaining that although the harvest strategy is set with an MEY target, it is still set to ensure that the fishery is sustainable and there is no sustainability risk to the stock.

The MAC discussed funding options for a stock assessment when the research trigger under option three is reached. Mr Jebreen explained that the \$90 000 to \$100 000 figure is just an estimate of what the stock assessment will cost. PZJA agencies have not spent time doing a full costing at the moment as agencies are happy to wait for the stock assessment to occur once effort increases. Mr Jebreen went on to explain that Government isn't likely to fund any more for prawn research, however we could talk to the prawn Cooperative Research Council.

Mr Jebreen went on to inform the MAC that option three in the short term is ultimately an acceptance that nothing will change in the fishery. The principal reason for this is that at this point in time, the economics of the fishery would not support a) an immediate move to MEY or b) the necessary research required to move to MEY including a new stock assessment. Therefore, the principal reason for choosing option three is to delay the need for a new stock assessment etc until the TSPF is viable enough to fund the required research. That said, this option should only be utilised if in the interim, the TSPMAC and PZJA agencies look at other ways to stimulate the fishery as opposed to allowing effort to decrease unabated.

The TSPMAC agreed that option three should be recommended with the caveat that PZJA agencies undertake work to change management arrangements to help to improve the profitability of the fishery. The MAC discussed which triggers should be set under this option. The MAC agreed it would be useful to have several triggers that could be reached, one on effort, and one each for tiger prawn and endeavour prawn. They agreed that the catch trigger should be set based on catching 75% of Australian portion of

catch (tonnes) or effort (days fished) if the TAE was set at B_{34} . The TAE at B_{34} would be 7,045 nights and the Australian portion of this is 4000 nights. As such, 4000 nights would be one trigger. This in itself would help limit the risk of 'over-shooting' effort targets and having stocks decline to levels where recovery mechanisms would need to be implemented immediately. The MAC also agreed to set catch triggers for each species using the highest recorded catch rates for tiger and endeavour prawns (170 and 156 respectively) to be conservative. This would mean catch triggers of 680t for tiger prawn and 620t for tiger prawns. The MAC agreed that although there are 3 triggers, one of the triggers would have to be hit for two consecutive years.

A brief discussion was also held on what possible steps should be taken if effort in the TSPF continued to decline. While steps are being made to stimulate the fishery, Ms Cocking also advised the MAC that given the state of the fishery and concerns effort may continue to decline, a minimum effort trigger could also be included in the Harvest Strategy to assess the economic viability of the fishery.

The TSPMAC agreed to the following recommendations regarding the Harvest Strategy for the fishery:

*The TSPMAC **RECOMMENDS** that PZJA agencies will report on the Harvest Strategy annually to the TSPMAC and PZJA when the updated data for the prawn handbook is provided by Fisheries Queensland assessment and monitoring unit.*

*The TSPMAC **RECOMMENDS** that the TAE for the fishery continues to be set at 9200 days for the maximum period allowable under the management plan (currently 3 years) unless research triggered under the Harvest Strategy identifies the need for alternate arrangements or the PZJA has concern about the status of the stock.*

*The TSPMAC **RECOMMENDS** that option 3 as presented in TSPMAC 9 paper 4.3 be used to develop the Harvest Strategy for the fishery, which includes:*

- a) a Target reference point (B_{targ}) of B_{34} (which is 1.2 B_{msy} of B_{28})
- b) a limit reference point (B_{lim}) of B_{20} as defined in the stock assessment model
- c) a trigger point for commencing research where if **≥ 4000 days of TAE** has been utilised or **680 tonnes of Tiger Prawns** are caught or **620 tonnes of Endeavour Prawns are caught** within a season, for two consecutive years (note: the same trigger must be triggered for the two consecutive years)
- d) if the trigger is reached then commence;
 - i. research which will entail an update of the stock assessment and bioeconomic modelling by the PZJA agencies;
 - ii. reconvene Harvest Strategy Working Group to oversee the research and further development of the Harvest Strategy;
 - iii. estimate B_{mey} using the additional research
 - iv. revisit target and limit reference points and trigger points and develop decision rules for setting the TAE using the new

research outputs and current status of the fishery and social environment in which it operates (including decisions rules around what we do when stock assessments are undertaken and when they aren't undertaken)

- e) *if less than **1000 days** of the TAE has been utilised during any one season then consult industry about the possibility of suspending the fishery for a number of years which will reduce levies and have less financial pressure on industry to request advice on the future management arrangements of the fishery.*

*The TSPMAC **RECOMMENDS** that option three only be undertaken under the proviso that PZJA agencies undertake actions to determine potential ways to improve profitability in the fishery.*

*The TSPMAC **RECOMMENDS** that PZJA agencies will determine which mid year trigger points are used in other fisheries to monitor the stock status and determine if one is suitable for the TSPF.*

*The TSPMAC **AGREED** that assessment of whether the trigger has been reached should be undertaken using VMS data at the end of each fishing season on 1 December and this data be presented to the MAC regardless of its outcome.*

Ms Cocking discussed that it would be useful to make a list of some of the options that could be considered to try to improve the economics of the fishery, and list some of the pros and cons of each so PZJA agencies will have something to consider when developing the Harvest Strategy paper for the PZJA standing committee.

The following options were discussed:

1. gear restrictions (max headrope length, minimum mesh size, BRDs, TEDs)
 - It can be difficult to change gear restrictions and to ensure you are monitoring fishing power etc so actual effort in the fishery doesn't increase.
 - Benefits would apply to some boats (not all boats will be more efficient from increase headrope length)
 - Changing BRDs/TEDs to more efficient ones would have some benefits to efficiency however similar savings may be made in easier ways.
2. horse power
 - we could change these restrictions however it isn't likely to have a large benefit to industry. There is also a 400hp limit on east coast vessels so this would restrict changes for TSPF unless east coast also considered changing them.
3. horse power and gear restrictions
 - Combining horse power increases and more net will have a greater benefit however is harder to regulate.
4. closures – seasonal and spatial

5. fishing to meet optimum market conditions
6. 20 metre boat rule
7. management costs
8. lack of formal external leasing arrangements
9. improve marketing to increase prawn prices
10. regulated waste/permitted species/ utilisation of bycatch species
11. Fishing in PNG
12. penalty on transfer of T (the MAC questioned if this is still in force)
13. infrastructure (mother ships, flights for parts and servicing)
14. public image of the fishery – industry image of the TSPF

The MAC discussed that some of these options are obviously not controllable by Government and some are. Mr Jebreen commented that some changes will often have minimal benefit, however when we combine a number of changes, they have much more potential to make change which will benefit more of industry. For example, by combining leasing, boat restrictions, horse power and gear restrictions it would improve the functioning of the fishery for all license holders by improving investment value of the fishery for others to come in. It would take a lot of work to determine just how such changes would be implemented in a way that is still sustainable for the fishery.

Mr Jebreen explained that if there is concern with implementing a number of things at once, there is the option not to do everything at once. This is more conservative however considering the current environment in the fishery, we may not have that luxury of time. He added that we need to do some modelling to determine the impacts and effects of each option.

Mr Mosby commented that he still has some concern about vessels longer than 20 metres as operators have trouble with operating vessels smaller than 20 metres considering the number of sunken vessels this season. Mr Earle said 20m boats are safer vessels and less likely to sink as they are more stable.

Mr Jebreen commented that we could have restrictions on larger boats to stop them from going into certain areas etc.

The MAC discussed the possibility of getting funding for an industry workshop to be run, organised by TSPMAC industry members to allow discussion of the future management of the fishery with TSPF license holders before the commencement of the 2010 fishing season.

Mr Jebreen commented that it is unlikely that funding could be sourced at such short notice for such a workshop. Mr Jebreen explained that if work is required into the analysis of options after the meeting, and Government doesn't have the resources to commit, industry can enter into a private contact to fund work. In order fisheries this occurs when industry members believe work must be done urgently but Government don't have the resources to fund it. In this case, not all license holders necessarily pay, however some industry members see it as so necessary that they are willing to make the investment anyway.

ACTION: TSPMAC industry members to determine the resources that would be required to fund an industry forum to discuss management arrangements for the fishery, and the best venue for such a meeting.

Agenda Item 4.4 External Leasing

Mr Jacobsen presented the paper on external leasing in the TSPF. He explained that external leasing in the TSPF has been under ongoing debate since 2006 and is the term used by industry members to describe leasing of licenses to people external to the TSPF. He added that informal external leasing is already happening in the fishery as license holders are entering into private arrangements to transfer their licenses to another operator, and these licenses are transferred back after a certain period of time. Mr Jacobsen explained that there are conflicting views amongst industry where some industry members would like formal external leasing arrangements put in place and some would not.

Given the conflicting views of industry, at TSPMAC 8, the MAC agreed that a survey should be distributed to industry requesting comments on the current leasing arrangements and questioning if they would like formal external leasing arrangements to be put in place. It was agreed that the survey should have a default position to encourage people to respond to the survey, as there has been lack of engagement from industry in the past. Mr Jacobsen explained that although the survey was set out with a no response as default vote *for* external leasing in order to give us a definitive answer, it is difficult to tell if people didn't respond due to lack of care, or didn't respond because they were actually voting for external leasing and this was easier than sending in a response. He informed that MAC that 15 responses were received, with 66% supporting external leasing.

Ms Paulsen commented that she thinks the way the survey was written, and that no response was considered a vote for external leasing is disingenuous. She felt that there was a bias towards the pros of external leasing in the wording of the document. Mr Earle added that there has been such a low response in the past that the MAC acknowledged that this was the only way of getting responses. He will be disappointed if the MAC is put here to manage this fishery and we can't because we are afraid to make decisions when we gave industry the opportunity to comment and the didn't.

Mr Jacobsen commented that the survey listed the pros of external leasing, and also explained the main concern from industry about external leasing that it may have a negative impact on license and/or effort unit values in the TSPF. Ms Paulsen again said that she thinks it lacked the cons of external leasing and only focused on the positives. Mr Jebreen commented that it is difficult to list the cons of external leasing as PZJA agencies don't see many cons, a part from the concern above.

Mr Earle added that an industry letter with a summary from the MAC, including information regarding the external leasing survey was sent to industry. So they were aware the survey was coming and the context before the survey was sent from Government.

Mr Betzal questioned if the survey can be considered to be representative with 15 responses being received from a possible 43. Mr Perks from ABARE commented that a 30% sample is actually considered representative in scientific data analysis terms and 15 of 43 is 35%. Mr Betzal added that the MAC did agree that we would make a decision once we received the results of the survey and he would be disappointed if we didn't follow through with this. Mr Earle commented that it is concerning if the MAC and PZJA agencies are afraid of making decisions due to not having a unanimous views across industry or a large number of responses, despite doing their best effort to ensure people are properly consulted regarding management decisions. He again reiterated that industry and Government contacted industry members regarding this survey and there is only so much we can do to encourage people to complete the survey.

Mr Jacobsen commented that the only additional thing we could have done is hold face to face meetings or contacted people by phone. Ms Cocking commented that she is doubtful that it would have helped, as phone calls in the past have not always been effective, as a number of license holders no longer care about giving their opinion on management arrangements in the fishery.

Ms Paulsen commented that despite not agreeing with the method the surveys were undertaken in, she respects the outcomes of the survey and the decision that the MAC makes regarding external leasing.

Mr Bourke commented that he is against external leasing as he thinks restricting entry into the fishery increases asset value. Mr Perks explained that like in renting houses, licenses that can be rented as well as bought would have a greater value than a house or license that can only be bought, but not rented, as it effects the methods of making revenue on your asset.

Mr Earle commented that license holders that are currently fishing are taking advantage of others not being able to fish in the fishery. These people are still paying levies, how are not able to make return on their asset. He added that he doesn't see how license value can drop further. They are already at the bottom so the current management system is obviously not working. By removing restrictions it will hopefully increase the value of the fishery.

Ms Paulsen questioned why a decision needs to be made on this now when they are planning an industry forum in February.

Ms Cocking explained that this issue has been going on for a number of years. There is never going to be a unanimous position from industry regarding external leasing and a decision needs to be made. The MAC can decide if we want to wait until February, however we can't keep putting off the decision. Mr Jebreen reminded the MAC that we will not be introducing external leasing as a completely new thing into the fishery, as it is already occurring informally. PZJA agencies would simply be putting a system into place to formalise the arrangements. With this in mind, this isn't as

controversial a decision as if we were looking to introduce external leasing when it had not already been occurring in the fishery.

Mr Jacobsen also advised the MAC that at this point in time we are only seeking a recommendation from the MAC that a process for formalising external leasing arrangements be developed. This recommendation still needs to be progressed through the PZJA Standing Committee and to the PZJA itself.

*4.4.1 The TSPMAC **RECOMMENDS** that based on survey results, PZJA agencies determine a process for formalising external leasing in the TSPF and implement it.*

ACTION: PZJA agencies to determine a process for formalising external leasing in the TSPF and implement it.

Agenda Item 4.5a Ghost nets and marine debris project funding

Mr Nakata explained that the TSRA and DEEDI's Northern Fisheries Centre have sourced funding for doing a survey of the rubbish in the area. The survey will be undertaken in January and February 2010 and then a proposal for removal of rubbish put together by May 2010.

ACTION: TSPMAC industry members to inform industry in their MAC letter that a survey reviewing rubbish in the areas of Kodall and Masig Islands is being undertaken and remind them of the need to be responsible with rubbish, mention the code of conduct.

Agenda Item 4.5b Ghost nets and marine debris code of conduct

Ms Cocking presented this agenda item and explained that at TSPMAC 6 in 2008, the TSPMAC agreed that a code of conduct should be developed to ensure that TSPF operators are aware of the effects of ghost nets and marine rubbish and waste and ways of minimising their effects. She explained that the code was developed by combining information from another fisheries code of conduct, the information in the prawn handbook, and the MARPOL guidelines and requirements. The draft was distributed to TSPMAC industry members for comment and the attached version has been updated with their suggested changes. Ms Cocking invited TSPMAC members to suggest any additional information that should be included in the code of conduct.

The following changes were suggested:

- Mr Earle questioned whether we should we have information in the code generally asking operators to respect the indigenous way of life and the Torres Strait Islands as well as information on the responsible disposal of marine debris.
- Ms Paulsen explained that the code could have a better more logical format. Ms Cocking discussed that the format would change somewhat as this was a very rough draft. Ms Paulsen agreed she would provide comment on structure after the next draft.

- Mr Jacobsen suggested adding in the QLD legislation into the laws and conventions section of the document, including the transport operations (marine pollution) Act 1995, Transport Operations (marine pollution) regulations 2008, transport operations (marine safety) Act 1994 transport operations (marine safety) Regulations 2004.
- Add a dot point on page 3 asking operators to minimise all rubbish being taken to Torres Strait if it can't be taken to the mother ship.
- Change the dot point regarding rubbish to say that rubbish should be returned to home port or the mother ship instead of port.

ACTION: update code of conduct with the suggested changes and including adding in a section on a code for respecting the traditional way of life.

Agenda Item 4.6 AQIS quarantine database.

Mr Lui explained that to allow industry members that fish in the PNG sector to be able to bring caught product back to Australia for sale, there are a number of concerns of AQIS that need to be considered. He explained that the paper lists a number of issues that need to be addressed. We had hoped to do this at the MAC, however there is not enough time.

*The MAC **AGREED** to reduce the priority of this issue considering the limited time we have for discussion today. However industry agreed they would do work on the dot points to bring to the next MAC.*

Ms Cocking suggested that a lot of the issues could be addressed by making people take observers if fishing in the PNG area of jurisdiction. TSPMAC industry members discussed that this would be very laboursome. Mr Jebreen explained that this system is used in some other fisheries if people want to do something unusual in the fishery.

Agenda item 4.7 History and current development of the Sponge Farm

Mr Nakata presented this agenda item and explained that its purpose is to provide an update on the progress on the development of the sponge farm.

Mr Nakata explained that the project started with the development of a business plan, which was approved following a number of issues being addressed which were triggered by EPBC Act requirements. The major concern was to determine how the hawksbill turtles would impact on the farm, as sponges are a food source for this species in this area. A project is now underway to assess the potential effects of the turtle population on the farm.

Mr Mosby commented that they are also addressing issues with recruiting stock for the farm. He explained that they only use wild stocks in the initial recruitment stage as they then cut off stock at the basket end and they continue to grow within the basket. The MAC began to discuss the collisions

that occurred with the sponge farm this season, and the chair suggested going onto the next agenda item relating to this issue.

Agenda Item 4.8 sponge farm incidents and managing risk

Mr Nakata discussed that paper 4.8 is in relation to the marine incidents that have been occurring with the sponge farm in the Torres Straits. He explained that the area adjacent to the sponge farm is regularly used by commercial fishing vessels, predominantly as a transit zone to reach the crab pot anchorage area. He explained that marker buoys are present around the sponge farm to alert operators to its presence, however there are still collisions occurring, which is putting the aquaculture investment at risk and causing potential risk for divers on the farm.

Mr Mosby reiterated the desire for TSPF operators to simply be aware of the investment they have put into this sponge farm, and its importance in providing a source of income and allowing the island communities to continue to become more economically self sufficient. He asked that TSPMAC industry members help to encourage other industry members to be aware of this.

Mr Mosby also questioned if Marine Safety Queensland (MSQ) have any special markers they can use for the farm divers. MSQ explained that diver flags are used, however this doesn't seem to be enough for prawn trawlers and are concerned for their wellbeing. The MAC discussed that the diver flags only require a 30m clearance, so it is important to make sure the boat stays close to divers if the flags are not attached to the divers themselves. Mr Mosby explained that they do their best to keep the boat in close proximity to their diver.

Mr Nakata explained that the recommendation is for the MAC to discuss possible ways for addressing the collisions that are occurring with the sponge farm. There are already marker buoys in place and the coordinates of the farm and buoys were provided to operators, however collisions are still occurring.

Mr Earle asked how much space there is in the channel for navigating through. Mr commented that he thinks that the Judy B skipper was new and questioned if they were running an old plot from before the farm was in place. He also explained that there is a high spot of ground that needs to be avoided in the channel as people have run aground there in the past.

Mr Betzal added that he had heard concern that the marker buoys are difficult to see, and one of his skippers had only just spotted the most northern buoy of the farm as it sticks out a long way into the channel. He explained that if you aren't really alert, you can hit the buoy. Mr Mosby again pointed out that a formal notice was released that has the coordinates of the buoys and they just need to plot them. Mr Credetten explained that there is also a bommie on the left of the channel, so it is a tight gap to navigate between the buoy and bommie. Mr Mosby suggested coming in from the north west instead. Rusty commented if you aren't aware of the seabed it is dangerous as there is high ground, however if you know the area, it is safe.

ACTION: MSQ to determine whether there is a problem with the visibility of the north most buoy of the sponge farm.

The MAC went on to discuss alternate anchorages away from the crab pot. Rusty explained that they need an anchorage in the crab pot area of Kodall Island, as in large wind there is no other safe anchorage in this area. The North West or airstrip has a lot of swell so isn't safe and the NE part of Kodall is needed for mothership loading and unloading at least.

Mr Mosby acknowledged that the safety of this area makes it good for anchorage and the sponge farm so there is a need to balance these activities. Rusty suggested drawing a line and sharing it. Mr Mosby explained that they may well want to use the whole area of Kodall in the next 10 years for the sponge farm and they are also looking to put in a black pearl farm in some location.

The Chair explained that we have requirement to look after the prawn sector and also the growing traditional sector investment so we need to negotiate between the two stakeholder groups to come to an arrangement.

Mr Lui refocused the group and explained that we are trying to protect the sponge farm from things running into it. He questioned if we can put channel markers in to show the boats how to navigate through this area safely. Industry members agreed this would be a good idea.

The MAC discussed the process for setting up channel markers in this area. MSQ said they generally deal with investigation; however there will be a process for putting marker buoys into place.

*The TSPMAC **RECOMMENDED** that AFMA and TSRA liaise with MSQ to determine the process that would be required for placing channel markers to guide vessels into the crab pot.*

ACTION: AFMA to:
1. liaise with MSQ about the method for putting channel markers into the area near the aquaculture farm to guide vessels to the crab pot;
2. inform TSRA for the method for doing this so they can write a letter to MSQ requesting the markers.

ACTION: AFMA to enquire about whether spill response kits are present on York Is and the mother ship.

ACTION: TSRA to seek additional avenues for funding for placing more buoys on the sponge farm, or discussing other ways of improving visibility of the sponge farm.

Mr Pearson questioned if vessels are anchoring close to the sponge farm, could fuel, bilge water etc harm the sponges. Mr Lui explained that there are rules around this and it shouldn't happen. Ms Cocking explained that the MARPOL document details the requirements for bilge water and oil etc must be diluted to 15 parts per million.

ACTION: place information regarding the sponge farm and code of risk management for spillage in:

- prawn handbook
- industry MAC summary
- code of conduct
- discuss at the industry forum if it is held .

Agenda Item 4.9 what can and can't VMS be used for?

Mr Ian Jacobsen from QLD Fisheries discussed that at TSPMAC 8, CFGs requested that VMS be used to determine if vessels are fishing around home reef and sponge farm areas. The request raised questions about what VMS systems can and can't be used for. Mr Jacobsen explained that VMS is designed for enforcement and monitoring things that can be enforced via legislation. He explained that it can't be used to identify individual trawl tracks or a group of boats as this can breach privacy laws. He added that there is reluctance in this fishery to release information due to the low level of effort and there is risk of breaching the privacy act. He commented that he isn't even allowed to see the maps of trawling as this information is very restricted.

CFGs again expressed concern that operators are fishing within the area of the sponge farm. Mr Lui commented that an action of this meeting is to determine the methods for putting marker buoys in and this should help with this issue. The MAC agreed that this would be a good start to progress CFGs concerns and this can be revisited later on if need be.

FINANCES

Agenda item 5.1 2010 season Levies

Mr Lui explained that the 2010 season levies have now been finalised and are going to ExCO this week. He explained that there was a slight change in the cost recovered budget of \$2 from what was presented at the August TSPMAC meeting. Further, there was a shift of costs between the license and unit component of the levy as some costs had been incorrectly divided up between these components.

OTHER BUSINESS

Marine Safety Queensland

Mr Ian Jacobsen explained that considering the questions that have been asked regarding lost vessels and safety in the Torres Straits, Mr Kevin Schindler from Marine Safety Queensland (MSQ) had agreed to come along to provide information on incidents in the Torres Straits.

Mr Schindler explained that he is an investigator for marine incidents and that MSQ are responsible for protecting QLD waterways for people who use them, increase maritime safety and responding to marine pollution, maintaining navigational aids, examination and issue of marine qualifications and minimising marine waste.

Mr Schindler is mainly responsible for investigating marine incidents which are defined as damage or harm to people or structures caused by ships.

He explained that low scale incidents don't have a lot of investigation and they often simply issue a marine infringement notice or letter asking a person or body to remedy the problem which was found (such as retrieving a sunken vessel). All incidents are put on a database and an annual report is written. This database is reviewed annually and used to determine if they need to change or introduce new legislation to protect the marine environment.

Mr Schindler explained that there were 757 marine incidents in QLD waters in 2008. 95% of these incidents included minor or no injury and most incidences occurred a minor safety or environmental impact. Only 2% of incidents lead to marine pollution. He explained that Cairns had a 15% reduction in marine incidences in 2008 compared to 2007.

The MAC questioned the process that is undertaken when a vessel sinks in the Torres Straits. Mr Schindler explained that when a vessel sinks, MSQ usually seek for the vessel to be floated and removed. However sometimes a vessel is in too deeper water or its location makes it unsafe for removal. Safety is the most important aspect so if there is a great risk with removal, and little obstruction risk with leaving the vessel, it will be left.

If a vessel needs to be removed, MSQ issue a direction to the vessel owner. The owner must then arrange for the vessel to be removed, however this may take several days due to remoteness of the fishery as it can be difficult to get a salvage crew in. For this reason MSQ usually give sunken vessels in the straights a longer period for removal such as 3 weeks. The salvage crew contact MSQ if there is a problem and the direction is lifted from the owner once the vessel has been salvaged.

Mr Mosby questioned about the removal of the vessel Posidon. Mr Schindler explained that MSQ are unaware of where the vessel is so they cannot issue a direction for its removal. He added that the Dynasty is in too deeper water so it is unsafe to salvage. He again reiterated that it is MSQs preference to have all vessels removed however we can't do this if it is unsafe.

Mr Mosby asked if there is a database which has within it a list of vessels that have gone down over the years as the traditional sector would like to know how many vessels have gone down, how many vessels have been recovered and how many are still under. Mr Schindler explained that a database with this information does not exist. He explained that TSRA or CFGs can put in a formal request to have a list made detailing this information. He explained that the list may not be complete, however they would give as much information as possible.

Mr Mosby expressed concern with having any vessels remaining underwater, as they pose a threat to the ecosystem in terms of fuel and chemical leakage, If nets are not properly stored when a vessel sinks the gear can also pose threat to marine life. He explained that 80% of their food source is from fish.

Mr Schindler explained that when boats are sinking, operators try to isolate fuel tanks to minimise spillage of fuel. If this is not done, they endeavour to dive and fix it as soon as possible after the vessel is lost. The MAC acknowledged CFGs concerns however noted that there was little to do about it when the vessels are irretrievable such as the Dynasty. Mr Schindler noted that a number of salvage crews including Navy divers refused this particular job as the salvage depth was viewed as being too dangerous.

Mr Jacobsen commented that it is important to note that they did all they could to retrieve boats, and if no divers are willing to retrieve them due to safety concerns, they don't have any other options.

Mr Mosby asked for an environmental assessment report on what is on the sunken ship which may pose a risk and if nets are still under water as they may still be catching fish.

ACTION: TSRA to write to MSQ to request information be provided on the vessels that have sunk over the years and which have been retrieve and which are still submerged. The request should include an inventory of equipment and chemicals on board the vessel.

Mr Pearson questioned if we can improve communication between MSQ and the island communities so they know which vessels have sunk and their location.

ACTION: TSRA to contact MSQ and formalise a method of increasing communication between MSQ and the island communities when a vessel goes down in the Torres Straits.

Mr Mosby added that if MSQ inform island communities when there are missing crew from sunken vessels they look for lost crew while out fishing. MSQ explained that AMSA begin the search so you would need to notify them to let them know. MSQ agreed that they would email AMSA to inform them of this request

ACTION: TSRA to follow up MSQ to determine if they have contacted AMSA regarding notifying island communities when crew are missing at sea.

Mr Earle asked if there are new requirements which are being introduced which vessels will need to comply with. Mr Schindler commented that changes are being made, old vessels will not have to make structural changes etc, however new vessels coming into the fishery will need to adhere to the changes.

PNG update

The TSPMAC chair invited Mr Lester Baule from PNG to discuss anything he would like to that is of issue to PNG. Mr Baule commented that nothing is currently happening in the prawn sector of PNG.

The Chair closed the meeting at 3pm.

Actions arising from TSPMAC 9

Action reference number	Action	Date item was added	responsibility	Status
TSPMAC 9.1	Ms Paulsen to get more information from Jim Foggerty of FRDC regarding the prawn campaign and see if it is possible to extend it to the TSPF.	TSPMAC 9	Kylie Paulsen	
TSPMAC 9.2	AFMA to determine whether there are any CMOs from the NPF fishing in the TSPF that can collect additional data	TSPMAC 9	AFMA	
TSPMAC 9.3	TSPMAC industry members to include a section in their MAC letter relating to the need to improve orderliness of paperwork on board vessels	TSPMAC 9	TSPMAC Industry members	
TSPMAC 9.4	TSPMAC industry members to include in their industry MAC letter, the need to report the catch of syngnathids in the TSPF as they are a protected species	TSPMAC 9	TSPMAC Industry members	
TSPMAC 9.5	AFMA to determine if there are better species ID sheets as the images in these sheets are not adequate for identification	TSPMAC 9	AFMA	

TSPMAC 9.6	Fisheries QLD to liaise with the TSRA to get photos to Identify a ray found by CFGs	TSPMAC 9	Fisheries QLD	
TSPMAC 9.7	ABARE to provide information on the future projected fuel prices and their potential effects on agricultural and rural industries	TSPMAC 9	ABARE	
TSPMAC 9.8	ABARE to provide the fisheries status report for distribution to the MAC members	TSPMAC 9	ABARE	
TSPMAC 9.9	Executive Officer to send the strategic research plan to MAC members	TSPMAC 9	TSPMAC EO	
TSPMAC 9.10	AFMA to send to the MAC, a list of members of the SAC, the research budget and where the SAC obtain their money from	TSPMAC 9	AFMA	
TSPMAC 9.11	Fisheries QLD to put together a business case for the funding of routine scientific work that considers using savings from reducing observer coverage or the 25% manage costs attributed to the PNG allocation	TSPMAC 9	Fisheries QLD	
TSPMAC 9.12	TSPF Harvest Strategy background section to include	TSPMAC 9	AFMA	

	explicit information explaining that although the harvest strategy is set with an MEY target, it is still set to ensure that the fishery is sustainable and there is no sustainability risk to the stock			
TSPMAC 9.13	TSPMAC industry members to determine the resources that would be required to fund an industry forum to discuss management arrangements for the fishery, and the best venue for such a meeting	TSPMAC 9	TSPMAC Industry members	
TSPMAC 9.14	PZJA agencies to determine a process for formalising external leasing in the TSPF and implement it	TSPMAC 9	QLD fisheries to lead	
TSPMAC 9.15	TSPMAC industry members to inform industry in their MAC letter that a survey reviewing rubbish in the areas of Kodall and Masig Islands is being undertaken and remind them of the need to be responsible with rubbish, mention the code of conduct	TSPMAC 9	TSPMAC Industry members	
TSPMAC 9.16	update code of conduct with the suggested changes and	TSPMAC 9	AFMA	

	including adding in a section on a code for respecting the traditional way of life			
TSPMAC 9.17	MSQ to determine whether there is a problem with the visibility of the north most buoy of the sponge farm	TSPMAC 9	MSQ	
TSPMAC 9.18	MSQ to determine whether there is a problem with the visibility of the north most buoy of the sponge farm	TSPMAC 9	MSQ	
TSPMAC 9.19	AFMA to: 1. liaise with MSQ about the method for putting channel markers into the area near the aquaculture farm to guide vessels to the crab pot; 2. inform TSRA for the method for doing this so they can write a letter to MSQ requesting the markers	TSPMAC 9	AFMA	
TSPMAC 9.20	AFMA to enquire about whether spill response kits are present on York Is and the mother ship	TSPMAC 9	AFMA	
TSPMAC 9.21	TSRA to seek additional avenues for funding for placing more buoys on the sponge farm, or discussing other ways	TSPMAC 9	TSRA	

	of improving visibility of the sponge farm			
TSPMAC 9.22	place information regarding the sponge farm and code of risk management for spillage in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - prawn handbook - industry MAC summary - code of conduct - discuss at the industry forum if it is held 	TSPMAC 9	AFMA and TSPMAC Industry members	
TSPMAC 9.23	TSRA to write to MSQ to request information be provided on the vessels that have sunk over the years and which have been retrieved and which are still submerged. The request should include an inventory of equipment and chemicals on board the vessel	TSPMAC 9	TSRA	
TSPMAC 9.24	TSRA to contact MSQ and formalise a method of increasing communication between MSQ and the island communities when a vessel goes down in the Torres Straits	TSPMAC 9	TSRA	
TSPMAC 9.25	TSRA to follow up MSQ to determine if they have	TSPMAC 9	TSRA	

	contacted AMSA regarding notifying island communities when crew are missing at sea			
TSPMAC 9.26	TSPMAC industry members to respond to AQIS' concerns (within TSPMAC 9 paper 4.6) regarding quarantine of product caught in PNG waters to bring to the next MAC.	TSPMAC 9	TSPMAC industry representatives	

Ongoing or incomplete action items from previous meetings

Action reference number	Action	Date item was added	responsibility	Status
TSPMAC 8.3	AFMA to upload the PZJA historic decision record to the PZJA website	TSPMAC 8	AFMA	Ongoing. DAFF will provide a completed decision record in the future as they would like to wait until a whole of PZJA decision record is produced, not just prawn.
TSPMAC 8.9	AFMA to draft a letter to industry asking them to commit to taking observers	TSPMAC 8	AFMA	Incomplete. considering the low amount of effort and higher priority work in the fishery. This was not completed. AFMA will undertake this for next season.
TSPMAC 8.15	QPIF to liaise with Mr Harris to determine whether funding can be sourced from the CRC for TSPF research needs.	TSPMAC 8	QPIF	Ongoing. CRC funding can be sought through member organisations of the Australian Seafood CRC. If QSIA

				successfully join the Australian Council of Prawn Fishers (ACPF), funding can be sought from the CRC.
TSPMAC 8.16	AFMA to determine whether an investment warning is still required for the fishery and the methods of lifting it.	TSPMAC 8	AFMA	Incomplete. PZJA agencies are trying to determine the process for lifting the investment warning in the fishery.
TSPMAC 8.17	AFMA management to liaise with the observer section to get a report on the bycatch that is caught in the TSPF.	TSPMAC 8	AFMA	Ongoing. TEDs were introduced into the fishery in 2002 and vessels had already commenced implementation in 1998. BRDs were compulsory from 2004. As such the MAC should consider whether a report on bycatch is going to be useful. It will not show the effect of TEDs and BRDs and reductions in bycatch. Further reductions in bycatch can be taken as a positive or negative as it could mean the biomass has decreased or that bycatch is reducing due to fishing practices
TSPMAC 8.18	AFMA to assess whether a summary of bycatch data can be put in the TSPF handbook for the 2010 season.	TSPMAC 8	AFMA	Ongoing. The MAC should consider whether they would like this information in a public document such as the handbook.
TSPMAC 8.21	PZJA agencies to develop an article to distribute positive	TSPMAC 8	AFMA & QPIF	Incomplete. The MAC needs to discuss again what information

	information regarding the TSPF including bycatch reduction for presentation in forums including the TSRA newsletter, the QSIA news letter and the Torres News.			should be included in this document, as bycatch data will not be that useful (as per action 8.17 above).
TSPMAC 8.22	AFMA to develop a letter to license holders informing them of the process being undertaken to develop the HS and HSWG industry members	TSPMAC 8	AFMA	Incomplete.
TSPMAC OOS 070509 1.3	TSPF Industry members to develop a proposal for Government to pay 25% (the PNG portion) of the budget which benefit this sector of the fishery.	TSPMAC OOS 070509	Industry	Incomplete. Industry members would still like to develop a paper and may do it for TSPMAC 10.
TSPMAC OOS 070509 1.5	AFMA to provide a summary of some comments from other MACs regarding the CRIS at TSPMAC 8.	TSPMAC OOS 070509	AFMA	Incomplete. Comments cannot be provided at this time as the process is still pending.
TSPMAC 6.3	TSPMAC to undertake an annual self assessment against PZJA indicators outlined in PZJA FMP No. 1 (May 2008).	TSPMAC 6	TSPMAC	Ongoing. Self assessment is not thought to be appropriate at this time considering the change over of MAC members. The MAC agreed to conduct a self assessment at TSPMAC 10 in June 2010.
TSPMAC	The TSPMAC Executive	TSPMAC 6	TSPMAC EO	Complete.

6.7	Officer to ask industry representatives if they would like any other fishery specific objectives to be considered for the TSPF observer program.			Industry members commented that no more objectives are desired.
TSPMAC 6.15	DAFF to determine whether PNG caught product will need to be clearly marked with the jurisdiction in which it was caught.	TSPMAC 6	DAFF	Ongoing. This action item is awaiting finalisation of import rules by Biosecurity Australia and AQIS. These rules cannot be finalised until the TSPMAC provides responses to certain questions from AQIS (see TSPMAC paper 4.6)
TSPMAC 6.18	AFMA to work with the TSRA and AFMA communications section to consider a method of disseminating the information from Mr Turnbull and Dr Pitcher's reports to the indigenous sector.	TSPMAC 6	AFMA	Incomplete. This has not been a priority in the fishery at present.
TSPMAC 6.29	AFMA to apply a 3 tiered approach to the TED, BRD and try net survey, which includes; 4. sending out surveys to all licenses holders and wait two weeks for a response; 5. following up surveys with a	TSPMAC 6	AFMA	Ongoing. This has been decreased in the work priority list as due to other critical issues. However AFMA is finalising the BRD survey and will undertake the survey in early 2010.

	phone call offering phone surveys; 6. QB&FP and AFMA observers to conduct surveys whilst in the field.			
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