

## 10 November 2005 Cairns Cruising Yacht Squadron

### Prawn Working Group Draft Record

#### Attendance

- 1) The following members and observers were in attendance at the Prawn Working Group (PWG) meeting:

John Pollock (Chair)  
Mark Millward (Industry)  
Jim Prescott (AFMA)  
Wez Norris (QDPI&F)

Barry Wilson (Industry)  
Clive Turnbull (QDPI&F)  
Dave Johnson (AFMA)

Rob Giddins (Observer - Industry)  
Marie Giddins (Observer - Industry)  
Britt Maxwell (Observer - DAFF)  
Mick George (EO - AFMA)

Rusty Crettendon (Observer - Industry)  
Peter Ward (Observer - Industry)  
Steve Colquitt (Observer - DAFF)  
John Kung (Observer - QDPI&F)

#### Opening

- 2) The Chair, John Pollock, opened the meeting at 1500 hrs. The PWG through the Chair expressed best wishes to Rosemary on her current illness and to Mark on his recent accident.

#### Apologies

- 3) Apologies for the following PWG members were noted:  
Rosemary Millward (Industry)                      Lota Warria (TSRA – Yorke)  
Kenny Bedford (TSRA – Erub)                      Peter Yorkston (TSRA)  
Samuel Tamu (TSRA – Warraber)                      Charles David (TSRA – Yam)  
Noted that the traditional inhabitant members were attending another meeting on Thursday Island.

#### Adoption of meeting agenda

- 4) Agenda was adopted noting that industry members had only received the agenda paper and supporting documents the previous evening and only then by FAX, and so would not be in a position to make any decisions at this meeting.

#### Ratification of previous meeting record

- 5) Ratified without amendments with further confirmation from industry members.

#### 2006 Management Arrangements

- 6) It was acknowledged that everyone has faced difficulties in the last week in relation to the decision and announcement of arrangements for the 2006 season. Management acknowledged that the timing of the announcements and the convening of the meeting did not produce the desired dynamics for a meeting and that it understands everyone's difficulties but that the process was unavoidable.
- 7) A PowerPoint presentation presented by Dave Johnson outlined the stakeholder process and other meetings that had been held during the week for other Torres Strait fisheries. The presentation gave a broad overview of July PZJA decisions (PZJA 18) and the 3 November 2005 PZJA teleconference decisions.
- 8) The Chair clarified documents that were tabled at this meeting.
  - Press release
  - PZJA decisions
  - TSRA submission
  - TSPEHA submission
  - Agenda paper
- 9) The Chair asked industry members if it was an appropriate time to discuss TSPEHA submission. Industry representatives commented that because papers were only received the previous night that they were not able to make any decisions on proposals. Industry felt it would be useful to listen to the background papers and discuss the information to gain a better understanding. The TSPEHA paper was distributed for consideration by the group.
- 10) The Chair lodged and recorded the TSPEHA submission as a formal PWG document, and clarified that it was a statement of intent that industry would be pursuing outcomes outside of the PWG forum. Industry drew attention to the last three points of the submission. The Chair acknowledged that no decisions would be made, as the industry proposal was based on the premise that the PZJA decision will be implemented. So items would be discussed but decisions would not be made. Comments would be made on proposals tabled.
- 11) Management confirmed that the decisions of the PZJA not for reconsideration at this meeting, but some decisions from industry were needed. It was proposed that the PWG seek agreement to consolidate the industry position to be presented to the PZJA stakeholder forum. Industry representatives stated that may not be acceptable to the wider industry, and further consultation would be needed.
- 12) The agenda paper was presented by Dave Johnson.
- 13) The PWG noted the PZJA decisions.

### **Effort reduction**

- 14) Industry stated their belief that the effort figure of 9,197 days was based only on tiger prawns, as there was not stock assessment for endeavour and king prawns. Industry asked for it to be noted that June 2004 was when the last stock assessment was tabled, and that since that time Clive Turnbull had done a lot of work and this more recent information should be considered. Industry asked for endeavour prawns to be modelled.
- 15) Management stated that the stock assessment modelling was based on fishing patterns that included targeted effort on tiger or endeavour prawns or a mixed fishing strategy. Thus while the assessment was only made for tiger prawns that assessment

is based on the way effort has historically been used. Management acknowledged industry's work with Clive on trying to identify key tiger prawn spawning areas, and hope that such information will be able to be used in future management of the fishery.

- 16) The Chair asked the working group to consider if there were ways to look at using spatial management (closures) to address other prawn spp, as was developed out of AMS workshop and last PWG meeting.
- 17) Industry noted that it was a PZJA 18 decision that the AMS workshop would form the basis of future management. The Chair clarified the need to ask for PZJA rationale for decision, noting this was something beyond the capacity of the working group, and that TSPEHA would take this up through other avenues.
- 18) Industry asked to be informed about the rationale behind the decision to unitise the fishery. Management stated that level of access for each licence holder is defined under a unitised system,(ie a certain percentage of fishery is provided to each licence holder that does not change unless there is a trade between licence holders). This helps to provide certainty for banks. Industry requested any advice from financial institutions that Management may have pertaining to mortgages (ie improved certainty from having units) that was obtained to assist in making the decision to unitise the fishery. Industry did not accept that units would provide greater certainty than the current system of allocated days.
- 19) Industry asked for management to provide an information paper about options for how unitisation would be done. The Chair highlighted the need to identify timelines that are critical to industry to lead into the 2007 season. Management agreed to prepare a paper with some options for industry to look at. (Eg: Effort Units, Gear Units)
- 20) The working group discussed the rationale for a minimum holding in the fishery due to operating costs, but that further discussion would be needed prior to any recommendations on minimum holdings.

### **PNG purchase**

- 21) Industry asked for clarification about the purchase of PNG days, and if it was conditional on unitisation of the fishery. Management confirmed that a decision had been made to move to units, and advised that the tender process to purchase the days will be run in first half of 2006.
- 22) Industry asked what the process would be if endorsed PNG operators wished to fish on 1 March 2006, as it would seem that they have not been allocated days until the purchase had been complete. It was industry's view that the tender process should therefore be completed prior to start of season. The issue of "double dipping" was raised as a possibility to occur if PNG are fishing prior to days being purchased. Management clarified that an operator must have unused days available to sell if they put in a tender and are successful. Management also clarified that the tender process details have yet to be clarified, and will be part of a package to be developed that would contain the business rules for tender process. Industry asked to be provided with this.
- 23) Industry made the comment that there are a number of people who would like to exit fishery, but that if the tender process was not complete by the start of the season, then they may not be able to fish and then may not be successful with tender. This was not fair to industry. Industry stated that it would be prudent to buy all packages (boats, licences, and days) not only days off all operators, and that there are only 70+ operators so the tender process should be able to be done before the season starts.

- 24) Industry asked management for clarification on how many nights are need to account for PNG's entitlements in the fishery. Management advised that the theoretical maximum would be 2299 days, if catch is directly proportional to days. Industry asked if the tender process would be a single stage process, as operators wouldn't want a drawn out process. Management agreed that it will be done in one stage.
- 25) Industry reaffirmed their request for information from financial institutions pertaining to mortgages (certainty from having units), details on unitisation (why & options), business rules for the tender process, and any Regulatory Impact Statements relating to the PZJA decisions (as per last point on the TSPEHA submission). The Chair noted the need to have firm information on the rational for unitisation and the business rules for the tender process as soon as possible.

### **US TEDs**

- 26) The working group agreed that the proposed amendments to the Fisheries Management Notice to comply with the new requirements from the US would be considered the next time the working group convened. It was noted that this is a market issue, but industry members were not able to comment due to the current situation regarding the PZJA decision on effort.
- 27) It was also noted that there is a need to clarify an issue on floatation for bottom shooting TEDs and openings (primarily flap specifications), and then distribute to wider industry, before a decision can be made. Industry made it clear that they were not in favour of floats on the bottom shooting TEDs.

### **TSRA Submission**

- 28) The Chair proposed to handle the TSRA submission in the same way as the TSPEHA submission (i.e. acknowledged that no decisions would be made but comments would be made on submission tabled).
- 29) Management explained the absence of TSRA members was due to a conflicting meeting of the Community Fisher Group, and advised that management met with members on TI the previous night to get input for meeting.
- 30) Industry commented that some points of the submission have implications for licence holders.
- Point 3 (tiger spawning grounds) – Industry sought some clarification. Clive presented the work that had been done to identify closures following on after the AMS workshop. Additional closures such as moon closures in the east and extension of warrior closure in the west (for additional growth) had been developed by Clive and industry. Industry noted TSRA's point but felt that there appears to be a lack of understanding of the developments from those proposed at the alternative management arrangements workshop. Management acknowledged that a great deal of positive work had been done, and stated that this work should be positively embraced in the future management of the fishery. Industry disagreed with Management's comment as the PZJA decision had changed the situation (with a cap of 9197 days then no closures were necessary), and some industry members withdrew their support for the closures that had been developed. Industry would like to confirm that the proposal put forward from the workshop and the additional work undertaken since that time would achieve sustainability goals of the fishery.
  - Point 4 – Industry questioned why spawning closures would be needed if the fishery is to be moved to sustainable level.

- Point 7 – industry didn't agree that meetings should be held on Thursday Island as it is easier to get industry licence holders and members to attend meetings in Cairns.

31) Industry stated their view that the TSRA has a vested interest in the outcomes of the working group, and asked if they would continue to be part of the decision making process. Management commented that there are TSRA members of the working group and as such and will be part of decision making process. The working group noted that TSRA members will be part of decision making process even though they have no entitlements in the fishery.

### **Next Meeting**

40) The PWG agreed that the next working group date would be decided out of session

The meeting closed at 1630 hrs.

After the meeting was closed Clive Turnbull provided information in the performance of the fishery during the past two and current seasons. It was noted that the catch rates for tiger prawns was higher than average in 2004 and 2005. Effort was also much lower in 2004 and 2005 (noting that about 6200 days had been fished up to 2 November 2005).