

Torres Strait Prawn Management Advisory Committee (TSPMAC)

MINUTES

TSPMAC 15

17 June 2014

Masig Island community hall

CHAIR: Mr. Stuart Richey

TORRES STRAIT PRAWN

MANAGEMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING No. 14

17 June 2014: 12pm – 6pm

Venue: Masig Island community hall, Masig Island, Torres Strait

AGENDA

1 Preliminaries

- 1.1 Chairs opening remarks, opening prayer and traditional owner welcome
- 1.2 Apologies
- 1.3 Adoption of agenda
- 1.4 Declarations of interest

2 Meeting Administration

- 2.1 Actions and/or business arising from previous TSPMAC meetings (EO)

3 Reports

- 3.1 Industry update – 2014 season to date (verbal) (**Industry**)
- 3.2 Management update (**AFMA**)
- 3.3 Compliance report - Season update on activities (**QDAFF**)
- 3.4 Data report – final 2013 and 2014 season to date catch and effort trends (**Clive Turnbull**)

4 Management

- 4.1 Flow of benefits to Torres Strait communities - outcomes of the stakeholder consultation and where to from here (**AFMA and Andy Bodsworth**)
- 4.2 QDAFF review of commercial fisheries (**QDAFF**)
- 4.3 Investment warning (**AFMA**)
- 4.4 Total Allowable Effort (**AFMA**)

5 Finance

- 5.1. Update on combined AFMA and QLD draft budget (**AFMA and QDAFF**)

6 Other business

- 6.1 Dates and location for next meeting
- 6.2 Closing remarks and closing prayer

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

Attachment A - TSPMAC 15 Decision Record

2.1.1. The TSPMAC **NOTED** progress on actions arising from previous TSPMAC meetings.

3.1.1. The TSPMAC **NOTED** the industry update for the TSPF.

3.2.1 The TSPMAC **NOTED** the management update for the Torres Strait Prawn Fishery (TSPF).

3.3.1 The TSPMAC **NOTED** the domestic compliance arrangements and achievements in the Torres Strait Protected Zone (TSPZ) for the 2013/14 financial year.

3.4.1 The TSPMAC **NOTED** the final catch statistics for the 2013 fishing season and the monthly trends in the catch and effort for the start of the 2014 fishing season.

4.1.1. The TSPMAC **RECOMMENDED** that the flow of benefits project be supported in going ahead, noting the positive support from the community meeting.

4.2.1 The TSPMAC **NOTED** the update on the proposed Fisheries Queensland Review.

4.3.1 The TSPMAC **NOTED** and **DISCUSSED** the update on the TSPF investment warning.

4.3.2 The TSPMAC **RECOMMENDED** that the paper to lift the investment warning be progressed to the PZJA noting wording changes to the notification which will acknowledge that all Torres Strait fisheries operate in a Native Title area.

4.4.1 TSPMAC **AGREED to recommend** that a minimum one year TAE at 9,200 days be set, noting a three year TAE can be set depending on the outcome of the native title consultation process which would gauge the openness of native title holders on a three year TAE.

5.1.1 That the TSPMAC **NOTED**:

- a) the combined AFMA and QDAFF 2014/15 draft budget for the Torres Strait Prawn Fishery (TSPF).
- b) that AFMA's portion of the draft budget is based on AFMA's 2004 Cost Recovery Impact Statement (CRIS 2004). This is not applied to the QDAFF component of the budget.

Attendance

Stuart Richey	Chair
Lisa Cocking	EO and AFMA Member
Edwin Morrison	Industry Member
Marshall Betzel	Industry Member
Ron Earle	Industry Member
Nick Schultz	Industry Member
Mariana Nahas	TSRA member
Jerry Stephen	Traditional inhabitant member
Kiwat Lui	Traditional inhabitant member
Kenny Bedford	Traditional inhabitant member
Francis Pearson	Traditional inhabitant member
Michael Passi	Traditional inhabitant observer
Hilda Mosby	Traditional inhabitant member
Siri Stephen	Observer
Steve Bolton	AFMA Member
Darren Roy	QDAFF Member
Tom Roberts	QDAFF Member
Clive Turnbull	Scientific Member
Joseph Posu	Permanent observer PNG
Andy Bodsworth	Observer – primary investigator of flow of benefits project

TSPMAC 15 meeting record

PRELIMINARIES

The Torres Strait Prawn Management Advisory Committee (TSPMAC) Chair Mr Stuart Richey welcomed participants to the meeting. Apologies were noted from Mr Jim Newman and Mr Maluwap Nona who was invited as an observer.

Item 1.3 Adoption of Agenda

The TSPMAC adopted the agenda, noting agenda item 4.1, 4.3 and 4.4 would be moved up as Marshall Betzel is leaving early.

Item 1.4 Declaration of Interest

The Chairman reminded committee members of the importance of discussing and recording potential conflicts of interest for the TSPMAC as a whole and each agenda item. The following potential declarations of interest were reported in general (Table 1). No direct conflicts relevant to specific agenda items are recorded within the relevant section of the minutes so all members were permitted to be a part of all agenda items.



Table 1. Declarations of interest for TSPMAC 15.

Name	position	Disclosures of interest
Stuart Richey	Chair	Chair of NORMAC. No other interests in northern Australian fisheries.
Lisa Cocking	Member	Australian Fisheries Management Authority employee
Edwin Morrison	Member	TSPF Licence Holder and operator
Marshall Betzel	Member	President of QLD seafood marketers association and fleet manager for Torres Strait boats.
Ron Earle	Member	TSPF Licence Holder and operator. Also holds Northern Prawn Fishery and Queensland East Coast licences and is a member on NORMAC and NPRAG.
Nick Schultz	Member	TSPF licence holder. No direct conflicts of interest relating to the agenda.
Mariana Nahas	Member	Torres Strait Regional Authority employee
Jerry Stephen	Member	TSRA Board member (Stephen Island)
Kiwat Lui	Member	TSRA Board member St Pauls
Kenny Bedford	Member	TSRA Board member, land owner Erub Island. Traditional Inhabitant Boat licence holder, TRL licence holder, member of PZJA committees as TSRA fisheries portfolio member.
Francis Pearson	Member	TSRA Board member for Poruma Island
Michael Passi	Observer	Murray Island fisheries association. TIB licence holder. Traditional owner. TSRA board member for Murray.
Hilda Mosby	Member	TSRA Board member for Masig Island



Siri Stephen	Observer	TSRA Board member for Stephen Island
Steve Bolton	Member	Australian Fisheries Management Authority employee. No current conflict of interest.
Darren Roy	Member	QDAFF employee. No current conflict of interest.
Tom Roberts	Member	QDAFF employee. No current conflict of interest.
Clive Turnbull	Member	AFMA consultant. No current conflict of interest.
Joseph Posu	Permanent observer	Papua New Guinea National Fisheries Authority employee. No current conflict of interest.
Andy Bodsworth	Observer	AFMA consultant, PI on project at agenda item 4.1.

MEETING ADMINISTRATION

Item 2.1 Actions and business arising from past TSPMAC meetings

Members discussed the actions arising from past meetings, noting a number have been finalised. The major discussion was around the need for a strong a code of conduct in the TSPF to ensure environmentally sustainable and culturally respectful fishing practices. This is vital to helping to building good relationships with communities. Community members still had concerns around rubbish in the Torres Strait region that they believe is from the prawn industry.

The meeting noted there is already a code of practice for the responsible disposal of marine debris and trawl rubbish in the TSPF and MARPOL requirement stickers that generally go on every boat, as well as cultural information in the handbook and the TSRA cultural protocol guide which was sent to all industry members. Any code of practice should be short and punchy or it won't be read, and that AFMA should check whether TSPF boats have the MARPOL stickers. The QSIA magazine can also be used to advertise important information.

ACTION: AFMA to confirm the requirements for MARPOL stickers on boats and whether TSPF boats have them.

ACTION: Put information on codes of practice etc in the TSPF in the QSIA magazine every 2 months.

The committee also discussed the benefits of getting some trawl footage specifically of the Torres Strait region as communities have doubts of how relevant the Queensland East Coast trawl fishery footage is to the Torres Strait. The committee noted that in the past coral and rock may have been trawled up in this fishery, but prawn trawl fisheries catch prawns on sandy bottom where prawns live, not rock and coral which also destroys nets costing a lot of money. So any contact with non- sandy bottoms is accidental and rarely encountered today with the very detailed region maps and sounding equipment. The committee noted that it was the view of one community member when they needed black coral for carvings that they could get it from trawlers.

The committee agreed that some myth-busting around trawl fishery practices and environmental effects could play a significant part in lessening community concerns about the prawn fishery, given today's trawling practices and rules (including bycatch reduction devices and Turtle Excluder Devices) are very different to the past. The committee agreed to investigate getting some underwater footage of trawling in the Torres Strait.

The committee agreed that it may be useful for Mr Bodsworth to combine some mythbusting into stage 2 of the project to help communities to understand trawling practices in the Torres Strait.

ACTION: Mr Bodsworth to combine some myth-busting into stage 2 of the project to help communities to understand trawling practices in the Torres Strait.

ACTION: put together a brochure and footage from the three videos of trawling (new footage for the Torres Strait, Roland Pitchers project and east coast footage of a functioning TED and other BRDs. The brochure should also acknowledge that

damage was done in the past (rubbish disposal and bottom damage) but things have improved now.

ACTION: AFMA to see if cameras can be placed on a TSPF trawl boat to collect footage of trawling in the region.

REPORTS

Item 3.1 Industry update

The TSPMAC industry members provided an update on the 2013 fishing season to date. Key information included:

- catch rates are not as good this year as last
- main catch is of 10/20's
- they are finding it much easier to keep stable crew this year probably due to economics and less opportunities in the mining industry.
- Mr Morrison noted that they now make sure their staff wear uniforms when coming on the Island so people know who they are, and they also notify X X and X when coming onto the island.
- Profit margins are very tight this year, so unless we can increase profits there won't really be any benefit to pass onto communities.
- The market is strong for 10/20s as there was a Vanemai prawn disease which prevented their import, increasing demand in the Australian market. The southern Queensland scallop disaster and poor king prawn season also meant more people were fishing in northern Queensland and some in Torres Strait.
- Prices are OK but they aren't targeting bigger prawns.

ACTION: TSPMAC industry members to provide their crews with a list of people to notify if they are coming ashore on Masig Island.

Item 3.2 Management Update

AFMA presented a management update for the fishery, including the major outcomes of PZJA 23. The major outcome relevant to the TSPF was the implementation of the TSPF vessel monitoring system guidelines, which are available on the PZJA website and the new licence conditions will come into effect for the 2015 fishing season. These licence conditions are a change in wording only, not in the requirements of licence holders.

The committee also noted that the observer program has completed its 47 sea days for the 2013/14 financial year, equating to approximately 2.1% coverage of the actual effort in the fishery for the 2013 fishing season.

Item 3.3 Compliance report

A number of compliance boardings of TSPF boats occurred. There have been no major compliance issues in the TSPF to report.

Item 3.4 Data report

Preliminary data indicates that this years catches aren't as high as last year, however an industry member indicated that they are coming up slightly now as we get into the season. Although effort and catch rates are still higher than 2011 and 2012, they are still historically low compared to the 1990s and early 2000s, however this was before the fishery effort reduction. If the current trends in monthly effort and catches continue the totals for 2014 will be lower than in 2013.

Mr Turnbull explained that it is normal to have bad and good years depending on various influences in prawn fisheries and these trends often match up with the Gulf and east coast prawn trawl fisheries.

The committee noted that costs are higher and profits less so profit per hour of trawling would be much less than previously. Further industry members explained they really need to be catching at least 300kg per night and fishing most of the season at this catch level to be profitable in this fishery. They believe that the PZJA has an obligation to manage this fishery for economic efficiency and there is a need to review and allow more efficient gear if there is to be an increase in catch rates and economic viability.

Item 4.1 Flow of benefits project

The TSPMAC Chair acknowledged the thorough and positive discussion at the community meeting on the flow of benefits project over the last few days, noting all stakeholders seem supportive of the project. Mr Bodsworth explained that economic and business data from commercial fishers would be useful, and if they are willing to provide it he will sign a deed of confidentiality.

RECOMMENDATION

The TSPMAC **RECOMMENDED** that the flow of benefits project be supported in going ahead, noting the positive support from the community meeting.

Item 4.2 QDAFF review of commercial fisheries

The Queensland Department of Agriculture Fisheries and Forestry announced a review of commercial fisheries on 6 March 2014. The aim of the review is to reduce red tape and improve environmental sustainability.

Item 4.3 Investment warning

The committee noted that the PZJA Standing Committee has supported the TSPMAC recommendation to the PZJA to release a media statement (attachment 4.3A) revoking the TSPF investment warning, however given the native title ruling, AFMA thought the TSPMAC should revisit the need for an investment warning before it is removed.

TSPMAC industry members noted investment warnings continue to have a negative effect on the ability for some people to get loans to buy into the fishery, as banks can be hesitant to issue a loan for a fishery with an investment warning. One community representative believed an investment warning should be in place given the native title ruling and PZJA support for 100% ownership aspiration of Torres Strait Islanders. Another noted that it would

have made more sense for the warning to be in place while the native title process was underway, and is less relevant now the ruling is finalised.

The committee also noted that investment warnings are only really something in the fishing industry, as most other industries do their own research when entering into a business. Business operators and investors need to have due diligence. Investment warnings have been used in the past partly as an extra safety measure to protect Government. Further the future Acts requirement until the *Native Title Act 2000* will ensure native title holders are consulted before changes occur in the fishery and investment warnings are a separate process not specifically relevant to that. The committee agreed that the TSPMAC needs to make a recommendation from a fisheries management perspective and anything in relation to managing risk to Government should be up to the PZJA and doesn't require MAC consideration.

RECOMMENDATION

The TSPMAC **RECOMMENDED** that the paper to lift the investment warning be progressed to the PZJA noting wording changes to the media release which will acknowledge that all Torres Strait fisheries operate in a Native Title area.

ACTION: AFMA to progress PZJA paper to lift the investment warning noting changes to the media release which will acknowledge that all Torres Strait fisheries operate in a Native Title area.

Item 4.4 Total Allowable Effort

The TSPMAC discussed the need to set the 2015 total allowable effort level for the fishery, and whether the TAE should be again set for three years as it was in 2011-2013 or one year.

The committee noted that the 9,200 sustainable effort limit is still the best available data based on catch rates from the 2004 stock assessment and agreed that this was still an appropriate level of effort to set, whether for one or three years. 2004-06 data was added to this stock assessment in 2007.

Given the Malu Lamar is still establishing, and the need to consult native title holders on this matter, TSRA would prefer the TAE be set for 2015 only, noting it may be easier to seek a longer term TAE next time when the Malu Lamar is fully established. Further, Mr Stephen raised concerns that setting it for three years could create difficulties if native title holders or other reasons require a change. AFMA advised that the *TSPF Management Plan 2009* allows the TAE to be changed within a season or three year term under certain circumstances.

The committee noted that it was important to identify the difference between a scientific sustainability reason to only set the TAE for one year, or for a native title reason.

RECOMMENDATION

TSPMAC **AGREED to recommend** that a minimum one year TAE at 9,200 days be set, noting a three year TAE can be set depending on the outcome of the native title consultation process which would gauge the openness of native title holders on a three year TAE.

Action: Write a native title consultation letter about the possibility of a three year TAE in August.

Item 5.1 Update on combined AFMA and QLD draft budget

The TSPMAC noted the updated draft budget, now including the QDAFF component. The QDAFF budget has a slight increase from last year due to an unforeseen salary increase.

The committee also noted that the large overheads are still a big concern to industry, although there seems to be nothing that can be done about this.

The committee also noted the need to consider ways to reduce costs in the fishery if the fishery was to have less boats through licence holders surrendering licences or through some form of structural adjustment.

Item 6 Other Business

6.1 Uninhabited Islands

Mr Stephens explained that uninhabited islands now have a Prescribed Body Corporate so fishers need approval before going onto these islands.

ACTION: Mr Stephen to send a list of which islands come under which PBC to the executive officer to be sent to TSPMAC industry members.

6.2 Update on Papua New Guinea Prawn fishery

Joseph Posu from the PNG National Fisheries Association explained that there is still no interest in the Torres Strait Prawn Fishery, and their fishers are focusing on the Gulf of Papua fishery.

The TSPMAC Chair thanked everyone for their attendance at the meeting, and gave particular thanks to the Masig community and representatives for their welcome into their community.



Stuart Richey
TSPMAC Chair

14 July 2014



Item number	Action	Responsibility	Progress
15.1	AFMA to confirm the requirements for MARPOL stickers on boats and whether TSPF boats have them.	AFMA	
15.2	Put information on codes of practice etc in the TSPF in the QSIA magazine every 2 months.	AFMA	
15.3	Mr Bodsworth to combine some myth-busting into stage 2 of the project to help communities to understand trawling practices in the Torres Strait.	Andy Bodsworth	
15.4	Put together a brochure and footage from the three videos of trawling (new footage for the Torres Strait, Roland Pitchers project and east coast footage of a functioning TED and other BRDs). The brochure should also acknowledge that damage was done in the past (rubbish disposal and bottom damage) but things are different now.	AFMA and QDAFF	
15.5	AFMA to see if cameras can be placed on a TSPF trawl boat with an experienced skipper to collect footage of trawling in the region	AFMA	



15.6	TSPMAC industry members to provide a list of people to notify if they are coming ashore Masig Island.	TSPMAC industry	
15.7	Mr Stephen to send a list of which islands come under which PBC to the executive officer to be sent to TSPMAC industry members.	Mr Stephen through TSRA	
15.8	Write a native title consultation letter about the possibility of a three year TAE in August.	AFMA	
15.9	Progress PZJA paper to lift the investment warning noting changes to the media release which will acknowledge that all Torres Strait fisheries operate in a Native Title area.	AFMA	
14.9	PZJA agencies to work with Mr Bedford to develop a communication strategy, including an ongoing newsletter and/ or posters about what is happening in the TSPF, or other TS fisheries. Information may include current mechanisms in place to offer environmental protection to the region (i.e. MARPOL, code of conduct etc), results of research projects (i.e. the sustainability assessment or TRL survivability trial) and the progress on developing methods to increase flow of benefits to the traditional sector.	Kenny Bedford and PZJA agencies	Ongoing. This will be developed through the PZJA communications strategy for use for all TS fisheries. This strategy is currently being developed.
14.10	PZJA agencies to work together to explore possible options for improving the flow of benefits to Torres Strait communities, such as a cadet program or using	PZJA Agencies	Ongoing. Agenda item 4.1.



	community infrastructure.		
14.11	Develop a method of communicating decisions and information to communities such as the surrender of TSPF licences.	PZJA agencies.	Ongoing. This will be developed through the PZJA communications strategy for use for all TS fisheries. This strategy is currently being developed.
14.14	Review the code of conduct for the responsible disposal of marine debris and rubbish and see if more generic issues can be added, such as the TRL march and voluntary move on provisions.	AFMA	Ongoing. This item is yet to be progressed.
14.15	PZJA agencies to work together to distribute TED and BRD footage to communities.	PZJA Agencies	Ongoing. This item is yet to be progressed. The footage is available to be distributed. Some footage will be brought to the meeting for those interested.
14.16	Investigate the feasibility of an education program for skippers, providing information on cultural, environmental and socially significant matters for the region (e.g. pre-season briefings or an information pack for boats and/ or new skippers).	AFMA	Ongoing. This item is yet to be progressed. Given the low effort levels in the fishery other matters have been of higher priority.
14.19	TSPMAC to discuss how community proposals for closures in the TSPF can be fed through the MAC process.	TSPMAC EO	Ongoing. There has been no TSPMAC meeting to date.
14.20	Provide a copy of the 2010 report on island fishing infrastructure to the Executive Officer to distribute to the MAC.	TSRA	Ongoing. Update will be provided to the EO out of session.



14.21	Determine whether there has been a study on the feasibility of community provision of services.	AFMA	Ongoing. Update will be provided at the meeting.
14.23	Compile a basic model showing gradings and prices for prawns if there was an earlier fishing season.	Marshal Betzel and Jim Newman	Incomplete.
14.24	Provide advice to TSPMAC on how Torres Strait communities should be consulted about the proposal to have an early season start date.	TSRA	Completed. This was taken to the TSRA board in September 2013. Board members agreed to do the consultation themselves with their communities. The communities did not support the trial of an early season start date..
14.27	Facilitate the process to engage some PNG fishers to work on TSPF boats to see the effectiveness of TEDs and BRDs. Discussions will need to be facilitated with TSPF licence holders and PNG.	AFMA	Incomplete.