



## **Torres Strait Prawn Fishery Management Advisory Committee (TSPMAC)**

### **TSPMAC CHAIR'S SUMMARY**

**TSPMAC 13, 13 December, 2012**

### **CAIRNS**

#### **CHAIR: Mr. Stuart Richey**

The 13<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Torres Strait Prawn Management Advisory Committee (TSPMAC) was held at the Northern Fisheries Centre in Cairns on 13 December 2012. The main items discussed were an update on the project collecting indigenous community's perceptions on a proposed trial of larger boats and gear in the Torres Strait Prawn Fishery (TSPF) and a discussion around the Torres Strait Scientific Advisory Committee research priorities. The key outcomes from the meeting are summarised below.

A complete decision record can be found at Attachment A and attendees at Attachment B. Agenda papers are on the PZJA website: [www.pzja.gov.au](http://www.pzja.gov.au), under TSPMAC 13. Should you have further questions, please contact Ms Lisa Cocking, the TSPMAC Executive Officer on (02) 6225 5451.

#### **Declaration of Interest**

The Chairman drew attention to a renewed focus on 'conflict of interest' declarations at MACs and RAGs. This is to ensure that declarations of interest are recorded in a consistent approach across Commonwealth-managed fisheries. Mr Richey advised that being an expertise-based committee; it is likely that members have conflicts of some kind, however it is important to recognise when a conflict of interest would assist or hinder any one member more than another member, or stakeholder in the fishery. It was noted that the conflict of interest provisions apply to all members, not just industry MAC members. In accordance with section 55 of the *Fisheries Administration Act 1991*, members declared their interests (see TSPMAC 13 minutes for more detail).

#### **Industry Report**

TSPMAC industry members provided an update on the 2012 fishing season. The MAC heard that the export market for prawns continues to be poor; however the prices they have been receiving for tiger prawns have generally increased throughout 2012. The MAC also heard that catch rates are very high, however overall catches are still low relative to historic levels.

The MAC noted that Sea Swift (mother shipping company) has new management, who have advised that they will be operating in the Torres Strait during the 2013 season, which is very positive given the importance of the service the company provides to the fishery.

### **TSPF Levy Regulation Amendments and Invoices**

The MAC noted that the TSPF levy regulation amendment had been determined and that levy invoices were being generated for distribution the week of the MAC meeting.

### **Compliance Report**

The MAC noted that compliance operations for Torres Strait had recently changed, with compliance officers now based in Cairns and undertaking surveillance remotely, with fly in/fly out at-sea inspections occurring. The MAC noted that the same level of compliance will be provided in the 2013 season. The MAC also noted the excellent compliance rates in the TSPF, which continue to be high (99.7 percent), with only minor breaches detected which related to carrying the proper paperwork on board.

The TSPMAC acknowledged the ongoing concern from traditional inhabitants about the level of compliance the Torres Strait and the effectiveness of having remote compliance officers. It was noted that this matter would be raised at the Torres Strait Fisheries Management Advisory Committee meeting in 2013.

### **Torres Strait Scientific Advisory Committee (TSSAC) Research Priorities**

The TSPMAC discussed the research priorities that are used to allocate TSSAC funding each year. Input from the TSPMAC on these priorities is important, as it will ensure significant TSPF research priorities are flagged with the TSSAC and can be considered by researchers when developing research proposals for the Torres Strait.

The TSPMAC acknowledged that research priority 3 the existing research plan, *Developing economic efficiency*, may be more effective if it was broadened to include a desire for efficiencies to be applicable across adjacent fisheries such as the Northern Prawn Fishery and the Queensland East Coast Otter Trawl Fishery. By developing more complementary arrangements, operators in these fisheries could integrate into the TSPF more easily.

The TSPMAC agreed to provide specific comments on the research priorities out of session.

### **Torres Strait Prawn Fishery Perceptions Consultation**

The TSPMAC noted the progress of the “*Targeted Indigenous Community Consultation in the Torres Strait; gaining an understanding of Indigenous communities’ perceptions regarding boat and gear length in the Torres Strait Prawn Fishery*” project being undertaken by Mr de Fries.

The consultation was originally scheduled to be undertaken in October 2012, and then in November 2012, however there were a series of delays. The project is now set to be undertaken in January 2013 and is committed to providing accurate and independent consultation for the communities.

The TSPMAC discussed the possibility of delaying the consultation until after the TSRA Board meets on 1 March. The TSRA member advised the MAC that the TSRA will be formally inviting the AFMA CEO, Dr James Findlay and Mr de Fries to brief the TSRA board, as a preference before the consultation occurs. The MAC agreed that this would be the preferable option, however it was noted that due to the

commitments of the consultants involved there would be a high risk of further delay. The MAC noted that the consultants were hoping to meet with the TSRA Board following the consultation.

The TSPMAC agreed that given the restrictive timeframes and risk of further delaying the project, the TSRA Board would be briefed following the consultation, and the Board would be provided a copy of the consultant's presentation for information prior to the consultation taking place. Indigenous Fisheries Advisory Committee (IFAC) members on the MAC also agreed to assist with getting information about the consultation out to the communities to ensure good participation in the process.

### **Management costs**

The TSPMAC discussed the ongoing management costs for the TSPF. The MAC noted advice from industry members that if management costs didn't continue to decrease, or profitability increase, the risk of licence holders surrendering their licences this season is high.

The TSPMAC acknowledged the ongoing work of PZJA agencies to reduce management costs over the last two years; however industry members noted that costs were still difficult for some operators to meet.

The TSPMAC noted the ongoing economic pressures being experienced in the TSPF and the AFMA member agreed to raise the matter at the next PZJA Standing Committee meeting.

Yours sincerely,



Stuart Richey  
TSPMAC Chairman

## **Attachment A - TSPMAC 13 Decision Record**

- 2.1.1** The TSPMAC AGREED to adopt the decision record from the TSPMAC Out of Session (OOS) budget meeting held on 23 May 2012.
- 2.1.2** The TSPMAC AGREED to adopt the decision record from the TSPMAC OOS paper distributed on 28 August 2012.
- 2.2.1** The TSPMAC AGREED to adopt the minutes from the TSPMAC 12 meeting held on 1-2 June 2011.
- 2.3.1** The TSPMAC NOTED progress on actions arising from previous TSPMAC meetings.
- 3.1.1** The TSPMAC NOTED the industry update.
- 3.2.1** The TSPMAC NOTED the information updates on the management of the TSPF.
- 3.3.1** The TSPMAC NOTED:
  - a) a report on Domestic Compliance for the period July 2011 to June 2012;
  - b) concerns of the TSRA over the potential reduction of compliance effort in the Torres Strait region resulting from the restructure of QBFP; and
  - c) that the level of compliance in the Torres Strait has remained at 60 days since 2009 and that the QBFP currently have no compliance concerns related to the TSPF.The TSPMAC AGREED:
  - a) That the compliance concern is largely with other Torres Strait fisheries and should be discussed at the TSPMAC and/ or the PZJA Standing Committee.
- 3.4.1** The TSPMAC NOTED the environment update provided at Attachment 3.4A detailing the environment-related issues the fishery will need to focus on over the coming months.
- 3.5.1** The TSPMAC NOTED the final catch statistics for the 2011 fishing season; and the preliminary information presented on the monthly trends in the 2012 catch and effort data compared with earlier years.
- 3.6.1** The TSPMAC NOTED outcomes of the Torres Strait Scientific Advisory Committee Meeting (TSSAC) on 19 and 20 November 2012
  - a) The TSPMAC DISCUSSED research priorities currently listed in the TSSAC Annual Operational Plan for 2012 and provide feedback to the TSSAC on the suitability of research priorities outlined in the Annual Operational Plan.
  - b) The TSPMAC NOTED the TSRA's concerns regarding a trial of larger boats and gear in the TSPF and that alternative arrangements were put forward including consultation before a trial would be considered.
  - c) The TSPMAC AGREED that Objective 3b will be reviewed to include further information regarding harmonising of management arrangements for adjacent fisheries.
- 3.7.1** The TSPMAC NOTED an update on the commencement of the CSIRO project "*Sustainability assessment for trawl bycatch in the TSPF*".
  - a) The TSPMAC DISCUSSED the proposed outputs of the project.

**4.1.1.1** That TSPMAC NOTED an update on the research project - *Targeted Indigenous Community Consultation in the Torres Strait; gaining an understanding of Indigenous communities' perceptions regarding boat and gear length in the Torres Strait Prawn Fishery.*

- a) The TSPMAC AGREED that given the restrictive timeframes, the series of delays to date, and the risk of further delaying the project, the consultation should take place in February as planned, and the TSRA board can be briefed following the consultation.
- b) The TSPMAC also AGREED that the TSRA Board should be provided a copy of the consultant's presentation for information before the consultation occurs, which will hopefully assist Board members in encouraging attendance of the meetings with the consultant.

**4.2.1** That the TSPMAC NOTED an update in relation to the TSPF Turtle Excluder Device (TED) United States Accreditation.

**5.2.1** The TSPMAC NOTED the ongoing economic pressure on the TSPF and agreed to advise the PZJA Standing Committee in a paper when summarising the outcomes of TSPMAC 13.

#### **Attachment B – TSPMAC 13 Attendances**

The following members and observers were in attendance at TSPMAC 13.

<b>Members</b>	<b>Observers</b>
Chair – Stuart Richey	Industry – Mike O'Brien
EO – Lisa Cocking	TSRA – Neville Nakata
Industry – Edwin Morrison	TSRA – John Adams
Industry – James (Jim) Newman	TSRA board member – Jerry Stephens
Industry – Marshall Betzell	TSRA board member – Kenny Bedford
Industry – Ron Earle	CSIRO – Roland Pitcher
TSRA – Suzanne Stratton	Consultant – Anthony de Fries
IFAC – Ned Larry	
IFAC – Gavin Mosby	
AFMA – Fiona Hill	<b>Permanent Observer</b>
AFMA – Steve Bolton	PNG – Ian Liviko
QDAFF – Ian Jacobsen	PNG – Ludwig Kumera
Scientific member – Clive Turnbull	ABARES – Matt Flood
QBFP – Bob Russell	