

Torres Strait Prawn Management Advisory Committee (TSPMAC)

MINUTES

TSPMAC 18

13-14 June 2018

Northern Fisheries Centre Cairns

CHAIR: Mr. Stuart Richey

TORRES STRAIT PRAWN

MANAGEMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING No. 18

Date: 13-14 June 2018: 9am-5pm and 9am – 2pm

Venue: QDAF Northern Fisheries Centre, 38-40 Tingira St Cairns

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 Native Title update. **For Noting.**
- 3.2 a) Industry update. **For Noting.** (Industry – verbal update)
b) PNG update. **For Noting.** (PNG verbal update)
- 3.3 Management update. **For Noting.** (AFMA)
- 3.4 Compliance report - season update on activities. **For Noting.** (QDAF)
- 3.5 Data summary format
- 3.6 Data report – 2017 season and 2018 to date catch and effort trends. **For Noting.** (Clive Turnbull)

4 Management

- 4.1 Season dates – review of data and future. **For Discussion.** (AFMA/ Industry)
- 4.2 Stock assessment and gear survey. **For discussion.** (AFMA)
- 4.3 Harvest Strategy Review. **For Discussion.** (AFMA)
- 4.4 Total Allowable Effort limit 2019-2021. **For Decision.** (AFMA)
- 4.5 Where to from here? Fishery future focus. **For Discussion.** (AFMA)

5 Finance

- 5.1 Review of levy allocation formula (between licences and units). **For Discussion.** (AFMA)
- 5.2 TSPF 2018-19 budget

6 Other business

- 6.1 Seaswift briefing (Seaswift)
- 6.2 Dates and location for next meeting
- 6.3 Closing remarks and closing prayer

TSPMAC 18 Decision Record

2.1.1. That TSPMAC members **NOTED** the progress against actions items arising from previous TSPMAC meetings as detailed in the attached table.

3.3.1 That the Torres Strait Prawn Management Advisory Committee (TSPMAC) **NOTED** the PZJA decisions relevant to the TSPF since the last TSPMAC meeting.

3.3.2 That the TSPMAC **NOTED** the TSPF has been granted a 10 year List of Exempt Species approval for export given the low level of effort in the fishery (Attachment 3.3A).

3.3.3 The TSPMAC **NOTED** the update on the ecological risk assessment process for the Torres Strait prawn fishery.

3.3.4 The TSPMAC **DISCUSSED** the pros and cons of undertaking a basic trial of the NPF approved BRDs before considering implementation in the TSPF, or whether the NPF is similar enough to allow implementation without a trial.

3.3.5 The TSPMAC **AGREED** that a trial should be undertaken in 2019, using the most effective BRD identified through the NPF trial this year. The trial should be completed on one or two licence holders boats.

3.3.6 The TSPMAC **NOTED** that a public licence register for the TSPF is now available on the PZJA and AFMA websites.

3.3.6 The TSPMAC **NOTED** the transition of compliance operations for the TSPF to be undertaken by AFMA is on track for July 2018.

3.3.7 That the TSPMAC **NOTED** the observer data for the 2016 and 2017 fishing season.

3.4.1 The TSPMAC **NOTED**:

a) the domestic compliance arrangements and achievements in the Torres Strait Protected Zone (TSPZ) for the 2017/18 financial years

b) that 6 at sea boards were undertaken in the TSPF and no breaches were reported.

3.5.1 The TSPMAC **DISCUSSED** the type of information presented in the annual “Torres Strait Prawn Fishery Data Summary.”

3.5.2 The TSPMAC **AGREED** that the data summary should continue in the current format with analytical commentary.

3.5.3 The TSPMAC **RECOMMENDED** that the data summary be sent to TSPMAC for short consideration before publishing each year, noting the fishery data analysis present.

3.6.1 The TSPMAC **DISCUSSED** the information presented in the “Torres Strait Prawn Fishery Data Summary 2017” and this paper and attachments.

3.6.2 The TSPMAC **DISCUSSED** the analysis of the monthly trends in fishing effort, tiger prawn catch and tiger prawn CPUE for 2016, 2017, and 2018 compared with earlier years.

3.6.3 The TSPMAC **DISCUSSED** the catch and effort patterns in the east coast otter trawl fishery compared to the TSPF.

3.6.4 The TSPMAC **NOTED** information within this paper will be discussed in more detail during agenda items 4.1 and 4.5.

4.1.1 That the TSPMAC **NOTED** background information including the previous consultation around TSPF season dates in 2015.

a) the industry proposal for a 1 April season opening

b) aspects to consider regarding changes to the season dates.

4.1.2 The TSPMAC **RECOMMENDED** that no changes be made to season dates until 2020 season at earliest, following results of the stock assessment and an additional year of data.

4.2.1 The TSPMAC **NOTED** that the TSPF tiger prawn stock assessment is being updated during the 2018-19 financial year following the out of session TSPMAC consultation.

4.2.2 That the TSPMAC **NOTED** the stock assessment will include an update of fishing power in the fishery and provide advice on the maximum sustainable yield and associated total allowable effort levels going forward for the fishery.

4.2.3 That the TSPMAC **NOTED** the revised stock assessment will be used as the basis for reviewing the TSPF harvest strategy.

4.3.1 That the Torres Strait Prawn Management Advisory Committee (TSPMAC) **NOTED** the harvest strategy is due for review.

4.3.2 The TSPMAC **DISCUSSED** the proposed approach of using a harvest strategy working group to review the TSPF harvest strategy.

4.3.3 The TSPMAC **RECOMMENDED** a harvest strategy technical working group should be established, including Jim Newman (industry), Clive Turnbull (scientist), 1 other independent scientist and AFMA (secretariat). Once a plan is put together, it should be presented through consultation to communities before going to the TSPMAC.

4.4.1 That the Torres Strait Prawn Management Advisory Committee (TSPMAC) **DISCUSSED** the process for setting the TSPF total allowable effort limit for 2019-2021.

4.4.2 That the Torres Strait Prawn Management Advisory Committee (TSPMAC) **RECOMMENDED** that the PZJA set the Total Allowable Effort (TAE) in the TSPF at 9,200 days for the 2019 and 2020 seasons, noting that the revised stock assessment will be undertaken and fully considered prior to setting the TAE for the 2021 season, at which time TSPMAC can reconsider setting the TAE for a three year period.

4.4.3 That the Torres Strait Prawn Management Advisory Committee (TSPMAC) **NOTED** that the proposed TAE is consistent with the TSPF management plan, harvest strategy and sustainability reference points.

4.4.4 That the Torres Strait Prawn Management Advisory Committee (TSPMAC) **NOTED** the TAE can be changed by the PZJA if needed within or between seasons by determination or emergency determination, if the stock assessment indicates a new TAE is required.

4.5.1 The Torres Strait Prawn Management Advisory Committee (TSPMAC) **NOTED** the lack of effort and reduced performance of the fishery over recent years; the economic pressures on the fishery; and, past/recent research which has been undertaken to assess and improve the fishery.

4.5.2 The Torres Strait Prawn Management Advisory Committee (TSPMAC) **DISCUSSED** the need and potential steps for action to improve participation and economic performance of the fishery.

4.5.3 The TSPMAC **RECOMMENDED** that no changes be pursued at this stage, while AFMA look into research projects for environmental drivers effecting TSPF biomass.

5.1.1 The TSPMAC **DISCUSSED** the split of budget costs between the licence and units of fishing capacity and **RECOMMENDED** that the Table of splits within the minutes be adopted.

5.2.1 The TSPF **NOTED** the 2018-19 TSPF budget.

Attendance

Stuart Richey	Chair
Lisa Cocking	EO and AFMA member
Ian Butler	AFMA member
Darren Roy	Fisheries Queensland member
Marshall Betzel	Industry member
Glen Duggan	Industry member
Ed Morisson	Industry member
Jim Newman	Industry member
Allison Runck	TSRA member
Mariana Nahas	TSRA observer
Gavin Mosby	Traditional inhabitant member (day 1 only)
Rocky Stephen	Traditional inhabitant member
Francis Pearson	Traditional inhabitant member
Clive Turnbull	Scientific member
OBSERVERS	
Clinton Farnham	Industry member observer
Sasha Sansom Peter Domenighini	Seaswift – attended for seaswift update and question time on Wednesday morning only.

TSPMAC 18 meeting record

PRELIMINARIES

The Torres Strait Prawn Management Advisory Committee (TSPMAC) Chair Mr Stuart Richey welcomed participants to the meeting, including the newly appointed traditional inhabitant Industry member, Rocky Stephen, replacing Jerry Stephen who has moved to the fisheries portfolio member position for TSRA, and on the committee. Mr Maluwap Nona provided an acknowledgement and traditional owner welcome and Mr Rocky Stephen spoke an opening prayer for the meeting. Apologies were noted from Mr Jerry Stephen.

Agenda Item 1.4 Disclosure of Interest

The Chairman reminded committee members of the importance of discussing and recording potential conflicts of interest for the TSPMAC as a whole at the commencement of the meeting and at each agenda item where appropriate. 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. Disclosures of interest.

Name	Disclosures of interest
Stuart Richey	Chair of NORMAC. Chair of AMSA. No other interests in northern Australian fisheries
Lisa Cocking	Australian Fisheries Management Authority employee
Ian Butler	Australian Fisheries Management Authority employee
Darren Roy	Queensland fisheries
Maluwap Nona	Chair of Malu lamar. No other interests declared.
Edwin Morrison	TSPF Licence Holder and operator
Marshall Betzel	President of QLD seafood marketers association and fleet manager for Torres Strait boats.
Clive Turnbull	Agenda item 4.2 regarding the stock assessment is a potential conflict of interest if the TSPMAC make any recommendations, Mr Turnbull would not be a part of them.
Glen Duggan	Licence holder in TSPF and QLD East Coast Otter Trawl Fishery.
Jim Newman	Holds 1 Torres Strait licence.
Allison Runck	Torres Strait Regional Authority employee.

Gavin Mosby	Traditional inhabitant member for Masig. Traditional fisher for BDM, TRL and Finfish.
Clinton Farnham	Industry member licence holder. Observer at this meeting.

MEETING ADMINISTRATION

Agenda Item 2.1 Actions and business arising from past TSPMAC meetings

The TSPMAC reviewed the actions arising from past meetings.

Action item 17.2 – “TSRA to explore the feasibility of making flow charts to explain how to gain certifications (like a master fisherman’s licence) and where they could gain employment.”

TSRA explained that they will look into providing some flow charts in the future, however are waiting for the AMSA certifications to change, which is in progress for the next few years (new regulations will start in 2020). Changes will include coxswain certificates being mandatory for all boat drivers, as there used to be an exemption for boats under 6m. The TSRA agreed to progress this action (17.2) for the next meeting.

Discussions were had in regard to master fisherman licence qualification requirements and if the master fisherman licences applied equally to the TIB sector. AFMA agreed to seek clarification and provide this to members.

ACTION 18.1: AFMA to seek clarification regarding aster fisherman’s licenses and requirements for TIB fishers and feedback to the TSPMAC.

Action Items 5.2 - “Put information on codes of practice etc in the TSPF in the QSIA magazine every 2 months”

The TSPMAC also agreed to remove action item 15.2 noting the magazine isn’t probably read by the general public audience they were targeting with this action. Industry are well informed of the code of practice through the fishery handbook.

Once the committee finished going through the action items, the Malu Lamar representative discussed the sea spill exercises being undertaken in the Torres Strait and their intention to negotiate a sea use agreement. Several nearby communities will be engaged in discussions.

Malu Lamar explained that they would like to work directly with industry regarding future development of an Indigenous Land Use Agreement, rather than Government being a middle man. They acknowledged that it is difficult to get in touch with industry given the lack of an industry association. AFMA explained that they can send letters to industry on behalf of Malu Lamar, using plain envelopes so AFMA is not associated with the letter, noting AFMA are unable to give out contact information of licence holders.

Mr Nona mentioned commercial agreements which had been negotiated between traditional owners and investors such as Gina Rinehart, which traditional owners were very happy with. They hoped similar things could be negotiated in fisheries.

ACTION 18.2: AFMA to send email to Malu Lamar explaining ways they can get in touch with licence holders, including AFMA sending letters on their behalf.

TSRA also confirmed that AFMA is welcome to provide fisheries related updates in the TSRA newsletters when needed.

Agenda Item 6.1 Seaswift presentation

Sascha Sansom, the Seaswift Fuel Services and Fisheries support manager and Peter Domenighini, the General Manager came to the meeting to explain and answer questions about Seaswift's intentions for the Torres Strait region. They explained that Seaswift continue to do all they can to work with active fishers to support them around their needs. They have been blending services with the Lockhart river area as there have not been enough boats fishing to fund a full time service. They need at least 10 boats to fund using the larger mother ship service.

The committee noted that Seaswift are confident that they will be able to continue servicing the 15 boats now fishing using the smaller cargo vessel, rather than the larger mothership used in the past, as it can carry ample fuel, and can be topped up from cargo barges where needed. However this boat cannot take passengers for crew changes. The committee also noted that pre booking offloads will help Seaswift to better support fishers and plan their work. The TSPMAC industry members agreed to let licence holders know about this in their TSPMAC industry update letter.

ACTION ITEM 18.3 – TSPMAC industry members to write to licence holders regarding pre-booking fuel and offloads for the mothership. Notification should occur to the Seaswift office and can also be to the boat drivers, however this is less reliable due to periodic driver changes.

REPORTS

Agenda Item 3.1 Native Title Update

The TSPMAC noted that Malu Lamar are looking forward to more closely engaging with industry going forward, outside of the formal MAC or other meeting processes. They also wish to see the fisheries progress financially while maintaining environmental stability. Mr Nona acknowledged the rights of others (non-traditional inhabitants) to fish, but want to move towards working under an Indigenous Land Use Agreement, which then allows the fishery to operate around traditional owners rights and desires.

Agenda Item 3.2a Industry update

The TSPMAC industry members provided an update on the 2018 season to date. The following major points were noted:

- Season opened 1 Feb and the first vessel arrived around 23rd February. There were only 2 boats fishing until the end of April and there are now around 15-17 boats.
- Low effort in the TSPF is considered a result of the high catch rates in the Queensland East Coast Otter Trawl Fishery (ECOTF) at the start of the season. These catch rates have now dropped, driving some fishers to try the TSPF.
- Mother shipping has been a challenge for licence holders, however Seaswift continue to work closely to support fishers as best they can.

- Catches were high at the start of the season (350-400kg or more per night) however have dropped since more boats have entered the fishery (inconsistent catch rates now between 200-400kg a night). This is because boats going through an area appears to disperse the prawns and they are then harder to find.
- Historically the start of the TSPF season had the best fishing around Aureed Island, as the rest of the Straits didn't have prawns yet. After a few weeks this area dropped off as prawns came into the rest of the fishery.
- People cook the endeavour prawns to increase the price value. They do this at the end of the year for Christmas market, so people are more willing to target endeavours at the end of the year.
- Endeavour catches will usually go up when tigers go down, as they swap and target them if they can't get tigers.
- The Southern end of the TSPF isn't performing as well the last 2-3 years.

Agenda Item 4.4 Total Allowable Effort Limit

The committee discussed the total allowable effort (TAE) limit for the fishery and the reason a TAE is used rather than total allowable catch. Mr Turnbull explained that it is easier to manage the fishery using an effort limit, as it takes into account the slight changes to catches and catch rates each year without needing to change the TAE. If a catch limit was set, it would more likely need to change every year.

The committee noted concerns from one traditional inhabitant member who felt there was not enough consultation during the development of the TSPF harvest strategy. Another TIB member noted that there were traditional inhabitant members on the TSPMAC during development of the harvest strategy, however these old Community Fisher Group (CFG) representative positions on the committee didn't always take information back to the communities properly. He explained that he needs time to consult his community before he can support a recommendation at the committee.

The committee discussed the system of consultation, noting that TIB members felt there was inadequate support from AFMA or the TSRA for them to consult with their communities regarding fisheries management decisions. TIB members acknowledged that they believe communities should be consulted in person before a decision is taken to the TSPMAC to be discussed and considered. This is easier for TSPMAC, as there is a member of the committee from each neighbouring Torres Strait community unlike cluster reps for other committees.

ACTION 18.4: AFMA and TSRA to work together to discuss the memberships and consultation with traditional inhabitants regarding Torres Strait management.

Agenda Item 3.2b PNG update

PNG were not in attendance at the meeting so no update was received.

Agenda Item 3.3 Management update

The TSPMAC noted the management updates for the fishery, including:

- The approval of the amendments to the TSPF Management Plan 2009 which are now in force.
- The cancellation of 34 units of fishing capacity in the TSPF, from a licence package which had been surrendered.

- The wildlife trade operation for the TSPF has been upgraded to a 10 year List of Exempt Species approval for export given the low level of effort in the fishery
- that a public licence register for the TSPF is now available on the PZJA and AFMA websites.
- the transition of compliance operations for the TSPF to be undertaken by AFMA is on track for July 2018.
- Discussing the observer data for the 2016 and 2017 fishing seasons. Traditional inhabitant members noted that the species of interest list are still considered the most relevant species they wish to collect data on.

ACTION 18.5: AFMA to send an email to licence holders and the TSPMAC once we know a start date and process for AFMA taking over the TSPF compliance functions.

AFMA Observers

The committee discussed the TEP reporting for the fishery, and noted it would be useful to compare the observer TEP interactions to those reported in logbooks, to see if they are comparable. This may give an indication of whether people are reporting TEP interactions accurately.

ACTION 18.6: AFMA to compare logbook data to observer data for TEPs to see if they match.

The committee also noted that AFMA should closely monitor effort given the increase in boats now fishing in the TSPF, and increase the observer effort where needed.

ACTION 18.7: AFMA to monitor observer days and make sure we have enough budgeted as effort increases.

Ecological Risk Assessment

The committee also discussed the current AFMA process for updating, or undertaking ERAs for all AFMA managed fisheries (including Torres Strait) over the next several years. AFMA are currently considering whether the TSPF does need to undertake one of these assessments for consistency with other fisheries, noting the sustainability assessment already undertaken is actually a more robust assessment. AFMA will provide an update to the TSPMAC following the ERA meeting in late June.

ACTION 18.8: When information is obtained, AFMA to send an update on the whether the TSPF will be joining the AFMA ERA process, to the TSPMAC.

Bycatch Reduction Devices and trials

The committee also discussed the bycatch reduction devices for the fishery. The committee noted that the NPF are still trialling new BRDs to reach their target of a 30 percent reduction in bycatch. The two latest trials have shown a 20-30 and 30-40% reduction between the two trials. The committee agreed that a trial needs to be undertaken in the TSPF following the NPF identifying the most successful BRDs, given it is a different fishery with different species. For example, the Kon's Covered Fish eye (KCF) works based on fish swimming out of a net. So different species will benefit from the BRD more than others.

Queensland fisheries explained that a trial of the KCF on a boat in the ECOFT led to a lot of prawn loss. The committee agreed that a trial could be undertaken on a boat using a developmental permit, and this should occur once the NPF trials are complete, so the most effective BRD can be trialled in the TSPF. . Engaging a PhD student was discussed, however logistics and costs may be too difficult. The committee agreed it would be easiest to trial it on an existing boat, and if possible, attempt to get some research funding to supplement the costs of the boat doing the work, through possible prawn loss or increased fuel or other costs.

Mr Farnham agreed he may be able to carry out a trial next year.

The Malu Lamar representative raised the issue of intellectual property, as he believes any that any boat data should be owned by traditional inhabitants as they believe it is their fish, and thus they also own the data.

The committee noted that any changes to TSPF BRD requirements would need to be mirrored in the east coast fishery to be viable for TSPF licence holders to use them. The Queensland member noted that they should be able to make an argument for implementing a BRD in the ECOTF if we have TSPF and NPF data, and do a basic trial on a few boats to gather enough evidence and argument to implement them.

<p>RECOMMENDATION: The TSPMAC AGREED that a trial should be undertaken in 2019, using the most effective BRD identified through the NPF trial this year. The trial should be completed on one or two licence holders boats.</p>

ACTION 18.9: Mr Betzel to contact the FRDC to see whether funding would be available to supplement fishers trialing BRDs.

ACTION 18.10: AFMA to work with Maggie Jo (Clinton the Skipper) regarding trialing the KCF next year following NPF trials finishing.

ACTION 18.11: circulate NPF trial data when it is released seeking TSPMAC recommendation about which BRD to trial in the TSPF.

The TSRA provided a short update regarding fisheries management, including a few research projects being undertaken including:

- A project investigating a potential model for community ownership and management of Torres Strait fisheries such as BDM, which TSRA currently holds and manages. The project aims to set up an independent commercial entity that will hold the resource, instead of it sitting with the TSRA.
- A project exploring the export market and possible branding for Torres Strait fisheries. This may improve the supply chain and improve value and return on product for Torres Strait fishers.

TSRA also explained an Industry development summit is scheduled for August on Horn Island, to discuss these projects going on in Torres Strait and talk about other PZJA issues. This summit will also be the time for elections of the new community representatives for PZJA committees.

This forum will include representatives from all communities and PZJA agencies will be invited.

Agenda Item 3.4 Domestic compliance report

The Queensland Fisheries compliance representative explained that only 46 of the 60 compliance day target was achieved for Torres Strait fisheries this financial year, as they were not able to use the police vessel they usually use for trips. No breaches were recorded in the TSPF with 6 boardings.

Agenda Item 3.5 Data summary

The committee discussed the format of the TSPF data summary, and whether the summary should remove all analysis and hypothesise regarding data, and instead strictly present raw data and figures.

This suggestion came, noting that the NPF data summary strictly provides data without analysis or suggestions regarding trends. Because the suggestions are only from one person and have not been peer reviewed, there could be some risks considered with putting this information in the public domain. Despite this, the TSPMAC agreed that they like the current format of the data summary, would like it to stay, noting it should be sent to the TSPMAC for short consideration prior to publishing each year.

<p>RECOMMENDATION: The TSPMAC RECOMMENDED that the data summary be sent to TSPMAC for short consideration before publishing each year, noting the fishery data analysis present.</p>
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The committee also noted that it would be useful to have fuel and beach product price data in the summary, including trends on the east coast. TSPF industry members agreed to provide this data to Clive Turnbull. They noted that Gulf fuel is more expensive than the east coast and prawn prices will be different so we can't use their data. Mr Turnbull noted that if industry provide the data we can put it in.

The committee also discussed the five boat rule, and agreed that there was little use for it going forward given all boats can generally see each other on AIS now anyway. With so few boats fishing it is less important, particularly given it risks leaving holes in data if we implement the five boat rule.

ACTION 18.12: TSPF industry members to provide fuel and beach product price data to Clive Turnbull for use in the data summary.

ACTION 18.13: AFMA to consider steps to remove the five boat rule policy for TSPF as industry are not generally concerned. Send a letter of question to industry.

<p>RECOMMENDATION: Send data summary to TSPMAC for short consideration before publishing each year, noting the fishery data analysis present.</p>

Agenda Item 3.6 Data report

Clive Turnbull presented a data summary for the 2017 and 2018 season to date. Key points discussed included:

- The 2017 fishing season had the lowest catch of tiger and endeavour prawns and the lowest fishing effort since 1978 when catch records commenced for this fishery.

- The low fishing effort may in part stem from the initial low catches during the early months of the 2017 fishing season (Table 1). The tiger prawn CPUE for 2017 was still higher than the 1990's but was low compared with recent years (2012 - 2016) and may have discouraged fishers from operating in the fishery.
- Monthly CPUE from the first few months of 2017 suggest that there may have been unusually poor recruitment. This is generally when tiger prawn recruitment is strongest.
- The years prior to 2005 had the highest number of vessels fishing, highest days fished and the lowest mean annual catch rates (CPUE) for tiger prawns since the start of full logbook records in 1989.
- The highest catches of tiger prawn (Figure 2) occurred in 1992 and 1998 and were well above the estimate of Maximum Sustainable Yield (MSY).
- Since 2005 the annual tiger prawn harvest has generally been well below MSY (Figure 2). This could have allowed the tiger prawn stock to increase in size which would be one explanation for the higher annual and monthly CPUEs after 2005.'
- The annual trend of tiger prawn CPUE for Torres Strait is similar to that of northern and southern tiger prawn sectors of the Queensland East Coast Otter fishery (ECOT). Since 2000 the CPUE of all three fisheries (Figure 3) has increased while fishing effort has decreased.

The committee discussed the decline in endeavour prawn effort and CPUE for the fishery, noting that the decline in effort occurred 2 years before the decline in CPUE. Mr Newman questioned whether the decline is linked to the introduction of BRDs, and mentioned the hypothesis of Neil Gribble that endeavour prawns are scavengers and may have been feeding off the bycatch of trawlers.

The committee also discussed the apparent reduction in king prawn data. Industry mentioned that king prawn catches have decreased, as they are not fishing in the boundary areas where king prawns are historically caught. Further, some industry are not separating king prawns when only a very small number are taken meaning they are not reported.

Agenda Item 4.1 Season Dates

The TSPMAC discussed the season dates, including a proposal put forward from some industry members to trial a later season opening. The committee noted that when the early season opening trial was recommended by the TSPMAC in 2015 (for the 2016 season onward), some members were supporting it with the caveat that they are hoping it will make the TSPMAC open to trialing a late season opening in the future too. The proposal put forward the hypothesis that a later season opening may allow prawns to increase in size, thus resulting in better catch rates and prices for prawn. Some scientific data would indicate it may not be as simple as this, as prawn have continual recruitment into the fishery throughout the year. Mr Newman explained that of the fishers he spoke to, some were supportive (at least 5-6 who are currently fishing), some were unsure and a few NPF dual endorsed licence holders, who do not hold QECOTF licences, were not supportive as they would no longer be able to fish. Mr Morrison noted that he had received calls from a number of licence holders last night noting they do not support the later opening. Other operators were of the view that those fishers who are actively fishing should have the biggest say in season dates. The committee noted the debate is not of sustainability concern, but around economics and participation.

Other points discussed included:

- Other fisheries including the NPF and QECOTF have experienced changes to catch rates since 2015, possibly as a result of mangrove die off and rapid sea level changes.
- It would be useful to look at the size composition of the catches for the February opening, not just prices. The 15 April opening in 2009 showed large prawns were already around. Further, Mr Farnham noted that the February catches were mainly of u10s (76 boxes) with 11 boxes of 30/40s and 31/30s.
- If there is an issue with latent effort in the fishery, why would we restrict fishing even more?
- The original decisions for a season extension included the benefits of a longer season with possibly retaining crew.
- The Exmouth and Shark Bay fisheries in Western Australia have seen a better catch rates for prawns with a shorter season.
- Some fishers believe there are not enough prawns to warrant any early opening. AFMA doesn't believe this warrants opening later, as fishers have the choice of whether they fish early or not, and this year, given the lack of early season effort, it was almost as if a May/ June opening occurred.

The traditional inhabitant representatives acknowledged that community members are likely to question more changes to season dates only three years after the early season opening was introduced, and they may be more likely to support another change after the stock assessment is updated. They also explained they are unable to support the decision without consulting with the communities first in person.

The committee acknowledge that given the early season opening was introduced very late for the first season (2016), the catch rates have been low the past two years, and there may be climate change impacts effecting prawn productivity and catches, it would be worthwhile continuing with the early season opening. Further, committee members feel there would likely be more support from communities after the stock assessment is complete. Even though it is not related to the season dates, communities may feel more comfortable around sustainability.

RECOMMENDATION

4.1.1. That the TSPMAC **NOTED** background information including the previous consultation around TSPF season dates in 2015.

a) the industry proposal for a 1 April season opening

b) aspects to consider regarding changes to the season dates.

4.1.2. The TSPMAC **RECOMMENDED** that no changes be made to season dates until 2020 season at earliest, following results of the stock assessment and an additional year of data.

Item 4.2 Stock Assessment

AFMA provided an update regarding the stock assessment, which was supported by the TSPMAC out of session earlier this year, and will be carried out in the 2018-19 financial year. This agenda item is seeking comment regarding the gear survey and whether any changes are needed to collect all the necessary data to update fishing power for the fishery.

Mr Turnbull will be contacting the 20 or so vessels that have been actively fishing to collect gear information and update fishing power.

The committee agreed that net composition (net material e.g. knotless nets) should be added to the gear survey.

Action 18.14: Mr Turnbull to add gear composition to the gear survey.

Phone boosters

AFMA relayed information just sent in from Gavin Mosby who was not attending the meeting today, who had received calls regarding phone boosters possibly being used in the Torres Strait again. Since the extra boats have arrived in the Torres Strait, the mobile reception has gone down on Masig Island.

The TSPMAC industry members agreed to include a reminder about this in their industry update from the meeting, noting it is difficult to tell whether boosters are being used, or other circumstances are affecting phone reception.

Item 4.3 Harvest Strategy

The committee discussed the TSPF harvest strategy, noting that the strategy was introduced in 2011. It was developed through the TSPMAC, and a dedicated working group. The harvest strategy is overdue for a basic review, noting a full review of triggers and rules isn't needed until the triggers in the strategy have been reached. AFMA is seeking a simple review of the way the triggers are set, noting that there is a need to allow them to be flexible with changes to catch rates. The current harvest strategy triggers can be overshoot if catch rates are really high, as the same kg level of prawns can be caught in a much shorter timeframe. AFMA proposed a small working group be put together to develop the new triggers, which would then be presented to the TSPMAC for consideration.

Traditional inhabitant members voiced a request to redevelop the whole Harvest Strategy, noting the level of consultation being undertaken now for TRL and BDM, wasn't carried out with the TSPF harvest strategy. The committee noted that community members were consulted through the TSPMAC, however further consultation was not undertaken with communities, as they harvest strategy affects the licence holders, of which there are currently no traditional licence holders. There were not resources to review the full harvest strategy at this stage. Traditional members also suggested it would be useful to go to communities and explain the TSPF harvest strategy, so they understand how it works and can have more confidence that the fishery is not being overfished. It is difficult carrying out this level of consultation in a cost recovered fishery. The committee also questioned the point of TIB members on the committee if consultation has to be carried with all communities members in person as well.

The committee agreed that there is a need for AFMA and the TSRA to work together to better support Traditional Inhabitant engagement in PZJA management. Even though the four communities within the TSPF have members on the TSPMAC, there may sometimes be need to consult with communities more broadly.

The committee agreed that a working group should be established, including Jim Newman (industry), Clive Turnbull (scientist), 1 other independent scientist and AFMA (secretariat).

The committee agreed community members were not needed during the technical discussion, but once a plan is put together, it should be presented through consultation to communities before going to the TSPMAC. AFMA will work with the TSRA on the engagement with Traditional Inhabitant members and Torres Strait communities.

Item 4.4 Total Allowable Effort Limit for 2019-2020

The committee discussed the need to set a new TAE limit for the fishery, noting the current determination expires this year. Noting the stock assessment is currently being updated, the committee recommended a 2 year TAE be set at 9,200 days, instead of being set for three years. Following the stock assessment the TSPMAC can reassess the limits and set a longer TAE if considered appropriate.

Item 4.5 Where to from here?

The TSPMAC noted the history of discussions regarding the TSPF, particularly economics and engagement with the fishery. They discussed investment, including two research projects exploring community perceptions around larger boats and gear in the TSPF, and also exploring ways to improve the flow of benefits from the fishery to communities. Little progress has been made since these projects were completed, and the committee has made a decision not to continuing discussing these matters, noting the high costs with little movement with changes in the fishery.

Given it has been a few years since the discussion, AFMA wanted to again raise the issues around licence holder participation, latent effort and fishery economics. AFMA completed a survey of licence holders exploring their reasons for not fishing in the TSPF, with the trend of responses relating to economics, and it being more economical to fish on the east coast, noting the high fuel and freight costs, and remoteness of the TSPF. There are also ongoing concerns regarding infrastructure, and the difficulties getting crew in and out with the reduced Seaswift services.

The committee also noted the need to work closely with Queensland fisheries around any changes that may occur, noting dual endorsed boats may have difficulty employing new management arrangements which may not be allowed in the QLD ECOTF. Similarly, any changes made to the ECOTF through the review should be considered in the TSPF, and the need for a long consultation period needs to be acknowledged, making it vital AFMA and QLD Fisheries work closely together as changes are agreed to in the ECOTF, so the TSPMAC can begin discussing the effects to the TSPF.

The traditional inhabitant members again raised their desire for 100% ownership of this fishery, and to have control over who is able to fish or not. They feel they own the resource, and thus should be better consulted regarding the fishery decisions.

The committee noted the 100% ownership aspirations, but reminded members that this committee is here to discuss management decisions, within current management arrangements, which gives existing licence holders a right to access the fishery, and if this right was extinguished, they would be likely eligible for some sort of compensation. These broader equity or ownership matters can't really be discussed at the TSPMAC as they are a much bigger matter of the PZJA.

No matter how many boats they are, sustainability is protected. Rocky said they would be concerned if there were 61 boats up there fishing. That is a social issue not a sustainability one.

The committee went through a range of options exploring their feasibility, pros and cons.

Option 1 – Fishery Restructure

Cons

- Industry / other funded buyback.
- Natural restructure as a result of people handing in licences.
- Noted we are not sure how funding would come for a restructure.
- Less boats would result in increased levies for remaining boats, as fishery management costs are unlikely to decrease much aside from VMS.

Pros

- There would be increased value of remaining licences.
- Some reduced VMS costs, which make up around 20% of the budget at present. These are charged based on the number of boats in the fishery.

The committee concluded that option 1 would likely cause more problems than benefits if levies were not reduced before a restructure.

Option 2 – Short season

Changing the season to as short as a few months. The committee questioned how we would decide on the appropriate timing of the season.

Pros

- May encourage people to fish in a shorter timeframe, boosting effort at improving infrastructure support
- Could consolidate days and reduce latent effort
- It may increase stock size, or size of prawns. We would not know without trying it.

Cons

- Depending on season length, some fishers may not be able to fish all their unit holding.
- Some dual endorsed NPF boats will not be able to fish if the season opens later, as they fish before the NPF opening.

The committee noted that Industry would generally like to fish less days and catch the same amount, however the TSPF stock does not behave the same way as the NPF stock – i.e. they don't school together in TSPF like other fisheries. This means they generally have to fish longer periods to get the same catch. Further, if the prawns were to come in early and then die off, a later season start could send fishers broke.

Option 3 - Larger nets

Cons

- Previously proposed with no support from the PZJA or communities.
- It can be considered more dangerous to fish with bigger nets with the same sized boats.
- Some believe it is unlikely to make much difference to catch, yet cost more in fuel from drag.
- Some examples of boats towing larger nets in other fisheries have shown that they have not been catching more prawns.

Pros

- May improve catch per unit of effort.

The committee concluded that changes to nets are unlikely to have any significant benefit.

TSPMAC discussed the following additional points related to a way forward for the fishery:

- More licence holders would likely fish if there were no prawns on the East Coast. So this will naturally change from year to year.
- Many licence holders are currently holding onto licences, or trying to but licences, because they believe the Government will be funding a buyout. This is wharf talk, and AFMA verified they have not heard discussions around this within Government. It is impossible to know whether a buyout will be offered.
- It would be useful to have an idea of the ideal TSPF structure (number of boats, units of fishing capacity etc) if buyout discussions do eventuate. If the TSPMAC has an idea of the best fishery structure, a proposal could be put forward if we were asked. If not, the Government would have nothing to go on.
- There is a difficulty with consulting on these matters without an industry association for the fishery.
- Generally people need to catch 300-400kg per night for economic viability, with 2/3 of these being tiger prawns.
- Is pollution coming out of the Fly River effecting the prawn fishery? AFMA agreed to distribute the Fly River research from the CSIRO TRL project to the committee to consider.
- The committee considered the option of a pre-season survey, noting it was not really economically viable, costing upwards of \$100,000 for 5-10 days.
- The committee considered co-management as an option, noting it would unlikely prove many savings, and couldn't be established without an industry association.

Action 18.15 – AFMA to send fly river research from CSIRO TRL project to TSPMAC to consider.

RECOMMENDATION: The TSPMAC recommended that no changes be pursued at this stage, and we look into research projects for environmental drivers effecting TSPF biomass.

Item 5.1 TSPF levy allocation formula

AFMA explained that the levies for the Torres Strait prawn fishery are split between the licences and units of fishing capacity, following a recommendation of the Torres Strait Prawn working group in 1997. The split of the levies has changed twice since this time, and is based on the different management activities whether the costs increase with increased effort (likely to be more allocated to unit levy), or not (likely to be more allocated to licence levy).

The committee discussed the suggested splits, and agree to them as presented in the paper, with two changes, to the bycatch and MAC and RAG activity groups. See table 1 below.

Budget item – activity	Total cost 2018-19	Proposed percentage charged to boat licence	Proposed cost to boat licence based	Proposed percentage charged to unit of fishing capacity	Proposed cost to Unit of Fishing Capacity	More information on budget item (see Attachment 5.1A for full details)	Justification for splits budget categories between licences and units
species and environmental management	\$40,959	40	\$16,383.6	60	\$24,575.4	This item relates to everyday fisheries management including harvest strategies, setting the TAE, environmental management. A large proportion of the Management officers' time is allocated to this budget item.	These costs, although relevant to all boats, generally increase as fishing increases, where greater monitoring of harvest strategies etc... is required. Consequently it is recommended a slightly higher percent of the budget is allocated to units, meaning people holding more units and thus have greater opportunity to fish pay more of these costs.
Risk management	\$10,469	40	\$4,187.6	60	\$6,281.4	This item relates to fisheries assessments under the <i>Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1991</i> including annual reporting against the export approvals (WTO) and ERA and ERM work.	These costs, although relevant to all boats, generally increase as fishing increases, where greater monitoring of ERAs and bycatch and discard work plans is required. Consequently it is recommended a slightly higher percent of the budget is allocated to units, meaning people holding more units and thus have greater

							opportunity to fish pay more of these costs.
Bycatch	\$10,168	20 40	\$2,033.6	80 60	\$8,134.4	This includes time spent working with bycatch management and reduction and includes the TSPF management officer and bycatch teams time.	Requirements for bycatch management go up as effort increases in the fishery, however there are basic bycatch management requirements regardless of effort. The recommended split reflects this.
MAC & RAG	\$34,415	30 70	\$10,324.5	70 30	\$24,090.5	This budget item relates to the costs of holding meetings (travel and meeting costs and sitting fees for members).	As effort in the fishery increases more MAC meetings are generally required to discuss management tools (harvest strategies, ERAs, seasons etc). This leads to a direct costs increase with increased effort, reflected in the recommended splits. These splits are used commonly in other fisheries for MAC and RAG costs to.
Consultation and engagement	\$4,402	50	\$2,201	50	\$2,201	This item includes time spent providing advice to industry members, port visits, and working with science agencies and organisations.	The split is based on some costs being required regardless of the level of fishing, and some components such as providing advice to fishers being more closely linked to fishing effort.
strategy, governance and	\$9,349	100	\$9,349	0	0	This budget category is associated with some of the costs associated with the	Costs are allocated 100% to boat licences as costs are not very relevant to fishing effort.

leadership						general manager of fisheries and corporate services.	
observers	\$41,700	20	\$8,340	80	\$33,360	This item refers to the costs of AFMA observer coverage in the TSPF. The TSPF has a commitment to observer days which equate to 2.6 percent of the actual effort in a given year in the fishery and changes from year to year.	Observer coverage increases as effort increases, however this data is a requirement for reporting and benefits all licence holders in this way. This is why a small percentage is charged to licences with the majority attributed to unit levies.
Vessel monitoring	\$52,844	80	\$42,275	20	\$10,569	These costs include the implementation and administration of vessel monitoring systems on TSPF boats. All boats must have a functioning VMS regardless of whether they are fishing.	VMS costs are required regardless of the amount of fishing that occurs. It is a boat related cost hence the majority being charged against the boat levy.
Logbook data	\$12,306	20	\$2,461.2	80	\$9,844.80	This costs is associated with the printing of logbooks (costs associated with boats) and data entry (costs directly related to effort).	A small amount of logbook data costs are allocated to boat levies associated with the costs of printing logbooks which all boats require.
data management	\$5,135	30	\$1,540.5	70	\$3,594.5	This item relates to costs of managing data and completing	Data costs increase as data increases with increased effort. The recommended splits reflect this.

						data extracts for analysis work by Clive Turnbull for the TSPF.	
Licensing administration and revenue collection	\$15,472	80	\$12,377.6	20	\$2,794.4	Licensing costs cover transactional services such as processing applications for licence renewal each year and working with the management team to assist with licensing enquiries.	Licensing costs are required regardless of the amount if fishing that occurs. It is a boat related costs hence the majority being charged against the boat levy
Research (projects and admin)	\$23,466	50	\$11,733	50	\$11,733	This includes direct costs of any research projects and a small administration fee for administration of research contracts within AFMA.	Research project costs are split 50 / 50 as costs benefit all licence holders, however requirements for research increase with increased effort.
Policy	\$15,666	100	\$15,666	0	\$0	Policy budget is associated with things such as development and management of the CRIS each year.	The policy costs are largely independent of effort so is recommended to be 100% allocated to licence levies.
Total	\$276,351		\$138,872.80		\$137,478.20		

Item 5.2 Budget

The TSPMAC noted the final budget for the 2018-19 financial year. AFMA noted that each year, they provide a copy of the draft budget to the TSPMAC for comment before it is finalised, however this year, they inadvertently missed doing this. They would ensure this doesn't happen again, and the TSPMAC noted the final budget for the fishery, which has gone down by 1.3%.

6 OTHER BUSINESS

Research Priorities

The committee discussed a few of the outcomes from the recent meeting of the Torres Strait Scientific Advisory committee. The committee approved a new administrative procedure for Torres Strait fisheries, which requires each fishery RAG, MAC or WG to put together a three year rolling fisheries research plan. This plan should include possible research projects that are needed for the fishery and should be considered for funding by the TSSAC or other funding bodies. The projects should fit into the broad categories under the five year strategic research plan, however the priorities in the high level plan are so high, most any fishery related projects would fit under one category or another.

The committee nominated the following projects as priority for the TSPF, in order of need:

1. Environment drivers of TSPF recruitment and biomass including the impacts of climate change.

This project aims to explore any possible environmental or climate change factors that may be effecting the recruitment into the TSPF, noting the changes the last few years.

2. BRD trials – compensation to fisher doing the trial. And cost of making KCFs etc.

This project aims to seek some funding to compensate any TSPF licence holders who take part in the formal trial of BRDs (such as the KCF) in the TSPF, noting the costs associated with such a trial, including gear costs, possible prawn loss, fuel costs and time costs of crew.

3. Management Strategy Evaluation for TSPF harvest strategy to look at different opening dates or other possible changes that can be tested through modelling.

The proposal is to use the stock assessment modelling to complete a management strategy evaluation on possible management changes such as season dates. This could be taken out by Clive Turnbull the current stock assessment scientist with additional funding, noting this work isn't covered under his existing contract.

The committee also noted the past project "Improved TSPF profitability and pathways for a sustained flow of benefits to Torres Strait Island communities" undertaken by Andy Bodsworth, and the need to review the outcomes, and whether anything can be pursued or implemented from this project, or whether additional research is required to explore any outcomes.

ACTION 18.16; AFMA to review outcomes of Bodsworth project to see whether anything should be pursued relating to research or social licence in the future.

The committee also discussed the need to provide some plain English outcomes to support Traditional Inhabitant members in their discussions with their communities following this meeting, similar to the industry update provided by the industry members to licence holders after each TSPMAC meeting. The TSRA agreed to put this together.

ACTION 18.17: TSRA to put together a document for Traditional Inhabitant members of key outcomes from TSPMAC 18.

ACTION 18.18: TSPMAC industry members to put together a TSPMAC 18 industry update, which can be sent to licence holders by AFMA.

Observer protocols

AFMA explained that the NPF are currently reviewing their observer protocols to ensure they are still collecting data which is most relevant for the fishery, and add value to data analysis and management. The TSPMAC agreed that AFMA should review the NPF observer protocols and edit these where appropriate for the TSPF. The TSPMAC should be notified regarding this.

ACTION 18.19: AFMA to work to review the observer protocols to ensure the data being collected is still relevant.

Meeting Closed at 115pm.

Item number	Action	Responsibility	progress
ACTION 18.1	AFMA to seek clarification regarding master fisherman's licenses and requirements for TIB fishers and feedback to the TSPMAC.	AFMA	
ACTION 18.2	AFMA to send email to Malu Lamar explaining ways they can get in touch with licence holders, including AFMA sending letters on their behalf.	AFMA	
ACTION 18.3	TSPMAC industry members to write to licence holders regarding pre-booking fuel and offloads for the mothership. Notification should occur to the Seaswift office and can also be to the boat drivers, however this is less reliable due to periodic driver changes.	TSPMAC industry members	
ACTION 18.4	AFMA and TSRA to work together to discuss the memberships and consultation with traditional inhabitants regarding Torres Strait management.	AFMA	
ACTION 18.5	AFMA to send an email to licence holders and the TSPMAC once we know a start date and process for AFMA taking over the TSPF compliance functions.	AFMA	
ACTION 18.6	AFMA to compare logbook data to observer data for TEPs to see if they match.	AFMA	
ACTION 18.7	AFMA to monitor observer days and make sure we have enough budgeted as effort increases.	AFMA	
ACTION 18.8	When information is obtained, AFMA to send an update on the whether the TSPF will be joining the AFMA ERA process, to the TSPMAC.	AFMA	
ACTION 18.9	Mr Betzel to contact the FRDC to see whether funding would be available to supplement fishers trialling BRDs.	Mr Betzel	

ACTION 18.10	AFMA to work with Maggie Jo (Clinton the Skipper) regarding trialling the KCF next year following NPF trials finishing.	AFMA	
ACTION 18.11	Circulate NPF trial data when it is released seeking TSPMAC recommendation about which BRD to trial in the TSPF.	AFMA	
ACTION 18.12	TSPF industry members to provide fuel and beach product price data to Clive Turnbull for use in the data summary.		
ACTION 18.13	AFMA to consider steps to remove the five boat rule policy for TSPF as industry are not generally concerned. Send a letter of question to industry.	AFMA	
ACTION 18.14	Mr Turnbull to add gear composition to the gear survey.	Mr Turnbull	
ACTION 18.15	AFMA to send fly river research from CSIRO TRL project to TSPMAC to consider.		
ACTION 18.16	AFMA to review outcomes of Bodsworth project to see whether anything should be pursued relating to research or social licence in the future.	AFMA	
ACTION 18.17	TSRA to put together a document for Traditional Inhabitant members of key outcomes from TSPMAC 18.	TSRA	
ACTION 18.18	TSPMAC industry members to put together a TSPMAC 18 industry update, which can be sent to licence holders by AFMA.	TSPMAC industry members	
ACTION 18.19	AFMA to work to review the observer protocols to be sure the data being collected is still relevant.	AFMA	
Actions from past meetings			
ACTION 17.1	Write a letter to AMSA and MSQ requesting a letter, including the incident report, be sent to the PBC and communities in the Torres Strait if a vessel sinks in the region. The report should include simple information about	TSPMAC Chair/ EO	Ongoing. Send to AMSA. Yet to hear back.

	the final outcome or an incident (i.e. will the boat be retrieved, how much fuel and other items on board).		
ACTION 17.2	TSRA to explore the feasibility of making flow charts to explain how to gain certifications (like a master fisherman's licence) and where they could gain employment.	TSRA	Ongoing. This item will be progressed for the next meeting, noting some changes are being made in AMSA to legislation, however some flow charts are not related to these changes and could be progressed now.
ACTION 17.3	TSRA to look into funding for training observers and funding co-observers, and AFMA to send skills information to TSRA.	TSRA and AFMA	Ongoing. There has been some initial correspondence between the TSRA and AFMA about the development of a Torres Strait based observer programme but it has not been progressed as a priority action in the fishery. TSRA are willing to provide future funding to progress as a capacity building exercise, as a collaboration with AFMA and CSIRO on the design of the programme as well as training. However, the issue has not been raised recently through other PZJA forums and is unlikely to be able to be actioned in the short term with available resourcing.
ACTION 17.4	PZJA agencies and executive officers to continue speaking with Ms Sansom about Seaswift services particularly if there are changes to opening and closing dates etc that would impact the demand for their services.	TSPMAC Executive Officer	Complete. Ongoing action.