



Australian Government
Australian Fisheries Management Authority



TORRES STRAIT SCIENTIFIC ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MEETING NO. 51

MINUTES

TELECONFERENCE

12 APRIL 2010

CHAIR: MR IAN CARTWRIGHT

These minutes were ratified on 16 June 2010 at TSSAC #52.

Prepared by the Australian Fisheries Management Authority on behalf of the Torres Strait Protected Zone Joint Authority

FINAL AGENDA

1. Meeting Administration

- 1.1. Preliminaries - Acknowledgement of Traditional Owners/Chairs Opening
Remarks/Meeting attendance/Declaration of Interests/Apologies
- 1.2. Review and Adoption of Agenda
- 1.3. Correspondence
- 1.4. Ratification of TSSAC 50 Minutes
- 1.5. Action Items from TSSAC 50

2. CSIRO full proposal for Lobster Management Strategy Evaluation (AFMA)

3. Cultural Protocols document from Martin Nakata (AFMA)

4. Summary of research progress in the Torres Strait for 2009/2010 (AFMA)

5 Other Business

- 5.1 Update on the International Indigenous Commercial Fisheries Forum.

DECISION RECORD – TSSAC 51 (12 APRIL 2010)

1.4.1 The committee agreed to accept the minutes of TSSAC 50 as a true and accurate record of the meeting.

2.1.1 The TSSAC agreed to recommend the research proposal '*An Integrated Management Strategy Evaluation (MSE) for the Torres Strait tropical rock lobster population*' to AFMA for funding, subject to a revised proposal being developed that address concerns raised by TSSAC.



The following members and observers were in attendance at TSSAC No. 51:

Members

Name	Role	Declaration of Interest
Mr Ian Cartwright	Chairperson	Consultant
Dr Annabel Jones	AFMA Representative	Manager, Thursday Island
Ms Rebecca Williams	Acting Executive Officer (AFMA)	Assistant Management Officer, Thursday Island
Dr Michael O'Neill	Scientist	QDPI&F
Dr Roland Pitcher	Scientist	CSIRO researcher
Ms Sevaly Sen	Social/Economics Member	Consultant
Dr Stephen Newman	Scientist	WA fisheries scientist
Mr Ian Jacobsen	QDPI&F Representative	QDPI&F Fisheries Manager
Mr Steve Hall	TSRA representative	Fisheries Policy Officer

Observers

Mr Augustine Mohiba	PNG Representative	PNG National Fisheries Authority
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Apologies

Mr Tony Vass	Industry Representative	Ex Mackerel Licence Holder
Mr Charles David	Community Fisher Representative	Iama Traditional Owner



ACTION ITEMS

#	Action Item	Item No.	Due Date	Champion
1	The final report for the project ' <i>Sustainable Harvest Strategies for the Torres Strait Hand Collectable Fisheries</i> ' to be distributed to TSSAC members when available and discussions held as to how the report can be distributed more broadly.	51.1.5 (Carry over from TSSAC 50.3.1)	30 May 2010.	AFMA
2	TSRA to distribute the draft document ' <i>Cultural Protocols for Researchers Working in the Torres Strait</i> ' by e-mail and fax to council members and CFGs for each community for comment (state clearly that it is for comment only).	51.1.5 (Carry over from TSSAC 50.3.2)	June 16 2010	TSRA
3	AFMA to make the draft document ' <i>Cultural Protocols for Researchers Working in the Torres Strait</i> ' available to other stakeholders for comment (state clearly that it is for comment only).	51.1.5 (Carry over from TSSAC 50.3.2)	June 16 2010	AFMA
4	Request Professor Nakata to be present at TSSAC 51 to discuss and incorporate any comments into the final document ' <i>Cultural Protocols for Researchers Working in the Torres Strait</i> '.	51.1.5 (Carry over from TSSAC 50.3.2)	June 16 2010	AFMA
5	Further work will be undertaken by the steering committee to secure funding and develop details for the International Indigenous Commercial Fisheries Forum.	51.1.5 (Carry over from TSSAC 50.3.3)	June 16 2010	Ian Cartwright Annabel Jones Sevaly Sen
6	The feasibility of developing a TRL education program for Torres Strait Islander students will be discussed with James Cook University, Thursday Island and the Thursday Island high school.	51.1.5 (Carry over from TSSAC 50.5)	June 16 2010	AFMA
7	TSSAC will obtain a copy of the CSIRO data and report using fine-scale modelling to detect possible changes to water temperature and salinity levels in response to climate change to discuss at future meetings. In addition, CSIRO will further investigate the approach to climate change in Torres Strait fisheries that identifies key species and associated climate change impacts.	51.1.5 (Carry over from TSSAC 50.5.2)	June 16 2010	CSIRO AFMA
8	The TSSAC to inform the PI of the Committee's recommendation to AFMA to fund of the research project ' <i>An Integrated Management Strategy Evaluation (MSE) for the Torres Strait tropical rock lobster population</i> ' of the Committees subject to a revised proposal being submitted addressing concerns raised by the TSSAC.	51.2	23 May 2010	AFMA



Agenda Item 1.1 Chair's Opening

The Chair opened the meeting and welcomed all attendees. As the meeting was a teleconference all traditional owners of land where members were present were acknowledged. This is the first teleconference for the TSSAC and members were encouraged to provide feedback to AFMA on the meeting.

Agenda Item 1.2 Review and Adoption of Agenda

The agenda was adopted with addition of Agenda Item 5.1 Update on the International Indigenous Commercial Fisheries Forum.

Agenda Item 1.3 Correspondence

The Committee **NOTED** letters to the TSSAC including:

1) In-principle support for the International Indigenous Commercial Fisheries Forum from:

- a) TSRA;
- b) Fisheries Queensland; and
- c) PNG NFA.

2) The covering letter from the Principal Investigator (PI) of the submitted full research proposal '*An Integrated Management Strategy Evaluation (MSE) for the Torres Strait tropical rock lobster population*' which was discussed at Agenda item 2.

Agenda Item 1.4 Ratification of TSSAC 50 Minutes

1.4.1 The committee **AGREED** to accept the minutes of TSSAC 50 as a true and accurate record of the meeting.

Agenda Item 1.5 Action Items from Previous Meeting TSSAC 50

The TSSAC **NOTED** progress on action items from TSSAC 50. Action items were complete with the following exceptions.

Action Item 6 referring to the distribution of the draft report '*Sustainable harvest strategies for the Torres Strait Hand Collectables Fisheries*' (PI: Tim Skewes) to the TSSAC for comment was carried over (**Action Item 1**). A draft was provided to AFMA but was deemed to be too preliminary to circulate for TSSAC comment. Initial comments from AFMA have been provided to the Principal Investigator (PI) and it is anticipated a draft will be available in the near future on which TSSAC members will be able to provide comment. The report contains good information and findings on Bêche-de-mer and Trochus stocks in eastern Torres Strait. There have been reports from research being undertaken in the MOU Box (Gulf of Carpentaria) that species composition for Hand Collectable species may differ between day and night. Tim Skewes has tested this in the Torres Strait by undertaking night surveys in areas previously surveyed during the day and has not found any difference in species composition for Bêche-de-mer.

Action Items 8, 9 and 10 referring to the distribution of the draft document '*Cultural protocols for researchers working in Torres Strait*' (PI: Professor Martin Nakata) were carried over (**Action Item 2, 3 and 4**). Comments are needed from the TSSAC before the document can



be released for wider comment. This wider feedback is also needed before Professor Nakata can be present at a TSSAC meeting for discussions to be fully beneficial.

Action Item 5 regarding further work to secure funding for the International Indigenous Commercial Fisheries Forum was carried over (**Action Item 5**). An update on this progress was discussed at Agenda Item 5.1.

Action Item 19 regarding the development of an education program for Tropical Rock Lobster (TRL) on Thursday Island was carried over (**Action Item 6**). AFMA has been unable to discuss TRL education options with Thursday Island TAFE and high school due to time constraints.

Action Item 20 referring to the TSSAC obtaining a copy of the CSIRO Hobart report on climate change was also carried over and revised. Roland Pitcher has been in contact with CSIRO Hobart regarding the research but the data and report have not been finalised and may not be available for several months. There have also been discussions on a different approach to climate change where species important to fisheries are identified and analyses performed to investigate potential impacts of climate change on them. This may be a useful approach in addressing climate change impacts on Torres Strait fisheries and will be further investigated further through discussions with CSIRO (**Action Item 7**).

Agenda Item 2 CSIRO full proposal for Lobster Management Strategy Evaluation

At TSSAC 50, the Committee recommended that the principal investigator of the pre-proposal '*An Integrated Management Strategy Evaluation (MSE) for the Torres Strait tropical rock lobster population*' be invited to submit a full proposal for the research. The Committee considered the submitted full proposal at this meeting.

The proposed MSE research included two main aspects: a fishery component and a socio-economic component. Whilst the two components can work as stand-alone models, there is significant benefit to have an integrated model due to interactions between the fishery and socio-economic aspects of the lobster fishery. The applicant requested funding from the TSSAC for the fisheries component only and had approached FRDC to fund the socio-economic aspect. The Committee was advised that the proposal to FRDC for the non-fishery component of the MSE had been unsuccessful.

The Committee noted the importance of including the socio-economic component of MSE with the fishery component and felt that this would provide a more comprehensive and complete tool for evaluating the robustness of a variety of management decisions in the Torres Strait Tropical Rock Lobster (TRL) fishery. The Committee was also informed that the integrated MSE would align well with the recommendations and outcomes included in the recent TRL 5 year business plan as well as addressing a number of TSSAC research priorities for the TRL fishery (see the 2009 Operational Plan) and TRL RAG priority research areas. Another benefit to including the socio-economic component of the research is the ability to recognise that Torres Strait fisheries have a large and inherent social and cultural component which is an important consideration when developing management options. The TSSAC felt that inclusion of the socio-economic component of the MSE research would make the MSE tool more appropriate for the Torres Strait environment.

As the full proposal provided to the TSSAC included information on the socio-economic aspects in addition to the fishery component, the proposal was assessed on both of these components using the agreed criteria provided in the TSSAC proposal assessment template.

The TSSAC recommended the full proposal to AFMA for funding, inclusive of both the fishery and socio-economic components. However, it was requested that, given that the Committee is now recommending the fully integrated MSE for funding, the PI submit a revised proposal,



addressing certain specified issues identified by the Committee. The issues to be addressed are to be provided to the PI to address in revising the proposal (**Action Item 8**).

2.1.1 The TSSAC **AGREED** to recommend to AFMA for funding the research proposal '*An Integrated Management Strategy Evaluation (MSE) for the Torres Strait tropical rock lobster population*', subject to a revised proposal being developed that addresses concerns raised by TSSAC.

It was also recommended that the PI should also continue to approach FRDC to secure additional funding for further development of the socio-economic component of the research.

Agenda Item 3 Cultural Protocols

The TSSAC discussed the draft report '*Development of Cultural protocols for researchers working in Torres Strait*' developed by Professor Martin Nakata. It was felt the document needs to clearly detail the operational aspects for researchers, outlining the practical steps needed to undertake research in adherence with the cultural protocols. This could be achieved by restructuring section 4 of the draft protocols document to function as a stand-alone operational guide with the 'key compliance points' column as the focus. However, it was noted that there should be a certain degree of flexibility in the guidelines and they should not be so prescriptive that they are difficult for researchers to abide by.

Recommendations provided in the document regarding how cultural protocols can be better communicated to researchers and how research can be controlled in this way were briefly discussed. It was suggested that whilst recommendations could be taken on board, the guidelines need to reflect current systems and established operations. For example, although a recommendation to have a central dedicated contact point in the Torres Strait through which all research filters has significant merit, this position does not currently exist and is not budgeted for by any organisation.

Given the time constraints of the meeting, further discussion regarding the recommendations, format and other points was carried over to TSSAC 52, to be held in June 2010. After the TSSAC have finished providing comment on the document, wider feedback will be sought from stakeholders and researchers. Professor Nakata will not be required to discuss the document at a TSSAC meeting until all feedback has been received. This ensures that discussions can be fully beneficial.

Agenda Item 4 Summary of research progress in the Torres Strait for 2009/2010

PNG: PNG NFA attempted to carry out research on Bêche-de-mer in PNG waters at the same time as the CSIRO/AFMA Bêche-de-mer survey conducted in February 2010 but was unable to do so. However, researchers are currently undertaking research on Bêche-de-mer at Warrior Reef and results from these surveys should be available at the end of April 2010.

There is currently a three year Bêche-de-mer closure in PNG waters. In addition, permanent survey areas are being established in PNG waters which will be used for the continual monitoring of Bêche-de-mer stocks. Funding will be provided for people to collect information monthly or every three months to monitor the recovery of Bêche-de-mer stocks.

Fisheries Queensland: Queensland will commence a recreational fishing survey in late 2010 which will include the Torres Strait. The survey will use phone and diary collection methods



and will be similar to the previous national recreational fishing survey. This work will address a TSSAC research priority¹ to quantify non-commercial catch. As Torres Strait fishing is unique compared to other fisheries in Australia in that recreational and traditional fishing are often not mutually exclusive, ways to deal with this ambiguity in the survey are being investigated.

Western Australian Fisheries: Nil to report.

AFMA: Five research projects funded by AFMA are in progress, contracted or outstanding in the current financial year:

1. The research '*Sustainable harvest strategies for the Torres Strait Hand Collectables Fisheries*' (PI: Mr Tim Skewes, CSIRO) is outstanding. A final report has been received by AFMA but additional work is required prior to assessment by the TSSAC.
2. The research '*Development of Cultural protocols for researchers working in Torres Strait*' (PI: Mr Martin Nakata). As discussed at agenda item 3. The draft report has been received and is awaiting comment from TSSAC members.
3. The TRL surveys '*Refined stock assessment and TAC estimation for the Torres Strait rock lobster (TRL) fishery*' (PI: CSIRO) are contracted for the next 3 years.
4. The research '*Recovery of the *Holothuria scabra* (sandfish) population on Warrior Reef, Torres Strait*' (PI: Mr Tim Skewes, CSIRO) is on track with surveys completed in March 2010. A draft field survey report is due on the 31 June 2010.
5. The research '*Population structure and genetic composition of green turtles sold in the Daru Market*' (PI: Mr Mark Hamman) does not appear to be going ahead as he has not replied to the TSSAC request for more information on his full proposal. The TSSAC requested PI to address some comments prior to recommending funding and is still awaiting reply from researcher.

Agenda Item 5 Other business

An update was provided on progress regarding the International Indigenous Commercial Fisheries Forum. Approval will be sought from AFMA for seed funding enabling a company to be hired to begin organisation proper of the forum and to seek further funding and sponsorship. Letters of support from the PZJA agencies (as tabled in correspondence at this meeting) will give weight to further funding requests.

Closing remarks

As this was the first teleconference of the TSSAC, the Chair requested that members provide feedback regarding the efficiency and logistics of holding teleconferences in place of face-to face meetings in certain circumstances. Feedback will be discussed at TSSAC 52.

Next Meeting

TSSAC #52 will be held on the 16th June 2010 in Brisbane. Venue to be confirmed.

¹ See Research Priority 2.1 (B) (b)) in the 2009 Annual Operational Plan for Torres Strait Fisheries available at PZJA website.

