

West Coast Demersal Scalefish Expert working Group

Meeting #2 – Report (Agenda, Attendees, Summary)
4th May 2022

Chair: Andrew Rowland, Recfishwest

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| 1:00pm | 1. Welcome and Apologies (Group) |
| 1:10pm | 2. Action Items Update (Matt) |
| 1:20pm | 3. Community feedback through working group members (Group) |
| 2:00pm | 4. WCDSF Stock Assessment Key Elements (RFW) |
| 2:30pm | 5. Consultation Phase 1: Survey Results Overview (RFW) |
| 3:15pm | 6. Summary of data requested/questions by EWG members (RFW) |
| 3:40pm | 7. General discussion/other business (Group) |
| 3:50pm | 8. EWG Administration (Matt Gillett) |
| 4:00pm | Meeting Closed |

List of Attendees

Recfishwest Staff:

- Dr Andrew Rowland
- Matthew Gillett
- Leyland Campbell
- Ben Carlish
- John Dempsey

Expert Working Group:

- Scott Coghlan (Online)
- Tim Farnell (Online)
- Brian Marshall
- Ashley Ramm
- Brody Laroux
- Matt Howard
- Pat Shinnick (Online)
- Michael Heslewood
- Rob Hoefhamer (Online)
- Dave Hilton

West Coast Demersal Scalefish Session #2 May 4th, 2022

Welcome and apologies:

The chair welcomed members to the second Expert Working Group session, thanking them for their time and acknowledged their efforts in this process.

Actions item update:

Action items were discussed with a review of any outstanding items for the Expert Working Group.

Community feedback through working group members:

The Chair asked EWG members for any feedback they had received from the community or their networks in regard to the West Coast Demersal Scalefish issue. Expert working group members discussed the feedback they had received, topics included:

- Broad concern from the wider public towards management options, with members of the public feeling as if decisions have already been made and under the impression an extended ban and/or bag limit reductions have already been decided.
- The clarity and availability of information is a concern, with community members not on social media or on email subscriptions finding it difficult to gain a better understanding towards the fisheries status and management.
- The potential impact that management changes would have on viability of fishing clubs and mental wellbeing of fishers and the importance of the social connection they provide being lost.
- The science surrounding the WCDS fishery is very complex and difficult to understand.
- Community members are hesitant to get involved in the process given there are no defined proposals available.
- Some community members do not believe the science and data by DPIRD in relation to the WCDS fishery as it is not reflecting what they are seeing on the water.
- Fishers generally expressed a high level of stewardship and willingness to play their part.
- Community had questions as to whether recreational sector and commercial sector allocations are appropriate, and this aspect should be part of the management discussions.
- Impacts on bioregions in the north and south and the shifting effort remains a matter of concern.

WCDSF stock assessment key elements:

Recovery trajectories of dhufish and pink snapper across the West Coast Bioregion were discussed, noting that dhufish stocks in the south are recovering better than those in the north. Snapper stocks in the north and south remain of greatest concern from a sustainability perspective. Further topics included:

- High recruitment variability in pink snapper stocks. Only a few year classes are still supporting the fishery.
- Different post-release mortality rates between dhufish and pink snapper and the potential need for further research in this area.

Consultation phase 1 – survey results overview:

A presentation was provided on the preliminary results of demographic data in the Recfishwest West Coast Demersal Scalefish survey. The survey had 5,957 responses and will take more time to analyse than expected. Recfishwest will give survey responses and associated comments the due diligence that

is required. In ensuring the process can continue in a timely manner Recfishwest will provide analysis to the working group as it is analysed. Preliminary results of demographic data included:

- The association of respondents (club associations, Recfishwest member, tackle industry etc.).
- Gender mix of respondents.
- Age brackets of respondents.
- Avidity of WCDS recreational fishers.
- Residence of respondents.
- Representativeness of the Recfishwest survey (displayed in a GIS map).

Ensuring working group members have the best available information from which to make decisions

It was agreed Expert Working Group members would provide questions to Recfishwest within 24-hours of EWG sessions so that they could be collated and provided to the correct persons at DPIRD. This process will help ensure that answers to such questions can be provided by the next EWG session.

General discussion/other business:

The Expert Working Group engaged in an open general discussion. Topics included:

- Shark depredation
 - Impact towards fish stocks;
 - Management towards the issue.
- Gaining a better understanding of the impacts of the 10kg demersal trip limit introduced in 2021.
- Recognising action has recently been taken on extending the Cockburn and Warnbro sound spawning closures (2019).
- Potential catastrophic impacts on the charter sector in being restricted to a 20t catch.

The Chair thanked Expert Working Group members for their time, efforts, and valued discussion.

Meeting Closed.