



West Coast Demersal Scalefish

Expert Working Group

Meeting #3 – Report (Agenda, Attendees, Summary)
11th May 2022

Chair: Andrew Rowland, Recfishwest

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| 1:00pm | 1. Welcome |
| 1:10pm | 2. Action Items Update |
| 1:20pm | 3. Community feedback through working group members (Group) |
| 1:30pm | 4. Overview of primary management measures <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ What is a primary management measure○ What are the different primary management measures○ What are the Pro's/Con's of different primary management measures |
| 2:15pm | 5. Focussed discussion on potential WCDSF closure options <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Broad scale closures○ Fine scale closures○ Temporal closures○ Spatial closures |
| 3:30pm | 6. DPIRD responses to EWG questions |
| 3:50pm | 7. EWG Administration |
| 4:00pm | 8. Meeting Closed |

List of Attendees

Recfishwest Staff:

- Dr Andrew Rowland
- Matthew Gillett (Online)
- Leyland Campbell
- John Dempsey (Online)

Expert Working Group:

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

Welcome

The chair welcomed members to the third Expert Working Group session. Apologies were given for Matthew Howard who was unable to attend the session due to work commitments.

Actions items update

Action items were discussed, with outstanding action item 2.5 (dedicate time towards a discussion on the plausibility of tags as a primary management measure) to be addressed in the following meeting.

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:

- More awareness in the recreational fishing community surrounding the seriousness of the issue.
- Scott Coghlan's recent article in The Sunday Times has helped the community gain perspective towards west coast demersal scalefish challenges.
- General interest from recreational fishers towards dedicated fishing days.
- Concern towards north and south bioregion recreational effort shift/increase.
- Continued concern from members of the public with them feeling as if decisions have already been made.
- Community members expressing concern towards the West Coast Bioregion being too large for a single set of overarching rules.
- General interest from fishers towards size limit reductions to reduce post-release mortality in indicator demersal species.
- Community support towards current spawning closures, with interest towards increased targeted closures.

Overview of primary management measures

An overview was provided of various primary management measures, discussing what they are, different types of measures and the pros/cons of each. Preliminary data analysis from the Recfishwest West Coast Demersal Scalefish survey was also presented. Data analysis showed that neither age or region was a significant factor in people's preferences, with targeted closures being the most preferred management measure across all regions and age classes. Further topics included:

- Primary management measures deliver the majority (10% or more) in required reductions.
- Primary management measures are compatible with other primary measures and supportive measures.
- Targeted closures were the most supported primary management measure (23%).
- Pros and Cons of primary and secondary measures was discussed, with the group providing their perspective towards management measures.

Focussed discussion on potential WCDSF closure options

Recfishwest provided a presentation towards the types of fisheries related closures (broad scale, fine scale, temporal and spatial), discussing their suitability with examples of current Western Australian closures. Discussion surrounding primary management measures with focus towards closures then continued. Topics also included:

- Percentage captures of dhufish during October, November and December were discussed in relation to the demersal closure and the reductions it has achieved.
- Popularity of the tag system, with discussion towards the number of tags and number of recreational fishers and the potential difficulty associated.
- Complementary reductions in the south coast bioregions bag limits and community sentiment towards reductions in limits.
- Capture statistics for Demersal scalefish (dhufish, baldchin groper, pink snapper) for each month of the year.
- Alignment of closures with alternative fishing opportunities (e.g., timing of closures when fish are at FADs)
- Impact of current rules on release mortality for dhufish, with 14% of released dhufish due to the individual species bag/boat limit.
- Multiple demersal species peak spawning period from January to March.
- Discussion towards closures during school holidays (December – January) and the non-support for it.
- The plausibility of rolling spatial closures and the lack of information regarding spawning grounds for dhufish.
- Positive community sentiment towards a closure during the February/March dhufish spawning period.
- Pink snapper bag limit reductions.

DPIRD Responses to EWG Questions

Questions raised in the previous EWG session for DPIRD were discussed.

Meeting closed.