



West Coast Demersal Scalefish

Expert Working Group

Meeting #4 – Report (Agenda, Attendees, Summary)
18th May 2022

Chair: Andrew Rowland, Recfishwest

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| 1:00pm | 1. Welcome and apologies |
| 1:10pm | 2. Action Items Update |
| 1:20pm | 3. Community feedback through working group members (Group) |
| 1:30pm | 4. Overview of survey analysis |
| 1:45pm | 5. Re-cap on primary management measures and discussion on closures |
| 2:00pm | 6. Focussed discussion on Tag system <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ How they work○ Shark Bay pink snapper tag system○ Broadened pros/cons of a tag system○ Discussion points surrounding tag system |
| 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 (Online)
- Matthew Gillett (Online)
- Leyland Campbell (Online)
- John Dempsey (Online)
- Ben Carlish (Online)

Expert Working Group:

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

Welcomes and Apologies:

The chair welcomed members to the fourth Expert Working Group session. Apologies were given for Michael Heslewood and Matthew Howard who were unable to attend the session due to conflicting commitments. The session was held online in response to the current Covid situation.

Action Items Update:

Action items were discussed, with Recfishwest acknowledging items which are currently ongoing and due to be completed prior to the next EWG session.

Community feedback through working group members (Group):

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:

- Community sentiment regarding the need for more information surrounding appropriate capture techniques and issues surrounding catch and release fishing for demersal scalefish.
- Community suggestions towards gear limits and limiting the number of hooks on a single line to reduce the capture of 'double headers' (i.e., capturing multiple fish at a time).
- Reduction in the size of the West Coast Bioregion, or the "break-up" of the West Coast Bioregion into separate zones.
- More acceptance from the community regarding the WCDS issue in response to reduced captures and size of captures in demersal species, specifically west Australian dhufish.
- Positive sentiment towards individual effort limits and the available options for individual effort limits.
- Large support for a targeted demersal spawning closure during the February/March period.
- Strong community opposition surrounding reduced bag limits for demersal scalefish.
- Strong community sentiment towards reducing the size limit of key indicator species to reduce rates of post-release mortality.

Overview of survey analysis:

Survey analysis results were discussed, with Recfishwest presenting an overview on respondent rationale for primary management measure preferences. Topics also included:

- Consistent preferences amongst all age ranges.
- Large community desire for increased education surrounding correct demersal scalefish practices.
- Overwhelming complaints from respondents who view 'fishing for the freezer' negatively.
- Appetite for a system capable of recording recreational captures and other benefits for fishers.

Re-cap on primary management measures and discussion on closures:

Recfishwest provided an overview of the previous meetings results, focussing on the preferred primary management measures and the groups early positive position on targeted spawning closures, daily effort limits, and finer scale spatial closures. The pros/cons of primary and supportive management measures were also re-iterated.

Focussed discussion on Tag system:

Recfishwest provided a presentation on tag systems, discussing how they are implemented, and the previous use of a tag system within the Freycinet estuary in Shark Bay. Topics also included:

- Broadened pros/cons of tag systems.
- Mathematics behind the WCDS suite and species allocations, discussing the number of tags which would be available to recreational fishers in the West Coast Bioregion.
- The plausibility of a tag system acting as a supporting management measure rather than a primary management measure.

Discussion surrounding the plausibility of a tag system as either a primary or supporting management measure then continued between EWG members, topics included:

- Difficulty in using both input and output management controls, with note towards determining the effectiveness of each management measure.
- Whether the introduction of a tag system will have any influence on reducing post-release mortality, 'high-grading', and if the introduction of a tag system will result in increased participation in capture and release fishing.
- Issues regarding non-compliance with a tag system and the limited number fisheries officers to check compliance.
- Difficulty associated in accessing tags, and that if a tag system were to be introduced it should be in a digital format.
- Recreational allocations and the difficulty associated regarding the number of tags available per licenced fisher.
- Change in community appetite for a tag system if the number of tags which would be available do not meet expectations.
- Positive sentiment towards increased data collection if a tag system was to be introduced.
- Concern towards recreational fishers/boat owners gaining recreational fishing licences for family members and friends to increase access to demersal tags.
- Opportunity for a tag system to be used as an effort limit (tags for fishing days).
- Concern towards fishers losing additional benefits provided by recreational fishing (physical health, mental health, etc) if they cannot access tags.

Following discussion surrounding tag systems, the Chair asked EWG members on their perspective towards the introduction of a recreational capture logbook/app system noting better data collection doesn't in itself reduce catches. Topics included:

- Mandatory verses voluntary reporting systems.
- How a reporting system could add to or take away from the fishing experience.

- Security and ability for any system to be digital such as app based.
- Difficulty associated in a mass catch recording system.
- Options to encourage recording of catch.

DPIRD responses to EWG questions:

DPIRD responses to EWG questions were discussed, with EWG members raising queries in relation to DPIRD responses and seeking further clarity.

EWG Administration:

The next scheduled EWG session will be in early June with Recfishwest to canvass available times.

Meeting Closed.