



West Coast Demersal Scalefish

Expert Working Group

Meeting #5 – Report (Agenda, Attendees, Summary)

1st June 2022

Chair: Andrew Rowland, Recfishwest

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| 1:00pm | 1. Welcome & apologies |
| 1:10pm | 2. Action Items Update |
| 1:20pm | 3. Community feedback through working group members (Group) |
| 1:30pm | 4. Re-cap on previous meetings and 'hot' and 'cold' primary management measures |
| 1:50pm | 5. Overview of survey results |
| 2:00pm | 6. Focussed discussion on Individual Effort Limits |
| 3:30pm | 8. DPIRD responses to EWG questions |
| 3:50pm | 9. EWG Administration |
| 4:00pm | 10. Meeting Closed |

List of Attendees

Recfishwest Staff:

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

Expert Working Group:

- Matthew Howard (Online)
- Ashley Ramm (Online)
- Brody Laroux (Online)
- Pat Shinnick (Online)
- Rob Hoefhamer (Online)
- Michael Heslewood (Online)
- Tim Farnell (Online)
- Brian Marshall (Online)

Welcomes and Apologies:

The chair welcomed members to the fifth Expert Working Group session. Apologies were given for Scott Coghlan and Dave Hilton 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 the group, with no further outstanding items to be addressed.

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:

- Members of the EWG discussed their meeting with the Fisheries Minister on Tuesday 31st May, with EWG members expressing their appreciation to the Minister for the extended consultation process.
- Members expressed community concerns towards not being aware of or being included in consultation in the Abrolhos Islands draft management plan.
- Protecting demersal fish during their spawning period also allows the breeding to continue in peak spawning conditions, and the sentiment that this should protect a lot more fish than just the mortality associated with these periods.
- Community sentiment towards a demersal fishing licence and the logging of demersal captures.
- Shifts in perception towards the need for a recreational app recording system and concern towards broader public perception of a recording system.
- Discussion around the Westport development and concern towards the resultant impact on pink snapper spawning stocks.
- Differences in the monetary value placed on demersal species by recreational and commercial sectors and the higher value per fish placed by the recreational sector.
- Current economic loss experienced by the tackle industry.

Re-cap on previous meetings 'hot' and 'cold' primary management measures:

Recfishwest provided an overview of previous meeting results focussing on the meeting outcomes and groups sentiment on primary management measures. Preferred primary measures by the group were discussed, re-iterating prior sentiment and group position towards the effectiveness and suitability of some measures. Topics also included:

- Targeted closures, individual effort limits, fine scale spatial closures and establishing zones within the West Coast Bioregion being considered as management options worth exploring more.
- Tag systems, rolling closures, complete closure and extension of the current bioregion wide closure considered as management options that were not preferred by the EWG.

Overview of survey results:

Survey analysis results were discussed, with Recfishwest presenting an overview on respondent opinions towards the recreational and socialisation values of West Coast Demersal Scalefish, frequency of respondent opinions towards management measures, and rationale for primary management measure preferences. Topics also included:

- Spending time with family and passion and joy for fishing were the two most popular recreation and socialisation values of the West Coast Demersal Scalefish fishery.
- The three most common explanations as to why survey respondents chose their desired management preference.

Focussed discussion on adjustable open seasons

The chair asked the group for their sentiment towards adjustable open seasons, topics included:

- Concern towards accurately determining demersal captures with an adjustable open season.
- Concern towards increased fishing effort over good weather periods and associated traffic increases at boat ramps and facilities.
- Concern towards creating a 'race to fish', with those who can fish more often being benefitted by the management measure.
- Concern towards the opening and ending of season and fishers taking unnecessary risks, (e.g., fishing in bad weather near the end of season).

Focussed discussion on individual effort limits:

Recfishwest provided a presentation on individual effort limits, discussing the potential tools which could be used and the considerations surrounding the management measure. Topics also included:

- Effort limits aim to constrain fishing effort as a proxy for limiting total fishing mortality.
- Positive community sentiment and support towards individual effort limits.
- Concern towards compliance with individual effort limits and fisheries officers' ability to monitor an individual effort limit across the West Coast Bioregion.
- Discussion towards how an individual effort limit system may be incorporated and how it may work, with sentiment from the group being that a meeting with DPIRD is required.
- Individual effort limits providing the potential to target highly avid fishers or people which are able to fish multiple days in a row and limit their effort.
- Practical difficulties with the management measure (e.g., fishing clubs which may have a competition over multiple days) and the importance of not implementing a management system which may damage the social benefits of fishing and club associations.

Following deliberation towards individual effort limits as a primary management measure, the EWG discussed other management measures to assist in the West Coast Demersal Scalefish fishery. Topics included:

- Itemised fishing from boat licences (e.g., demersals scalefish, nearshore, squid etc).
- Desire for more pro-active education towards recreational fishers to stop bottom fishing once demersal bag and/or boat limits have been reached.

- The significant mortality of demersal scalefish associated with avid fishers who fish more than 5 times per month.
- Group support for an education campaign towards sustainable demersal fishing practices as an output/recommendation of the EWG.
- Promotion of species other than demersal scalefish as recreational target species.
- Discussion towards possible offsets to be included within the recommended management package.
- Desire for fisheries to educate recreational fishers more, with tackle store owners feeling as if they are the educators and do not currently have the appropriate tools and support from government.

DPIRD responses to EWG questions:

DPIRD responses to EWG questions from session 4 were discussed. EWG members expressed their desire to have DPIRD researchers present during the next EWG session to engage in constructive conversation.

EWG Administration:

Dates for future EWG sessions were discussed, with the group agreeing to move sessions to Thursdays for the month of June.

Meeting Closed.