



West Coast Demersal Scalefish

Expert Working Group

Meeting #6 – Report (Agenda, Attendees, Summary)

9th 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. Survey analysis (supporting measures) |
| 1:40pm | 5. Supporting measures discussion |
| 2:00pm | 6. Q&A session with DPIRD managers, including the following topics discussed previously by the EWG: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Closures, including potential for spawning closures• Fine scale spatial or temporal closures• Different zoning within the WCB• Individual effort limits• Increased catch and effort reporting• Better educating recreational fishers around post release mortality• Gear restrictions |
| 3:50pm | 7. EWG Administration |
| 4:00pm | 8. Meeting Closed |

List of Attendees

Recfishwest Staff:

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

Expert Working Group:

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

Welcomes and Apologies:

The chair welcomed members to the sixth Expert Working Group session. Apologies were given for Matthew Howard, Dave Hilton and Michael Heslewood who were unable to attend the session due to conflicting commitments and technical difficulties.

Action Items Update:

Action items were discussed with the group, with no further outstanding items to be addressed.

Timeline for Expert Working Group Recommendations:

The chair discussed the timeline for recommendations to be provided to DPIRD, expressing that recommendations from the working group are to be finalised at 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 regarding the West Coast Demersal Scalefish issue. Expert working group members discussed the feedback they had received, topics included:

- The recreational communities desire to see recommended management options for consideration coming in July.
- Large community interest in the consultation process, with inquiry into where the current situation is at.
- Recreational fishers from Mandurah to Kalbarri reporting increased catches of pink snapper, leading them to believe the current data surrounding pink snapper stocks is not correct.

Survey analysis (supporting measures)

Survey analysis results were discussed, with Recfishwest providing an overview on respondent preferences towards supporting management measures and rationale for supporting management measure preferences. Topics also included:

- Revising the EWG of primary and supporting measures which have been discussed and those which require further discussion

- The two most common rationales for respondent preferences of supporting management measures.

Supporting measures discussion

Recfishwest provided an overview on supporting management measures that require further discussion to gather group sentiment. Topics also included:

- The EWG re-iterated their sentiment towards not reducing the demersal bag limit to 1 as it would make fishing unviable.
- The EWG confirmed their sentiment towards not reducing the individual species limit for pink snapper.
- Positive sentiment towards a bag limit of 2 demersal scalefish per person irrespective of species, and that removing individual species limits will likely assist in reducing post-release mortality rates.
- Desire for a clear demersal scalefish education campaign promoting sustainable practices and fishing methods to assist in reducing post-release mortality.
- Positive sentiment towards removing the 2 dhufish boat limit to assist in reducing post-release mortality with discussion towards reducing or removing the dhufish size limit.
- Positive sentiment towards a maximum demersal limit for larger vessels irrespective of the number of fishers on board.
- Acknowledgement towards the required blend of management measures, both primary and supporting, which will be required to meet the new target.
- Positive sentiment towards a West Coast Demersal Scalefish licence endorsement and the attributed data collection of the management measure.

Q&A session with DPIRD managers

The chair welcomed DPIRD staff to the sixth Expert Working Group session, thanking them for their efforts during these past weeks and for their attendance for the day's session. The group discussed plausible primary and supporting management measures, associated challenges with compliance, and how management measures may be implemented. Topics also included:

General:

- DPIRD staff providing their view towards reaching the 2030 target, stating that DPIRD want to implement a range of primary and supporting management measures, with yearly reviews to determine if enough action or too much action was taken.
- Next review of the Harvest Strategy is set for 2026.
- The need for primary management measures to be adjustable for future management implications (e.g., closed seasons can adjust timeframes, individual effort limits can adjust the number of fishable days).
- The requirement for management measures to be simple and not confusing to assist in compliance.
- Difficulties associated with 'simple' management measures as the simpler the management measure, the blunter it will be.

- Harsher control measures to be enforced by primary management measures, with supporting measures able to be adjusted and simplified more easily.

Individual effort limits:

- At the concept level, individual effort limits limit effort as a proxy for total mortality.
- Compliance issues relating towards the need to know when fishers are out fishing and associated nomination system for fishing days.
- Management measure being an input-based control, with people adapting to the management framework over time and becoming more efficient.
- If fisher efficiency were to increase over time, the need for reducing individual effort limits to still meet set targets.
- The benefits of the management measure, including equal opportunity and flexibility for fishers.
- The management measure creates equal opportunity for all fishers, but by doing so it may also reduce opportunity (i.e., equal days for all fishers reduces the total amount of fishing days for all fishers).

Spawning closure:

- Positive sentiment towards a spawning closure from January to March, which does not include the Easter period holidays.
- The large community support and expectation of protecting spawning demersal scalefish.
- The 'double benefit' of reducing catch (total mortality) and maximising spawning activity.
- May result in a 'race to fish' effect between December and January, limiting or removing the associated benefits of protecting spawning fish.

Bag limits:

- Positive sentiment towards not reducing current bag limits.
- Reducing current bag limits may lead to an increase in effort in nearshore waters as fishers will not travel large distances for a single fish.
- Discussion around the need to reduce the occurrence of releasing demersal scalefish and that individual species limits and boat limits may not be an appropriate management measure going forward.

Logbook/Reporting app:

- Discussion around how a reporting system may be implemented and what form it may take.
- Plausibility of an opt in recording system whereby fishers can nominate themselves to record their captures and be incentivised (free fishing from boat licence etc)
- Difficulty associated with mandatory reporting and concern towards implementing a system which will make recreational fishing labourious.
- Difficulty associated with a voluntary reporting system as it may incur fisher avidity bias.
- Discussion towards extrapolating out a small percentage (10%) of fishers participating in a reporting system to determine whole bioregion captures.

Gear restrictions:

- Positive group sentiment towards reducing the number of hooks per fishing line to a single hook, or a single set of hooks (e.g., 1 set of gang hooks or snells).
- Positive sentiment towards reducing the occurrence of 'double headers', and the associated rates of post-release mortality.
- Difficulties associated with compliance in gear restrictions, and the associated reliance of fishers to abide by gear restrictions.
- Enforceability may not be always present, although the management measure may lead to increased stewardship/education.
- Reducing the occurrence of shark depredation (primarily north) if reducing the maximum number of hooks per line to 1.
- Various fishing clubs in large support for gear restrictions.

Licence endorsement:

- Positive sentiment towards the increased data collection for the recreational sector.
- Will place a higher value on West Coast Demersal Scalefish.
- Enforceable by fisheries compliance officers.
- Concern towards any fee associated with a West Coast Demersal Scalefish licence.
- Responsibility in the licence holder for different classes

Broadening demersal suite category:

- The demersal suite already being split between inshore and offshore allocations.
- Low biological impact and efficiency in recreational fishers targeting the offshore demersal suite and understanding how that may play a role in assisting an inshore demersal suite recovery.

Creating zones within the WCB:

- The distribution of key species changing throughout zones from north to south.
- Positive sentiment towards the ability to target separate areas which require harsher management restrictions.
- An individual effort limit would assist in reducing concerns towards shifting effort across zones.

EWG Administration:

Expert Working Group member Pat Shinnick spoke to the group and DPIRD staff surrounding the risk and dangers associated with snagged fishing rigs on crayfish pots and ropes. Pat urged group members to educate associated networks with tagging ropes to notify cray fisherman of a snagged rig to prevent risk of injury when retrieving pots.

The Chair thanked the EWG and DPIRD staff for attending the meeting.

Meeting Closed.