

NSW Mulloway Harvest Strategy Working Group 11-12 April 2022

The NSW Mulloway Harvest Strategy Working Group had its second meeting on 11–12 April in Sydney. This was the first opportunity for the group to get together in person following the easing of COVID restrictions and cancellation of the meeting arranged for March due to the extreme weather events. Almost all members were able to attend in person and those that couldn't were able to participate online.

Early on the first day of the meeting, DPI presented a range of harvest strategy support measures that can be implemented while the harvest strategy is under development and/or during its early stages. The group noted that these would require careful consideration and agreed to make this the main focus of the next meeting.

The main topic for the meeting was the application of FishPath to help characterise the various elements of the Mulloway fishery as a whole. FishPath is a software tool designed to help with developing harvest strategies, where stakeholders are presented with a range of questions designed to capture the unique characteristics of the fishery and identify appropriate monitoring, assessment and management options. Use of FishPath was facilitated by Dr Natalie Dowling of CSIRO, and supported by DPI Fisheries research staff. After working through the questions relating to the fishery structure and available information on the first day, a summary of FishPath outcomes was presented on the second day. This will be considered again at a later meeting, so the group can use it to help build the harvest strategy.

On the second day, the working group discussed information from DPI on minimising unintended mortality in NSW commercial prawn fisheries. Minimising unintended mortality is an important management objective for all fisheries and sectors, with three general management options available: (1) modifications to fishing gear to improve selection; (2) changes to operational procedures to improve survival of non-retained catch; or (3) spatial or temporal closures to fishing. The group will further discuss measures to minimise unintended mortality as part of a broader package to support the implementation of the harvest strategy.

The next meeting will be held online with the main focus on possible harvest strategy support measures. The following face-to-face meeting will be focussed on draft objectives for the harvest strategy. In the meantime, DPI will start assembling the harvest strategy document, bringing together all the topics discussed so far and enabling the group to focus on the final product expected from this process.

Dr James Findlay, Independent Chair, NSW Mulloway Harvest Strategy Working Group.

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