

Minutes

Meeting	Spanner Crab Harvest Strategy Working Group		
Meeting Number	4	Dates	4 th and 5 th August 2022
Location	Ballina and online via Microsoft Teams Meeting	Time	13:00 – 17:00 09:00 – 14:00
Members	<p>Independents: James Findlay (Chair), Julian Morison (Economist), Jeremy Prince (Scientist)</p> <p>Commercial Fishing Representatives: Andrew Rigby, John Joblin, Ian McRae, Gary Bordin,</p> <p>Mitchell Sanders (Commercial Fishing NSW Advisory Council – CommFish NSW), Tricia Beatty (Professional Fishers' Association)</p> <p>DPI Fisheries Manager: Darren Reynolds</p> <p>DPI Fisheries Scientist: Daniel Johnson</p>		
Observers	Samantha Miller (QLD), Nicholas Giles (DPI), Rowan Chick (DPI) Ashley Fowler (DPI)		

Agenda Item	Issue	Notes & Actions
1.	Welcome and Introduction	<p>1.1 Acknowledgment of country</p> <p>The Chair opened by acknowledging Traditional Custodians and paying respects to Elders past, present and emerging.</p> <p>1.2 Apologies and Recognition of Observers</p> <p>The Chair welcomed all Working Group members and meeting guests.</p> <p>1.3 Confirmation of Agenda</p> <p>The meeting agenda was accepted, with addition of an update on development of other harvest strategies.</p> <p>1.4 Declaration of pecuniary interests</p>

		<p>Updates to the register of pecuniary interests were confirmed.</p> <p>1.5 Minutes of the previous meeting</p> <p>The previous meeting minutes were adopted following confirmation that all comments had been resolved.</p> <p>1.6 Progress of other NSW fisheries harvest strategies</p> <p>DPI provided an update on the Trawl Whiting and Lobster harvest strategies and confirmed that both had been completed. A draft Harvest Strategy is also being developed by the Mulloway Harvest Strategy Working Group.</p>
2.	Introduction to Rebuilding strategy components	<p>DPI provided an introduction to rebuilding strategy components. Harvest Strategies are designed maintain stocks around target levels, and also consider management actions to be undertaken if stocks decline towards or to undesirable levels. This can be done through both decision rules and rebuilding components, which is much easier to consider when stocks are in a healthy condition. This allows consideration of management actions to prevent or recover from depletion before this might occur.</p> <p>Discussion</p> <p>The working group discussed approaches to rebuilding undertaken in the NSW Lobster and Trawl Whiting, and QLD Spanner Crab harvest strategies. Members considered it important the corrective action is taken should biomass decline, to provide high certainty of avoiding stock depletion and associated impacts to the fishery. Rebuilding components will be further considered as decision rules are developed, noting that a rebuilding strategy is likely to be a function of the decision rules which adjust TAC in accordance with stock performance in relation to target, limit and potentially trigger reference levels.</p>
3.	Introduction to potential Decision rules	<p>DPI provided an introduction to potential decision rules, which will provide a framework for adjusting Total Allowable Catch (TAC) from the Spanner Crab fishery with decision (or harvest control) rules linked to indicators and performance against reference point values of the indicator/s as defined in the operational objectives of the harvest strategy.</p> <p>For example, if a target reference point (e.g. CPUE or biomass of a certain level as a primary indicator) is exceeded, the decision rules could result in increased harvest (TAC) to return or maintain the fishery or stock</p>

		<p>around the target level. If performance is below the target, catch would decrease to return the fishery or stock to the target level.</p> <p>Discussion</p> <p>Members discussed several approaches to decision rules, recognising that response to changing fishery performance is important to support fishery health and stability of TACs between years and over time. Chosen indicators will be important to the decision rules to ensure appropriate response to changing fishery conditions, and avoid potential conflict should any one indicator diverge from others (e.g. if independent surveys conflict with commercial CPUE). Members also agreed that decision rules should provide meaningful changes to TAC to avoid insignificant continual adjustments to TAC.</p>
4.	Review of Developing Draft Spanner Crab Harvest strategy	<p>DPI introduced a developing draft of the harvest strategy that includes key harvest strategy elements discussed through previous meetings. The draft was reviewed by the working group, with further discussion and consideration of each element in context of the current strategy objectives and content. Additional content will be incorporated as developed by the working group. Key items of discussion are noted.</p> <p>Discussion</p> <p><i>Decision rules</i></p> <p>Recognising that the harvest strategy must consider a rebuilding strategy should biomass decline to unacceptable levels from its current sustainable biomass, members considered that rebuilding is most appropriate to incorporate as a function of decision rules (i.e. reduce catch as or to avoid ongoing biomass decline, also considering potential fishery closure if recruitment becomes severely depleted in the future).</p> <p>After reviewing potential decision rule models, members agreed decision rules consistent with operation of the QLD Spanner Crab harvest strategy to be appropriate considering the shared nature of the stock and stock characteristics (i.e. a proportional change approach).</p> <p>Members discussed decision rule principles, with agreement that a 2-year determination cycle with minimum change of 5t and no carryover of uncaught catch would be a sound starting point for further consideration of decision rules.</p>

		<p><i>Indicators</i></p> <p>Members saw benefit in having some link through indicators to performance of the larger QLD fishery considering likely recruitment from northern areas, whilst relying most heavily on NSW data. Considering differences in each fishery and historical performance, the indicators chosen and reference levels may be different, with reference levels potentially based around average historical performance of the NSW fishery. If data or indicators from the QLD fishery are incorporated in the NSW harvest strategy, cooperation between jurisdictions will be important, and the harvest strategy should consider the event of a shared indicator not being available.</p> <p>Discussion recognised that appropriate indicators included NSW commercial CPUE, NSW fishery independent surveys (legal and undersize), and potentially a pooled index including QLD independent survey data, with weighting to be further considered. Considering potential issues associated with CPUE as a key indicator, the fishery could seek to further develop stock indicators in the future (e.g. as technology and fishery information improves), with most benefit if this was undertaken as part of a whole of stock process.</p> <p>Members also considered economic indicators (such as price data), noting that this could be important to consider if changes to the TAC would have adverse effects (e.g. reduce price), but not likely as a direct function of decision rules at this stage.</p> <p><i>Reference points</i></p> <p>Members continued discussion on potential target and limit reference points, reviewing a target of 2.2 kg/net lift (average 2009/10-2020/21) and limit of 0.8 kg/net lift for further consideration as decision rules are developed. Potential actions at a trigger reference point (e.g. instigate review, change management action) were also discussed and noted for further consideration.</p>
<p>5.</p>	<p>Periodic review and further development</p>	<p>Harvest strategies should be reviewed over time, including periodic reviews and if available information or management arrangements change. The harvest strategy can also recognise key areas of investment or development that could improve operation of the harvest strategy, noting that this may require consideration of cost vs potential benefit.</p>

		<p>Discussion</p> <p>Members recognised benefits of periodic review and identifying areas that could be developed to improve operation of the harvest strategy and performance of the fishery over time.</p> <p>Review and development will be identified in the draft strategy to ensure that the strategy remains contemporary and effective, and to support consideration of investment or further development to further support the fishery into the future. These elements will be further considered as the draft harvest strategy is developed.</p>
6.	Changes to temporal spawning closures	<p>The working group considered potential changes to the existing temporal spawning closure for male spanner crabs at the previous meeting. Recommendations were provided to CommFish NSW following the meeting, and DPI has agreed to assist industry to develop a co-management approach to flexible seasonal closures if needed.</p> <p>Discussion</p> <p>Members noted the update and that CommFish will consider the recommendation at a coming meeting. Members discussed potential for co-management, noting it will be important for wider fishers to be involved, and an agreed governance arrangement would be beneficial.</p> <p>Action</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. DPI to check availability of a commercial management representative to attend to further discuss co-management and potential changes to the temporal closure.
7.	Other Business and Next Meeting	No other business was proposed.

The next meeting is proposed online for the 16th of September 2022, TBC.