

NEW SOUTH WALES TRAWL WHITING HARVEST STRATEGY WORKING GROUP

CHAIRMAN'S SUMMARY

The first meeting of the Trawl Whiting Harvest Strategy Working Group (TWHS) took place as a remote video meeting on Friday 20 November with all members present and assistance from NSW Fisheries staff. The Working Group is a subcommittee of Commfish NSW.

The meeting was addressed by Sean Sloan, Deputy Director General and Director of Fisheries who thanked members for their participation and looked forward to a collaborative approach by all sectors and Government in developing a Harvest Strategy for the trawl whiting fishery. He recognised that the timing for its development was very tight as it needed to fit in with quota considerations in early 2021 but emphasised the need to progress harvest strategy development for the range of benefits to the various sectors utilising our fishery resources.

The meeting received a number of presentations from NSW Fisheries officers and CSIRO researchers outlining the purpose, structure and operational challenges in developing harvest strategies, along with their potential benefits to industry, other sectors and the community. The presentations emphasised that harvest strategies are dependent on critical scientific and industry input and should be seen as an adaptive management tool which is subject to monitoring, updating and change as new information comes forward.

The Working Group has access to a wide range of expertise – biological, economic and management - designed to provide advice based on previous harvest strategy developments across Australia. In addition, industry representation is present to help “ground truth” the various aspects and assumptions contained in the strategy development. It is seen as a co-management approach in providing a real partnership from all sectors using the resource – commercial, recreational and aboriginal – in developing a supportive management approach.

The Group recognised that the harvest strategy could not simply be copied from other fisheries, but had to recognise the particular characteristics of the trawl whiting fishery, including being multi-species, multi-jurisdictional and recently subject to quota management. Nevertheless, experiences in other fisheries will be considered so that any pitfalls can be avoided and benefits maximised. Certainly this process will improve transparency in how decisions are made and add flexibility to management based on the level of risk in fishing operations.

The meeting has an Australian Fisheries Management Authority representation and will invite Queensland representation also in recognition of the shared nature of jurisdictions involved in the fishery. Recreational and Aboriginal interests are also included as any harvest strategy must take account of all users of the resource.

The next meeting has been set for 3,4 December as a face to face meeting, where a first attempt will be made to design the key elements of an interim harvest strategy for consideration and discussion by all parties.

Peter Neville

Chair. TWHS Working Group 20 November, 2020