

Chair's Summary - NSW Mulloway Harvest Strategy Working Group 6-7 June 2022

The fourth meeting for the Mulloway Harvest Strategy Working Group was held on the 6th and 7th of June 2022. The focus for this meeting was to progress defining the harvest strategy aims by shaping the draft goal, and strategic and operational objectives.

The meeting commenced with a presentation and discussion on the development of a harvest strategy framework for Aboriginal cultural fishing in NSW to support improved engagement, recognition and integration of cultural fishing interests into NSW harvest strategies.

CSIRO and DPI representatives then provided an overview and discussion of the developing shortlist of harvest strategy options for data monitoring, assessment and management measures from the FishPath online tool. The shortlist will guide integrating appropriate monitoring, assessment and management measures into the harvest strategy.

Discussion continued on potential support measures that could be implemented to improve recovery of the Mulloway stock and operation of the harvest strategy, with options associated with increasing compliance, improving data collection, reducing fishing mortality, and stock enhancement being progressed to form an integrated support package.

To assist with identifying the operational objectives of the harvest strategy, the Working Group discussed what a 'good' and 'bad' fishery looks like for each fishing sector. There was a consensus that the Mulloway stock is currently in a 'bad way', reflecting the 'Depleted' status defined within the stock assessment report, and it was considered highly undesirable for the biomass of the stock to decline any further.

Noting the views provided, it is important to recognise that improving data will be a critical component to increase certainty around the likely biomass level of the stock and improve ability to detect whether stock health continues to decline, or at what point positive trends become evident. Given the low stock biomass, it is also important to recognise that a precautionary approach must be taken to support recovery, including through the integrated support package and harvest strategy itself. Members recognised the importance of rebuilding the stock in the short-term, as well as discussing the potential for a future biomass (or proxy) target corresponding with maximum sustainable yield or higher, with higher targets seeking to increase stock abundance, resilience and fishing efficiency/opportunity for all sectors.

The next meeting will focus on further development of strategy objectives and building a draft of the harvest strategy, including draft indicators and reference points to track performance against operational objectives. Once the draft objectives, indicators and their reference points have been developed, work will focus on decision rules designed to achieve the strategy objectives.

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