

NSW TRAWL WHITING HARVEST STRATEGY WORKING GROUP

7TH MEETING Ballina 2 June 2021

CHAIR'S SUMMARY

The meeting considered three papers prepared by DPI Fisheries covering elements of the Harvest Strategy – Table of Contents and Schedule for Completion; Updated Objectives; Triggers and associated Decision Rules.

The meeting was advised of the decisions of the Total Allowable Fishing Committee which has agreed to increase the combined quota for trawl whiting from 898t to 1,066t and to set this figure for the next two years until the next stock assessment is completed, subject to consultation and scientific advice. The TAFC welcomed the development of the Harvest Strategy as a joint exercise between DPI Fisheries and stakeholders to provide advice to the Committee.

Two remaining critical issues for the Harvest Strategy completion were considered. Firstly, it was agreed for Eastern School Whiting to include a Trigger Point of B35 between the Target and Limit reference points, consistent with the Commonwealth, to allow for an earlier management response, where necessary, to changes in key indicators. The B35 trigger would not be used for Stout Whiting, in order to be consistent with Queensland. Secondly, in between full assessment years, fishing mortality (F) would be used as a key indicator using equivalent values for Target (F48), Limit (F20) and Trigger (F35) reference points.

Thus biomass and fishing mortality would be used jointly to track the status of the fishery, along with other measures, and provide a basis for decision rules to be applied as needed. These decision rules primarily concern movements in the TAC but could in future include complementary management measures. The Working Group was cognisant of not “casting these rules in stone” but still providing meaningful guidance to the TAFC and increased certainty for industry on appropriate changes to TAC etc., in response to changing circumstances.

The Department agreed to conduct “mini assessments” in years between full stock (i.e. biomass) assessments, looking at a broad range of factors which impact on fishery performance. The industry again stressed the need for improved data collection and understanding of reasons behind changes in data movements to improve confidence in the use of the data in the model and for informed TAC determinations by the TAFC.

Finally, the Working Group expressed its preference to operate on multi-year TAC (3 years) but with the option of applying “step up or step down” adjustments if this became necessary during the period.

The next meeting of the Working Group would consider a complete draft Harvest Strategy with a view of providing this to CommFish for their consideration.

PETER NEVILLE, CHAIR Trawl Whiting HSWG 4 June 2021