

NSW SPANNER CRAB HARVEST STRATEGY WORKING GROUP

Chair's Summary - 2nd Meeting - 29 October 2021

The second meeting of the Spanner Crab Harvest Strategy Working Group (HSWG) took place online on Friday 29 October.

I opened the meeting by acknowledging the Traditional Custodians of the lands and welcomed members and observers

The HSWG was provided a brief update from DPI Fisheries staff on the NSW Harvest Strategy Policy & Guidelines, and current progress on other harvest strategy developments for NSW fisheries.

I invited industry representatives to discuss their aspirations for the fishery in short and longer-terms. Industry noted they wanted a sustainable fishery into the future, with consistent high catch rates year on year, of large size crabs. They discussed the variability in catch, size and market price of spanner crabs and provided the group an insight into desirable catch quantities.

The meeting received presentations from DPI Fisheries around potential objectives and performance monitoring. Members discussed a potential goal, strategic objectives and operational objectives, noting these will be further discussed and may be refined or changed as the harvest strategy develops. Members also discussed the current monitoring and scientific assessment process, and how this supports development of potential indicators to track performance of the harvest strategy. The group acknowledged difficulties in identifying specific economic objectives without robust economic data, noting that economic outcomes can also be supported using other indicators.

Current monitoring and NSW Spanner Crab stock assessment data were presented, stimulating discussion on the main uncertainties in the assessment. Potential primary indicators were discussed, including standardised catch rates of Spanner Crabs by commercial fishers (sCPUE), and catch of legal-size crabs from the Fishery Independent Survey undertaken in NSW waters. The group acknowledged these indicators are also used in Queensland's Spanner Crab Harvest Strategy.

Potential monitoring options and research priorities to address uncertainties were discussed, with a focus on what additional information could be captured for future assessments. The group also acknowledged recent recommendations from the Total Allowable Fishing Committee, such as recording discarding, improving catch reporting and handling practices.

Other potential improvements to the NSW Spanner Crab assessment will be discussed at future meetings, including any that may be identified through an external review of the NSW Spanner Crab stock assessment being undertaken by the CSIRO.

The next meeting has been set for 11 March 2022. I look forward to a collaborative approach by all members in developing the harvest strategy for the NSW Spanner Crab fishery into 2022.

James Findlay, Chair, NSW Spanner Crab HSWG.

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