

RECORD OF MEETING

Meeting #2, 1 August 2024

VFA Queenscliff

CHAIR: Ian Knuckey

MEETING COMMENCED: 11:00 am

Present	
Ian Knuckey	Chair
Ewan Flanagan	Victorian Fisheries Authority / Executive Officer
David Reilly	Victorian Fisheries Authority
Melissa Schubert	Victorian Fisheries Authority
Klaas Hartmann	Institute of Marine and Antarctic Studies (IMAS)
Scott Hadley	Institute of Marine and Antarctic Studies (IMAS)
Anthony Ciconte	Giant Crab Fishery industry member
Apologies	
John Olver	Giant Crab Operator

1. Preliminaries

1.1. Welcome

Ian Knuckey, the Chair, opened the meeting with an Acknowledgement of Country and welcomed all attendees. Ian advised that this meeting is run as a sub-committee of the Rock Lobster and Giant Crab Resource Assessment Group (RLRAG). Outcomes of the meeting will be reported at the next RLRAG meeting. The previous meeting minutes were accepted as a true and accurate record of meeting one.

Ewan Flanagan ran through the actions for meeting one noting that most items were for consideration at the next RLRAG meeting.

2. Revised draft harvest strategy

2.1. Overview of changes

Klaas Hartmann provided an overview of the changes to the draft harvest strategy determined during meeting one. In summary:

- Level 1 provides the minimum required standards for this fishery and reflects the current harvest strategy requirements. It relies only logbook data and does not allow for Total Allowable Commercial Catch increases (TACC), only decreases.
- Level 2 builds on Level 1 by considering length-frequency sampling data and verification of fisher catch and effort data. While the current Enhanced Data Collection Project and Electronic Monitoring Program trial provide avenues for achieving these requirements, the draft harvest strategy does not specify how these requirements must be met. Level 2 allows for TACC increases, currently restricted to an increase of 20% every three years if the catch per unit effort has remained above the target reference point for the past three years. Klaas noted this ruling requires further consideration and without a stock assessment, it is difficult to understand the full impact on the TACC.
- Level 3 is achieved by meeting the requirements stipulated in Level 2 for three or more years as well as a formal stock assessment. Comparative to the original draft, the sub-committee deemed this more achievable than a required fishery independent survey. Under this level, the TACC can be increased annually.

Anthony raised a concern regarding the wording of input controls at this level. At the previous meeting it was agreed that the review of input controls would be considered as part of the management plan review. By stipulating a review of input controls under Level 3, it was suggested this review would not be considered if this level is not achieved. It was further noted that input controls should not be considered a harvest strategy control but a management control. The group agreed that input controls are still relevant to the harvest strategy but could be removed from this table to avoid confusion.

Action: Klaas to remove input controls from the tier table and specify in a separate section.

Ian raised the concern that the current draft doesn't specify a limit under which the fishery is closed. This was previously excluded from the harvest strategy to allow for small-scale exploratory fishing.

3. References Points Discussion

3.1. Reference Period Discussion

Building on the reference period discussion in meeting one, David Reilly provided some historical context on the Giant Crab Fishery.

David advised that the seasonality of fishing in the Giant Crab Fishery should be considered given the differences to current fishing practices. Most notably, giant crab fishing was less targeted than today and was fished outside of the peak rock lobster fishing period. Klaas noted that this factor will need to be considered in reviewing catch rate results and may affect the reference points.

David raised further concerns regarding the accuracy in fishery-dependent data between 1998 and 2012. Specifically, there were concerns relating to accuracy of effort reporting during this period. The group agreed that it was important to separate between suspicion and proven data discrepancies. Anthony further raised the concern that fishery management decisions after 2012 had been based on data recorded during that period. The group agreed to consider the effects of removing the data associated with the operator in which these issues relate. Klaas advised that principles surrounding the reference period can still apply.

Action: Klaas to review the effects on the data considered compromised during the proposed reference period.

Klaas further confirm that the reference period in the most recent draft harvest strategy concluded at 2013/14 rather than 2009/10 as had been suggested at the last meeting. This is based on the suspected period of compromised effort data. There is no significant difference in extending the reference period to 2013/14. In addition, it was clarified that the proposed start of the reference period was to coincide with the introduction of the legal minimum length, which was introduced mid-way through the 1994/95 season. The group agreed that this could be better presented on the graph in the harvest strategy.

Action: Klaas to move legal minimum length arrow to mid-1994/95 mark.

Klaas also raised the concept of a smoothed timeseries which aims to remove large fluctuations in data that are not reflective of the biomass. Essentially, smoothing the timeseries ensures harvest strategy rules do not overreact to isolated fluctuations. Given this is a low productivity fishery with a low rate of change, the group agreed that smoothed timeseries is appropriate.

Given the agreement to proceed with a smoothed timeseries, which works on a 3-year rolling average, Klaas proposed removing the requirement to be above the target for three years before a change in the TACC can be implemented. The group agreed to endorse this proposal in principle following a review of the amended figures at the next meeting.

Action: Klaas to provide amended timeseries based on smoothed dataset at the next harvest strategy review meeting.

3.2. Reference Points Recommendation

Klaas provided an overview of the reference points discussed in previous drafts and the group agreed that an additional meeting was needed to finalise this section. It was noted, however, that there is currently no control rule in the event that the CPUE begins trending down towards the target.

Action: Klaas to add detail regarding the limit reference points to the tiered table, as referred to in the Harvest Control Rules section.

The group agreed that it was worthwhile to present an update at the next RLRAG meeting despite not yet seeking endorsement to proceed with the draft.

Action: Ewan to include agenda item for giant crab draft harvest strategy update at next RLRAG meeting.

Action: Ewan to set the next meeting two weeks after the next RLRAG meeting.

The Chair called the meeting closed at 12:45 pm.

Schedule 1: Actions from meeting

Action	Responsibility	Timing
1 August 2024		
1. Circulate the draft minutes.	Ewan	August
2. Remove input controls from tier table and specify in a separate section.	Klaas	September / next meeting
3. Review the effects on the data considered compromised during the proposed reference period.	Klaas / David	September / next meeting
4. Move legal minimum length arrow to mid-1994/95 mark.	Klaas	September / next meeting
5. Provide amended timeseries based on smoothed dataset at the next harvest strategy review meeting.	Klaas	September / next meeting
6. Add detail regarding the limit reference points to the tiered table.	Klaas	September / next meeting
7. Provide update of draft harvest strategy progression at next RLRAG.	Klaas / Ewan	August
8. Set the next meeting two weeks after the next RLRAG meeting	Ewan	August
Existing Actions		
1. Provide clarification on the satellite airtime cost associated with Electronic Monitoring Program.	David	September / next meeting
2. Provide Terms of Reference example from AFMA Electronic Monitoring Program.	Anthony	September