



CCSBT-SFM/1803/07

Terms of Reference of the Ecologically Related Species Working Group (ERSWG)

Purpose

To provide an opportunity for the SFMWG to consider the Terms of Reference (ToR) of the ERSWG, and recommend necessary changes to ensure that the ToR properly reflects the needs of the Extended Commission in relation to Ecologically Related Species (ERS).

Background

At CCSBT 24, the Extended Commission agreed that, at its next meeting, it would provide additional guidance as to the priority issues to be addressed at future ERSWG meetings. In addition, the current ToR of the ERSWG have not been updated since they were originally adopted in 1995 at CCSBT 2.

In his presentation to the Extended Commission at CCSBT 24, the ERSWG Chair noted that The ERSWG had not yet identified which species SBT fishing interacts with and those that it doesn't, and that consequently, it is unclear as to which species the ERSWG should concern itself with and those of little or no relevance. The ERSWG Chair further noted that the CCSBT has been criticised for not addressing bycatch issues of species that the SBT fishery has little interaction with (e.g. billfish) and that such criticism could be addressed if the CCSBT better identified the bycatch from fishing for SBT.

Revised Terms of Reference

The Secretariat has developed a draft revision of the ERSWG's Terms of Reference. This draft is provided at **Attachment A**. The main proposed changes to the ToR are revisions to:

- Reflect changes in the CCSBT since the ToR was originally adopted (e.g. the formation of an Extended Commission and the implementation of confidentiality rules).
- Reflect some of the comments of the ERSWG Chair at CCSBT 24. In particular, paragraph 2 of the ToR has been revised to require the ERSWG to develop, maintain and regularly review a list of ERS species that may be affected by SBT fisheries and of predator/prey species that may affect the SBT stock¹. Other paragraphs have been revised to reflect this change. It is expected that this change will help to provide more direction to the work of the ERSWG and also help to fend off invalid criticism of the CCSBT with respect to species which SBT fisheries have little interaction with.
- Allow a more active role for the ERSWG with respect to conducting analyses and assessments. This was achieved by adding the text "*and conduct analyses and assessments on aspects*" to paragraphs "3(a)" and "3(b)". Previously, the stated role of the ERSWG in the ToR was passive in relation to assessments, and only involved monitoring trends and reviewing existing information and relevant research.

¹ Previously this paragraph was vague and did not add much value to help the ToR define the role of the ERSWG.

In addition to the changes shown in the attached Revision, the Secretariat suggests that Members consider whether item “2b” should be removed from the ERSWG’s terms of reference. This would also require removal of “3b”. These paragraphs relate to “*predator and prey species which may affect the condition of the SBT stock*”. It seems more appropriate that consideration of predator and prey species be a matter for the ESC as the ESC would be the main users of any such research findings. If the ESC is concerned about the potential impact of these species, or that its ability to understand and model SBT population dynamics is limited by a lack of understanding of the impact of these species, then the ESC could nominate specific research questions to be addressed. Consequently, it seems logical to have the ESC consider this type of research rather than the ERSWG. However, as predators and prey of SBT are part of the definition of Ecologically Related Species under the Convention, if these were removed from the ERSWG’s terms of reference, it would be appropriate to add consideration of SBT predator and prey species as a standing item on agendas of the ESC. It is also worth noting that continuing work on trophic relationships with SBT is on the ERSWG’s workplan with Japan taking the lead role.

Members are asked to consider the revised Terms of Reference for the ERSWG proposed by the Secretariat and to consider whether alternative or additional changes to the draft revised ToR should be drafted to properly meet the needs of the Extended Commission in relation to ERS.

To assist Members to propose addition changes to the ToR, an MS-Word version of both the original ToR and the draft revised ToR have been placed on the CCSBT web site and are available from the following links²:

- [Original version of the ERSWG’s Terms of Reference](#)
- [Draft Revision of the ERSWG’s Terms of Reference](#) as provided at **Attachment A**

Prepared by the Secretariat

² These links will be deactivated after the SFMWG5 meeting.

**TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR THE WORKING GROUP ON
ECOLOGICALLY RELATED SPECIES (ERS)**

(adopted at the Second Annual Meeting ~~(12—15_~~ September 1995))
(updated at the Twenty Fifth Annual Meeting – October 2018)

Terms of Reference for the Working Group on Ecologically Related Species (ERS)

1. The Ecologically Related Species Working Group (ERSWG) will report to the Extended Commission through the Extended Scientific Committee. The Extended Scientific Committee may provide comments to the Extended Commission on the reports (including advice and recommendations) of the ~~Ecologically Related Species Working Group~~ ERSWG.
2. To ~~provide information and advice on issues relating to species associated with develop, maintain and regularly review a list of ERS species and/or species groups that the ERSWG considers may be affected by~~ southern bluefin tuna (SBT)-~~(ecologically related species)~~ fisheries, with specific reference to:
 - a) species (both fish and non-fish) which may be affected by SBT fisheries operations¹; and
 - b) predator and prey species which may affect the condition of the SBT stock.
3. (a) With respect to the species and/or species groups identified in 2 a) above, to monitor trends, ~~and~~ review existing information and relevant research, and conduct analyses and assessments on aspects including but not limited to ~~studies on~~:
 - (i) the population biology of ~~ecologically related~~ these species;
 - (ii) the identification of factors affecting populations of ~~ecologically related~~ these species;
 - (iii) the assessment of the SBT and other fisheries effects on ~~ecologically related~~ these species and of the proportion of the SBT and other fisheries effects to the overall effects; and
 - (iv) modification to gear and operational aspects of the SBT fishery to minimise the effects on ~~ecologically related~~ these species.
 (b) With respect to the species and/or species groups identified in 2 b) above, to monitor trends, ~~and~~ review existing information and relevant research, and conduct analyses and assessments on aspects including but not limited to ~~studies on~~:
 - (i) the population biology of ~~ecologically related~~ these species;
 - (ii) the identification of factors affecting population of ~~ecologically related~~ species ~~these~~; and
 - (iii) the assessment of the effects of ~~ecologically related~~ these species on the condition of the SBT stock.

¹ Species that interact with SBT fisheries at a very low level should not be included on this list where there is consensus amongst ERSWG Members that the interaction with those species is sufficiently low and the populations of those species are sufficiently robust that it is reasonable to conclude that the SBT fishery would have no noticeable adverse impact on those species. Such decisions should be subject to review at the regular review of the list of ERS species.

4. To provide recommendations on data collection programs and research projects with respect to the species and/or species groups~~issues~~ identified in 2 above, including recommendations on research priorities and estimated costs of such research.
5. To provide advice on measures to minimise SBT fishery effects on the species and/or species groups identified in 2 a) above~~ecologically related species~~, including but not limited to gear and operational modifications.
6. To provide advice on other measures which may enhance the conservation and management of the species and/or species groups identified in 2 above~~ecologically related species~~.
7. To review these terms of reference and to recommend to the Extended Commission changes as and when appropriate.
8. To co-operate and liaise with relevant experts, scientists (from ~~Convention parties~~Members of the Extended Commission and elsewhere) and inter-governmental and non-governmental organisations, in data collection and analysis on ~~ecologically related species~~ERS subject to the provisions of the data handling criteria (Annex1).
9. To respond to requests for advice on specific matters from the Extended Commission.

Annex 1 Data Handling Criteria for the Ecologically Related Species (ERS) Working Group

1. Collection of Data and Samples

- a) The ERS ~~WG Working Group~~ will provide recommendations on the information required and advice on how to collect the relevant data and samples.
- b) The collection of data on and samples of ERS should follow agreed data collection protocols consistent with those of the Extended Scientific Committee, and those of the relevant national authority.
- c) The collection of data and samples of ERS should be conducted in a way that ~~do~~ does not interfere with the safe and smooth operation of the vessels.

2. Management of the Data and Samples

- a) The ERS ~~WG Working Group~~ shall adhere to the CCSBT's "Rules and Procedures for the Protection, Access to, and Dissemination of Data Compiled by the CCSBT" ~~use procedures that ensure strict confidentiality~~ in the use and distribution of data.
- b) Unless otherwise agreed, samples of ERS collected on the high seas will be held by the Fflag States Member; that ~~flag States Members~~ should facilitate access by other interested scientists to the ERS samples.
- c) Participants in the ERS ~~WG working group~~ should assist each other's work by sharing data and samples on ERS.

3. Analyses of Data and Samples

Analyses of the data and samples on behalf of the Extended Commission may be conducted by scientists from Members of the Extended Commission ~~the Convention Parties~~ and other relevant experts designated by the ERS ~~WG Working Group~~.

4. Consideration of the Results of the Analyses

Results of analyses which use data and samples collected under these criteria will not be published without the consent of the ~~parties who~~ Extended Commission Members which provided the data and samples.