



CCSBT-ESC/1208/09

Report from the Ninth Meeting of the Ecologically Related Species Working Group

Purpose

To consider the Report of the Ninth Meeting of the Ecologically Related Species Working Group (ERSWG) and to optionally provide comments to the Extended Commission on the ERSWG's report.

The Terms of Reference for the ERSWG state that:

“The Ecologically Related Species Working Group will report to the Commission through the Scientific Committee.”

and that:

“The Scientific Committee may provide comments to the Commission on the reports (including advice and recommendations) of the Ecologically Related Species Working Group”

Recommendations from the ERSWG Report

The full report of the Ninth Meeting of the ERSWG is provided to this meeting as CCSBT-ESC/1208/Rep01.

The ERSWG made the following recommendations for consideration by the Extended Commission:

- That the format in **Attachment 4** be used for future Annual reports to the ERSWG.
In discussion of Members' reports it became apparent that considerable time was spent in clarifying issues that might not have been necessary if more standardised reporting was used and that the ERSWG would be able to better consider trends across SBT fisheries if more comparable information was provided. The ERSWG modified the template for future Annual Reports in order to address these issues. The modified template also incorporates the ERSWG's next recommendation, concerning data reporting.
- That data reporting by Members and CNMs be standardized (as recommended at paragraphs 8 - 11) to allow better monitoring of the level of seabird bycatch and to allow approximate estimates of total seabird mortality in SBT fisheries to be made at future ERSWG meetings. The meeting further recommended that such reporting should be harmonized with other RFMOs to the extent possible.
The recommended changes for reporting of ERS mortalities by Members and CNMs included:
 - *A common definition of the definition of the fishery for the purpose of ERS reporting, which was agreed to be: All fishing effort by CCSBT authorised vessels where SBT is targeted or caught;*
 - *Reporting of ERS interactions should be stratified to enable increased accuracy and decreased variance of estimates. The default strata should be CCSBT statistical areas unless analysis shows better strata for ERS interactions in the Member's fishery;*
 - *Members should show how representative the observer coverage was of the overall fishery; and*

- *Both the observed effort and the total effort should be reported for each stratum.*
- That the ERA process identified in CCSBT-ERS/1203/09 be used by the ERSWG for seabirds in future.
Paper CCSBT-ERS/1203/09 by New Zealand elaborated a semi-quantitative methodology for ecological risk assessment (ERA) of seabird interactions with CCSBT longline fisheries. The ERSWG noted that this type of analysis could identify areas and species of greatest need for risk reduction and also highlight where data gaps occurred.
- That the Extended Commission note the considerable progress in recent years on mitigation research for pelagic longline fisheries when deciding future bycatch mitigation measures, especially with respect to new or improved mitigation measures, including line weighting and hybrid tori lines.
Papers were presented to the ERSWG indicating that best practise mitigation to reduce seabird bycatch to the lowest level involved a combination of weighted branch lines, tori lines and night setting, and that no single measure can reliably prevent incidental mortality of seabirds in most pelagic longline fisheries. Furthermore, recent research results have indicated that use of paired hybrid tori lines and/or new line weighting options (including lighter weights placed at the hook) have the potential to further reduce incidental seabird mortality.
- That the independent Chair be tasked with liaising with the Joint Tuna RFMO Bycatch Working Group on the issues identified in paragraphs 20,49,53,69 and 109.
These paragraphs related to: The Joint Working Group's (JWG) plan to meet electronically on a quarterly basis; Collaboration with other tuna RFMOs to assess risks to seabirds from all fisheries in the region; Cooperation with other RFMOs, ACAP and NGOs such as Birdlife international to obtain improved estimates of seabird captures and mortalities; The need for international coordination across oceans in relation to southern hemisphere populations of porbeagle sharks; and the Need to develop of a set of minimum requirements for observer data taking into account the potential for harmonisation across RFMOs.
- On the basis of concerns about seabird populations, continued reports of widespread and substantial captures of seabirds in SBT fisheries and the results of recent research reflected in the ACAP advice on best practice, the meeting recommended to Extended Commission that implementation of more effective mitigation measures based on best practice is urgently required.
The ERSWG recognised that all three measures (line weighting, night setting, tori lines) should be applied in high risk areas, to reduce the incidental mortality of seabirds to the lowest possible levels. It also recognised that other factors such as safety, practicality and the characteristics of the fishery should also be recognised, and agreed that it was important to regularly review new monitoring and research data and on the basis of such review to refine mitigation measures as required. Finally, the ERSWG recognised that the available information indicates that prompt implementation of effective seabird bycatch mitigation measures should not be delayed while ecological risk assessments are progressed.

Other notable observations of the ERSWG and/or its Chair included:

- Disappointment that the Philippines and South Africa did not provide annual reports for the meeting;
- The threatened status of many albatross and petrel species that are caught in SBT fisheries; and
- The usefulness of having science based population status summaries for seabirds from ACAP.

The ERSWG has also developed a workplan for Members and the Secretariat to follow between now and the next meeting. The workplan is provided at Attachment A. The action items in the plan were grouped in accordance with the tasks specified in the CCSBT Strategic Plan. One of the action items within the workplan, **which is subject to specific endorsement by the Extended Commission**, is to approach the other tuna RFMOs with an offer to lead global work on assessment of impacts of fishing for tunas on seabirds and porbeagle sharks.

It was recommended that the next meeting of the ERSWG be held in conjunction with the 2013 meeting of the Extended Scientific Committee and that it be 3 to 4 days in duration.

Finally, at CCSBT 17, the Extended Commission decided that a Chair with appropriate expertise should be appointed to the ERSWG by the Extended Commission for a term of at least two meetings of the ERSWG. The 2012 meeting of the ERSWG was the first ERSWG meeting with an appointed independent Chair. The ERSWG welcomed the facilitation by the independent Chair and recommended to the Extended Commission that this support be continued.

ERSWG Workplan

The work plan of the ERSWG between ERSWG9 and the next meeting of the group is specified below. The action items have been grouped in accordance with tasks specified in the CCSBT Strategic Plan.

CCSBT Strategic Plan			
Tasks in the CCSBT Strategic Plan	Priority	Time-frame	Action items in the ERSWG workplan
Implement the Recommendation to Mitigate the Impact on ERS of Fishing for SBT ¹	High	2010-11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secretariat to obtain new information on seabirds likely to be caught in fisheries from ACAP and Birdlife International (including population status summaries and reviews of mitigation measures) in advance of ERSWG meetings. • New Zealand to update the CCSBT seabird ERA to include global tracking data from Birdlife International prior to the next ERSWG meeting. • Members were encouraged to develop papers on ERA for non seabird species (in particular sharks) caught in SBT fisheries prior to next ERSWG meeting. • Japan, New Zealand and Australia to work together on a stock assessment for porbeagle sharks in advance of the next ERSWG meeting. • The Secretariat to contact IOSEA-Turtles with a view to assessing what data it holds and how it might assist any future work of the ERSWG.
Review the implementation of the Recommendation on ERS	Medium	Ongoing	
Agree on data provision requirements for ERS that ensure full reporting of bycatch and mitigation measures used in each fishery; this could occur through other RFMOs (e.g. WCPFC, IOTC) if they have appropriate protocols in place for ERS data reporting.	High	2011 then Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Members to report ERS catches to the next ERSWG meeting with appropriate stratification and in accordance with new standardised format agreed at ERSWG9. • Members will undertake intersessional discussion to develop an agreement concerning the exchange of ERS data by CCSBT 19. The Secretariat will coordinate the discussion. • Develop a set of minimum requirements for observer data, taking into account the potential for harmonisation across RFMOs. It recommended that this work be performed intersessionally. The Secretariat will facilitate the intersessional discussion. Birdlife International and ACAP to collaborate with Members and Cooperating Non-Members to develop protocols for the improved identification of seabirds. • Members to provide further details on electronic monitoring systems in advance of the next ERSWG meeting.

¹ Implementation of the ERS Recommendation includes The Extended Commission and/or its subsidiary bodies undertaking an assessment of the risks to ecologically related species posed by fishing for southern bluefin tuna.

CCSBT Strategic Plan			
Tasks in the CCSBT Strategic Plan	Priority	Time-frame	Action items in the ERSWG workplan
Assess how well the mitigation measures adopted by other area-based RFMOs mitigate the risks caused by fishing	Medium	2012	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Considered at ERSWG9 and to be a standing item on future ERSWG meetings.
Where necessary, identify and adopt additional mitigation measures to manage risk taking into account the coordination and harmonization with other RFMOs	Medium	2012	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To review information on mitigation measures as they become available. • Members are encouraged to conduct experiments to identify new mitigation measures or improve existing mitigation measures that may be effective in reducing bycatch of ERS. • Secretariat to update its paper on ERS mitigation measures of other tuna RFMOs in advance of future ERSWG meetings. • Members are encouraged to exchange information and collaborate between Members and with NGOs for effective and smooth implementation of mitigation measures.
Coordination and harmonization with area-based RFMOs, including on data reporting (see above)	Medium	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ERSWG Chair to follow up with the Coordinator of the Joint Bycatch Technical Working Group (JBTWG) on progressing the work of that group. • The Secretariat to provide JBTWG participants with any publicly available information, including papers submitted by Members to the ERSWG, that they seek. • Subject to endorsement by the Extended Commission, approach the other tuna RFMOs with an offer to lead global work on assessment of impacts of fishing for tunas on seabirds and porbeagle sharks.
Instruct the ERSWG to monitor predator and prey species which may affect the condition of the SBT stock and report its findings to the Commission	Medium	2013	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Members to provide relevant papers for consideration at the next ERSWG meeting. New Zealand will report on its stomach content work with updated data from 2006.
Action items not specified in Strategic Plan			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secretariat to finalise the revised ERS pamphlets for seabirds and sharks, including translating to Member languages. • Birdlife International, ACAP, Members and CNMs collaborate to develop protocols for the improved identification of seabirds