



Enhancing ESC-EC communication

Davies CR and Preece AL
CCSBT-ESC/2108/17

Prepared for the CCSBT Extended Scientific Committee for
the Twenty Sixth Meeting of the Scientific Committee

23-31st August 2021

Citation

Davies CR and Preece AL (2021). Enhancing ESC-EC communication. CCSBT Extended Scientific Committee for the Twenty Sixth Meeting of the Scientific Committee, August, 2021, online. CCSBT-ESC/2108/17.

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Acknowledgments: This work was funded by AFMA and CSIRO

1 Abstract

Regular consultation and effective communication are key elements of the Management Strategy Evaluation process and the implementation phase of a Management Procedure (MP). Suggestions for potential improvements in future ESC-EC and stakeholder communication include adding a non-technical summary of the MP and meta-rules to a new page on the CCSBT website, development of factsheets, with similar information to the webpage, that could be used in a variety of forums and use of the SFMWG for the first review of the MP scheduled for 2025.

2 Introduction

Regular consultation and effective communication are key elements of the Management Strategy Evaluation (MSE) process and the implementation phase of a management procedure (MP). The Extended Scientific Committee (ESC) of the Commission for the Conservation of Southern Bluefin Tuna (CCSBT), and the Extended Commission (EC) of the CCSBT have used member scientists, external advisory panel briefings (e.g. seminars given by Hilborn and Parma prior to adoption of the Bali procedure), circulars with information for and seeking advice from the EC, and meetings of the Strategy and Fisheries Management Working Group (SFMWG) to address this need.

Several of these options were scheduled for the most recent MP development process, however, communication from the ESC to EC has mainly relied on the ESC reports, working papers and member scientists briefing their Commissioners. This may have led to the need expressed by the EC for improved communication between the ESC and EC. Our focus is on suggestions to improve this science-policy communication in future. We also provide, for completeness, the background and information on the specific question in relation to the expectation of a TAC increase in 2021.

3 ESC – EC MSE communication workplan

The MSE workplan for development of a new MP included consultation steps, as these are recognised as important aspects of the MSE process. The original workplan agreed in 2017, included the SFMWG in 2018, a 1-day informal consultation with stakeholders in September 2019 that was specifically for stakeholders to review advice on the final candidate MPs being considered at the ESC that year, and a contingency plan for further consultation if needed in June 2020 (Anon 2017 OMMP report). Table 1 provides a summary of the consultation process between the EC, ESC and OMMP Technical group, for the process of developing, testing and selecting a new MP to replace the Bali MP.

Table 5. Slightly modified table of work plan from SFMWG report.

2018		
March	SFMWG5	Initial discussions of rebuilding goals and MP features
June	OMMP9	First presentation of candidate MPs (CMPs) evaluated using 2017 OMs.
September	ESC + 1 day informal OMMP	Evaluation of refined CMPs.
October	EC	Results on CMP performance and trade-offs presented to EC. Consultation with stakeholders. Commission decides or amends broad recovery objectives and longer term performance based on advice from the ESC (and SFMWG).
2019		
June/July	OMMP10	Recondition the OM and review initial updated versions of CMPs to develop a limited set to put forward to the ESC. The week of June 17-21 st .
September	ESC + 1 day informal OMMP	Review and advice on set of CMPs and a session for interaction with stakeholders.
October	EC	Aim to select and adopt MP .
2020		
June	Special ESC/EC meeting	Contingency placeholder in case more time is needed to complete evaluation
September	ESC	Implementation of adopted MP to provide TAC advice for 2021 (i.e., no standard 1-year lag) (note, this MP implementation will include the 2020 data exchange). Updated assessments including projections using adopted MP
October	EC	Agrees TAC for 2021-2023.

Table 1 The MP development workplan. Source: Table 5 of the Report of the Ninth Operating Model and Management Procedure Technical Meeting, 18 - 22 June 2018, Seattle, USA

Only the first of the scheduled meetings took place. In 2018, CCSBT Commissioners and ESC scientists worked at the SFMWG meeting to agree on many aspects of the development of a new MP. The SFMWG is a valuable mechanism for enhanced communication between the ESC and EC as it provides a slightly less formal forum to actively discuss technical issues and to improve interpretations and understanding by both scientists and managers.

The 2018 SFMWG agreed on key settings for the MP and desirable properties and performance measures. For example, the SFMWG report noted that: *“In relation to catch performance measures, the meeting agreed that smoothness in catch (low average annual variation in catch) and avoidance of large TAC decreases after increases were of particular importance” (SWMWG report 2018, para 15)*. This was a primary factor in the choice of the selected MP from the final set of candidate MPs at the ESC in 2019. The chosen MP was conservative in TAC increases in the first year of implementation and, therefore, had the lowest risk of TAC decreases in subsequent years, relative to the other final candidate MPs. ESC 2019 noted that: *“At OMMP10, procedure RH12 had initial increases in TAC followed by a drop (high P(2up/1down)), as described in Circular #2019/045*

sent to the EC requesting feedback on preferences. That problem was subsequently fixed in RH13 and P(2up/1down) for RH13 is now lowest of the CMPs for the reference set (base18)."

The planned 1-day stakeholder meeting prior to the ESC in 2019 was not considered necessary at the time. The 2019 ESC documented the expected range of TAC results from the MP (Figures 1, 2 and 3 in Anon 2019), based on the full set of alternative possible future scenarios that the 2019 operating models represent.

The EC adopted the MP in 2019, and no contingency meeting was considered necessary in 2020. The TAC calculation in 2020, was based solely on the MP input data (i.e. gene-tagging, CPUE, CKMR series) available in 2020 (the final set of data input values were unknown in 2019 when the MP was adopted) and fell within the range of values used during the testing phase. The stock assessment results had no impact or input to the MP TAC recommendation.

In retrospect, it may have been useful to convene a "contingency meeting" in mid 2020, after the OMMP and prior to the ESC to provide a detailed briefing on the final data input data set (as reviewed at OMMP11) and the preliminary results of the run of the MP. However, given the existing meeting schedule and the need to complete both the stock assessment and MP implementation (and associated documentation) in the same year, this was not possible. Instead, the ESC relied on members to undertake their own stakeholder consultations. The additional challenge of COVID-19 in 2020 and remote meetings format exacerbated communication difficulties.

Separating TAC setting and stock assessment activities, by off-setting them in time, has served the CCSBT well through the life of the implementation of the Bali Procedure. Doing so clearly separates the functions of the two activities (TAC setting with the MP and assessing the status of the stock and progress with rebuilding with the stock assessment), reduces the time pressure on those involved in both activities, has provided valuable time for the ESC to improve the stock assessment and review outputs of the scientific research plan (SRP), and provides more time for technical briefing and engagement with stakeholders. The requirement for a TAC recommendation by 2020 did not allow for this separation for the first TAC decision using the Cape Town procedure (CTP).

The implementation schedule for the CTP results in the stock assessment and TAC setting years being offset from 2022, when the second TAC decision using the CTP is required. This should provide greater time for improving communication between the EC and ESC and among members. We outline some suggestions for consideration by the ESC in the next section.

4 Future communication

Forms of communication that the ESC and EC could consider in future include:

- Adding both plain language and technical information on the MP, stock assessment and meta-rules to the CCSBT website.
- Developing short ‘fact sheets’ based on the non-technical summary of the MP and description of meta-rules (attachment 8 of Anon 2020), which outline the role of the MP, stock assessment and review processes in the management and monitoring of the SBT fishery and schedule for implementation, for use in a variety of forums.
- Reconvening the SFMWG as a mechanism for active engagement between the ESC and EC on the implementation and review of MP performance.

A potential opportunity for a future SFMWG meeting, to ensure that there is sufficient communication on the details of the MP and the results that have occurred, may be at the time of the review of the performance of the MP which is scheduled for 2025.

Documentation on the MP was produced for the 2020 ESC and is available as attachment 8 to the 2020 ESC report and as a link on the CCSBT website. The documentation of the review process in the meta-rules and the non-technical explanation of the MP are the key pieces that should provide Commissioners and other stakeholders with information for understanding the implementation of the MP.

A brief version of these documents could be made more readily available by adding a new page, specifically for these, to the CCSBT website. In addition, these documents could be used as a basis for the ESC to collectively develop communication materials (e.g. factsheets in appropriate formats and language) that may be helpful in a variety of forums. These documents could include a description of the selected MP, the input data, the expected behaviour and performance of the MP and the operation of the MP in the ESC and EC. Explanation of the meta-rules and review mechanisms in place is also important as these (meta-rules) specify the role of the stock assessment and rationale of adopting a fully specified MP as a central part of the CCSBT rebuilding program.

5 Expectation of a TAC increase in 2021 using the new Cape Town Procedure.

The unfulfilled expectation of an increase in TAC was one of the drivers of the request for improved communication from the EC.

The following factors may have contributed to the expectation of a TAC increase for the 2020-2022 TAC block from the first decision using new CTP:

1. Steady rebuilding of the spawning stock from a (historically) low level with fishing mortality below F_{MSY} over the past decade, as evident from the two most recent stock assessments (Anon 2020).
2. A pattern of consecutive TAC increases under the Bali Procedure from a historically low global TAC.
3. Positive recent trends in the longline CPUE index used in the stock assessment and tuning of the MP.
4. The 2020 stock assessment indicating that the interim rebuilding objective (0.20 SSB_0) is close to being achieved.
5. The change in MPs from one designed to rebuild to 0.2 SSB_0 (Bali Procedure) to one designed to rebuild AND stabilise at 0.30 TRO (CTP), with a high priority placed on catch stability and low probability of TAC decreases (following increases).
6. Undertaking a full stock assessment in the same year as calculating the TAC recommendation using the MP.

The first five factors contributed to an optimistic perception of the state of the stock, relative to the recent past, and it is understandable why some parties may have expected that this would translate into a TAC increase, particularly given the positive trend in the CPUE index. However, as explained by the ESC Chair, in response to questions at the EC:

“The CTP had not suggested a TAC increase because the main inputs to the MP, Gene Tagging (GT), Close Kin Mark Recapture (CKMR), and catch per unit effort (CPUE) were within the ranges defined for rebuilding and were not above the threshold values where the MP would suggest a TAC increase. The 2017 and 2018 GT estimates were half of the 2016 estimate but the 2016 estimate was very high, CPUE was good but in the steady range, CKMR was slightly below the rebuild target. The ESC Chair pointed out that the rebuild target of the CTP was different to that of the Bali Procedure.”

6 Conclusion

The ESC and EC have used a variety of mechanisms for engagement and communication during the MSE and implementation of the new CTP.

Future improvements to ESC-EC communication could occur through:

- Adding a specific page to the CCSBT website for a non-technical summary of the MP and meta-rules which outlines the role and timing of the MP, stock assessment and review processes.
- Developing short 'fact sheets' based on the non-technical summary of the MP and description of meta-rules (attachment 8 of Anon 2020).
- Actively engaging the EC in the review of the Terms of Reference for the MP review and convening the SFMWG for the first review of the MP, which is currently scheduled for 2025.

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Contact us

1300 363 400
+61 3 9545 2176
csiroenquiries@csiro.au
www.csiro.au

For further information

Oceans and Atmosphere
Campbell Davies
+61 3 6232 5222
campbell.davies@csiro.au