



CCSBT-EC/1910/08

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

(1) Purpose

To consider the Report of the Thirteenth Meeting of the Ecologically Related Species Working Group (ERSWG 13).

The Chair of the ERSWG will provide a presentation to the Extended Commission (EC) containing the recommendations and advice from ERSWG 13.

This paper provides a summary of the recommendations, advice and other matters from the ERSWG 13 meeting.

(2) Report of ERSWG 13

The ERSWG met from 28-31 May 2019. The full report of the ERSWG 13 meeting is provided to CCSBT 26 as CCSBT-EC/1910/Rep04. A summary of the recommendations and advice from the ERSWG 13 meeting is provided below.

Recommendations to the Extended Commission from ERSWG 13

The ERSWG recommended that the EC adopt:

1. The revised ERSWG Data Exchange template shown at Attachment 4 of the ERSWG 13 Report. The changes include:
 - Increasing the spatial and temporal resolution of the data from CCSBT Statistical Area and year to 5-degree resolution and quarter;
 - Removing the calculated fields of capture rate, mortality rate and estimated total number of mortalities as the Secretariat can perform these calculations;
 - Remove the “Captures (number)” field as this can be calculated from the “Fate (numbers) fields;
 - Adding “Human Observer/EM” column to specify the data source¹; and
 - Adding three columns under “Proportion of observed effort with specific mitigation measures” so that Members can specify the proportion of single measures used.

¹ The ERSWG recognised that there was no agreement that EM replace the requirement for 10% observer coverage, and that the proposed inclusion of the option to report on EM results was not intended to imply any such agreement but only to clarify the source of any data that were reported.

2. The revised ERSWG Annual Report template shown at Attachment 5 of the ERSWG 13 Report. The changes include:
 - Changes to reflect changes to the EDE template; and
 - The % observer coverage column would be retained for ease of reference.
3. The overall objective and five specific objectives of the CCSBT Multi-year Seabird Strategy shown at Attachment 7 of the ERSWG 13 Report.
4. The revised “*Resolution to Align CCSBT’s Ecologically Related Species measures with those of other tuna RFMOs*” as provided in paper CCSBT-ERS/1905/08 (Rev.1). This Resolution was modified to reflect changes to ERS measures of IOTC, WCPFC and ICCAT in accordance with paragraph 5 of the Resolution.

Advice to the Extended Commission from ERSWG 13

The ERSWG provided the following advice to the EC:

5. The ERSWG has agreed on the method for evaluating risk to seabirds from longline fishing for SBT (CCSBT-ERS/1905/17). This risk assessment, applied to data from 2016, found that for nine of the 25 albatross and petrel species the estimated annual incidental bycatch in surface longline fisheries exceeded the population productivity.
6. The data for 2017 provided to the ERSWG shows a lower total numbers of reported seabird mortalities but the ERSWG noted that this was most likely to have resulted from inadequate and unrepresentative sampling and not from improved mitigation. Therefore 2017 data should be treated with caution. 2018 data may require the same caution to be applied.
7. The ERSWG noted the potential for EM to improve the reporting of the number of ERS interactions, but that EM may not be applicable to all fisheries targeting SBT at present.
8. The ERSWG did not seek to amend its previous advice that the level of interaction between seabirds and SBT fisheries is still a significant level of concern.
9. The ERSWG agreed that the high-risk areas analysis should be incorporated into the southern hemisphere risk assessment analysis. The ERSWG has tabulated the options for potential high-risk areas and their trade-offs in Attachment 6 of the ERSWG 13 Report.
10. The ERSWG noted that ACAP has confirmed that the combined use of weighted branch lines, bird scaring lines and night setting remains the best practice approach to mitigate seabird bycatch in pelagic longline fisheries. In addition, ACAP has since 2016 also endorsed the inclusion of a hook-shielding device (meeting prescribed performance requirements) as a standalone measure to replace the three combined recommended measures.
11. That the ERSWG will intersessionally develop a draft list of strategic actions under each of the specific objectives of the Multi-year Seabird Strategy.

12. That data provided by Members indicated that 10 of the 12 shark species considered CCSBT relevant by CMS Sharks are present in the SBT fishery and additional species could also be considered to be CCSBT relevant. The three mostly commonly caught species (blue shark, porbeagle and shortfin mako) are already required to be reported as part of the EDE. There was no agreement to expand the list of shark species in the EDE reporting template.
13. The ERSWG examined the Southern hemisphere porbeagle shark status assessment (undertaken under the Common Oceans (ABNJ) Tuna Project) provided at paper CCSBT-ERS/1905/10). The ERSWG considered that the assessment represents the best available science on the status of the stock. For all assessment areas combined, and over all years and Maximum Impact Sustainability Thresholds (MIST) assessed, there was at most an 8% probability that fishing mortality is exceeding the MIST. The MIST is a kind of limit reference point which indicates a population's ability to withstand fishing pressure. The greatest contributions to fishing mortality were made by the pelagic longline fisheries, with the largest contribution (70-90%) from fleets targeting southern bluefin tuna or a mixture of southern bluefin and albacore tuna.
14. The ERSWG confirmed its previously agreed advice for all shark species caught in SBT fisheries, that there were currently no specific concerns about shark bycatch that warranted additional mitigation requirements.

Other matters

Some other matters were considered by ERSWG 13, that were not included in its formal recommendations and advice from the ERSWG but are nonetheless worth noting. These included:

15. Excellent intersessional progress had been made with the work program from ERSWG 12, with most work program items having been completed for ERSWG 13. The ERSWG has proposed a work program for intersessional work to be conducted between ERSWG 13 and ERSWG 14. The work program assumes a time period of approximately two years between the meetings.
16. At the 2018 meeting of the Compliance Committee (CC), HSI and BirdLife International proposed an amendment to the CC/EC reporting template to improve the information provided in relation to bycatch mitigation measures. The ERSWG did not recommend including the proposed amendment for a number of reasons including: the amendment did not include all mitigation measures (in particular hook pods and the use of three measures); one of the two proposed tables could be generated by the Secretariat using data already provided in the ERS Data Exchange Process; and not all Members collected the necessary hook by hook data to populate the other proposed table.
17. The Secretariat was requested to provide the report of ERSWG 13 to the other tuna RFMOs once the report is made public.
18. There was in-principle support for the joint BirdLife/CCSBT Secretariat proposal “*to enhance the implementation of ERS measures through outreach/education and to verify compliance with measures*” that was requested by CC 13. However, it was noted that further refinement of the proposal and discussion with Members was required.

Timing of the next ERSWG meeting

CCSBT 25 agreed to “*convene the ERSWG on an ad hoc basis, to address specific issues identified by the EC*”. Consequently, the ERSWG did not attempt to suggest the year when the ERSWG should next meet. However, the ERSWG considered that February/March was the best time of year to hold an ERSWG meeting due to commitments with other CCSBT and RFMO meetings later in the year. It was also noted that any time in a year after May would not be possible for some Members.