

# Discussion of Session 4

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## Chaired by Barry Evans

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Following the presentation by *Katrina Maguire*, John Glaister (NSW Fisheries) asked for a clarification of the terms "ecosystem integrity" and "ecosystem approach" as an approach to management.

Katrina Maguire replied that it was something that was developing as they went along. It was perhaps best described as a step by step approach – gathering information at different levels. The work done by Environment Australia on the Interim Marine and Coastal Regionalisation (IMCRA) was an example. The Government had also stated they intended to develop regional plans for all large marine ecosystems around Australia, of which there were five or six. The first objective would be south east Australia and the objective would be to get communication going between the sectors in each ecosystem and improve management that way. The regional plans would be binding on any sector in that system.

An ecosystem approach had been used in the sub-Antarctic fishery which had consulted many non-fishing interests, for example, Tasmanian Parks and Wildlife, World Wildlife Fund for Nature. In terms of management it

meant collecting information on ecologically related species, collecting baseline information on seals and seabirds and examining predator-prey relationships.

Malcolm Haddon (AMC) noted that to list a key threatening process was a relatively inexpensive process but to demonstrate that there was an actual threat or risk was both more difficult and expensive. He believed that management could get bogged down on this issue. He asked Katrina to comment on who had the burden of proof.

Katrina Maguire agreed that anyone could nominate a species or process under the Act. The process that Environment Australia had established was a committee to consider nominations which could co-opt a range of experts to assist with the process. They had also established a register for the purpose. Criteria that the committee rely on are those of the IUCN which are currently being reviewed.

Amongst the issues that needed to be addressed was the threat abatement plan. For example, with the recently nominated southern bluefin tuna, one of AFMA's positions has been that the

development of a threat abatement plan would not significantly add to the conservation of the species. It was certainly a bone of contention for industry that it was so easy to nominate under the Act and that it took such a long time to put a counter submission together.

Francis McKalis (Parliamentary Research Service) said that there was new legislation before parliament to overhaul the Endangered Species Act and to replace it with an Environment Protection and Conservation Bill which had a major section on the management of Commonwealth fisheries. She asked for a comment on how the new legislation would relate to the existing Fisheries Management Act.

Katrina Maguire replied that the Gunn's decision saw AFMA enter an agreement with EPA to have assessments based on management plans rather than designating the granting of each licence or permit as an environmentally significant decision. For the last few years, therefore, they had been operating under an arrangement that was now being set out as legislation.

Ian Poiner (CSIRO Marine Research) noted that the policy was addressing three things: i) Stuff that lands on the desk. ii) Trophic interactions. iii) Unretained bycatch and physical impacts. He asked what the interaction between action plans and policy was in terms of annual review and performance decisions.

Katrina Maguire replied that the policy stated that an annual review should occur alongside the review of the five-year strategic plan, including public comment.

Ian Poiner then asked what would be done.

Katrina Maguire responded that action plans had performance measures built into them with

targets that had to be achieved. The review would assess this and they expected that the research associated with action plans would lead to new actions that would be put into future plans.

Following the presentation by *Duncan Leadbitter*, Ian Poiner pointed out that, in the NPF, extension had not worked very well because of the nature of the fishery. Vessels were victualled at sea and did not return to base for a long period of time. Access to these vessels in terms of extension was very difficult. He asked how this might be overcome.

Duncan Leadbitter said that they recognised this but did not have any ready solutions to the problem. He noted that this was an area of potential research. He also felt that looking at the agricultural literature might give ideas as to how to deliver such services.

Ian Poiner said that another issue that was emerging, particularly in places like the NPF, was the difference between owners and operators. In dealing with the peak industry body one was dealing with company owners not skippers. It would be fair to say that there was a gap between what was decided at a peak industry body like a MAC and what was handed down to those on the ground. He asked if this was common in other fisheries and how extension should respond to this difference between power base and implementation.

Duncan Leadbitter replied that fishing associations ranged in size and in terms of organisational structure from grass root management to corporate activities. A lack of funding would make it impossible to cover everything. There was no need in some fisheries where there was already some service provided. In terms of assigning how this evolved over time they would be looking for feedback as part of their learning process.

Malcolm Haddon (AMC) commented that at a recent TasFRAB meeting FRDC made it clear that proposals that did not include explicit statements on how results would be extended to industry would be at a disadvantage.

Duncan Leadbitter said he was aware of this. The aim was to have something that continues after the research – not necessarily to ask scientists to do the extension.

Ian Smith (Queensland Fisheries Management Authority) noted that an important part of the extension work that Julie Robins' project was doing was to have technical staff who had a fishing background. This provided a greater credibility in an industry that had such a strong culture.

Duncan Leadbitter said that a lot of their feedback from the ASIC agreed with this. They had done the same in NSW on a project looking at waste on beaches.

Murray Johns (DPIE) stated that he applauded what Duncan had done with Ocean Watch and in finding support for this sort of work. He said that in 1996 when the United States banned imports from fleets that did not have BRDs, Canberra had put in a submission making the case for exemption based on a strong collaboration between research, industry and government. They had argued that they were handling the problem well without mandating the use of BRDs. In fact they had done exactly the same thing in 1992. What this showed was that they were hiding behind research and that little was being adopted. They were literally treading water. Murray believed that things had changed over the last few years and what Ocean Watch was doing was taking a bottom-up approach, using industry and getting the extension done.

Elkana Ngwenya (AMC) asked whether any attempts had been made to collect data during the extension work, particularly socio-economic data.

Duncan replied that the detail was still being resolved and that in his opinion it should not involve research. Rather it should work with researchers on any aspect including socio-economics.