

3. Issues relating to physical impacts of trawls going across the bottom, unobserved mortality and the related issue of responding to IMCRA (identifying a national system of representative marine protected areas).

In conclusion, the group noted that the SEF, apart from the issue of physical impacts, had very different problems. Because it is so fundamentally different to prawn fisheries, the approaches outlined would be of limited value.

Case study 2: Developing a threat abatement plan for the incidental catch (or bycatch) of seabirds during oceanic longline fishing operations – Andrew McNee (facilitator)

This case study concerned the threat abatement plan (TAP) for the incidental catch of seabirds by oceanic longline fisheries. Clearly the subject was unfamiliar territory for most of the participants. The group was given a presentation covering background material which emphasised the following:

- the TAP was a published document;
- there was a statutory framework; and
- there was a target of 0.05 birds per 1,000 hooks.

Discussion proceeded immediately to the target value. The group identified a variety of issues with respect to the TAP and subsequently discussed in more detail:

- the role of science in target setting at two levels (technically-oriented targets; in contrast to versus more general targets that fulfil some social agenda); and
- industry involvement.

Outcomes of the discussions

Some participants were uncomfortable with the target that is in the TAP and considered that it did not have the characteristics they considered

necessary or desirable. The group considered what the desirable characteristics for targets might be against the key issue – Why does one have targets?

There seemed to be two approaches to target setting, associated with ‘specific’ versus ‘general’ targets:

- seeking a conservation type objective that was a specific objective relating to a given species; and
- a more general target to fulfill some social desire to see something done (under this scenario a technical specificity was absent).

Depending on which type of target is adopted, there were implications for progressing the plan. It was suggested that the albatross TAP tended towards the second option. It was even possible that the TAP target may be achieved but that albatrosses may still become extinct.

Discussions then moved to the role of science at these two levels, namely specific versus general targets. If the TAP contained a ‘specific’ target that dealt with the conservation of albatrosses, science could provide a number of things:

- measurement of the risk or uncertainty of achieving particular aims;
- what is unknowable (the broad expectation ‘out there’ is that anything can be answered if enough time and expertise is thrown at it); and
- the stock assessment approach. This captures whole suite of particular actions and the group noted that, outside fisheries, this approach was probably not well understood. In conservation science circles there was probably not a strong understanding of this process. It delivers a capacity for technical status assessments; impacts of bycatch on species of interest; evaluation of mitigation in terms of effectiveness of devices and the

contribution this information can make to a particular issue.

For more 'general' targets, for example, if people want to see a reduction in the catches of albatross or whatever, there is a slightly different role for science. In this case, science could:

- tell you generally about the levels of bycatch that might be associated with achieving that particular target;
- determine what is achievable; and
- contribute to evaluation of devices and evaluation of trends to determine whether targets were being achieved or not.

Discussion of the role for industry in the process identified several key areas in which industry needed to collaborate:

- setting of targets and how the whole process of achieving those targets would work;
- development of mitigation devices and strategies for implementing mitigation;
- implementation of mitigation devices and strategies; and
- monitoring and evaluating whether these devices and strategies had been successful.

In conclusion it was argued that to some extent, these things might not have been particularly well enacted in the case of the TAP for seabirds. An important point was raised concerning the sort of language used with respect to industry involvement – 'participation' of industry versus 'consultation' with industry. Participation implied getting industry more closely involved.

Questions and comments

Ilona Stobutzki (CSIRO) asked what would happen if the target or the TAP was not achieved.

Andrew McNee explained that the implication was that the plan would 'trip' itself into a new

plan and that it would need to be tougher. It had been discussed during development of the current TAP that there may need to be some kind of decision framework ahead of time. However, for a variety of reasons, the people involved with the process were not particularly keen to see this.