

Chair's Introduction

Nick Rayns

Fisheries Division

Northern Territory Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries

PO Box 990, Darwin NT 0801

Before considering the management implications of fish movement and migration I would like to provide my view of the role of a fisheries manager. This is needed to assist in understanding the management response to fish movement and migration issues.

The role of a fisheries manager is to:

1. Be aware of all the information on a fishery;
2. Engage those who have an interest in the resource and its habitat in the fisheries management process;
3. Negotiate outcomes that are consistent with sustainable use and are accepted by key stakeholders.

A seemingly simple enough set of tasks!

So why is fish movement and migration important to fisheries managers?

First, it influences who is involved in the management process and is essentially a matter of scale, i.e. local, interState or international. Examples of whitebait in Tasmania, Australian salmon, and central and western Pacific tuna management will be given by speakers to demonstrate this.

Second, it affects what the dominant influences will be on decision making; biological, social, economic or political. International fisheries management is typically dominated by political issues, with science often playing a minor role.

Third, it can drive the option(s) for management, i.e. whether to pursue input or output controls. The international Southern Bluefin Tuna (SBT) convention only permits a Total Allowable Catch (TAC) approach.

So what issues do fish movement and migration present to fisheries managers?

At a local level, the primary issue is competition with other fishery, but more importantly non-fishery, users. Factors such as coastal development and water use (through storage, diversion and pollution) all impact on fishery resources. These are matters generally managed at a State or local government level.

At an interState level, in most cases the main issues are fishery-related. Each State may have differing priorities and policies for a fishery. At least I suppose this shows there is often more than one good answer to a fisheries problem! It also can lead to conflict; size restrictions in particular are an issue - for example rock lobster in South Australia and Victoria, and flathead in Victoria, Tasmania and New South Wales.

Internationally, the issues are again policy-related, but there are the complicating factors of culture and international politics. In regard to SBT, Australia comes from a position of resource conservation and Japan from food security. Australia is sometimes seen as arrogant and inconsiderate by Japan, whilst Japan is seen by Australia as denying the obvious truths about SBT sustainability. Clearly there is a need for understanding that each other's value systems are also important.

The seven speakers in this session will cover finfish and crustaceans, freshwater and marine environments, international through to local issues. I believe they provide a flavour of the diversity of issues created by the movement and migration of fish for managers.