



CONSEIL CONSULTATIF POUR
LES EAUX OCCIDENTALES
SEPTENTRIONALES

NORTH WESTERN
WATERS
ADVISORY COUNCIL

CONSEJO CONSULTIVO PARA
LAS AGUAS
NOROCCIDENTALES

Draft MINUTES

Focus Group Landing Obligation

Monday 06 February 2023, 10:00 – 12:00 CET

1. Welcome and introductions

The Chair, Emiel Brouckaert, welcomed all participants to the meeting. No apologies were received in advance of the meeting and the agenda was adopted as drafted.

Action points from the last meeting (29 November 2022) included:

1	The tool needs to be updated with the correct discard rate for each stock following ICES advice.
	The 2022 choke advice was delivered without the update, as updating the discard rate is a time-consuming exercise and the advice needed to be issued urgently. The discard rate will be updated for future use.
2	Include extracts from the new choke tool on those stocks categorised as “high risk” as annex to the choke advice.
	Done, advice sent to COM on 9 December.
3	Secretariat to ask MS and DG MARE about the preparatory process and work planned for the next Discard Plan.
	To be discussed under item 3 on the agenda.
4	Secretariat to ask MS and DG MARE to share details on the type of information requested by STECF to support proposed exemptions
	To be discussed under item 3 on the agenda.

2. Draft response to consultation on Western Waters MAP

The Secretariat shared on screen the draft response to the survey on the Western Waters Multiannual Plan (WW MAP), which was reviewed by participants during the meeting. Comments received were noted directly on the draft document.

Participants agreed that the NWWAC should both reply to the online survey and send an official response to Director Donatella's letter regarding this consultation. This letter would also allow to include an introductory paragraph reflecting on overarching topic in relation to MAPs implementation.

ACTION: The Secretariat will recirculate the updated draft to the Focus Group for review by 13 February.

Following review by the FG, the draft will be sent to the Horizontal Working Group and then to the Executive Committee according to the AC approval procedure. Given the high complexity of the task and the tight deadline, the use of the fast-track procedure can be considered.

The Secretariat informed participants that other ACs (PelAC and NSAC) were considering asking for an extension of the consultation deadline. In case this is brought forward, the NWWAC should support this request.

The Chair also mentioned that the topic was discussed at the NWW Member States Technical Group meeting a few days before but it remains unclear how MS will address this consultation.

3. Next Joint Recommendation on post 2023 Discard Plan

Referring again to the last NWW MS TG meeting, the Chair reported that the Commission is looking at the level of uptake of the exemptions to the landing obligation in place. Therefore, in addition to information supporting the use of exemptions, the MS will also have to provide catch data on the exempted stocks. The deadline for the MS remains the same, despite the more extensive work to be done to prepare their joint recommendation. The Chair suggested that the NWWAC should provide advice and point out that all existing exemptions are still needed. In this regard, since the Discard Plan for 2023 was modified, the AC should look at whether elements that were removed should be reintroduced or if new exemptions should be added. A lot of information is already available in the choke advice submitted in December 2022. He then mentioned the choke tool and pointed out that it should be used in the preparation of this advice.

ACTION: Secretariat to prepare draft advice on JR for review by the Focus Group and to be then submitted to Geographical Working Groups for discussion at meetings in Santiago.

Referring to the choke tool, Mo Mathies explained that the Secretariat had reached out to Michael Keatinge recently. She asked whether it would be interesting to ask him if he could do an analysis in the choke tool on the usefulness of each exemption. If this exemption was gone, what would happen?

The Chair agreed with this idea and added that the tool should also be updated with recent 2023 figures, TACs and discard rates, to the extent these are available. The impact of Brexit should also be considered as new chokes could raise.

Sean O'Donoghue pointed out that a TAC and quotas have been established again for spurdog, whose survivability is very high. Spurdog usually congregates meaning catches can be quite high. This issue needs to be tackled urgently.

The Chair recalled that the related footnote in the TAC and quota regulation includes the obligation to put back alive at sea any species caught over 1 meter. O'Donoghue replied that there is still high

survivability for individuals under 1 meter as well. He proposed to include spurdog in the “what if” exercise with the choke tool. If there’s no high survivability exemption, what happens in terms of choke for spurdog?

John Lynch agreed with O’Donoghue and added that spurdog needs to be landed but it cannot be sold for human consumption. He also recalled that it was previously included in the protected species list. The footnote mentions that additional measures will come in later and this could create issues. On the exemptions to the landing obligation, it is important to state that removing those already in place won’t help the implementation of the landing obligation, it will actually make it more difficult. *“We would have always promoted to have certain exemptions to the landing obligation and in reality we don’t have enough of them to make it effective.”*

The Chair agreed that the landing obligation would be even less workable if it didn't have the exemption and that’s a statement the AC will certainly repeat in the advice on the joint recommendations. On the spur dog, he pointed out that, while this will be mentioned in the advice on the joint recommendation, it should mainly be addressed through a different piece of advice as the current management for 2023 already needs to be looked at.

Mathies pointed out that this stock was on the brink of the species list, as John said, and it's been taken off. However, the review of the criteria for adding or removing a species onto this list had been identified as a discussion point for the upcoming skates and rays workshop in Brussels the next Thursday. However, it was agreed to remove it from the agenda as it was felt that this is at a much higher political level with the UK already than any discussion the AC could actually influence. It was felt that it would be much better taking it out of the discussion and separating it out as a separate advice. It should because it is very urgent to understand why this happened because it seems to be a really political agreement, not a practical agreement. This is even something that could go into the next Inter-AC Brexit Forum asking why and how this happened.

ACTION: Put forward suggestion to HWG and ExCom to prepare a separate advice on spur dog referring to the fishery management in 2023.

4. Updates and future use of choke tool

The Chair summarized the items already discussed including:

- The “what if” exercise on exemptions
- Update with new data on TAC & quota and discards to the extent possible

Mathies pointed out that Keatinge has been invited to attend the March meetings and present on the tool updates, specifically on what the tool can achieve regarding the inclusion of the socioeconomic elements.

The Chair agreed that it is fundamental to have Keatinge as the tool expert to use the tool at its full potential. Therefore, his guidance is much appreciated.

5. Action points and closure of the meeting

The Chair thanked all the participants for their contribution and summarized the action points:

1	The Secretariat will recirculate the updated draft to the Focus Group for review by 13 February.
2	Secretariat to prepare draft advice on JR for review by the Focus Group and to be then submitted to Geographical Working Groups for discussion at meetings in Santiago.
3	Put forward suggestion to HWG and ExCom to prepare a separate advice on spur dog referring to the fishery management in 2023.

6. Participants

Members	
Alexandra Philippe	EBCD
Anais Mourtada	CNPMEM
Aodh O'Donnell	IFPO
Arthur Yon	FROM Nord
Edward Farrell	KFO
Emiel Brouckaert	Rederscentrale
Franck Le Barzic	Cobrenord
Irene Prieto	ARVI
John Lynch	ISEFPO
Secretariat	
Matilde Vallerani	
Mo Mathies	