

DRAFT Minutes

Joint NWWAC/NSAC Focus Group Skates & Rays

Virtual meeting via Teams

01 September 2022

Participants

Merel Barbosa	NSAC Secretariat
Franck Le Barzic	COBRENORD
Helene Deruwe	Vlaamse overheid
Erik Lindebo	DG MARE
John Lynch	Irish South & East FPO
Mo Mathies	NWWAC Secretariat
Geert Meun	VisNed
Tim Plevots	ILVO
Solène Prévalet	FROM Nord
Amerik Schuitemaker	Nederlandse Vissersbond
Erik Tichelaar	Dutch administration
Matilde Vallerani	NWWAC Secretariat
Damian Villagra	ILVO
Jasmine Vlietinck	Rederscentrale
Johnny Woodlock	Irish Seal Sanctuary

1. Welcome and introductions

The Chair welcomed all participants. Apologies were received ahead of the meeting from Pauline Delalain (CNPMM) who nominated Franck Le Barzic for participation in her absence, and from Paddy Walker (Dutch Elasmobranch Society).

The agenda was approved as drafted. Action points from the last meeting (21 January 2022) included:

- 1 Secretariat to follow the developments of the STECF EWG.
- 2 Solene to regularly report updates on the work of the FIP to the Focus Group at every FG meeting; there will be no need to translate FIP meetings minutes.
- 3 Secretariat to include links to all the identification guides received from members on the NWWAC website, under the page "Useful links".

All are ongoing for discussions today.

Members approved the minutes from the last meeting.

2. STECF EWG 26-30 September - update

The Chair explained that the Focus Group had been invited to send requests to become observers and thus join the online summary sessions at the end of each meeting.

Mo Mathies added that there has not been confirmation from the STECF Secretariat yet on who has been appointed to the EWG. Paddy Walker has applied to become an expert of the EWG. She then shared on screen the STECF 70th plenary report (PLEN-22-02) including a section on the “Preparation of EWG 22-08 – Skates and rays management” and asked participants for comments.

The Chair noted that the plenary report expresses the intention to consider the appropriateness of using single species sub-TACs as an alternative to the current SRX group TACs, an aspect that had been discussed previously in the FG. He added that the FG had also mentioned the possibility of having a minimum landing size, which is not included in STECF plenary report. This could be a point to raise during the observers sessions.

Mathies asked Erik Lindebo, DG MARE, when the EWG report would be published. He replied that the draft report should be ready in October and then finalised by the STECF plenary in November and published in early December. He added that working documents developed by the SCF with the UK and other preparatory work done on group TACs should be available at the beginning of next week. Lindebo will inform the ACs once this is available.

Franck Le Barzic referred to the EWG ToR 1, which aims at considering the current EU and UK approaches for calculating fishing opportunities for the skates and rays species falling under the SRX group TACs. He pointed out that TACs could be set in other ways, for example according to variation of % in the advice as weighed with the quantities landing of each stock, taking into account the biomass of the stock and assuming landings are proportional to the size of each stock. “*Will the STECF consider other approaches as well?*”, he asked.

Lindebo explained that ToR 1 is a comparison of those two approaches to analyse to what extent they are appropriate in the context of current skates and rays management. In addition, the experts will under ToR 2 be asked to consider alternatives to the way the current group TAC is conceived and used.

Tim Plevots asked the Chair to elaborate on his comment on minimum landing size. Lynch explained that the topic had been discussed several times in the FG, with presentations on relevant projects, and he was wondering if the STECF will consider this during the EWG. Plevots pointed out that ILVO has also been working on minimum landing size to ensure it is biologically feasible and economically sustainable in the long term. Mathies replied that the topic was addressed in the Sumaris and Raywatch projects and that she would send minutes from previous meetings to Plevots for his information.

Mathies added that it could be useful for the FG to discuss and prepare an AC position on the working documents to be shared by Lindebo, in preparation to the EWG. Alternatively, each observer can bring its own individual position at the summary sessions. According to Lindebo, both approaches are feasible and the Chair agreed to leave the choice to members once the documents are available.

ACTION: Mathies to distribute working documents once available. After review by members, Mathies will ask for interest in developing common position and organise a quick meeting if needed.

3. Harmonisation of ID guide for skates & rays – discussion on a potential request to be made to the COM from the ACs

Mathies explained that the letter requests specific support from the Commission regarding the harmonisation of skates and rays identification guides for fishers in EU waters. Currently multiple identification guides in various languages are available both online as well as in printed format, which can lead to confusion and potential misidentification of individuals. While an overview of guides has been made available on the NWWAC website, the FG would appreciate the assistance of the Commission on this task.

Lindebo confirmed that from his perspective this is a good initiative and the Commission would seriously consider it.

The Chair asked members to approve the letter.

ACTION: Members approved the letter. The NWWAC and NSAC Secretariats will now progress with their respective approval procedures.

4. Discussion on the organisation of a skates & rays workshop

- Review of 2017 format
- Draft Terms of Reference

Mathies explained the next steps in the organisation of the workshop. First, she will need to get in touch with MARE D3 regarding who should be responsible for organising this (the FG or the Commission). Then, she pointed out the importance of establishing the objectives and outputs of the workshop.

The Chair replied that it would be wise to wait for the EWG results before working on this. Mathies expressed her concerns regarding timing, as FG members wanted to have the workshop in January/February 2023.

Lindebo added that the observers debriefings sessions will give stakeholders an idea of the EWG direction. *“We will have a clear idea of the main outcomes of the EWG by mid October, and this should help defining the ToR of the workshop”*, he explained. He then raised the issue of possible UK attendance at the workshop. If it is going to be stakeholder led, it would make sense to include presentations on UK projects. He explained that at SCF the Commission made clear that the UK is welcome to participate and collaborate in the STECF EWG. However, the UK were reluctant to do so, as they could not participate in the finalisation of the report in the STECF plenary. However, it would be useful to have UK participation at an open stakeholder workshop.

Johnny Woodlock agreed that the Channel is a very important area for skates & rays management. It is vital to have all stakeholders involved to ensure the ecosystem approach can be implemented.

ACTION: A FG meeting should be planned at the end of October to discuss finalisation of workshop ToR after EGW information is available.

5. Update from the Thornback Ray FIP – Solène Prévalet

Presentation available here

Mathies pointed out that, with the end of the budget year approaching, the NWWAC has resources to provide translations of the FIP meetings minutes as well as of the Ifremer report, if members are interested. Length of documents and price of translations would need to be considered by the NWWAC Secretariat before proceeding.

Damian Villagra added that the Raywatch project report, which is still being prepared, could also be translated from Dutch into English. Tim Plevots added that the summaries of this report would be made available in English as part of the project work.

ACTION: Mathies will liaise with Prévalet and Villagra to discuss and organise the translation of these documents.

6. Request for consideration by Irish Seal Sanctuary

Woodlock explained that some countries are using subsea cables to block access of sharks in bathing areas, but these can have an impact on elasmobranchs in general, including skates and rays, potentially affecting spawning and reproduction. There should be data on this but it is not widely available. The FG could work on a request to the Commission to address this.

Amerik Schoutemaker replied that there is a Dutch project ongoing which aims at addressing this issue, among others. It is a monitoring and research project focusing on windfarms. He will share links and documents on the project that might be of interest.

Mathies added that a presentation on the project could be organised at the next meeting. ICES might also be working on the topic.

Links provided following the meeting:

WOZEP (Wind op Zee Ecologisch Programma) which freely translates to “Offshore windfarms ecological program”. The program funds research focusing on the ecological impact of offshore windfarms which includes electromagnetic fields (EMFs). [Wozep ecological programme - Noordzeeloket UK](#)

‘ElasmoPower’ [Sharks, rays and offshore power cables - Noordzeeloket/ ElasmoPower - WUR](#)

<https://www.seai.ie/technologies/ocean-energy/ocean-test-sites-in-ireland/foreshore-lease/Appendix-4-Impact-of-electric-and-magnetic-fields.pdf>

https://marine.gov.scot/datafiles/lot/inch_cape/Environmental%20Statement/Volume%20E%20-%20Appendices/Appendix%2013C%20-%20Electromagnetic%20Field%20Assessment.pdf

<https://archimer.ifremer.fr/doc/00617/72944/71974.pdf>

[https://infrastructure.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/wp-content/ipc/uploads/projects/EN010056/EN010056-000285-6.3.9%20\(2\)%20Volume%203%20Chapter%209%20Underwater%20Noise%20and%20Electromagnetic%20Fields%20Appendix%209.2.pdf](https://infrastructure.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/wp-content/ipc/uploads/projects/EN010056/EN010056-000285-6.3.9%20(2)%20Volume%203%20Chapter%209%20Underwater%20Noise%20and%20Electromagnetic%20Fields%20Appendix%209.2.pdf)

<https://www.noordzeeloket.nl/en/network/north-sea-consultation-0/mons-research-monitoring-programme/>

<https://www.noordzeeloket.nl/en/network/north-sea-consultation-0/documents-mons-programme/>

<https://www.noordzeeloket.nl/publish/pages/199265/mons-report-english-summary-north-sea-consultation-2021.pdf> (on page 5 there are some research questions on the role of electro-magnetic fields)

ACTION: The FG will examine the information available on the subsea cables impact on elasmobranchs and consider inviting representatives from ICES and the Mons project to present on their results.

7. Summary of actions agreed and decisions adopted by the Chair

1	Mathies to distribute working documents once available. After review by members, Mathies will ask for interest in developing common position and organise a quick meeting if needed.
2	Members approved the letter. The NWWAC and NSAC Secretariats will now progress with their respective approval procedures..
3	A FG meeting should be planned at the end of October to discuss finalisation of workshop ToR after EGW information is available.
4	Mathies will liaise with Prévalet and Villagra to discuss and organise the translation of these documents.
5	The FG will examine the information available on the subsea cables impact on elasmobranchs and consider inviting representatives from ICES and the Mons project to present on their results.