

# Joint NWWAC/NSAC FG Skates & Rays

28 September 2021



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CONSEIL CONSULTATIF POUR  
LES EAUX OCCIDENTALES  
SEPTENTRIONALES

**NORTH WESTERN  
WATERS**  
ADVISORY COUNCIL

CONSEJO CONSULTIVO PARA  
LAS AGUAS  
NOROCCIDENTALES

# Agenda

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|---------------|--|
| 14:00 – 14:10 | <b>1. Welcome and introductions</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Welcome from the Chair Paddy Walker</li><li>• New members' introduction</li><li>• Adoption of the agenda</li><li>• Minutes from the last meeting (30 March 2021)</li></ul> |
| 14:10 – 14:20 | <b>2. Appointment of Chair and Vice-Chair</b>  |
| 14:20 – 14:40 | <b>3. FIP update (<u>Solène Prevalet</u>)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>a. Minutes from last meeting</li><li>b. Letter of engagement</li></ul>   |
| 14:40 – 14:55 | <b>4. Update on project 'Bridging knowledge gaps for sharks and rays in the North Sea'</b>   |
| 14:55 – 15:15 | <b>5. COM response to joint NWWAC/NSAC request to the Commission for updated scientific advice on skates and rays</b><br><a href="#">(link)</a>  |
| 15:15 – 15:50 | <b>6. Next steps</b>   |
| 15:50 – 16:00 | <b>7. Summary of actions <u>agreed</u> and decisions adopted by the Chair</b>  |

# Current members of the FG

Rosalie Crespin	CNPMEM	IND	FR	NWWAC/NSAC
John Lynch	Irish Fishermen's Organisation	IND	IE	NWWAC
Geert Meun	VisNed	IND	NL	NWWAC/NSAC
Sander Meyns	Rederscentrale	IND	BE	NWWAC/NSAC
Amerik Schuitemaker	Nederlandse Vissersbond	Ind	NL	NSAC
Linda Planthof	North Sea Foundation	OIG	NL	NSAC
Solène Prevalet	From Nord	IND	FR	NWWAC/NSAC
Sofie Smedegaard Mathiesen	Danmarks Fiskeriforening	IND	DK	NSAC
Jasmine Vlietinck	Rederscentrale	IND	BE	NWWAC/NSAC
Mo Mathies	Rapporteur, Secretariat	Sec		NWWAC
Tamara Talevska	Secretariat	Sec		NSAC

- **Election of Chair and Vice-Chair**

# FIP update

- Update by From Nord
- Letter of engagement

Objet : Lettre d'engagement **Partenaire / Observateur** – Projet d'amélioration de la pêche de raie bouclée en Manche-Est

Monsieur,

Nous nous adressons à vous en tant que coordinateur du projet d'amélioration de pêche ou FIP Raie bouclée de Manche-Est, porté par les organisations professionnelles OPN et FROM Nord en collaboration avec WWF France.

Nous venons par la présente vous signifier notre engagement comme **partenaire / observateur** de ce projet et acceptons que cet engagement apparaisse sur le site Internet FisheryProgress de suivi de ce FIP.

Aussi et dans la mesure de notre engagement et de nos possibilités, nous nous engageons à :

- Contribuer à la définition du plan d'action et son évolution
- Participer au Comité de Pilotage et/ou Groupes de Travail spécifiques
- Contribuer à la réalisation et/ou au financement des actions **(item à supprimer/observateurs)**

Nous notons bien qu'il nous sera possible de passer du statut d'observateur à partenaire du projet en fonction des intérêts qui pourraient émerger dans le cadre de la mise en œuvre du plan d'action. **(paragraphe à supprimer/observateurs)**

Nous vous prions d'agréer, Monsieur, l'expression de nos salutations distinguées.

**Subject: Observer Letter of Commitment - Project to improve the Thornback ray fishery in the Eastern Channel**

Sir,

We are addressing you as the coordinator of the Eastern Channel Thornback ray fishery improvement project or FIP, supported by the professional organisations OPN and FROM Nord in collaboration with WWF France.

We hereby notify you of our commitment as an observer of this project and accept that this commitment appears on the FisheryProgress website monitoring this FIP.

In addition, and to the extent of our commitment and our possibilities, we are committed to:

- Contributing to the definition of the action plan and its evolution
- Participating in the Steering Committee and / or specific Working Groups

Sincerely,

# Update on project 'Bridging knowledge gaps for sharks and rays in the North Sea'

## Survival

- Two vitality trips (twinrig and flyshoot)
- Gap analysis metier \* species (e.g. what have other projects done and how relevant is this for the Dutch fishery)
  - Choice made for beamtrawl and flyshoot, both with spotted and Thornback ray (c.f discard data MWR)
- Vessels selected: October 2021 first trip with beam trawler; November 2021 flyshoot; and January 2022 beamtrawl

## Tagging

- Spotted and blonde rays as target species
- Ca 290 DSTs available, programmed to release after 18 months; 12 individuals tagged during BTS NL and BTS BE
- Plan to go with commercial vessels during trips for other projects
- Flyer has been translated into English

## DNA

- DNA fin clips from spotted, blonde and thornback ray
- Intention is to collect 3500 clips per species, during regular (inter)national surveys, trips etc.

# COM response to joint NWWAC/NSAC request to the Commission for updated scientific advice on skates and rays

Dear Ms Vitcheva,

**Subject: Request for updated scientific information on skates and rays**

In 2020 the North Western Waters Advisory Council and the North Sea Advisory Council set up a joint Focus Group on Skates & Rays in order to develop advice to Commission and the Member States on improving management of skates and rays. The group meets regularly and has produced several advice documents to the Commission and the Member States over the course of its existence, including an annual update on its advice on best practice measures which was submitted to the respective Member States on 27 April ([link](#)).

To advance its ongoing work on harmonised management measures for skates and rays in the North Sea and North Western Waters, the joint Focus Group Skates & Rays would like to request specific support from the Commission regarding the following items:

- a) a synthesis of existing European, national and regional management measures in place in European Atlantic waters;
- b) an overview of the potential advantages and disadvantages of size restrictions;
- c) the current group-TAC for skates and ray and evaluate the potential advantages of having different TACs for different species or groups of species (e.g. one for thornback ray and another one for all the other species)

These issues were identified during the recent SUMARIS project and initially addressed at the 2017 STECF Expert Group. We suggest, building on the suggestions made by the STECF EG, and the progress made in the past 3 years, the following:

a) A request to ICES to:

- provide a synthesis of existing European, national and regional management measures in place in European Atlantic waters;
- provide a brief overview of the potential advantages and disadvantages of size restrictions

Further, recognising the fact that the current temporary exemption to the Landing Obligation will have to be reviewed in the near future, we suggest:

b) A request to the Commission to:

facilitate a collaborative ICES/STECF workshop on future skate and ray management options

We look forward to your response and thank you for the collaboration we continue to receive from the EC, which is crucial for our work.

Yours sincerely,

# Commission's reply

Dear Mr Brouckaert,  
Dear Mr Fischer,

Thank you for your letter of 14<sup>th</sup> May requesting for updated scientific information on skates and rays.

We acknowledge and welcome the work of the Advisory Councils, as well as your collaboration with the Member States (MS)' groups on skates and rays. The outputs of these initiatives has proven to be key to the development of scientific evidence and knowledge that ultimately feeds into scientific advice in support of sustainable management. This is especially important for the development and implementation of the landing obligation and the specific TAC derogations.

In the letter addressed to the Commission services, you request the Commission's support to three points in particular:

- a. a synthesis of existing European, national and regional management measures in place in European Atlantic waters;
- b. an overview of the potential advantages and disadvantages of size restrictions;
- c. on the current group-TAC for skates and rays, an evaluation of the potential advantages of having different TACs for different species or groups of species (e.g. one for thornback ray and another one for all the other species).

In the same letter, you request that ICES is invited to provide a synthesis of the national, regional and international management measures in place in relation to the European Atlantic waters in case of size restrictions. You furthermore ask that both ICES and STECF are consulted, in relation to the preparation of a joint workshop on future skates and rays management options.

As you may know, in May 2017, DG MARE organized a seminar, which looked into the advice received from the North-Western Waters Advisory Council (NWWAC) suggesting several alternative management measures, and requested STECF to review these measures. This seminar was attended by fishers, scientists, national administrations and other stakeholders, who helped in the drafting of the terms of reference for an STECF Expert Working Group (the EWG 17-10) dedicated to review the proposed management measures. This STECF EWG and the plenary produced a comprehensive report and provided the scientific advice as per the Commission's request.

We note that in this STECF report, two of the three points (points b and c) included in your letter have been analyzed, and that scientific advice has been provided in light of the scientific knowledge available at that moment. The same STECF advice led to the conclusion that MS' groups and ACs are to develop bespoke plans to replace group TACs in early 2018. Furthermore, such plans could contain a variety of measures such as seasonal closed areas, further sub-TACs or technical measures, depending on what MS can agree within the regional groups. These plans have unfortunately not been materialised to date. **It is our view that these plans should constitute the first step towards an assessment of future management measures.**

In addition to this, the NWW and NS ACs together with the MS' groups have produced the skates and rays roadmap, which amongst others, should oversee and compile the synthesis of existing EU national and regional management measures in place. It is therefore our understanding that at EU level this compilation could firstly be handled by the NWW and NS MS' groups.

Lastly, the TAC management of the skates and rays in the NWW and NS is a topic that was debated during the ongoing consultations with the UK, which due to its nature, and following the approach taken for other topics, was agreed to defer for further discussion under the remit of the Specialized Committee on Fisheries (SCF). We therefore expect that as soon as the SCF is established, talks with the UK will take place, including the ones related to the skates and rays' TAC management. This will likely focus on the skates and rays group TACs, and the translation of scientific advice into TAC management.

In summary, and following the above, we thank you again for the letter, and take this opportunity to recall the need for MS' groups to progress on this matter, notably on envisaging future TAC management. I have therefore asked my services to proactively approach the relevant MS' regional groups in order to recall the need for progress. We also look forward to our continued fruitful cooperation, especially in relation to the future work of the SCF on this topic.



# Next steps

## ■ Terms of Reference

### TERMS OF REFERENCE

#### Title:

**Joint Focus Group between the NWWAC and NSAC on management measures for skates and rays (FG Skates & Rays)**

#### Chair:

tbd

#### Vice-Chair:

tbd

#### Rapporteur:

Mo Mathies, NWWAC Secretariat  
Tamara Talevska, NSAC Secretariat

#### Working language:

English

#### Time frame and deadline:

A 36-month period (March 2020 – September 2022) to

- 1) respond to the specific request from the Scheveningen Group (Deadline 01 May 2020)
- 2) to address ongoing issues regarding the management of skates and rays
- 3) to address issues arising within the advisory process

Due to the outbreak of COVID-19 and related restrictions regarding travel, the group will commence its work via virtual meetings. The Secretariats will monitor the situation and organise a [face to face](#) meeting for all group members should this be required and once travel restrictions have been lifted.

#### NWWAC

The FG Skates & Rays will function within the Horizontal Working Group. The paper will undergo a written procedure at the NWWAC ExCom for revision and adoption. A final report to be presented at NWWAC September 2022 meeting in Dublin

#### NSAC

**Caroline Gamblin is the new Chair of the NSAC Demersal Working Group chair, so the Skates and Rays Focus Group will report to this group.** Papers will undergo a written procedure at the NSAC Demersal WG and ExCom for revision and adoption.

#### Objective:

- 1 Develop response to the request from the Scheveningen Group, including:**
  - a) Overview at fleet level of measures and best practice measures taken
  - b) Separation in avoidance, [selectivity](#) and survival (as in LO exemption text)
  - c) Advice on future measures that could be developed
- 2 Develop advice to Commission and MS on improving management of skates and rays**
  - a) Revisit previous advice from both ACs and formulate an advice paper on improved management
  - b) Review results from [SUMARIS](#), discuss merits
- 3 Develop advice to the Commission and MS on issues arising in the advisory process**
  - a) Engage with relevant parties in the advisory process
  - b) Invite experts from ICES to FG meetings

#### Members:

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