

Minutes

Joint NWWAC/NSAC Focus Group Skates & Rays

Virtual meeting via Teams

Tuesday 19 January 2021 | 10:00 – 11:00 CET

Participants

Paddy Walker (PW)	Dutch Elasmobranch Society (Chair)	NSAC
Irene Kingma (IK)	Dutch Elasmobranch Society	NSAC
Jasmine Vlietinck (JV)	Rederscentrale	NWWAC/NSAC
John Lynch (JL)	ISEFPO	NWWAG
Geert Meun	VisNed	NWWAC/NSAC
Caroline Gamblin	CNPMEM	NWWAC/NSAC
Loeiza Lancelot (LL)	FROM Nord	NWWAC/NSAC
Ana Leocadio (AL)	DG MARE (Brexit)	
Kerstin Heck (KH)	DG MARE (Skates & Rays)	
Mo Mathies (MM)	NWWAC Secretariat	
Matilde Vallerani (MV)	NWWAC Secretariat	
Tamara Talevska (TT)	NSAC Secretariat	

1 Welcome and introductions

The Chair welcomed all participants. The agenda was adopted. The Chair invited comments on the draft minutes from the previous meeting.

JV: Changes are needed on pages 3 and 4: the SUMARIS project covered areas 7d and 4c, and not 7d and e. The total number of trips carried out as part of the project was 31 across all participating MS, of which 10 trips were carried out by Belgian vessels.

Action points from the last meeting (12 December 2020)

1	FG to submit proposal on applying procedures currently used for <i>Nephrops</i> to advice development for skates and rays to the COM
	The NWWAC Secretariat sent an email requesting this to DG MARE on 17 December 2020 following approval by all FG members.
2	NWWAC Secretariat to circulate information on the FIP. Paddy Walker to join the steering committee, one NWWAC industry member to come forward.
	Information on the FIP was circulated as part of the minutes. Representation by an industry member to be discussed under point 3 of the agenda.
3	NWWAC Secretariat to circulate updated ToR for written approval by FG members.
	ToR were circulated for final approval but not all FG members responded; to be discussed under point 2 of the agenda.

The minutes were adopted and are available online [here](#).

2 Approval of Terms of Reference:

PW: Are there any comments on the ToR?

CG: Just to note that Irene Kingma is still listed as a member as North Sea Foundation, so this needs to be updated.

TT: Linda Planthof has been confirmed as the successor.

The members of the Focus Group approved the Terms of Reference.

ACTION: NWWAC Secretariat to forward ToR to NWWAC ExCom for approval.

3 Updates

a) Thornback Ray FIP – Loeiza Lancelot

At the beginning of February a meeting will be organised to present the Thornback Ray FIP to different stakeholders. The participation will not be an engagement into the FIP. The idea is to start the project with a meeting to present the action plan, its chronology over the next 5 years, discuss it and collect comments and possible contributions regarding it. Following this workshop, the official launch of the project will take place with a first steering committee.

PW: As agreed I will be joining the SC from an NGO perspective, is there a volunteer from the industry?

LL: This is a 5 year project. Just to note, the organisations presented at the meeting are mainly French and the meeting language will be French.

MM: I suggest that Loeiza is the industry representative from this FG as she is going to be participating in the project anyway. The French minutes can be translated by NWWAC.

The FG members agreed that Loeiza would represent the industry members from this FG.

LL: Caroline Gamblin has proposed to participate in the meeting.

b) ICES WKSURVIVE 09-11 February – Paddy Walker

This [workshop](#) will look at how discards can be included in the advice for all species and developing guidance to assist benchmark workshops and more.

Because it's a workshop there is no need for permission to participate from the delegates.

If members from this FG would like to participate they can get in touch with the ICES Secretariat hellej@ices.dk

c) WKSHARK5 – Paddy Walker

This 2020 Report of The Workshop on incorporating discards into the assessments and advice of elasmobranch stocks (WKSHARK5) puts forward the outputs from the 2019 meeting. Publication was delayed due to various reasons including the COVID pandemic.

4 Commission update following Brexit agreement – Ana Leocadio

The consultations with the UK are starting this week regarding defining the work that needs to be done this year. Skates and Rays will be discussed of course, but there are no specific details available yet.

KH: The submissions made by this FG to the Commission last year were received, however, there is no specific update available yet though the status will be checked with Jonathan Shrives. All the matters linked with UK will be dealt with new unit in DG MARE. The EU-ICES grant agreement is being discussed right now but has also not been agreed yet.

PW: When would be a good time for the next COM update?

KH: possibly at the end of Feb.

AL: The consultation rounds with UK are starting this week and there are likely to be a few meetings to get things organised so it is most likely that any update would be available by the end of February.

5 Discussion on way forward

PW: Looking at the ToR, reporting on the roadmap is expected for May, using the existing template on avoidance, selectivity etc. which was formulated a couple of years ago. This should be discussed in March or April. Regarding the ongoing issues regarding management, the FIP project is going to help with this in addition to the SUMARIS results. Are there any other projects?

JV: ILVO is running a project called [Raywatch](#), which is similar to SUMARIS but concentrates on the Western Waters and only for Belgian fisheries. It will look specifically at small-eyed ray in the Bristol Channel. Partners are only ILVO and Rederscentrale.

PW: A new project has also started in the Netherlands looking at survivability, migratory patterns.

GM: Referring to the LO this project will also investigate survival rates, migration patterns through the North Sea especially as fishermen see an increase in the fishing grounds especially blonde ray and thornback ray. It is also looking at genetics to see if that information can be used for prediction on the spawning stock. Tagging rays is also going to be started soon. The project will run for 2-3 years.

PW: This project is going to develop a lot of information relevant to this group. The exemption under the LO in the North Sea will be in place until the end of 2022.

JL: This is the same for the NWW. In Ireland there are ongoing studies on survivability though hampered by COVID.

PW: It is great to see how much work is going on regarding skates and rays and encouraging that so much is going to contribute to management. I would like to mention that the Dutch Elasmobranch Society is still hoping to organise a scientific conference at the end of this year which was meant to happen last year.

ACTION: Secretariat to invite representatives from the various projects to provide overview at the next meeting. Focus Group representatives to provide Secretariat with relevant contact details.

PW: Regarding issues arising within the advisory process, it is probably best to wait and see what comes out of the Focus Group's requests to the Commission in relation to ICES. Maybe someone from the WKSURVIVE could be invited to discuss the results after the workshop. The ICES Elasmobranch expert working group meeting is planned for 15-24 June. Are there any other comments or questions?

JL: Was there a revised list of minimum sizes? Is that part of any current project?

PW: This was part of SUMARIS, and the results may have gone to the Commission?

JV: The SUMARIS project did look to proposals for minimum landing sizes for thornback ray on its own and one for all the other species. The intention was to propose this to ICES but a comment was received that they did not have time to look at it in 2020 and that the way forward was to establish if the ACs could help? This could be discussed in this FG and a solution found on how to bring this forward to ICES?

PW: This request had been discussed here previously, and I thought it had gone to ICES.

JV: From Nord had led on this, and I am not sure what the current status is.

LL: I can check with Delphine Roncin for an update.

ACTION: Add topic of ICES request re. minimum landing size to the next meeting's agenda.

UPDATE NWWAC Secretariat: This was discussed during the November meeting of this Focus Group, the minutes of which can be found [here](#). The action that was agreed at this meeting was for the Rederscentrale to share the SUMARIS ICES request with the FG. This action does not seem to have been addressed.

6 Summary of actions agreed and decisions adopted by the Chair

Next meeting date: first week in March

Actions

1	NWWAC Secretariat to forward ToR to NWWAC ExCom for approval.
2	Secretariat to invite representatives from the various projects to provide overview at the next meeting. Focus Group representatives to provide Secretariat with relevant contact details.
3	Add topic of ICES request re. minimum landing size to the next meeting's agenda.
4	NWWAC Secretariat to circulate Doodle for next meeting date.