

MINUTES

Joint NWWAC/NSAC Focus Group Skates & Rays

Virtual meeting via Teams

Thursday 30 March 2021

10:00 – 11:30 CET

1. Welcome and introductions

The Chair Paddy Walker welcomed all the participants to the meeting. Apologies were received from Geert Meun. The agenda was adopted as drafted.

Members approved the minutes from the last meeting (04 March 2021). Action points included:

1	Secretariat to set up a Doodle regarding the two options for a Commission meeting to discuss the prohibited species list. Done by the NWWAC Secretariat on 4 March. Further discussion under item 4 of this agenda.
2	Secretariat to follow up with SUMARiS regarding the ICES feedback on this to update the draft request and circulate to FG members for review and comment. Discussion under item 3 of this agenda.
3	Secretariat to send out best practice table and instructions and ask for updates prior to next meeting. Done by the NWWAC Secretariat on 4 March.

2. Best Practice tables update

Members discussed the updates and the comments provided by members after the written consultation via email. All comments were included directly in the table.

ACTION: NWWAC Secretariat to share the updated spreadsheet with the FG members for a quick final round of comments.

ACTION: NSAC Secretariat to share the draft spreadsheet with the Demersal Working Group, for final approval during the group's meeting on 13 April.

ACTION: After approval by the Demersal WG, the NSAC representatives will provide a brief update on the advice at the MS Technical Group meeting on 14 April.

A decision will have to be made in the NSAC on who would be doing this presentation at the MS meeting.

After the NSAC Demersal Working Group has approved the spreadsheet, it will have to be approved by both NSAC and NWWAC ExComs before being delivered to the MSG (deadline: 26 April).

3. ICES request

Chair: The NWWAC Secretariat circulated on 23 March the ICES request developed by SUMARiS. It would be very worthwhile to look at these and consider if this group should put a proposal forward to the Commission for a request to ICES. The SUMARiS request was prepared last year, the ICES Working Group on Elasmobranchs (WGEF) looked at it and had some comments, which were also shared by the Secretariat:

- (a) Synthesis of existing European, national and regional measures in place in European Atlantic waters, building on the suggestions made by the 2017 STECF Expert Group and the progress in the past 3 years

This is something that can be taken up in WGEF.

- (b) Evaluation of the potential advantages and disadvantages of size restrictions (e.g. minimum and maximum sizes) for skates and rays (by family and by species)

This could be something for STECF: several workshops have already looked at length-based indicators and so far these haven't led to any implementation. The question as currently framed would be a full scientific study and would require a more dedicated workshop.

- (c) Revisit the current Group-TAC for skates and ray and evaluate the potential advantages of having a proportion (75%) of the TAC for landing thornback ray or to have 2 different TACs (one for RJC and another one for all the other species).

This is very much a question for STECF. Also, given the uncertainty in relation to Brexit, this should be addressed at a later stage.

Considering these comments, we should reflect on which kind of request and which aspects we would like to put forward as a Focus Group.

John Lynch: I think that point c on thornback ray refers to just the Channel and would not suit every other area. Percentages could take away from one of the main objective of this ray exercise, which is species identification. Also, we had a meeting with STECF in 2016 discussing these issues in a lot of detail. On the size restrictions, more weight was given to establishing a minimum size, which I think would be very beneficial, especially in the context of having species survivability.

Chair: I agree on the percentages comment. The report of the STECF meeting you mentioned was also linked as a footnote in the SUMARiS request to ICES. The report was from 2017 so we might ask the Commission for a new STECF meeting on skates and rays. Something we could instead include in our request addressing ICES could be the collection of available data and a discussion on the theoretical advantages/disadvantages of a minimum and/or maximum size, which was under item b of the SUMARiS request. We could also ask for their recommendation for a specific workshop.

Caroline Gamblin: I think we could also ask ICES that the exercise described in point a is implemented, as they said WGEF could take it up.

Chair: Absolutely, I think in our request to the Commission addressing ICES we should focus on items a and b, using the comments from WGEF as guidelines. We should not lose sight of point c, but it is too complex for the moment. Maybe we could bring this up at the next WGEF meeting.

ACTION: NWWAC Secretariat and Chair to draft the request to the Commission and send it to the members for comments.

4. Next steps

Chair: I would like to update you on our request to the Commission to discuss the prohibited species list. The Commission replied that they are currently very busy with the EU-UK consultations. Since the prohibited species is one of the topics that is currently being discussed in the context of these consultations, they suggested to organise this meeting once there is an agreement with the UK, and discuss this issue on its basis. However, as such a discussion might be beneficial to the EU-UK consultation, we replied that we would still like to meet soon to have a brief discussion, simply to inform each other and exchange ideas on this matter. We have not yet had a reply.

Members agree that the next meeting will be organised as soon as the Commission will be available. In the meantime, if members have urgent matters that they would like to discuss with the FG in a meeting, they should get in touch with the NWWAC or NSAC Secretariat.

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

1	NWWAC Secretariat to share the updated spreadsheet with the FG members for a quick final round of comments.
2	NSAC Secretariat to share the draft spreadsheet with the Demersal Working Group, for final approval during the group's meeting on 13 April.
3	After approval by the Demersal WG, the NSAC representatives will provide a brief update on the advice at the MS Technical Group meeting on 14 April.
4	NWWAC Secretariat and Chair to draft the request to ICES and send it to the members.

6. Participants list

Name	Organisation
Paddy Walker	Dutch Elasmobranch Society
John Lynch	IFO
Caroline Gamblin	CNPMEM
Jasmine Vlietinck	Rederscentrale
Loeiza Lancelot	FROM Nord
Neil Couhysder (observer)	Rederscentrale
Tamara Talevska	NSAC Secretariat
Amerik Schuitemaker	Nederlandse Vissersbond
Matilde Vallerani	NWWAC Secretariat