

Report of the Deepwater Sub-Group

1. Opening of the Meeting

The Sub-Group meeting was opened by Mr Rodolfo Serra, Chair of the Deepwater Sub-Group (DWSG).

2. Adoption of Agenda

The agenda was adopted without change and is annexed to the 11th Science Working Group Report.

3. Administrative Arrangements

3.1. Meeting arrangements.

There was no additional information on meeting arrangements.

3.2. Meeting documents

The Chair reviewed the meeting documents associated with the Sub-Group.

4. Nomination of Rapporteurs

Dr Peter Ward was appointed rapporteur.

5. SPRFMO Bottom Fishery Impact Assessment Standard

No new or updated Bottom Fishery Impact Assessments were presented at the meeting.

6. Deepwater Species Assessments and Management

No papers were submitted on options for stock assessment or sustainable management of deepwater species.

7. Report on Eastern Tropical and Temperate Pacific Regional Workshop to Facilitate the Description of Ecologically or Biologically Significant Marine Areas (EBSAs)

The Chair introduced SW-11-DW-01. The Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) convened a series of regional scientific workshops to facilitate the description of ecologically and biological significant marine areas. SW-11-DW-01 includes the scientific criteria that are used to assess marine areas that might be proposed as EBSAs. In addressing the criteria, contributors should document information sources and, where available, cite published scientific papers.

Preliminary application of the criteria had identified potential EBSAs, which were mostly within national EEZs. The final report has not yet been distributed to the participants and relevant Parties. The results of the workshop will be presented to the CBD subsidiary body on scientific and technical advice before consideration by the next Conference of the Parties to the CBD.

Participants sought clarification on the CBD's schedule for identifying EBSAs and how this process related to SPRFMO's work on vulnerable marine ecosystems (VMEs). SPRFMO has to date considered much of its environmental impact research, data collection and interim management measures in terms of VMEs. The origins and application of EBSAs and VMEs are different. VMEs originated from a UN FAO work programme whereas EBSAs had a CBD and UNEP origin. Although the two approaches have converged over time, there is potential for them to generate results that have significant differences for the same area. If both methodologies are applied to the same area, while many of the EBSAs and VMEs will be essentially the same, it is likely that some EBSAs and some VMEs will not be coincident. Consequently SPRFMO may need to develop an approach to managing such differences at both a scientific and fisheries management level.

8. Deepwater Research Program

8.1. Future Deepwater Work Programme

The Sub-Group considered a draft of high priority research activities as a subcomponent of the Science Working Group's Research Programme. Deep-water research activities included studies of the biology of target species (e.g. orange roughy), habitat models for predicting the spatial distribution of target species, the estimation of sustainable yields by feature or area and the identification and mapping of VMEs. Crucial to these tasks is the provision of catch and fishing effort data at a suitable resolution, e.g. a minimum data resolution of 0.1° (6 minutes) is required for scientific mapping of deep-water fishing activities.

The original draft included text on assessing the impact of fishing on non-target ('bycatch') associated or dependent species. The Sub-Group agreed that research on bycatch was relevant to other SPRFMO fisheries, and that the text should be moved to a generic level within the SWG's Research Programme. The revised draft of DWSG research activities is included in the Science Working Group's Research Programme.

8.2. Identification of short-term research and assessment requirements

Short-term research and assessment requirements were included in the DWSG section of the Research Programme. There remains a need to prioritise those activities and to identify short-term requirements.

9. Other Matters

Earlier in 2012 a New Zealand vessel conducted an acoustic survey for orange roughy within the SPRFMO Area. A report on this survey will be available later this year.

10. Adoption of Deepwater Sub-Group Report and Summary

The Sub-Group adopted the meeting's draft report and summary, and recommended those documents to the SWG for inclusion in the SWG's report. The meeting was closed on 18 October at 1520 hours.