

MINUTES

NWWRAC General Assembly Meeting

Friday 28th September 2007

Chair: André le Berre, NWWRAC President

Rapporteur: Dolores Hanratty, NWWRAC Secretariat

Welcome

The President opened the meeting by welcoming all present.

Adoption of Agenda

Due to an adjustment of the meeting timetable (ie. 12.00pm finish instead of 13.00 finish), it was proposed that the agenda item *Protocols & Structures* be deferred to be discussed and agreed by email. This proposed change to the agenda was agreed and accepted by all present.

Minutes of previous meeting

No comments/amendments were requested to the minutes of the previous General Assembly meeting of October 2006.

Welcome from the President of the NWWRAC André le Berre

(copy of speech is available on www.nwwrac.org)

Address from the European Commission.

Reinhard Priebe of DG Fish, addressed the meeting, pointing out that this was his first attendance at a RAC meeting.

Mr. Priebe gave an overview of the items currently on the agenda in DG Fish in Brussels, commenting briefly on most items:

- Autumn package being prepared. While Mr. Priebe wasn't yet in a position to give any figures for 2008 TAC and quotas and acknowledged that although timing was still very tight on the production of these figures, he stressed that some progress had been made on frontloading and intensive discussions were taking place around the Policy Statement. He was hopeful that the current consultation process would result in less surprises for all by the time proposals were finalised.
- Policy Statement – the Commission are into their second year of work on this, which they feel has turned out to be a useful instrument. Deadline is 30th of September – a good exchange of views has taken place around this generally.
- Effort Management – The Commission has recently circulated a non-paper on Annex II of the TAC and quota regulation (document on KW-days and quantity details). One of the major features of this regulation is to devolve to Member States the responsibility of the detailed allocation of fishing effort to fishing operators. Leaving the details to the member states requires a greater level of responsibility from the Member States. While many would like to see the proposed changes take effect from 2008, time is short, and many Member States say they require more time to be able to effect the proposed changes. Mr. Priebe pointed out that there would be a consultation arranged with the stakeholders on the proposed changes, and that they will inform RACs as soon as possible what the concrete proposals will be.
- Work in the Baltic Sea is progressing – discrepancies of views between Member States and enforcement controls is high on the DG agenda.
- Mediterranean regulation – doubts are being expressed in Brussels as to whether this regulation is being properly implemented.
- There is also work being done on the moving towards regionalisation and the need to have tailor- made instruments/measurements in each region
- Fisheries Management - The Commission are continuing work with recent accession states such as Romania and Bulgaria on fisheries management initiatives.

Mr. Priebe commented briefly on other items of work running in parallel to the TAC and quotas, which included:

- Technical Measures regulation

- Real Time Closures
- Cod Recovery
- Northern Hake Management plan
- Data collection regulation
- Discards
- IUU regulation

Looking ahead to key issues for DG Fish in 2008, Mr. Priebe cited the following:

- Governance problems and decision-making difficulties are an important part of current problems.
- Fisheries control and enforcement is at the top of the DG Fish agenda.
- Frontloading – hope to have advice ready for release in June 2008
- Regionalisation – all zones cannot be treated in the same way, yet the one framework on enforcement and control should apply to all.
- Fleet policy – discrepancies between size of fleet and future fishing possibilities.

Two final key issues being addressed by DG Fish in 2008:

- The CFP – putting it into a broader context e.g. environmental policy (Natura 2000 etc.) we foresee a broader development here.
- Maritime Policy – a more holistic approach to all coastal maritime problems is required – an announcement to be made on this on 10th October 2007

Mr. LeBerre thanked Mr. Priebe for his intervention and welcomed reactions to his presentation, which follow below:

- When questioned about the exact date of the release of the first TAC/quota proposals, Mr. Priebe clarified that it was DG Fish's intention to hold a stakeholders meeting sometime during November with ACFA as they did last year. When questioned about the importance of the inclusion of RAC participants in such a stakeholder meeting, Mr. Priebe acknowledged the importance of such inclusion, explaining that the participation in the November meeting was dependant only on the size of the meeting room.
- When questioned about the forthcoming Communication on TCMs Mr. Priebe agreed with the importance of the participation of the European Commission in the recent Technical Conservation Measures workshop held in Dublin on 13-14 September 2007 (attended by Ernesto Penas Lado and Francois Theret of DG Fish), noting that, while the Commission is aiming for TCM enforcement by 2009, it is their intention to build in 8-10 months of discussion with the Council of Ministers on same before any regulation is finalised.
- A question was raised regarding the data collection systems and the proposal circulated earlier in the week to introduce a system of KW days. Given the Commission's earlier reference to the current problems of governance, the member asked whether or not the Commission actually had the data it needed and how 'robust' the Commission believed this data was. Mr. Priebe confirmed that, while the Commission had a good 'overview', they do not yet have 'absolute clarity' from all member states. Members stressed that any changes to the overall allocation of fishing efforts should not be rushed into, and that good quality data should be relied upon when making any changes.
- Members stressed the importance of considering socio-economic factors in any changes to the regulations, particularly in considering the plight of under-employed people in the fisheries sector. (Mr. Priebe agreed specifically with this last point, stressing that Maritime policy needs to look at alternative employments in coastal regions where fisheries are in decline.)
- Concern was expressed by members about the use of Real Time Closures – could this be a tool of potential abuse for political reasons? Could Space Time Closures be used instead (ie. Where professionals in the sector know that there are juvenile stock in a zone – a closure could be applied there?)
- Regarding Discards, some members felt that more time was required to consider this issue, but not open-ended time. While NWWRAC members are already working on an initiative to reduce discards, a clear solution is needed to this issue.
- Grave concern was expressed by members regarding the issue of fuel costs. While funding had been approved to try to address the problems of fuel costs, the regulation does not solve the problem and, while fish-farming can be a helpful alternative, it does not replace the traditional fishing sector relied upon by so many.

Mr. Priebe acknowledged the ongoing difficulties in addressing the problem of fuel costs but underlined that this issue cannot be solved by public subsidies.

Regarding Real Time Closures, Mr. Priebe said that we was aware of the concern of some Member States and the industry, that these closures could be misused politically, pointing out that everyone in the fishing sector has a role to play in trust building, and that forums such as the RACs should be used to foster this trust-building. Mr. Priebe reassured members that the Commission would not 'rush into' anything regarding Discards, but that this process could not be deferred indefinitely either.

- When asked about the possibility of introducing a 'by-catch' quota to attempt to reduce certain types of discards, Mr. Priebe replied that, as they were still in the consultation phase, it was too early to confirm this.

Mr. Le Berre thanked Mr. Priebe for his presentation and participation at the meeting.

Report from Chairman of NWWRAC, Sam Lambourn (see copy of Chairman's presentation on www.nwwrac.org)

The Chairman began by thanking BIM and the Croke Park Conference Centre for the provision of such top-class meeting facilities, and also the great Gala Dinner and entertainment provided by BIM's World Seafood Congress team, which was enjoyed the previous evening by many NWWRAC delegates.

Due to time constraints, the Chairman's gave an abbreviated version of his original presentation (copy attached), highlighting the following areas:

- Appointment of new Seconded has been of great assistance to the work of the NWWRAC – thanks was expressed to Alexandre Rodríguez for his work to date.
- The changes in the funding structure of RACs is most welcome and should enable the NWWRAC to better manage any future funding.
- With the development of clearer internal NWWRAC protocols procedures, the Chairman re-iterated his own commitment to attempt to adhere to the agreed rules and procedures when developing NWWRAC opinions and making decisions on behalf of the NWWRAC.
- Future Work Programme – the Chairman felt that, as the NWWRAC had reached 'saturation point' regarding the number of subjects covered by work of the future work programme – it will be essential to ensure that priority areas/issues are clearly agreed by members, and welcomed members to work together in advance of the next NWWRAC Executive Committee meeting (22/11/07) to agree a priority list of issues to be addressed by the NWWRAC for 2008. An early list of these issues has already been produced as a result of the Members Questionnaire circulated before the summer break.
- Horizontal issues – as it is proposed that the next January 2008 working groups will be structured to allow a half-day for discussing horizontal issues, a chairperson and rapporteur for the Horizontal Issues group will be appointed at the next NWWRAC Executive Committee meeting (22/11/07).

The Chairman welcomed comments from the floor, which included the following:

- Members felt that while protocols were a good guide, a strong atmosphere of trust and confidence is needed within the NWWRAC to enable work to progress.
- As there is a great need for RACs to be relevant to the fishermen themselves, a call was made to the Commission to seriously consider the NWWRAC proposal on the 8% margin of tolerance, and to produce some action on this immediately.
- Members felt that the socio-economic aspects of various fisheries policies needed to be addressed in a very tangible way, and suggested the NWWRAC seek the input/cooperation of a key economist in this respect.
- The Chairman reminded members that the NWWRAC is not a lobbying body, but rather an evidence-based organisation, and encouraged members to continue to produce proposals which are based on very strong evidence.
- While the ability of NWWRAC members to reach compromise on certain issues was understandably difficult, the Chairman stressed that compromise is an essential element of enabling the work of the NWWRAC to progress. He stressed that as many NWWRAC members agreed that there was currently quite a receptive team working in the European Commission, that we should really try to make the most of this, and work together to provide quality proposals.
- On a procedural issue, one member raised a query regarding the suggested procedures between the Focus Groups, Working Groups and Executive Committee. These draft procedures are to be circulated to members for final approval after the meetings.
- The Chairman also agreed with another member's sentiment, in that there was an apparent lack of real incentive provided by the Commission for working groups to take on items of work and adhere to various policies.

Report from the Secretariat

Patricia Comiskey of the NWWRAC Secretariat presented the details of the NWWRAC Budget Spend for Year 2 and outlined the proposed Budget Spend for Year 3.

An update was also given on Subscriptions and Reimbursements paid, and details were also given of the effect of the new RAC's funding structure on the internal company structure of the NWWRAC.

The floor was opened to comments/questions, with the following items arising:

- No increases are foreseen to the current NWWRAC membership fees. Member subscriptions are currently being received by the Secretariat (deadline is end September 2007), after which an updated listing of members can be produced and posted onto the new website.
- Addressing a query regarding transferability between budget headings, Ms. Comiskey clarified that, under the new RACs funding structure, more transferability is permitted between budget headings. Previously, the translation budget was separated from the more general budget, with a maximum of 10% transferability permitted between budget headings. Under the new funding structure, one overall annual grant will be made to the NWWRAC (250,000 maximum) with 20% transferability of costs permitted between budget headings.

The presented budget for Year 2 was approved by all members, and the forecasted budget for Year 3 was approved by all members, with no votes received to the contrary.

Update on the Development of the new NWWRAC website

Due to time constraints at the meeting Alexandre Rodriguez gave an abbreviated presentation of the current work on the new NWWRAC website.

A key feature of the new website will be a members forum, including a password-protected area for NWWRAC members to view and discuss new NWWRAC proposals.

Member questions/ comments arising included the following:

- A suggestion was made that photographs should be included in the updated list of members on a voluntary basis, to enable everyone to view the members of the Executive Committee.
- A request was made to remove the proposed photograph of the starfish, which appears to be caught in a net. Subject to copyright approval, alternative photographs would be considered for inclusion.
- In the list of member organisations, a website link to their own organisational sites should be included.
- The possibility of ultimately disseminating all information to NWWRAC members via the new website would be considered, where practicable.
- The possibility of listing all attending members at meetings (prior to the meeting) with their email address, would be considered, where practicable, to enable members to communicate horizontally in preparation for the meeting.

Membership Issues

Dutch Representation:

A special request was received from the Dutch members of the Executive Committee to consolidate their representation, therefore identifying Mr. Gert Muun as the representative of the Dutch Fisheries Organisation who shall represent the Dutch members in future at NWWRAC Executive Committee level. No objections were received to this proposal, and the change in representation was therefore accepted by all members present.

New EAFPA Representative

A new representative of EAFPA (Spanish Executive Committee member) was proposed – Mr. Eduardo Míguez shall replace Mr. Jesús Lourido García. This proposed change was accepted by all members present.

Open Debate

The Chairman finished off the morning's session with an invitation to all members to consider the proposed work programme for the year ahead, and encouraged members once again to attempt to agree priority areas of work for 2007-2008.

Discussion took place around a number of potential areas mentioned by members in the Members Questionnaire which was circulated before the summer holidays, and the following listing was produced by attending members as an early draft of priorities:

- 1. Technical Conservation Measures (TCMs) & Discards**
- 2. TAC & Quota Advice and Fishing Effort**
- 3. Stock Recovery and Management Plans for different species (cod, hake...)**
- 4. Long term Management and Maximum Sustainable Yield (MSY)**
- 5. Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) – Marine Natura 2000 sites**

It was agreed that members should send further comments to the secretariat before the end of October so that the list of work priorities could be drafted and presented to the Executive Committee meeting in November.

Closure of Meeting

Dates of forthcoming NWWRAC meetings were acknowledged:

30th & 31st October 2007 – NWWRAC Working Group Meetings, Brussels
22nd November 2007 – NWWRAC Executive Committee Meeting, Brussels

André expressed his thanks to Alexandre Rodríguez and Patricia Comiskey for their presentations, and extended a final word of thanks to Reinhard Priebe of DG Fish for his participation in the meeting.

List of Meeting Participants:

Bertie	Armstrong	Scottish Fishermen's Federation
Víctor	Badiola	OPPAO, Spain
José Manuel Fernández	Beltrán	OPP-07-LUGO, Spain
Jacques	Bigot	CFTC/ Marins Pecheurs
Emiel	Brouckaert	Rederscentrale, Belgium
Richard	Brouzes	Copeport Maree OPBN
John	Casey	CEFAS
Alan	Coghill	Orkney Fisheries Association & Orkney FPO Ltd.
Patricia	Comiskey	NWWRAC Secretariat
Luc	Corbisier	SDVO, Belgium
Juan Carlos	Corrás Arias	Pescagalicia-Arpega-Obarco
John	Crudden	European Anglers Alliance
Pierre-Georges	Dachicourt	CNPMEM, France
Barrie	Deas	NFFO, UK
Anton	Dekker	Dutch Fisheries Organisation
Margaret	Downey- Harrington	Mna na Mara, Ireland
Francis	Foulon	French Ministry Representative
Ian	Gatt	Scottish Fishermen's Federation
Hugo	González	ARVI, Spain
André	Gueguen	OPOB/ CNPMEM
Dolores	Hanratty	NWWRAC Secretariat
Béatrice	Harmel	CRPBN, France
Sam	Lambourn	NWWRAC Chairman
Julien	Lamothe	FROM, France

André	le Berre	NWWRAC President
Daniel	LeFèvre	CRPBN, France
Francisco Etchevers	Lemus	OPP-13, Spain
Thierry	LePretre	CFTC, France
Jesús	Lourido Garcia	EAFPA
Joe	Maddock	Irish Fishermen's Organisation
Helen	McLachlan	World Wildlife Federation, UK
Eduardo	Míguez	EAFPA Spain
Sean	O'Donoghue	Killybegs Fishermen's Organisation, Ireland
Gerard	O'Flynn	IS&WFPO, Ireland
José Luis	Otero González	Lonja de La Coruña, S.A.
Mike	Parry	Welsh Federation of Fishermen's Associations
Jacques	Pichon	ANOP, France
Jim	Portus	South West Fish Producer's Organisation Ltd., UK
Brendan	Price	Irish Seal Sanctuary
Reinhard	Priebe	European Commission
Alexandre	Rodríguez	NWWRAC Secretariat
Delphine	Roncin	CRPMEM Nord/Pas de Calais/Picardie
Mark	Ruskell	RSPB Scotland
Peigi	Ryder	Mna na Mara, Ireland
Catherine	Sands	French Interpreter - DCULS
Samuel	Shepherd	Dept. of Fisheries, Isle of Man
Despina	Symons	European Bureau of Conservation & Development
Stéphanie	Tachoures	CNPMEM, France
Dominique	Thomas	CMEOP, France
Paul	Trebilcock	Cornish Fish Producers Organisation, UK
Borja	Velasco Tuduri	Spanish Government Representative