

NEW AND EXPLORATORY FISHERIES

7.1 At its 1992 meeting, the Commission noted that in the past, some Antarctic fisheries had been initiated and subsequently expanded in the Convention Area before sufficient information was available upon which to base management advice (CCAMLR-XI, paragraph 4.27). It agreed that exploratory fishing should not be allowed to expand faster than the acquisition of information necessary to ensure that the fishery can and will be conducted in accordance with the principles set forth in Article II of the Convention (CCAMLR-XI, paragraph 4.28).

7.2 The Commission noted that Conservation Measure 31/X had succeeded in providing a useful mechanism for evaluating new fisheries as they begin, and it agreed that it would be desirable to extend some of these requirements for new fisheries so that the provision of information would continue during the fishery's exploratory phase (CCAMLR-XI, paragraph 4.29).

7.3 The Commission had therefore requested the Scientific Committee and its Working Groups to consider this matter during 1993 (CCAMLR-XI, paragraphs 4.32 and 4.33). In response to this request, the Delegation of the USA prepared a draft document (CCAMLR-XII/5), which addressed the points specified by the Commission. This draft document was tabled at each of the intersessional meetings of the Scientific Committee's three Working Groups, and a revised draft was presented for consideration at the present meeting.

7.4 Following a discussion of that document, the Scientific Committee recommended that the Commission consider the approach outlined in paragraphs 7.5 to 7.8 when developing a formal procedure pertaining to fisheries during their exploratory phase.

7.5 Definitions: A primary objective in defining exploratory fisheries is to characterise the period immediately following the initiation of a new fishery, during the time when a fishery's commercial potential and the nature of its possible interactions with dependent and related species are being evaluated. Therefore, exploratory fisheries are defined as follows:

- (i) an exploratory fishery should be defined as a fishery that was previously classified as a "new fishery", as defined by Conservation Measure 31/X;
- (ii) an exploratory fishery should continue to be classified as such until sufficient information is available:
 - (a) to evaluate the distribution, abundance, and demography of the target species, leading to an estimate of the fishery's potential yield,

- (b) to review the fishery's potential impacts on dependent and related species, and
- (c) to allow the Scientific Committee to formulate and provide advice to the Commission on appropriate harvest catch levels, as well as effort levels and fishing gear, where appropriate.

7.6 Activities While a Fishery is Classified as Exploratory: The principal reason for classifying fisheries as exploratory is to ensure that adequate information is made available to the Scientific Committee for evaluation during a fishery's early phases. During the period when a fishery is classified as exploratory:

- (i) the Scientific Committee should develop (and update annually as appropriate) a Data Collection Plan, which will identify the data needed and describe the actions necessary to obtain the relevant data from the exploratory fishery;
- (ii) each Member active in the fishery should annually (by the specified date) submit to CCAMLR the data specified by the Data Collection Plan developed by the Scientific Committee;
- (iii) each Member active in the fishery or intending to authorise a vessel to enter the fishery should annually prepare and submit to CCAMLR by a specified date a Research and Fishery Operations Plan for review by the Scientific Committee and the Commission;
- (iv) prior to any Member authorising its vessels to enter an exploratory fishery that is already in progress, that Member should notify the Commission not less than three months in advance of the next regular meeting of the Commission, and the Member should not enter the exploratory fishery until the conclusion of that meeting;
- (v) if the data specified in the Data Collection Plan have not been submitted to CCAMLR for the most recent season in which fishing occurred, continued exploratory fishing by the Member which failed to report its data should be prohibited until the relevant data have been submitted to CCAMLR and the Scientific Committee has been allowed an opportunity to review the data;

- (vi) fishing capacity and effort should be limited to a level not substantially above that necessary to obtain the information specified in the Data Collection Plan and required to make the evaluations outlined in paragraph 7.5(ii);
- (vii) the name, type, size, registration number, and radio call sign of each vessel participating in the exploratory fishery should be registered with the CCAMLR Secretariat at least three months in advance of starting fishing each season; and
- (viii) each vessel participating in the exploratory fishery should carry a Scientific Observer to ensure that data are collected in accordance with the agreed Data Collection Plan, and to assist in collecting biological and other relevant data.

7.7 Data Collection Plan: The Data Collection Plan to be formulated and updated by the Scientific Committee should include, where appropriate:

- (i) a description of the catch, effort, and related biological, ecological, and environmental data required to undertake the evaluations described in paragraph 7.5(ii), and the date by which such data are to be reported annually to CCAMLR;
- (ii) a plan for directing fishing effort during the exploratory phase to permit the acquisition of relevant data to evaluate the fishery potential and the ecological relationships among harvested, dependent, and related populations and the likelihood of adverse impacts; and
- (iii) an evaluation of the time-scales involved in determining the responses of harvested, dependent and related populations to fishing activities.

7.8 Research and Fisheries Operations Plan: Research and Fisheries Operations Plans to be prepared by Members participating or intending to participate in the exploratory fishery should include as much of the following information as the Member is able to provide:

- (i) a description of how the Member's activities will comply with the Data Collection Plan developed by the Scientific Committee;
- (ii) the nature of the exploratory fishery, including target species, methods of fishing, proposed region and maximum catch levels proposed for the forthcoming season;

- (iii) biological information from comprehensive research/survey cruises, such as distribution, abundance, demographic data, and information on stock identity;
- (iv) details of dependent and related species and the likelihood of them being affected by the proposed fishery; and
- (v) information from other fisheries in the region or similar fisheries elsewhere that may assist in the evaluation of potential yield.

7.9 In outlining this approach, the Scientific Committee recognised that the specified reviews and evaluations could, of course, only be undertaken with the best information currently available. For example, a review of an exploratory fishery's potential impacts on dependent and related species would not necessarily be able to describe or quantify all possible contingencies. Instead, the review's objectives should be to identify potential impacts, draw attention to situations that require careful attention, and highlight the need for particular studies to fill information gaps.

7.10 It was noted that the objective of limiting the amount of fishing effort during an exploratory fishery was to prevent a rapid expansion of the fishery before the appropriate evaluations could be made; there was no intention to prevent modest levels of commercial fishing that would generate the data needed for these evaluations. A good example of this principle was the setting of a TAC in 1992 for the exploratory fishery for *D. eleginoides* in Subarea 48.4 (Conservation Measure 44/XI).