

## Chair Report on ISP Meeting 36

7<sup>th</sup> of September 2020

### ISP membership

John Rolfe welcomed Dr Roger Chong to his first ISP meeting, while noting that Roger has been already active in reviewing reports. Roger is a fish pathologist with CSIRO in Brisbane who has expertise in fish assessment, fish diseases and biosecurity.

### Science Program

The program is running well, and projects are on track to finalise reporting for the 2019-20 Report Card. There have been minor delays to sampling in the Visual Fish Health project because the Boyne-Tannum Hook-Up was cancelled, but the project team did some additional sampling in June to address this.

There have been limited sample sizes in both the Fish Health projects (HAI and Visual Fish Assessment) which limit the ability to make confident predictions. There are also low catch numbers in the Mud Crabs in Auckland Creek for the third consecutive year.

The ISP did have some discussion around the statistical approach used by InfoFish to score the indicators for the Visual Fish Assessment program. InfoFish will be asked to upgrade their methodology further.

### Chair's Report

The Chair noted that Bill Denison and Simon Costanza had made an interesting presentation to the previous GHHP MC meeting, and had suggested that there may be some potential to rationalise the number of measures and indicators used in the GHHP Report Card. The ISP noted that GHHP has very different needs to other report cards, and recommended asking Simon Costanza to provide a briefing on their current review of report cards before it is released.

### Meeting with PCIMP

The Chair reported that the regular annual meeting had been held with PCIMP to discuss the sampling program and data results. The key issue discussed were the continuing high levels of positive blanks (field, transport and laboratory blanks) that were still being generated. PCIMP noted that some but not all of the positive results are occurring at close to limits of detection levels, and that PCIMP has utilised laboratory certified Milli-Q water since March 2019. It was agreed that:

- PCIMP will investigate the type and processing of bottles (i.e. are they acid washed in a clean room, double bagged, etc.). Low density polyethylene bottles are best for trace metals.
- If issues persist, Jenny Stauber suggested to acid-wash bottles in an ultra-clean environment, double bag them and use them for the duration of one sampling period to see if this reduces contamination levels.
- Another field sampling audit of procedures be conducted to provide quality assurance about sampling procedures.

## Monitoring program for fish and crabs

The ISP considered the challenges in generating robust samples for fish health and mud crab programs while at the same time dealing with budget constraints. It was discussed that:

- The detailed fish health sampling program really needs larger sample sizes to produce useful results. It would be better to have at least two sample events per year, even if it meant that sampling could only be conducted every second year.
- The Mud Crab program is on the lower side for sampling, so would also benefit from more intense sampling even if frequency had to be reduced.
- There are some benefits to maintaining the Fish Recruitment program:
  - A long-term data set is being assembled, which will generate potential for analysis and explanatory power in the future
  - Fish recruitment is a lead indicator of how conditions may be changing in the harbour, whereas the other measures may be more lagged.
  - The variation in results from year to year helps to communicate that there is a lot of underlying variability in ecosystems and biodiversity in the harbour over time.

A separate recommendation on changing the sampling program within the Fish and Mud Crabs indicator is being provided to the MC.

## Process for MC approval of scientific reports

The ISP recommended against the MC being able to review the scientific reports, so as to maintain full independence of the MC from the report card results and limit the cost of review rounds for project teams.

Instead the ISP suggested two alternative approaches which would improve information flows to MC members:

- a. The ISP provides a summary statement for each report to the MC which provides a project overview and outlines any major changes and issues from previous years, or
- b. Members of the MC can view completed project reports before the November MC meeting upon signing a confidentiality agreement.

A separate recommendation about the review process for scientific reports is being provided to the MC.

## Review process for Social, Sense of Place and Economic indicators

The ISP agreed to a process where the ISP Chair and Science team would review these indicators and develop a proposal for a more limited set of measures, so as to enable more frequent assessment and to allow the Economic component to be assessed independently of the community survey. The revised structure will be considered at the next ISP meeting in November, after which an assessment of the Economic indicator for 2020-21 can be organised.