

ASBTIA INITIAL Submission to the Montara Commission of Inquiry

Term of Reference addressed by this Submission

ASBTIA wishes to address only 7.C – assess and report on the environmental impacts of the Uncontrolled Release.

ASBTIA has no expertise in the other Terms of Reference on regulation. However, it appears that the current requirement for consultation with stakeholders and operators of oil and gas exploration and development in the EEZ needs to be extended to areas adjacent to the EEZ.

Core Concern

Attached are the maps of the Montara slick, and the single global spawning ground for Southern Bluefin Tuna (SBT). There is a substantial overlap between the areas of the leak and apparent slick movement and the SBT spawning ground.

The SBT spawning season extends from September to April each year, again overlapping with the leak and the slick.

There is a significant literature base (see attached Reference List) on the SBT spawning ground and the behaviour of SBT larvae. However, ASBTIA requires more time to consult experts in Japan and Australia who have carried out surveys in the spawning ground.

Therefore we request permission to make further submissions by 25 January 2010.

SBT Biology

The following brief description of the Fishery is largely from the Commission for the Conservation of SBT (CCSBT) – www.ccsbt.org and from the Australian Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF) – www.daff.gov.au

SBT, *Thunnus maccoyii*, is a valuable, highly migratory species of pelagic fish. SBT ranges widely across the high seas regions of the southern hemisphere but also traverses the exclusive economic zones and territorial seas of countries including Australia and New Zealand.

SBT has a single spawning ground in the waters south of Indonesia (northwest of Australia) between approximately 7 deg and 20 deg S. Adult SBT migrate to the spawning ground from Southern Waters. Spawning takes place between September and April.

The larvae are then taken by currents to nursery grounds down the WA Coast, and then either into the Great Australian Bight or into the southern areas of the Indian Ocean.

SBT is a long-lived species, living up to 40 years or more. It has a lengthy pre-maturity period and virtually life-long exposure to fishing pressure; the stock is slow to recover from depletion relative to other shorter-lived species, including most other species of tuna.

SBT Fishery

CCSBT manages the international Fishery. The Commission meets annually to set a total global quota and its allocation between Member and Co-operating Non-Member countries.

Based on scientific advice, the total quota was reduced by 20% for 2010 and 2011 when the quota will be further reviewed. The allocations are:

Quota Allocation (whole tonnes)

Australia	4,015
Japan	2,261
Korea	859
Taiwan	859
Indonesia	651
NZ	709
South Africa	40
The Philippines	45
EU	10
Total	9,449

SBT Science

There continues to be considerable concern among CCSBT scientists and Government about the stock status of SBT. The next steps for the CCSBT Scientific Committee are:

- (1) Finalise a Management Procedure for future quota-setting.
- (2) A further stock assessment in 2011,

Australian Fishery

The summary is:

- (1) Over 97% of the catch is captured live for growout (ranching) in Port Lincoln (SA).
- (2) Australia's SBT exports, have ranged from \$180-300 million pa, largely to Japan.
- (3) Direct and indirect jobs generated by the industry have been about 4,500.

All the ranching catch is within the Great Australian Bight (GAB) and is heavily dependent on the recruitment from the spawning ground.

Next Step

ASBTIA will consult further with the experts on the SBT spawning ground, and the possible interaction with the Montara event – and make a more detailed submission by 25/1/09.

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