



8950 Martin Luther King Jr. Street N. #202
St. Petersburg, Florida 33702-2211
Tel: (727) 563-9070
Fax: (727) 563-0207
Email: MRAG.Americas@mragamericas.com

President: Andrew A. Rosenberg, Ph.D.

MRAG Americas, Inc.

Abrolhos Island and Mid-West Trawl Managed Fishery

MSC Variation Request

Table 1 – Variation request

1	Date submitted to the MSC
	22 January 2021
2	CAB
	MRAG Americas, Inc.
3	Fishery name and certificate number
	Abrolhos Island and Mid-West Trawl Managed Fishery
4	Lead auditor or program manager
	Richard Banks and Amanda Stern-Pirlot
5	Request prepared by
	Michealene Corlett
6	Scheme requirement(s) for which variation requested
	FCP 7.16
7	How many times has a variation for this requirement been accepted for the same assessment of the same fishery?

	Zero
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Table 2 – Variation justification	
1	Proposed variation
	MRAG Americas proposes to allow the assessment team to conduct the initial assessment audit remotely due to circumstances arising from the Covid-19 pandemic.
2	Additional time requested
	Original deadline date n/a
	Modified deadline date requested n/a
	Length of additional time requested n/a
3	Justification
	<p>The 28 September 2020 MSC Covid-19 derogation allows CABs to conduct assessment site visits as off-site visits while national or local travel restrictions are in place which impact the CAB or certificate holder.</p> <p>The following Covid-19 related factor has prevented an on-site assessment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - National or local travel restrictions that impact the assessment team or certificate holder https://www.wa.gov.au/organisation/department-of-the-premier-and-cabinet/covid-19-coronavirus-travel-wa
4	Implications for assessment
	The implication for this assessment is that the team members will not be in-person during site-visit meetings. This course of action will protect the health and safety of the assessment team, clients and stakeholders while ensuring there are no delays in the process. Because of current travel restrictions, it will also allow stakeholders, fishery scientists and managers who require interviewing to be involved in the assessment.
5	Mitigation of the implications for assessment
	The ability to verify information remotely is high (low risk). Refer to the attached risk assessment.
6	How many conditions does the fishery have and will their progress be affected (positive or negative)?
	Zero
7	What is the status of the current assessment or audit?
	Preparing for announcement
8	Further comments
	Australia did briefly open its internal borders to domestic travel but recently clamped back down again, stranding several people away from their homes. The situation is too volatile to plan on doing things in person, also because under these circumstances it might actually impede the ability of stakeholders to be involved, as well as the fishery scientist and managers who require interviewing.

9	If applicable, additional information added after the MSC's request

Risk areas	Key risks	Ability to verify remotely
Sufficient information to enable an effective and robust fishery assessment process and comprehensive assessment against the MSC Fisheries Standard	Ability to verify information remotely	Fishery reports, government documents, stock assessment reports and other relevant reports can be easily and transparently checked remotely due to such information being publicly available on websites or are widely distributed and made publicly available to several stakeholders. These reports can be transmitted electronically, and veracity easily confirmed.
	Ability to engage with stakeholders, deliver a robust stakeholder consultation process and conduct interviews with stakeholders.	There are ample opportunities and mechanisms to engage with stakeholders including electronic forms of communication, such as videoconferencing, phone conferencing, email and phone. These mechanisms are effective in the particular circumstances of the fishery.
	Ability to gather information and carry out stakeholder consultations if the Risk Based Framework is being used to assess data-deficient Pis.	The Risk Based Framework is not being used to assess any Pis in this fishery.
	Availability of information	Fishery reports, government documents, stock assessment reports and other relevant reports that can be used to assess performance against the MSC Fisheries Standard are easily and transparently checked remotely, due to such information being available publicly, on websites or are widely distributed and made publicly available to several stakeholders. The reports can be transmitted electronically, and veracity easily confirmed.
	Ability to understand the context, scale, and intensity of the fishery operations.	Verification mechanisms such as information from electronic monitoring of position, observer data, logbooks, fisher interviews, dockside monitoring are available to be transmitted electronically to auditors in a form that can be easily interpreted.
Sufficient communication capability to effectively plan, conduct interviews and facility information sharing as per IAF ID 4:2018.	Competency of assessment teams, auditees, and stakeholders in using ICT.	A 'Remote Assessment Form' is sent to all audit participants of a planned remote assessment to facilitate planning and to verify the competency of attendees' ability in using all available ICT. The

		assessment team is able to use multiple forms of communication to accommodate clients, fishery scientists, managers and interested stakeholders.
	Ability to clearly exchange information between the assessment team, prospective fishery client and stakeholders and to be understood by all parties when parties speak different languages.	A 'Remote Assessment Form' is sent to all audit participants of a planned remote assessment to determine if a translator will be used. The form also denotes that the official language of the MSC is English. Electronic files can be translated using Google Translate. In this instance, attendees are local and all speak English.
	Ability to schedule remote site visit activities at reasonable mutually convenient times when parties are located across different time zones.	A 'Remote Assessment Form' is sent to all audit participants of a planned remote assessment to verify the respective time zones of each participant. This will aid in planning a mutually convenient time for audit attendees. In this particular instance, attendees are local and there will be very little time difference, if any, from their respective locations.

Risk areas	Ability to verify remotely
Client and stakeholder input	There are ample opportunities and mechanisms to engage with clients and stakeholders including electronic forms of communication, such as videoconferencing, phone conferencing, email and phone. These mechanisms are effective in the particular circumstances of the fishery.
Fishery reports, government documents, stock assessment reports and/or other relevant reports	Fishery reports and other documented evidence that can be used to assess performance against the MSC Fisheries Standard are easily and transparently checked remotely, due to such information being available publicly, on websites or are widely distributed and made publicly available to several stakeholders. The reports can be transmitted electronically, and veracity easily confirmed.
Information appropriate to determination of Principle 1 and Principle 2 information requirements	Information from electronic monitoring of position, observer data, logbooks, fisher interviews, dockside monitoring etc. is required to verify performance against the MSC Fisheries standard, is available to be transmitted electronically to auditors in a form that can be easily interpreted.
Transparency of the management system	There is a high level of transparency in management, where information on a fishery is widely and publicly available or known to the wider group of stakeholders. Information provided can be easily verified.
Vessels, gear or other physical aspects of the fishery	The assessment does not require investigation of the physical aspects of the fishery.