

Estuary Prawn Trawl Management Advisory Committee

DRAFT AGENDA

Friday 1st September 2006, 9.30am to 5.00pm
Venue: Cronulla Fisheries Centre

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| 1. | Welcome and apologies | Chairperson |
| 2. | Procedural matters | |
| | a) Estuary Prawn Trawl MAC appointments | Chairperson |
| | b) Agreement on agenda | Chairperson |
| | c) Confirmation of draft minutes | Chairperson |
| | d) Business arising from previous meeting | Chairperson |
| | e) Correspondence received and sent | Chairperson |
| 3. | Updates | All members |
| 4. | Development of share management plans | DPI |
| 5. | Share trading on commencement of the plans | DPI |
| 6. | Proposed changes to licensing arrangements | DPI |
| 7. | Reviewing research on "riddling" | DPI |
| 8. | Brooklyn STP and outfall | Rolf Norington |
| 9. | Square mesh cod-ends in the Hawkesbury River | Rolf Norington |
| 10. | Other business | Chairperson |
| 11. | Next meetings | Chairperson |

Agenda Item 1	Chairperson
Issue Welcome and apologies.	
Outcome	
Agenda Item 2a	Chairperson
Issue Estuary Prawn Trawl MAC appointments.	
Background Welcome to Ms Suzane Hamilton (Hunter River) and Mr Rolf Norington (Hawkesbury River) who have recently been successful in the electoral process for appointment to the EPTMAC. The Committee would like to extend thanks to Mr Dennis Hyde and Mr Graeme Hillyard who have made a valuable contribution over many years.	
Outcome	
Agenda Item 2b	Chairperson
Issue Agreement on agenda.	
Background A request for agenda items was forwarded on 28 July 2006 to committee members, the Regional Industry Convenor, Fishermen's Co-operatives, interested parties and regional offices of the Department of Primary Industries.	
Outcome	

Agenda Item 2c	Chairperson
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Issue Confirmation of draft minutes.
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Background Committee members were provided an opportunity to comment on the draft outcomes for the EPTMAC meeting on 25 July 2005 before being distributed in draft form to the Regional Industry Convenor, Fishermen's Co-operatives, interested parties and regional offices of the Department of Primary Industries.

Outcome

Agenda Item 2d	Chairperson
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Issue Business arising from previous meeting.

Background An action status list (updated August 2006) is attached for the Committee to note.

Outcome

Action Status List for the EPTMAC – Updated September 2006

Recommendation/Resolution/Action	FMS	Meeting	Responsibility	In Progress	Pending	Complete	Ongoing
DPI to include nomination provisions in the draft Estuary Prawn Trawl Management Plan for further consultation.	2.4	25 July 2005	DPI			✓ Included in advice to PCO	
Consult fishers on banning the possession of spikes.	1.1 e	28 Apr 2004	Industry		✓		
DPI & Hawkesbury working group to meet and determine program for implementing the prawn count and ICR program		25 July 2005	DPI / HREPT		✓		
Report on research into the effects of trawling in the Clarence River by University of Sydney & DPI, to be referred to Committee members when finalised.	-	25 July 2005	DPI		✓ Report due November 2006		
DPI & Industry members of the Committee to consider the terms of reference for the IPART review on the Sydney Catchment Authority, with a view to making submission on issues relating to the Health of the Hawkesbury river.		25 July 2005	All MAC members		✓		
DPI to brief the Committee on the Clarence River Floodgate project at the next MAC Meeting.		25 July 2005	DPI		✓		
Eric McCarthy, Seafood Industry Training Council, to be invited to the next meeting to update the Committee on training programs for commercial fishers.		25 July 2005	DPI		✓		
Request Minister for DPI to make personal representation to Minister for Lands advising of importance of river health & sustainability of estuary prawn trawl. (STP in Hawkesbury)		25 July 2005	DPI			✓ Letter sent	
DPI to provide the Committee advice on DPI's approval of the Brisbane Waters Cycle way.		25 July 2005	DPI			✓	
DPI to modify the performance assessment report to reflect (a) MAC's advice, and (b) the outcomes of other issues discussed and relevant to the performance assessment.		25 July 2005	DPI			✓	
The result of research on "riddling" prawns is to be referred to the Committee for discussion at the next MAC meeting.		25 July 2005	DPI			✓ On agenda	
DPI to consider amendments to the DRAFT share trading rules and restructure program as suggested by the Committee.		25 July 2005	DPI			✓	
Industry members to refer fishers' feedback on share trading and restructuring to DPI.		25 July 2005	Industry			✓ On agenda	

DPI and Hawkesbury River working group to meet & determine transfer rules for Limited Access under the management plan, so that a freeze on transferring Hawkesbury river prawn trawl endorsements can be lifted.		25 July 2005	DPI / HREPT			✓	
Industry representatives to advise of a phase in period for square mesh cod-ends with a provision for fishers to refine the gear in each estuary over 2005/2006 season.		25 July 2005	Industry Representatives			✓ 2005/2006 passed. Advice on phase in time would be appreciated	
DPI to rank offences under the Act and Regulation relating to prawn trawling for comment by Committee members within 4 weeks.	6.1	25 July 2005	DPI			✓ No comments received	
DPI to consult with DEH & NSW Planning on amendments to the EFT FMS regarding share forfeiture scheme based on demerit point scale and then refer advice to the Minister for consideration.	6.1	25 July 2005	DPI			✓ Deferred	
Industry representatives from each estuary to provide DPI with the reasons why they do not support extending the king prawn count to the estuaries where trawling occurs, prior to referring the matter to the Minister for determination. (125 per 1/2 kg for catches consisting of more than 10% king prawns by number of individuals).		25 July 2005	DPI / Industry Representatives			✓ Joint MAC meeting proposed in 2007	
Committee recommended that byproduct levels be monitored on an annual basis with new trigger points included in the FMS (based on Table 13, page 83) that trigger a review of the strategy if exceeded. DPI to consult DEH & NSW planning on amending the EPT FMS, and then refer advice to the Minister for consideration.	4.2c	25 July 2005	DPI			✓ Trigger point included and will revise with DEH and NSWP	
DPI to provide a summary of representation received from other stakeholder groups regarding the EPT fishery.	7.1	25 July 2005	DPI				✓

Agenda Item 2e	Chairperson
Issue Correspondence received and sent.	
Background A list of correspondence received and sent is attached for the committee to note.	
Outcome	

Correspondence received and sent for ETMAC – Updated September 2006

Date	From	Issue	Action
16 Aug 2005	Department of Primary Industries	Draft outcomes of EPTMAC meeting held 25 July 2005, Research Paper by DPI “ <i>Reducing the short-term mortality of juvenile school prawns discarded during trawling</i> ”, Draft ranking of offences under the Act and Regulation, with draft share forfeiture and demerit point options	Information & comment
14 Dec 2005	Sydney Water	Environmental Assessment & Summary Document for Kurnell Desalination Plant	Comment
22 Dec 2005	Marine Parks Authority	Creation of Marine Park Port Stephens-Great Lakes	Information
15 March 2006	Director-General Department of Primary Industries	Outcomes of the Estuary Prawn Trawl MAC meeting held 25 July 2005	Information

Nil correspondence sent.

Issue

Updates

Background

Opportunity is provided for members to provide an update on major issues relating to management of the industry. Following is a brief update by DPI on contemporary issues.

New Fisheries Management Officer

Mr Bill Hoskin was appointed Fisheries Management Officer Trawl late last year and has since proved to be a great asset to the Department. Welcome aboard Bill.

Fisheries Manager

Late last year Darren Hale was seconded to the Management Planning Branch. Since returning to his substantive position Darren has been preparing advice for the preparation of share management plans with some time devoted to day to day issues affecting the Ocean Trawl and Estuary Prawn Trawl fisheries. Darren has been taken 'off line' to be part of a team charged with the responsibility of implementing share management plans before the end of the year. During this period, please contact Bill Hoskin in the first instance for all trawl related matters.

Seafood Industry Advisory Council

The Seafood Industry Advisory Council last met on 17 March 2006 and discussed many important issues including recommendations by the Structural Adjustment Working Group on the need for structural adjustment and structural adjustment options, beach access for ocean hauling fishers, and the development of a strategy for promoting the seafood industry. The Structural Adjustment Working Group met again on 23 June 2006, and the Pricing and Charging Working Group met on 11 August 2006. The Industry Development Working Group is expected to meet soon.

Review of recreational fishing rules and saltwater size limits

The outcomes of the review are expected to be finalised soon. This follows an analysis of over 3,000 public submissions in response to the earlier discussion papers and recommendations from a joint session of the Seafood Industry Advisory Council and Advisory Council on Recreational Fishing.

Australian Council of Prawn Fishers

The Australian Council of Prawn Fishers (ACPF) held a series of workshops throughout Australia during February and March to provide fishers an opportunity to discuss issues affecting their industry. A report has subsequently been prepared and will be used to develop a Strategic Directions Plan. A conference is scheduled for 2nd and 3rd February 2007 that commercial fishers are encouraged to attend. Further information on the conference will be referred by the ACPF to most coastal co-operatives.

Country of Origin food labelling

Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ) has introduced a food standards code to ensure that packaged food must carry a separate statement identifying the

country where it was produced, made or packaged. The new standard covers fresh and processed seafood, came into effect in Australia on 08 December 2005, and will be phased in over a two-year period. The code will help protect the consumers 'right to know' as well as

ensuring that in a global market, shoppers can choose to support local farmers and fishers by purchasing locally grown or produced products.

Port Jackson

Due to the detection of elevated dioxin concentrations in fish and prawns, the NSW Government closed Port Jackson to all commercial fishing to protect public health. As commercial fishers experienced difficulties through no fault of their own as a result of the closure, the NSW Government made voluntary offers to buy out commercial fishing entitlements.

Any Port Jackson fisher who accepted a voluntary buyout will be able to re-enter the commercial fisheries elsewhere in NSW (not including estuary general fishing in Region 5 or Port Jackson Estuary Prawn Trawl for a period of 5 years), subject to the prevailing entry requirements. Additionally, these fishers will be given the first option to re-enter any relevant "new" Port Jackson fisheries, if it becomes safe to harvest species in the future, subject to any necessary entry arrangements to be determined at the time.

Brooklyn/ Dangar Island Sewerage Scheme

At the request of the EPTMAC the Minister for Primary Industries wrote to the Hon Frank Sartor MP, Minister for Planning on 2nd March 2006, highlighting the importance of healthy ecosystems to the future sustainability and viability of the commercial fishing industry and seeking to ensure that affected fishers were fully consulted throughout the approvals process of the project.

After considering an independent assessment report prepared by the Director-General of the Department of Planning, the Minister for Planning subsequently granted conditional approval for the sewerage scheme proposal on 20th March 2006. The report considered the concerns raised by the prawning industry, but concluded the overall risks from the proposal were low. In coming to this conclusion the Department of Planning obtained additional modelling data from Sydney Water and had discussions with the Food Authority and the Department of Primary Industries. Sydney Water advised that it would be consulting widely within the local community about its implementation programme, and that it would include the local fishing industry.

Outcomes

Issue

Development of Share Management Plans

Background

Shares have been issued on a provisional basis pending finalisation of the management plans and any appeals. The process for hearing any appeals in relation to this allocation has commenced. The finalisation of the appeal process will not impact on the commencement of the share management plans and issue of final shares to business owners who have not appealed their allocation.

The provisions under the *Fisheries Management Act (1994)* for share management fisheries are different than those for restricted fisheries. As a result of the move to share management, fishery specific management plans will be made. A supporting plan that will include the general rules that apply across all fisheries, for example share trading, management charges, community contribution and some licensing matters will also be implemented. Amendment to the (General) Regulation is also required to pick up some other licensing matters.

The MACs have previously had input into most of the provisions that will be included in the Plans (including through the FMS process) and, port meetings were held in September 2005 where issues such as share trading and licensing matters were discussed.

The general process for preparing a Plan or an amendment to the Regulation is that DPI seeks approval from the Minister to make a Plan or a new regulation, broad drafting instructions are then provided to the Parliamentary Counsel's Office (PCOs) who turn the intent of our instructions into the legal format that you see in regulation. PCOs then provide the department with a first draft of the regulation for confirmation, clarification or modification of any relevant aspects. Several iterations of a new regulation are normally required before the regulation or Plan is in a format suitable for consultation.

Drafting instructions for the fishery specific plans, the supporting plan and amendments to the (General) Regulation have been provided for preparation into documents for consultation. It is likely that these documents will be provided to the department in a staged approach with the fishery plans prepared first, then the supporting plan, then the (General) Regulation amendments.

Statutory consultation is required on the fishery plans and the supporting plan. Industry will also be consulted on the changes proposed to the (General) Regulation. All three regulations will need to commence at the same time.

To ensure industry is provided with opportunity to comment and be involved in this process, initially a presentation will be made to all MACs during August 2006 on the proposed content of the Plans. Additional advice will be provided at a later stage on the opportunities available for Industry and the MACs to participate further in this process.

Presentations will also be made at this meeting on the proposed share trading rules and changes to the licensing arrangements. Most of the licensing changes are a consequence of the share management framework and others are proposed to achieve administrative and operational efficiencies for Industry and Government.

The contents of a share management plan are guided by section 60 of the *Fisheries Management Act*. The share management plans will include details such as:

- Definitions (ie bycatch, endorsement etc)
- Objective, Performance Indicators and Trigger Points (adapted from the FMS's)
- A description of the fishery (ie the waters)
- The regions of the fishery – Estuary General and Ocean Hauling only
- The classes of share
- Types of endorsement
- Dealing in shares including:
 - Minimum shareholdings (generally current criteria for new entrants, & status quo for existing fishers)
 - Maximum shareholdings
- Species that may be taken in the fishery
- Areas and time of operation
- Operational requirements if required (eg. priority, identification of vehicles etc)
- Boat capacity restrictions
- Code of Practice
- Waters closed to fishing

The Department will present in greater detail the proposed contents of each management plan and the supporting plan at the meeting.

Outcome

For noting and discussion.

Issue

Share Trading on commencement of the Plans

Background

Share management is a form of market based regulation that provides increased flexibility in the trading of fishing rights in the form of shares.

The objective of share trading is to enable fishing business owners to adjust their businesses and specifically the type and number of endorsements they hold within and across share management fisheries.

In a share management fishery, an endorsement authorises the holder of a commercial fishing licence to undertake specific commercial fishing activities.

Eligibility for an endorsement within a share management fishery is based on a 'minimum shareholding' being satisfied in respect of a fishing business – that is the fishing business including a minimum number of shares.

Share trading provides a means of adjusting the type and number of endorsements associated with a fishing business, and therefore the activities that may be undertaken.

It is envisaged that share trading will enable fishing business owners to access additional endorsements in fisheries they currently participate in or in other share management fisheries. At the same time share trading will enable fishing business owners to dispose of some or all of existing endorsements and fisheries through the sale of shares.

The management plan for each fishery will establish a minimum shareholding for each class of share that is required to be eligible for a corresponding endorsement.

Minimum shareholding provisions as proposed will enable holders of endorsements immediately before the commencement of a management plan to continue to be eligible for endorsements.

The minimum shareholding for a class of share will be triggered in respect of a fishing business when a shareholder has traded some of that class of share so as to reduce their shareholding.

Minimum shareholdings provide one tool that could be used to adjust the number of operators in a fishery and or at the endorsement level, which could be phased in over time subject consultation with management advisory committees.

Note that there is also the potential to create an effective link between the number of shares that person holds and their level of fishing activity in the future. However, the initial plans focus on creating a secure access right.

The framework adopted by the share trading rules is intended to apply across all new category 1 share management fisheries and so will be included in the draft Supporting Plan.

Key principles

While providing increased flexibility for fishing business owners, the proposed share and fishing business transfer rules and minimum shareholdings aim to result in no increase in the number of:

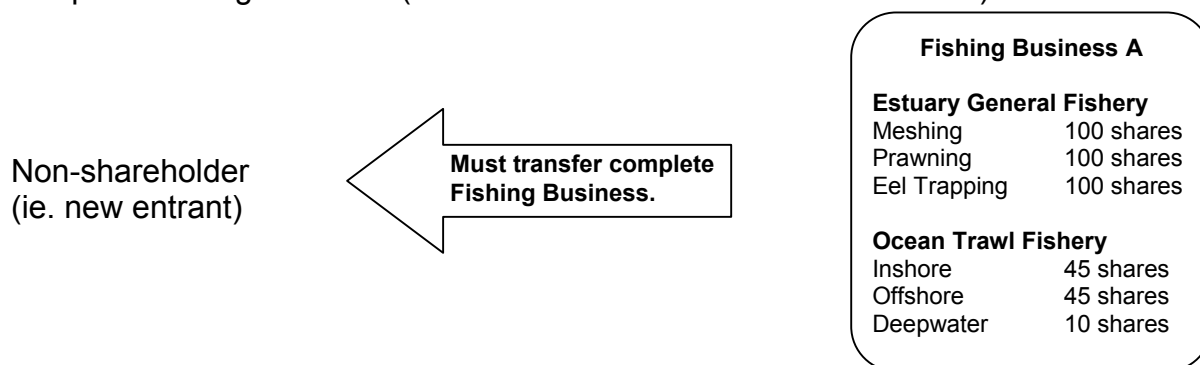
1. Fishing businesses in NSW
2. Fishers participating in each fishery in NSW
3. Fishers holding each type of endorsement within each fishery

General Arrangements

- The maximum number of shares a person may hold, of a class or in total
- No limit on how many classes of share (or endorsements) that may be held
- No requirement to retain a minimum number of shares or endorsements
- No transfer of Validated Catch History will occur on transfer of shares
- The inter-jurisdictional licence splitting policy still applies to dual licensed boats

Non-Shareholders (New Entrants)

To ensure there is no increase in the number of businesses in NSW as a result of share trading, shares may only be transferred to a non-shareholder as part of a complete Fishing Business (as defined under Section 34Q of the Act).



Note: The minimum shareholding requirements must be met to be eligible for an endorsement. In this example the Estuary General and Deepwater Prawn Trawl endorsements would not be available to the new owner of the business. The minimum shareholding proposed for the Estuary General endorsements is 125 and the minimum shareholding proposed for Ocean Trawl endorsements is 32.

Non-shareholder (Third Party Stakeholders)

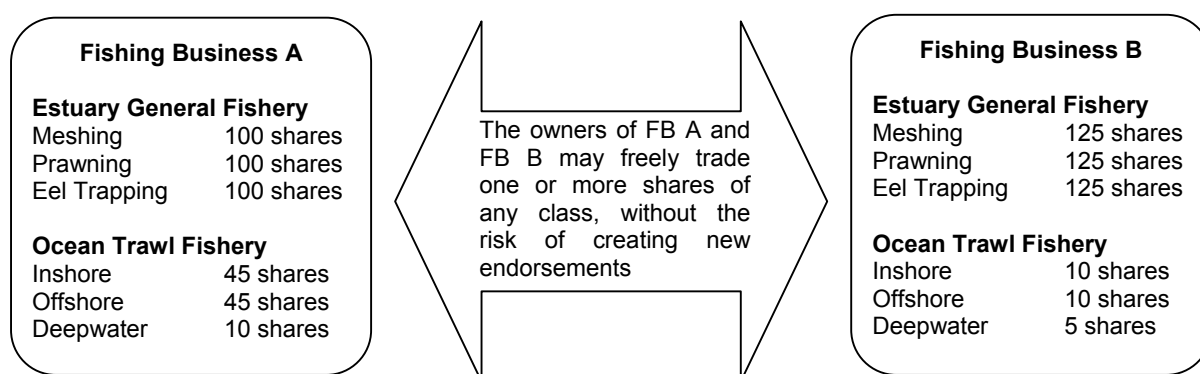
Shares may be transferred to a non-shareholder (eg. conservation or recreational groups) for surrender to the Minister. This enables other stakeholder groups to contribute towards restructuring NSW commercial fisheries.

Shareholders (Fishing Business Owners)

To enable fishing business owners to restructure businesses and participate in restructure programs, whilst aiming for no increase in the number of endorsements or fishers participating in each fishery, the following three arrangements are proposed.

1. 'Topping up' shareholdings

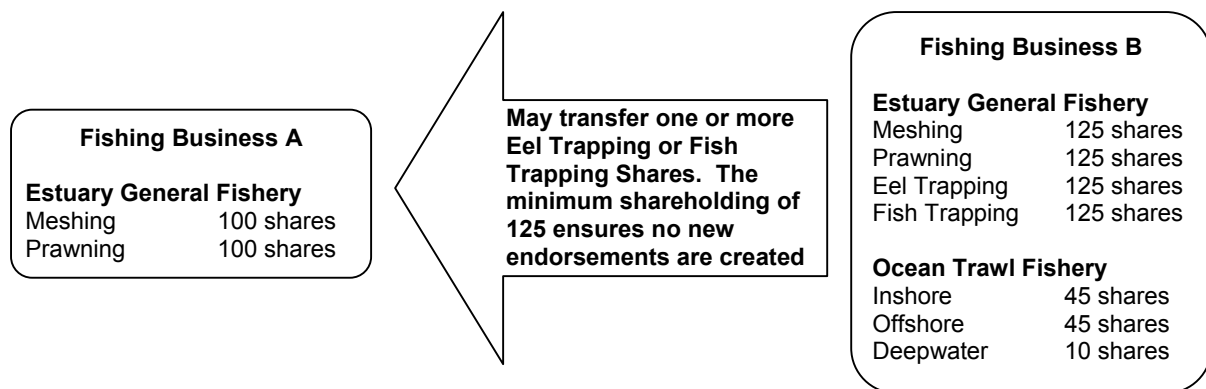
One or more shares for a class of share can be transferred to another holder of the same class of share. This enables fishing business owners to increase or decrease the number of shares held without creating new endorsements.



Note: As soon as trading takes place the minimum shareholding requirements are applied to determine if the transferor remains, and transferee becomes, eligible for endorsements.

2. Becoming eligible for a new endorsement within a Fishery

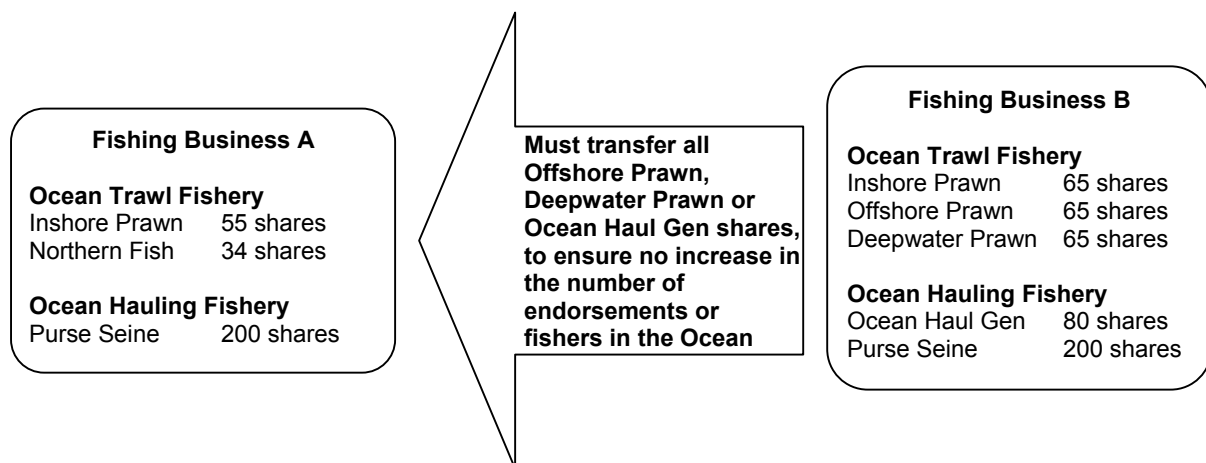
One or more shares for a class of share can be transferred to another shareholder in the same Fishery, other than for those classes of share listed below. This enables fishing business owners to acquire additional endorsements within a Fishery without increasing the number of fishers in the Fishery.



Note: As soon as trading takes place the minimum shareholding requirements are applied to determine if the transferor remains, and the transferee becomes, eligible for endorsements.

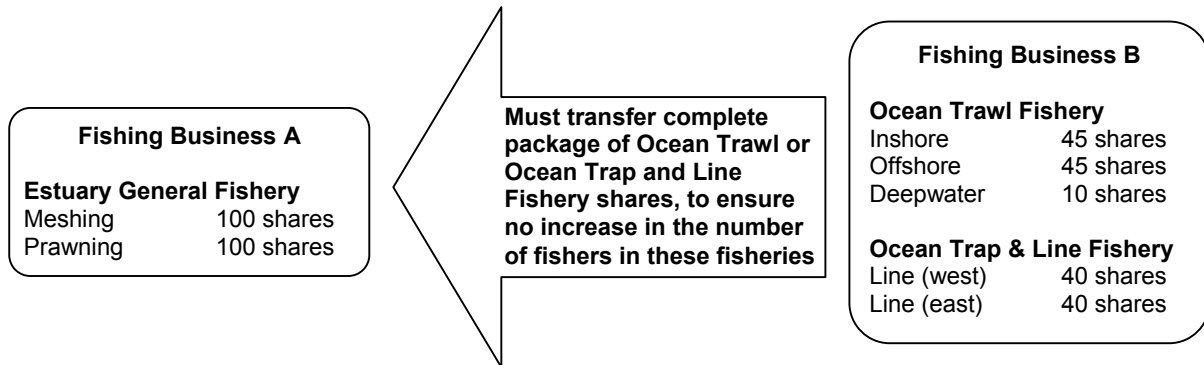
The classes of share listed below must be transferred as a complete package. This enables fishing business owners to acquire additional endorsements within a Fishery without increasing the number of endorsements or fishers in the Fishery. Note that for these classes of share the minimum shareholding is less than the maximum number of shares of that class originally allocated to the fishing business.

Ocean Trawl Inshore Prawn Shares
 Ocean Trawl Offshore Prawn Shares
 Ocean Trawl Deepwater Prawn Shares
 Ocean Trawl Northern Fish Shares
 Ocean Trap and Line Spanner Crab Northern Zone Shares
 Ocean Hauling General Shares (Regions 1-7)
 Ocean Hauling Bait Net Shares (Regions 1-6)
 Ocean Hauling Garfish Net Shares (Regions 1,3,4,5,6,7)
 Ocean Hauling Net Shares (Regions 1-7)
 Ocean Hauling Purse Seine Shares (Regions 1-7)



3. Becoming eligible for an endorsement in a new Fishery

All shares allocated to a shareholder in the Fishery must be transferred as a complete package if transferring to a person who does not hold shares in the Fishery (as defined under Schedule 1 of the Act). This enables fishing business owners to acquire endorsements in a new fishery without increasing the number of fishers in the Fishery.



Note: As soon as trading takes place the minimum shareholding requirements are applied to determine if the transferor remains, and the transferee becomes, eligible for endorsements.

Outcome

For noting and discussion.

Issue

Proposed changes to licensing arrangements for NSW Commercial Fisheries

Background

Implementing the share management framework provides an opportunity to streamline licensing and administrative arrangements across individual fisheries and the wider commercial fishing industry.

New licences and endorsements will need to be issued and take effect on commencement of management plans as existing commercial fishing licences that include restricted fishery endorsements will cease to have effect.

A number of regulatory reforms are proposed to streamline administration of commercial fisher licensing, to enable issue of new fishing business cards that include endorsements, and to improve flexibility with respect boat licensing.

A presentation will be provided at each upcoming MAC meeting on the proposed changes which include:

Commercial fishing licences

- Issuing commercial fishing licence on credit card size plastic card
- Aligning all licence expiry dates to the financial year ie 30 June 2007
- Moving endorsements to fishing business card
- Removing and simplifying conditions
- Including licence conditions in regulation where needed
- Authorising use of crew subject to fishery and or endorsement based rules

Fishing business card

- Listing endorsements associated with a fishing business on a credit card size plastic card
- Streamlining nominations
 - Fishing business owner advises Department of one or more licensed commercial fishers to be listed as potential nominated fisher
 - Fishing business owner selects one licensed commercial fisher from their list as nominated fisher and advises Department.
- Commercial fishing licence holder selected as nominated fisher and has possession of the fishing business card is taken to hold the endorsements.
- Removing and simplifying endorsement conditions
- Including endorsement conditions in regulation where needed
- No nomination fee

Fishing boat licences

- Issuing fishing boat licences on credit card size plastic card
- Aligning all expiry dates to financial year – 30 June 2007
- Removing and simplifying conditions
- Including licence conditions in regulation where needed
- Moving endorsements to the fishing business card
- New licence format includes

- 'boat licence' details - maximum length / units of boat that can be licensed
- 'physical boat' details – length / units of boat actually licensed.
- Boat replacement policy – automatic 10% or 1m length upgrade applied to original licence to establish maximum length then no tolerance.
- A physical boat up to the maximum length specified on licence, can be licensed - 2 year downgrade policy abolished.
- 'Abeyance' is where no physical boat attached to licence but fees remain payable
- Boat licences may be transferred separately to fishing businesses

2006/07 Fisheries Management Invoice

- Outstanding 2005/06 invoice charges are being pursued
- CPI increases only have been applied to 2005/06 charges
- 2006/07 invoices will be issued in September / October 2006.
- Share management charge and community contribution do not apply to new fisheries in 2006/07.

Outcomes

For noting and discussion.

Agenda Item 7	DPI
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Issue Reviewing the results of research on “riddling”.
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Background Management response 1.1d of the Estuary Prawn Trawl Fishery Management Strategy requires an investigation of the sustainability of riddling uncooked prawns. Attached is a copy of a paper titled “Reducing the short-term mortality of juvenile school prawns (<i>Metapenaeus macleayi</i>) discarded during trawling” for discussion.

Outcome

Agenda Item 8	Rolf Norington (Haw)
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Issue Brooklyn STP and outfall.

Background See Attachment 1 regarding Mr Rolf Norington’s comments on the proposed Brooklyn Sewerage Treatment Plant and outfall.

Outcome

Agenda Item 9	Rolf Norington (Haw)
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Issue Square mesh codends in the Hawkesbury River.
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Background See Attachment 2 for a comprehensive report by Mr Rolf Norington updating his trial work with square mesh codends in the Hawkesbury River.

Outcome

Agenda Item 11	Chairperson
Issue Next Meeting	
Background Opportunity is provided to schedule meetings for the next twelve months; including the proposed joint SIAC/5 MACs briefing prior to public exhibition of the draft share management plans.	
Outcome	

ATTACHMENT 1

BROOKLYN STP AND OUTFALL: EPT AGENDA ITEM 1/9/06

R.Norington, EPTMAC

The Brooklyn Sewer Treatment Plant and new outfall discharge point into the Hawkesbury River at the Brooklyn Road Bridge (Pacific Hwy/F3) has been approved by the Dept. of Planning. Construction has commenced for the system in Brooklyn and the first connections are expected to occur by October 2007, with commissioning of the new outfall to follow.

Issues surrounding the new sewer discharge point and the disposal of tertiary treated effluent into the Hawkesbury EPT Fishery were raised prior to approval by individual fishers, the Hawkesbury Trawl Association, the Brooklyn Estuary Management Committee, Oceanwatch and DPI. These have been ignored. The challenge industry and management face is to now identify the crucial issues that will affect our fishery. This can be separated into 2 categories:

1. Issues which immediately affect the fishery on commission: The most notable issue which takes effect instantly is the implementation of “no take” and exclusion zones around the discharge point by the NSW Food Authority, to be enforced by DPI. Information on these zones is difficult to obtain due to a “wait and see” approach by the Food Authority. It appears from informal discussion that a “no take” zone for all commercial and recreational fishing will be implemented for an area of a 500m radius around the discharge point (the Road Bridges), and an exclusion zone of a 5 km radius for the cooking and cooling of prawns. The “no take” zone raises issues for all fishing activities, and problems with the local and wider community are likely as DPI fisheries inspectors will be expected to prevent anyone from fishing in an area which is one of the most, if not the most popular recreational fishing spot on the lower Hawkesbury.

The exclusion zone will cause major restrictions in the ability for any EPT vessel operating out of the Lower Hawkesbury to cook prawns. From October 2007 it appears that no vessel operating in or from the Brooklyn area will be able to cook and cool prawns in the Hawkesbury River because of the size of the exclusion zone and the inability to travel outside it in a days fishing activities. This includes the entire prawning area of Mooney Mooney Creek. One would think that the fishers of this area are entitled to recognition and compensation on this issue immediately.

Immediate problems also exist with community perception of our product following commission. From discussions with members of the community it appears that from 10/07 no one in the Brooklyn area will be prepared to buy local prawns cooked for human consumption because of the belief that this product will be contaminated with STP effluent. The NSW Food Authority does not appear to be prepared to step in to provide information and advice to EPT Fishers and the community on the consumption of cooked prawns.

The EPT Fishers also believe that the overall value of the EPT fishery in the Hawkesbury River will be decreased as a result of this new outfall, not only affecting the marketing ability of the product, but also reducing the ability of management to continue to assess the ongoing value of the entire fishery.

2. Issues which will impact on the fishery in time.

There are many. An extremely important issue for the future which needs to be addressed now is the lack of knowledge concerning the release of tertiary treated effluent into the estuarine environment and its effect on zooplankton communities, which contain crustaceans and vary their position in the water column depending on the time of day and other factors. Efforts are being undertaken to secure more information regarding this unknown issue, and the fishers of the Hawkesbury EPT request the assistance of DPI in any way possible to secure information in predicting impacts prior to commissioning. The ongoing passage of marine life in its early stages as it makes its way upstream, and later as it travels to sea, and its interaction with sewer effluent plumes in an estuarine environment needs research to clarify what we are facing as soon as possible.

Another issue we are facing in time is the increase of effluent discharge from this outfall as development of the current area continues, and outlying areas (eg Cowan) are connected. This obviously would lead to increases in the area of “no take” and exclusion zones, reducing the area of the fishery and increasing the area where prawns cannot be cooked and cooled. This would render an even larger part of the fishery to be “green prawn only” and threaten the overall future of Hawkesbury EPT.

The fishers of the Hawkesbury EPT would like to see more emphasis placed on the importance of pre-commissioning monitoring. Sydney Water and Planning do not consider this to be necessary. At this stage Hornsby Shire Council are the only body prepared to undertake some monitoring prior to commissioning, but their budget is very restricted. NSW Maritime has offered their support in the form of watercraft and a boating officer to assist with sampling when convenient. We are requesting that DPI make a similar offer of support as there are watercraft and officers based at Brooklyn, and this assistance could be provided during the normal course of patrol duties. The information received would be beneficial to us all as we attempt to assess the impacts of this new outfall.

In conclusion, it must be stated that the comments from Sydney Water and Planning on their expectations regarding the effects of their new outfall on the environment and our fishery are based on their system running on 100% efficiency 24 hours per day, 7 days per week. All information the Food authority will one day have to use to determine exclusion and “no take” zones is based on this principle. We have no confidence in being told where and where not to fish and cook/cool when these zones can be rendered ineffective as soon as the first case of human error, unknown to us, occurs with the everyday running of the sewer treatment plant and the discharge of effluent (which is supposed to be maintained to a particular standard) into the Hawkesbury River. The concerns of EPT fishers here are many, and we ask DPI to appreciate the gravity of the situation we all are facing, certainly an adverse effect on the way we will be able to continue to fish and DPI will be able to continue to manage.

ATTACHMENT 2

PROGRESS REPORT FOR ATTENTION OF EPTMAC: FURTHER TRIALS OF SQUARE MESH CODENDS IN THE HAWKESBURY RIVER EPT FISHERY

By Rolf Norington , Hawkesbury River EPT Fisher, FL820736, PO Box 159 Brooklyn

During the 2005/6 Summer/Autumn period in the Hawkesbury, square mesh codends of 30mm mesh size were applied to the Hawkesbury EPT fishery and used in everyday operation on a trawler of small to medium size. In the summer months a square codend of 100 bars in circumference was attached to a prawn trawl of 5 fathom headline containing a "blubber chute" as a BRD and used to target prawns in the central part of the River, between Bar Point and Laughtondale. During the Autumn period, a square mesh codend of 150 bars in circumference was attached to a squid trawl of 5 fathom headline and used to target squid below Juno Pt, at the seaward end of the fishery. The following discussion deals mainly with the use of the square codend in the squid trawl.

The square codend of 100 bars, which was used for prawning, provided similar results to the standard codend of 86 bars, which was tested and discussed last year with a net containing a similar BRD(see last report on square codends in the Hawkesbury). The extra 14 bars made an improvement in the handling of the codend and product, giving more room for the catch to move around and possibly assisting the escape of smaller prawns. Large objects and weed are still able to choke and damage a codend of these dimensions, and it is important to note that prawning was carried out downstream of the area where weed is mainly encountered.

At the downstream end of the Hawkesbury EPT fishery, where squid are targeted, there is the presence of jellyfish ("white blubber") at certain times through the year. Catches are severely hampered by hauls of jellyfish, which can be sporadic in size and location depending on wind, sea and tidal conditions. Photographs depict the effect of jellyfish on the trawl, including the sheer volume of the catch in a conventional diamond mesh codend, resulting in handling and stability problems, especially in adverse weather. These problems could be intensified with the use of a square mesh codend in the same situation, as the square codend cannot expand to allow a large amount of "blubber" in the same way as a conventional codend. On occasions, large hauls of striped catfish or herring, a small pelagic schooling fish, may occur as bycatch in a similar way, as a squid trawl can be described as a semi-pelagic trawl in the way it achieves lift to target squid. After weather events resulting in heavy seas, large amounts of kelp and marine weed are shifted from the shorelines to the main estuary by tidal movement, resulting in large incidental hauls by trawlers on occasions. Again, problems regarding handling and safety develop from this.

To adapt a square mesh codend to these conditions is a challenge. Use of the combination codend, ie a conventional diamond mesh codend containing 30mm square mesh patches in the previous tests, was successful in dealing with a larger haul, and it is possible that a codend of similar dimensions could be adapted to the seaward end of the Hawkesbury EPT Fishery. In this case, an initial trial has been carried out to test a full square mesh codend of 150 bars in circumference attached to a 50 mm 12 ply 4 seam flyer squid trawl of 5.3 fathoms in headline. This was carried out over a limited period, in that direct comparisons with a diamond mesh codend in condition of severe jellyfish and kelp could not take place. However, the square 150 codend was tested in a variety of situations that can occur in the normal process of trawling for squid in the lower Hawkesbury, providing encouraging results and enthusiasm for further trials.

The square 150 codend is to some degree a combination codend. This is because conventional diamond mesh is attached at the top of the codend, for correct attachment to the reduced diamond mesh extension piece containing the BRD, in this case a Hawkesbury square mesh panel (40mm). Conventional 40mm diamond mesh is also attached to the bottom of the 30mm square mesh, providing a reduction and area for the drawstring (refer to plans of codend attached).

The square 150 codend appeared to open and hold its shape well in the water. On retrieval during normal clean shots, the catch was seen to be swimming around freely inside the bag. The 30mm square meshes appeared to be holding their required shape very well, enabling the easy escape of small catch through the square meshes. The Hawkesbury square mesh panel BRD appears to be opening correctly across the top of the extension piece. This is supported by the absence of whitebait inside the square mesh codend whilst some were caught in the diamond meshes further up the trawl.

During normal operation, with the usual amount of variation encountered in conditions influencing the total catches in trawling the lower Hawkesbury, the square mesh codend of 150 bars in circumference was efficient in size for a 5 fathom squid trawl for the duration of this trial. It is important to note that only moderate incidental catches of jellyfish, kelp and marine debris were made over this period, due to the time of the year and the fairly moderate weather conditions that lasted over the trial period. It is also important to note that in comparison to the smaller gear used in the trial, a trawl net of 6 fathom headline would be expected to catch larger amounts of jellyfish and deposited kelp, and the circumference of the codend may need to be increased. This leads to the necessity to trial a square mesh codend of 200 bars in circumference attached to a trawl net of 6 fathom (11m) headline, using a vessel of larger proportions at the seaward end of the fishery.

The attached photographs highlight some incidental encounters in the form of kelp, marine debris and schooling catfish and herring whilst trawling for squid in the lower Hawkesbury using the square 150 codend during the month of March 2006. It is important to note that the photograph demonstrating retrieval in a normal clean shot is representative of the usual catches, with variation in the amount of squid for most shots.

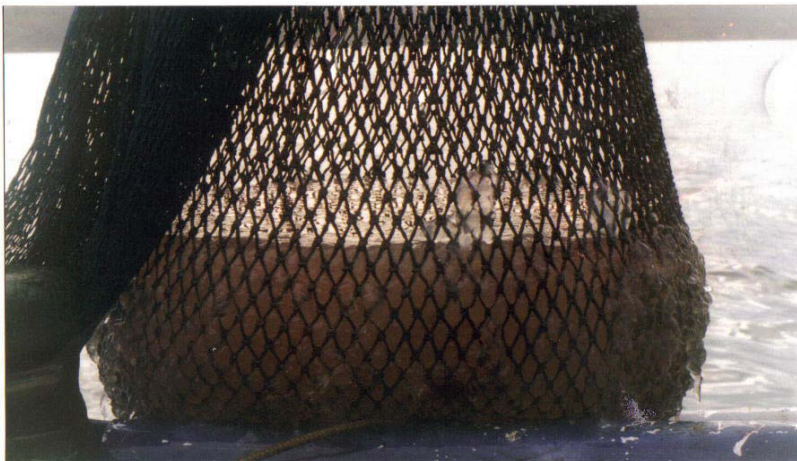
Whilst the concept of a square mesh codend of larger circumference demands further research and application, it must be noted that concerns exist about the durability of the material in the conditions described above, and the length of time and labour required to construct a square codend of over 100 bars. This is due to the absolute need for all the borders of the material to be seamed with 36 ply twine to prevent early breakage. Larger square mesh codends require diamond meshes at each end for efficient joining and placement of the drawstring. A codend of 150 to 200 bars does require quite an amount of network. This does not rule out further research, but does restrict the ability of some fishers who do not engage in network on a regular basis to access or gain enthusiasm for this development. Consideration must be also given to the amount of time an experienced fisher takes to construct a codend of these dimensions, as during peak fishing times the incidence of breakage and replacement may create major setbacks to the fishing operation with these codends in use in the lower Hawkesbury.

RECOMMENDATION: Research up to this point on the use and application of 30mm square mesh in codends in the Hawkesbury EPT fishery has been encouraging and useful. Much more is needed, including the trial of a square mesh codend of 200 bars in circumference in Broken Bay and the lower Hawkesbury during all conditions. This is expected to occur from August 2006 and permits are being arranged. The square 150

codend, currently in use, will be further trialled during 2006/7 if approved. Problems continue to escalate with egeria and other weed in prawning operations in the upper Hawkesbury, and this needs to be discussed between researchers and the participants in that area of the Hawkesbury EPT fishery, especially with reference to the application of square mesh codends in that area of the fishery. The fishers of the Hawkesbury EPT are hoping the department will continue to work with industry in research which will be beneficial for all involved in the fishery, in a time frame which addresses the many concerns that exist in differing areas and conditions within the fishery.



Trawling for squid on the lower Hawkesbury River.



White jellyfish inside a conventional 40mm codend, which expands to allow the volume. There was a catch of squid mixed in with the “blubber”



White blubber is often retained throughout the trawl, causing handling problems and affecting the performance of the net.



The 150 square mesh codend and Hawkesbury square mesh panel BRD on retrieval, with a decent haul of squid, some swimming towards the top of the net and against the flow.



The same shot immediately after landing. Water is added to the tub for sorting. The unsorted catch contains squid and some jellyfish.



An incidental catch of 50kg of herring, encountered during a short tow. This codend was able to contain the weight and volume. A quantity of squid was sorted out



This incidental load of striped catfish also contained a quantity of squid. The circumference of this square mesh codend enabled handling of the catch.



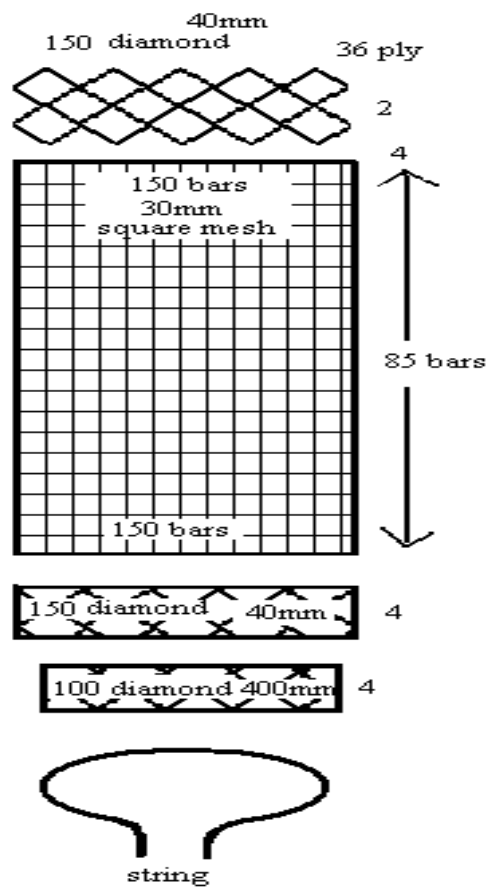
This catch in the square mesh 150 codend included a 20 litre oil drum partially filled with mud, which led to the net fouling further with some kelp and stringrays. Silver biddies and squid were also caught.



The diamond mesh extension and the opening on the 150 square mesh codend were sufficient to remove the drum for disposal on shore. This would have been more difficult in a square mesh codend of less circumference.



The square mesh codend material must be seamed to prevent early breakage.



The 150 square mesh codend