

ESTUARY PRAWN TRAWL MANAGEMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING

AGENDA

26 November 2009

9:30 am to 5:00 pm

2nd meeting for 2009
Sydney Fish Markets
Pyrmont NSW

Chairperson

Mr Pat Appleton, deputising for Mr Brian Beer

Management Advisory Committee Representatives

Mr Don Johnson	Clarence River
Ms Suzane Hamilton	Hunter River
Mr Rolf Norington	Hawkesbury River
Mr Malcolm Poole	Recreational Fishery
Ms Anissa Lawrence	Conservation
Ms Fiona Hill	Director-General's nominee

	Welcome and Apologies	Chairperson
	Agreement on agenda for 26 November 2009.	Chairperson
	Confirmation of draft outcomes for EPTMAC meeting on 28 and 29 April 2009	Chairperson
	Correspondence received and sent	Chairperson
1	Business arising from the previous meeting	Chairperson
2	Updates – Research, Compliance, Resource Management	I&I NSW
3	Industry Reform Program for NSW Commercial Fisheries	I&I NSW
4	Presentation - Habitat Makes Fish Happen: Loss of habitat along NSW estuaries	I&I NSW
5	Introduction and overview of new FishOnline System	I&I NSW
6	Increasing infrastructure in the Hawkesbury EPT Fishery and its Impact upon Fishery access	Industry
7	Transferability of shareholdings	Industry
8	FRDC project – Empowering Industry Research, Development & Extension	Ian Knuckey & Chris Calogeras
9	Age, growth and maturity of cuttlefish and octopus	I&I NSW
10	Other Business	Industry/ I&I NSW
11	Chairperson's summary	Chairperson

Chairperson**Issue**

Welcome and apologies

Background

The Committee welcomes members who have recently been re-elected to industry representative positions.

As part of the recent election processes Mrs. Suzanne Hamilton was elected to the Hunter River position and Mr Rolf Norington was elected to the Hawkesbury River position. Cabinet approval has been sought for appointment of members following the conclusion of the recent elections and expression of interest processes.

Outcome**Chairperson****Issue**

Agreement on agenda

Background

Notice of the meeting and call for agenda items was circulated to committee members, Regional Industry Convenor, Fishermen's Co-operatives, other interested parties and regional offices of Industry & Investment NSW on 29 September 2009. A revised notice was circulated on 12 November 2009 advising of the venue change from Cronulla Fisheries Centre to the Sydney Fish Markets.

Outcome**Chairperson****Issue**

Confirmation of draft minutes from the previous meeting on 28 and 29 April 2009.

Background

Draft outcomes for the EPTMAC meeting on 28 and 29 April 2009 were circulated amongst MAC members for comment prior to being distributed to the Regional Industry Convenor, Fishermen's Co-operatives, other interested parties and regional offices of the Industry & Investment NSW.

Outcome

Chairperson

Issue

Correspondence received and sent

Background

A list of correspondence received is attached for the Committee to note.
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Outcome

EPTMAC CORRESPONDENCE LIST

Date	From	Issue	To	Action
27/04/2009	Biosecurity Australia	Advice re prawn and prawn products import Risk analysis	EPTMAC	Information
6/05/2009	I&I NSW	Smart Gear Competition information	EPTMAC	Information
6/05/2009	I&I NSW	Cultural Fishing consultation	EPTMAC	Information/comment
11/05/2009	I&I NSW	Communication to Industry regarding grants and programs to facilitate growth etc.	EPTMAC	Information
12/05/2009	I&I NSW	MPAC – Membership call for expression of interest	EPTMAC	Information
11/06/2009	I&I NSW	Proposed Marine Parks Regulation 2009 and Regulatory Impact Statement	EPTMAC	Comment
16/06/2009	I&I NSW	EPTMAC Meeting Draft Outcomes – 28 & 29 April meeting 2009 & Links to SMPs and other relevant legislation.	EPTMAC	Comment
13/07/2009	I&I NSW	Out of Session item - Prawn counts and incidental catch ratios	EPTMAC	Comment
13/07/2009	I&I NSW	Pyrmont Pact to promote strong future for commercial fishers	MAC Chairperson	Information
13/07/2009	I&I NSW	Seafood CRC – Marketing Master Class	EPTMAC	Information
15/07/2009	Chairperson	Chairperson summary from EPTMAC meeting 28 & 29 April 2009	Minister	Comment
17/08/2009	Biosecurity Australia	Advice re prawn and prawn products import Risk analysis	EPTMAC	Information
8/09/2009	I&I NSW	Out of Session item - EIS for Marine Fish Stocking in NSW	EPTMAC	Comment
11/09/2009	I&I NSW	Market Power – NSW Workshops	EPTMAC	Information
16/09/2009	I&I NSW	Availability for MAC meeting	EPTMAC	Comment
02/10/2009	I&I NSW	November MAC meeting	EPTMAC	Information/comment
20/10/2009	I&I NSW	Seafood Directions Conference 2010	EPTMAC	Information
12/11/2009	I&I NSW	Change of venue for November MAC meeting	EPTMAC	Information

Issue

Business arising from the previous meeting.

Background

An action status list is attached for the Committee to note.

Items complete and previously noted by the EPTMAC as complete have been removed from the list. Only action items included in the outcomes for the EPTMAC meeting on 28 & 29 April 2009 are included in the attached Action Status List.

It is recommended that the EPTMAC reviews the Action Status List with the objective of removing those actions that are not a priority or are no longer relevant.

Outcome

Action Status List for the EPTMAC – Updated March 2008

Recommendation/Resolution/Action	Meeting	Responsibility	In Progress	Pending	Complete	Ongoing
I&I NSW to review pricing and valuation methodologies in the EPT fishery when resources are available.	November 2007	Industry/ I&I NSW		✓		
Hawkesbury EPT representative to arrange with the local DFO the appropriate time to meet with constituents to form a joint I&I NSW/Industry working group and agree on approach for responding to small prawns or high levels of by-catch under the 'prawn count' and 'incidental catch ratio' program, noting the success experienced in the Clarence River.	November 2007	Industry		✓		
I&I NSW to consider the MAC's suggestion that a small working group of relevant I&I NSW and industry experts be formed to review the efficacy of the current method of measuring mesh size in respect of square-mesh codends.	November 2007	I&I NSW	✓ Internal discussions have been initiated. See Management Update.			
Industry representatives to include in the next agenda a list of species that they wish to be added to the 'by-product' lists in the EPTSMP.	November 2007	Industry		✓		
I&I NSW to replace the draft outcomes on the website with the final outcomes for previous MAC meeting.	April 2009	I&I NSW			✓	
Industry members to provide I&I NSW with their local co-operative prawn prices.	April 2009	Industry		✓		
SIAC member to raise the issue of appropriate methodologies for NSW commercial fisheries to allow comparison across primary industries.	April 2009	Industry		✓		

I&I NSW to provide the Committee members with a link to the SMP's and Regulations for the EPTF.	April 2009	I&I NSW			✓ Emailed to MAC members 16 June.	
I&I NSW to provide the committee with a breakdown of offences recorded as 'non-comply' within the graphs.	April 2009	I&I NSW			✓ See Compliance Update	
I&I NSW to provide a summary of the structural adjustment presentation to fishers.	April 2009	I&I NSW			✓ A copy was mailed to all fishing business owners.	
Industry members to discuss the package for reform within their regions and provide comment as soon as possible.	April 2009	Industry	✓			
I&I NSW to provide the Committee the opportunity to comment on any proposed definition of "stowed" fishing gear prior to the Regulation being gazetted.	April 2009	I&I NSW		✓		
I&I NSW to consult with Hunter River EPT MAC representative when finalising specifications regarding any amendment to the Hunter River season.	April 2009	I&I NSW			✓ See Management Update.	
Clarence River representative to consult local fishers regarding the proposed amendment to the ungraded prawn count and provide advice to I&I NSW as soon as possible.	April 2009	Industry			✓	
I&I NSW to contact Conservation Managers in relation to who has the contract to dredge Palmers Channel; entrance to Lake Wooloweyah.	April 2009	I&I NSW		✓		

Issue Updates

Background

Opportunity is provided for members to provide an update on contemporary issues relating to the management of the EPT Fishery. Following are updates by I & I NSW on contemporary issues that may be of interest to stakeholders in the EPT Fishery.

Management Update

Departmental Structure

Formed in July 2009, the Department of Industry & Investment, trading as Industry & Investment NSW, brings together a number of former NSW Government departments and authorities. These former agencies included the Department of Primary Industries (including Forests NSW), Department of Water and Energy, Rural Assistance Authority and the NSW Food Authority.

The Deputy Director General Primary Industries, George Davey, has approved a new Branch structure for the Fisheries and Compliance Division within the Primary Industries Group. Mr Paul O'Connor is now the Principal Director of Fisheries and Compliance.

The Branches within this division are, namely:

- The Fisheries Resource Management Branch (which manages the sustainability of our fish stocks, and the commercial and recreational harvest);
- The Conservation & Aquaculture Branch (which manages threatened species, habitat protection & restoration, and aquaculture issues);
- The Compliance Operations Branch (which manages agricultural and fisheries compliance activities, and the shark meshing program); and
- The Fisheries Strategic Review Branch (which coordinates all review activities, including the revamp of IT infrastructure related to share-management).

Seafood Industry Advisory Council (SIAC)

SIAC met on the 28 October 2009 primarily to discuss the outcomes from recent port meetings facilitated by SIAC representatives on the Industry Reform Program of NSW Commercial Fisheries, known as the Pyrmont Pact. The EPT MAC representative to SIAC will provide an update.

Marine Bioregional Planning

There are currently 5 Marine Regions identified for planning by the Australian Government: North, North-west, South-east, and East. The East Marine Region encompasses Commonwealth waters offshore from the northern tip of Cape York to the southern NSW town of Bermagui.

There are four key stages in development of the East Marine Bioregional Plan:

Stage 1 - The Regional Profile

Released in May 09 can be found online at www.environment.gov.au

Stage2 - The Draft plan

Stage 3 – The Final Plan

Stage 4 – Implementation and Review

The draft marine bioregional plan is likely to be released for public comment (60 days) in early 2010.

The draft plan will include policies and programs for the management of priority marine conservation issues in the region.

Hunter River season

An amendment to the *Fisheries Management (Estuary Prawn Trawl Share Management Plan) Regulation 2006* (EPT SMP) has been approved so that the Hunter River prawn trawl season commences “...on the first weekday on or after 1 November each year and finishes on the last Friday in May in each succeeding year.” This arrangement also applies to the commercial fishers in the Estuary General Fishery when taking prawns in the Hunter River. Further to this an amendment to the *Fisheries Management (General) Regulation 2002* has been approved so that the Hunter River prawn fishing season for recreational fishers commences on 1 November and continues to 31 May in each successive year.

Clarence River season

The following amendments to the EPT SMP have been approved so that the Clarence River trawl season (except Lake Wooloweyah) commences “on the Monday nearest to 1 December each year, and finishes on the Friday nearest to 31 May in each succeeding year.” Further to this the trawl season “may be extended by not more than 15 working days by notice in writing given by a fisheries officer.” The fisheries officer may, at any time before extending the trawl season, arrange for a trial trawl to be conducted in the Clarence River area for the purposes of establishing the availability and size of prawns or the level of bycatch.

Bycatch Reduction Devices

An update on BRD options for the Clarence River will be provided at the meeting.

Measuring square-mesh

Industry members have recently raised concerns with the technique currently being used by compliance officers in NSW to measure the mesh size of square-mesh codends. The Department will undertake a review of the current technique and assess alternative options to address these concerns.

Research Update

An update will be provided at the meeting by Dr Steve Montgomery. Also see Agenda Item 9.

Compliance Update

An update will be provided by Mr Warren Winter at the meeting. Refer to tables below.

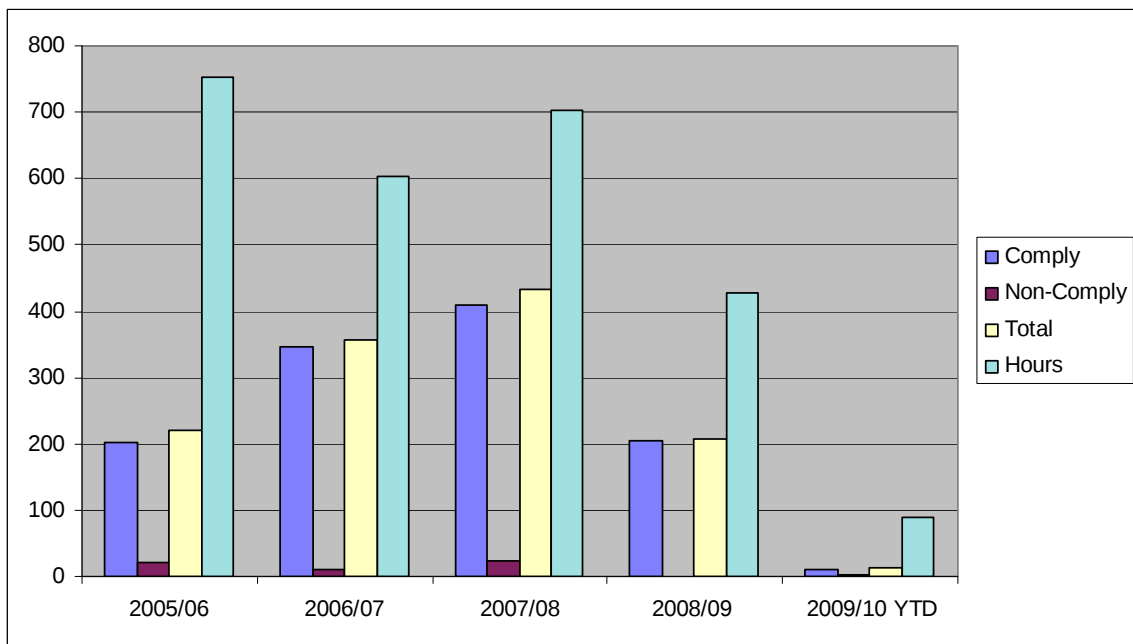


Table 1: EPT compliance breakdown 2005/06 to 2009/10.

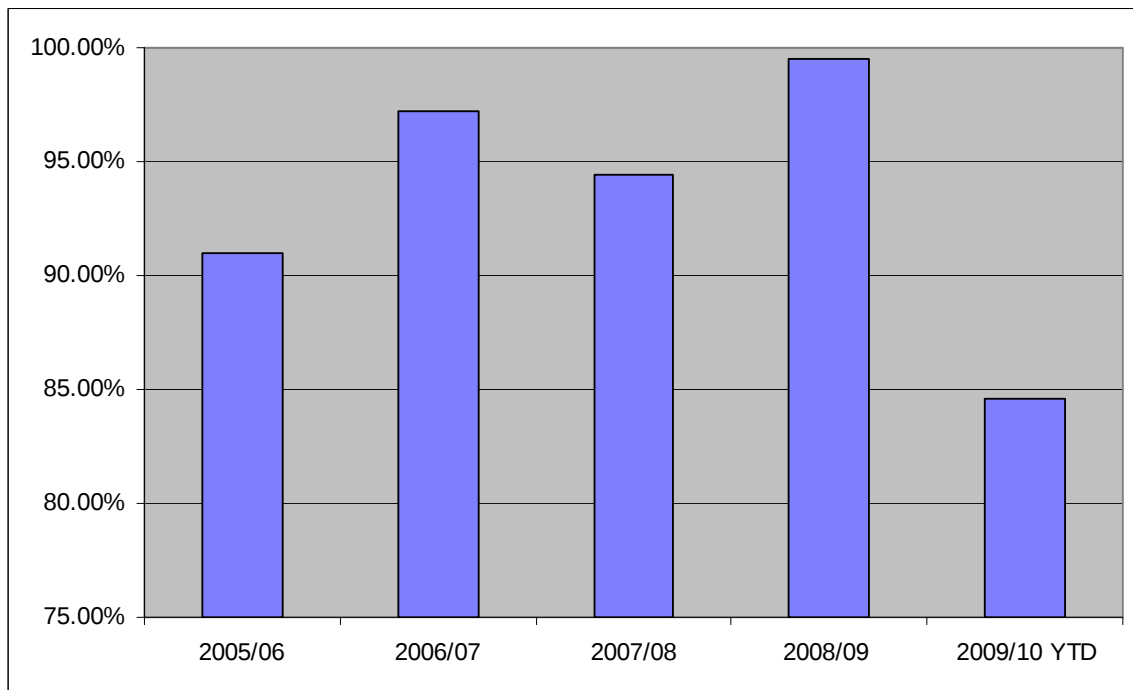


Table 2: Compliance percentage 2005/06 – 2009/10.

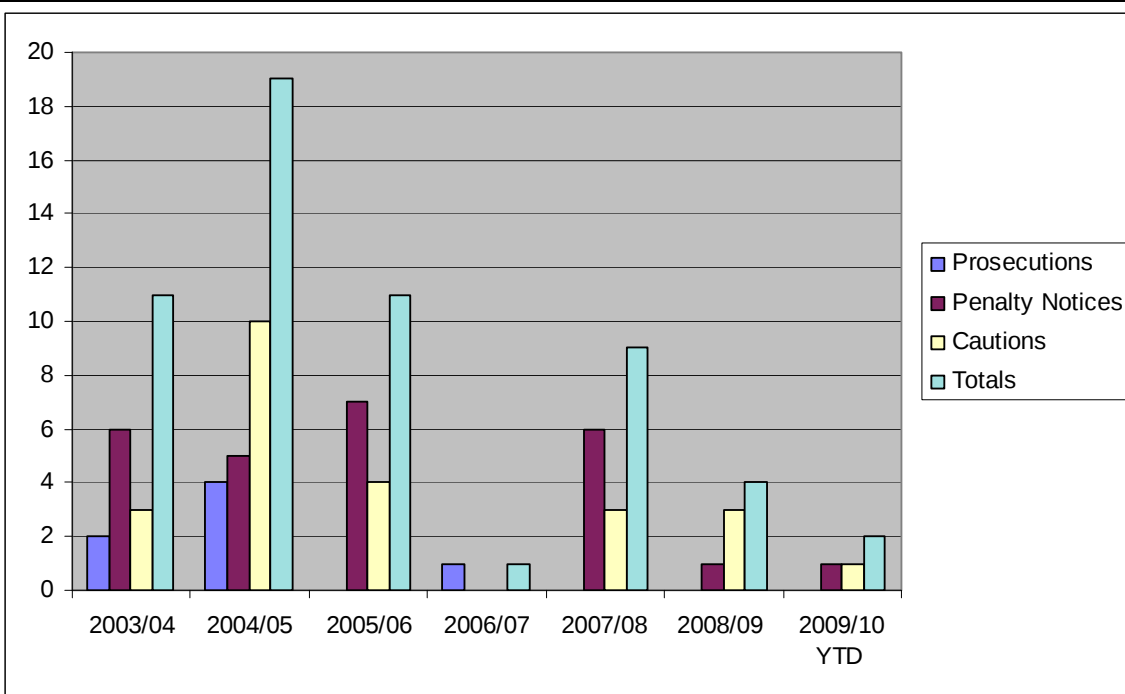


Table 3: Breakdown of EPT offences 2003/04 – 2009/10.

Outcome

Issue

Industry Reform for NSW Commercial Fisheries

Background

The industry reform and structural adjustment package (Pymont Pact) was recently discussed at a series of port meetings along the coast. Members of the Seafood Industry Advisory Council (SIAC) structural adjustment presented these information sessions which were well received.

Components of the reform program as presented are:

1. Creating a range of tools to provide for tradable input and output controls
2. Providing for initial restructuring with minimum shareholdings and exit grants
3. Reviewing industry regulatory requirements and streamlining administrative systems
4. Reviewing cost recovery
5. Reviewing fishing closures
6. Moving the focus toward risk-based resource management
7. Initiating an industry development program
8. Enhancing industry's voice to government

In summary comments received through the consultation process indicated:

- Overall support for the reform package
- Tools for tradeable controls supported if optional. Regional options were considered important and many fishers expressed the view that quota would not work in multi-species fisheries.
- Exit grant structure generally well received.
- Risk focus for management priorities generally supported. Need to consider "whole of environment" risks and develop a transparent process was emphasised.
- Strong support for review of closures and concern about concentration of effort through previous buy-outs/closures.
- Need for cost recovery understood, however no one wants higher fees. Industry would be seeking increased influence on expenditure with the introduction of cost recovery.
- General support for industry development program.
- Single industry voice supported. There was a general willingness to pay despite substantial concern that it might not work and political issues.
- Other issues raised included:
 - Impact of illegal fishing on viability e.g. interfering with traps, deepwater species bag limit and black market
 - Clear that communication strategy with industry will be important and there were some complaints about MAC members' communication.

SIAC is now considering its advice to the Minister on whole of industry issues and has provided advice on priorities for implementing the reform program. Fishery-specific suggestions made during the meetings or in submissions will however require consideration from individual fishery MACs.

Advice is sought from the MAC on fishery specific priorities for implementing the industry reform agenda and the tools for tradeable input or output “units”, which industry feels could be suitable for use if needed.

Outcome

For discussion by the Committee

Issue

Habitat Makes Fish Happen: Loss of habitat along NSW estuaries

Background

Estuaries are critical for the survival of many species. Tens of thousands of birds, mammals, fish, and other wildlife depend on estuarine habitats as places to live, feed, and reproduce. Many species of fish and shellfish rely on the sheltered waters of estuaries as protected places to spawn, giving them the nickname "nurseries of the sea." Hundreds of marine organisms, including most commercially valuable fish species, depend on estuaries at some point during their development.

In NSW, coastal catchments have undergone extensive modification as a result of agricultural, urban and industrial development. Much of the increased pressure affects areas near the edges of estuaries and bays, both of which are vital for the survival of juvenile fishes and crustaceans. Such development has had many detrimental impacts on aquatic habitat such as loss of riparian vegetation, wetland destruction, alteration of river flows, damage to seagrasses and mangroves, loss of snags or reefs, the introduction of exotic species, an increase in general water pollution and barriers to fish passage and flow. The cumulative effect of these impacts on fish habitat, which to date has not been fully documented or understood, is to reduce considerably populations of commercially important species.

What we do know however for example is that between 1967 and 1989 there was a 100% loss in saltmarsh and mangroves and a 37% loss in paperbark from the Tuckean swamp in the Richmond River. This equates to a loss of 306ha of mangroves. Studies in Moreton Bay in Queensland have revealed the value of mangroves in monetary terms to be equivalent to \$13 600 per annum of marketable fish per hectare. If we look at figure in terms of the loss of mangroves from Tuckean swamp alone this equates to approximately \$4M! In addition it has been calculated that in the US that 1000ha of coastal vegetation (back swamps, mangrove, salt marsh, floodplains etc) can produce 100 tonnes of shrimp. In the Richmond River it is estimated that 26,400 ha of coastal vegetation is affected by altered drainage. This potentially could equate to a loss of 2600 tonnes of prawns.

The coming decades will see NSW experience extensive change to its marine and coastal environment. Large-scale changes in population are expected, regional development in primary, secondary and service industries will continue and impacts from climate change are forecast to occur. Simultaneously and, in some respects in conflict with these changes, community demands for healthy and robust ecosystems will continue to grow.

Therefore protection and restoration of the widest possible range of estuarine habitats is recognised as essential for the long term viability of our estuaries and the commercial fisheries they support. Considerable work has been completed to restore fish habitat along the NSW coast, however there is still much more work to be done to protect remaining good habitat and restore degraded areas.

Outcome

Issue

Introduction and overview of new FishOnline System

Background

The purpose of the Commercial Fisheries Structural Adjustment (CFSA) – Year 1 Project is to establish a commercial fishers online self service system to be known as FishOnline so that revised management arrangements can be implemented that provide enhanced services to industry at reduced cost.

The specific objectives of the CFSA Systems Reform Year 1 project are:

1. Provision of a commercial fishers' online self service system to be known as FisherDirect that is used by external clients and supports quota transfers and catch and effort reporting and that is extensible to other transaction types in the future.
2. Provision of an Interactive Voice Response (IVR) system to be known as FisherIVR that support pre and post commercial fishing landing reports.
3. Expansion and enhancement of the existing CRQMS system to be known as FisherAssist that is used by I&I NSW staff to provide assisted service to clients and to manage the overall system.

The suite of applications developed under this project will be generically known as FishOnline.

Outcome

Agenda Item 6	Industry
Issue Increasing infrastructure in the Hawkesbury EPT Fishery and its impact upon fishery access.	
Background Presentation to be provided at the meeting by Gary Howard.	
Outcome	

Issue

Transferability of shareholdings

Background

The Hunter River EPT MAC representative wishes to discuss current share trading rules and the following scenario with the MAC to gain advice regarding this issue:

'Business A' Started with 100 Hunter River EPT Shares

Owner of 'Business A' invested in an additional 100 Hunter River EPT Shares and added them to 'Business A'. 'Business A' now has 200 Hunter River EPT Shares.

The owner now wishes to transfer 100 shares from 'Business A' to 'Business B' however; this is not permissible under the current transfer rules if 'Business B' does not have any estuary prawn trawl shares.

Issues:

- Unsure why 'Business A' can not transfer the full complement of shares (100) to another business with or without estuary prawn trawl shares;
- Industry need to be better educated regarding the current transfer rules.

Current Position.

Under current arrangements one or more shares in the EPT fishery may be transferred to another person, if their fishing business already includes at least one share in the EPT fishery. Alternatively, all the EPT fishery shares held may be transferred to another person if their fishing business includes shares in the OT, OH, OT&L or EG fishery. These arrangements are in place to ensure that the number of fishing businesses eligible to participate in the fishery remains constant or decreases over time, rather than increasing.

Within the Estuary Prawn Trawl fishery there are currently 14 fishing businesses with more than the minimum shareholding and/or shares in more than one estuary. If share trading rules were amended to allow the transfer of any number of EPT shares to a fishing business with or without EPT shares, the current 14 businesses could increase to 25 fishing businesses with entitlements to undertake estuary prawn trawling.

The EPT MAC may wish to consider the use of minimum shareholding and share trading arrangements within the context of the broader industry adjustment package.

Outcome

Issue

FRDC project – Empowering the Fishing & Seafood Industry

Background

Chris Calogeras, C-AID Consultants and, Dr Ian Knuckey, Fishwell Consulting, are undertaking a FRDC funded project titled: “Empowering Industry R&D: Developing an Industry driven R&D model for the Australian fishing and seafood Industry - partnerships to improve efficiency, profitability and performance (FRDC Project#2009/300).” The aim of the project is to capture industry RD&E ideas, especially those that will improve the ‘value’ of industry, and link them with the most appropriate RD&E providers or researchers to develop projects through a range of funding sources.

As part of the project, a series of workshops are being run in all major cities and a number of regional centres across Australia. The workshops are being run separately for the commercial, recreational and indigenous fishing sectors to ensure the key RD&E needs for each are understood. Following these workshops the coordination of themes and project development across sectors on a national and regional RD&E scale, will be undertaken.

Industry project ideas, R&D providers and potential funders will be linked through an easy to use website to allow projects to be developed in partnership between those involved.

Chris and Ian will provide further information and encourage discussion on commercial fishing RD&E needs at the meeting.

Outcome

Issue

FRDC Project -Age, growth and maturity of cuttlefish and octopus species in New South Wales' waters

Background

Cephalopods (squid, cuttlefish and octopus) are an important component of the commercial seafood landings in New South Wales (NSW) contributing around \$3.5million per annum to production. This production is predominantly through the ocean prawn trawl fishery (65% by weight) with contributions from ocean fish trawl (13%), estuary prawn trawl (13%) and estuary general (9%) fisheries.

Many species comprise the commercial catch of cephalopods off NSW but *Sepia rozella*, *S. Hedleyi* (cuttlefish), *Octopus australis*, *O. tetricus* (octopus) and, *Sepioteuthis australis*, *Nototodarus gouldi* (squid) make up the bulk of the catch.

Whilst there is some literature about the commercially important squid species from other areas that could be used for the assessment of NSW stocks of squid, there is no information about the cuttlefish nor octopus species. Cephalopods are relatively short-lived animals whose life history makes population sizes susceptible to environmental perturbations and the impact of fishing. Of concern are the facts that landings have fallen since 2000-01 and little is known about the biology of cuttlefish or octopus species in the landings.

Information about growth, mortality and maturity are fundamental ingredients into the assessment of a stock. Cephalopods do not have the bony structure of fish so studying growth in these species is difficult. In cephalopods the 'hard parts' which could be studied are the gladius (squid), statolith (squid, and cuttlefish), cuttlebone (cuttlefish) and stylet (octopus).

In 2009 I&I NSW funded a one year study to determine the ages of *O. australis*. The study developed world first techniques for using electron microscopy to examine the rings deposited on the stylet and determine the periodicity of ring formation (Nuttall, Montgomery and Booth in press).

It is proposed to seek funding from the FRDC for a new study to examine spatial differences in the growth, and size of maturity in *S. rozella* and *S. hedleyi*, *O. australis* and *O. tetricus*. The results of this study will have relevance to the management of the stocks of these species not only off NSW but also those off other states.

A letter of support from the Estuary Prawn Trawl MAC is sought with regard to the proposed research project (see Attachment 1).

Outcome

Agenda Item 10**I & I NSW****Issue**

Other Business

Specific issues raised by each MAC representative follow for discussion.

- 1) Retention of Bycatch species in the Clarence River EPT Fishery
- 2) Clarence Valley Council and Lake Wooloweyah

Outcome**Agenda Item 11****Chairperson****Issue**

Chairperson's summary

Outcome



Dr Patrick Hone
Executive Director
Fisheries Research & Development Corporation
PO Box 222
Deakin West ACT 2600

Dear Dr Hone,

Support for FRDC Application 'Age determination, growth and maturity of cuttlefish and octopus species in New South Wales' waters'

The Estuary Prawn Trawl Management Advisory Committee would like to confirm their support for the above application. Members consider that the results from this project will provide important information needed to address some of the main issues confronting the management of cephalopod resources in NSW. The main one being the decline in catch rates in recent years.

Industry sees the information from this research to be essential to make optimal use of the cephalopod resources.

Yours sincerely

Mr Pat Appleton
A/EPT Chairperson

ESTUARY PRAWN TRAWL MANAGEMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Chairperson's summary Meeting of 28/29 April 2009

Attendance

All members were in attendance

The Estuary Prawn Trawl Management Advisory Committee met for a 2 day meeting on 28 & 29 April 2009 at Sydney Fish Market. Below is a summary of the main issues discussed at meeting;

1. Industry reform – Pyrmont Pact

The Committee were presented with the package of reforms for ensuring the long term sustainability and viability of commercial fisheries. The Committee in principle gave support for the reform package. Industry members supported SIAC presenting the reform package to broader industry. Industry recognised that the suite of tools presented were not going to be applicable to all aspects of the fisheries and should be 'food for thought'.

2. Regulatory Reform

The Committee discussed the amendments to the EPT Share Management Plan. The Committee provided comments on 3 other proposed amendments (see attached outcomes).

3. Hunter River Season

The Committee discussed the proposal for increasing the Hunter River trawl season and operating hours. The Committee supported the proposal to include a flexible 15 working day opening arrangement similar to the arrangement for the Clarence River.

4. Prawn Counts & Incidental Catch Ratios

The Committee discussed the upcoming expiry of Section 8 prawn count and incidental catch ratios closures with respect to the Clarence, Hunter and Hawkesbury Rivers. The Clarence River representative deferred providing any comment to the MAC to allow for time to discuss the arrangements with the Clarence River Professional Fisherman's Association and local fishers. It was agreed that the Clarence River representative would provide DPI with their recommendations after consultation had occurred.



Brian Beer
EPTMAC Chairperson