



Australian Government

Australian Fisheries Management Authority

ANNUAL STATUS REPORT

Small Pelagic Fishery Wildlife Trade

January 2009

This report has been prepared by Australian Fisheries Management Authority for consideration by the Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts in relation to the exemption of the Small Pelagic Fishery from export controls under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*.

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Introduction

The Small Pelagic Fishery (SPF) has been operating under a series of short term Wildlife Trade Operation Declarations (WTO) under Part 13A of the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act) since 29 November 2004. The current WTO is due to expire on 27 February 2009. This accreditation was subject to number of recommendations and conditions, the outcomes of which are discussed in Section 8.

The SPF and related Informally Managed Fishing Permits are currently in a transitional phase of management, as the final drafting stages of the SPF Management Plan (the Plan) are underway. The draft Plan is due for release for public comment in March/April 2009 and will be implemented in 2010. A draft Strategic Assessment report for the proposed management arrangements has been prepared and will be submitted to the Minister for the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts with the finalised draft Plan .

This report details how the current management arrangements address the *Guidelines for Assessing the Ecological Sustainability of Commercial Fisheries – 2nd Edition* (the Guidelines). The Guidelines form part of the generic *Terms of Reference – Environmental Assessment of Commonwealth Fisheries* and are a central component of the *Terms of Reference for the Small Pelagic Fishery*.



1. Description of the Fishery

The Small Pelagic Fishery (SPF) was first assessed by Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts (DEWHA) as an approved WTO in 2004. There have been no changes to the description of the fishery since the last assessment.

1.1. Status of export approval/accreditation under *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*

The SPF has been operating under a series of short term WTO Declarations under Part 13A of the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act) since 29 November 2004. The current WTO is due to expire on 27 February 2009. This accreditation was subject to number of recommendations and conditions, the outcomes of which are discussed under Section 8.

2. Management

2.1. Changes to management arrangements

The SPF continues to be managed under the '*Management Policy for the Small Pelagic Fishery (December, 2001)*'. Within the scope of this policy, the Board (meeting 143, June 2008) agreed to set eastern and western stock based TAC limits for SPF and Informally Managed Fishing permits for 2008/09 instead of the zone-based Trigger Catch Levels previously in place. In addition to the TAC's, catch monitoring triggers will also apply. These changes reflect the findings of research that reviewed likely stock structure in the SPF. DEWHA was notified of these management changes in writing (see attachment 1).

With the implementation of the management plan in 2009/10, the zone boundaries of the fishery will be altered to reflect the zones used for TAC calculation. Instead of the previous 4 zone management system, the SPF will be divided into Eastern and Western Zones. The Eastern Zone is an amalgamation of previous Zone D and the section of Zone A that lies east of longitude 146°30' E. The Western Zone incorporates previous Zones C, D and the remaining section of Zone A.

2.2. Performance of the fishery

The Management Objectives of the SPF are outlined in the SPF Management Policy. How these objectives have been met is outlined below.

Ensuring management arrangements facilitate the Ecologically Sustainable Development of the SPF, and promote the productivity and efficient conduct of the commercial, recreational, and ecological components of the fishery

Management arrangements in the SPF are designed to facilitate the ecologically sustainable development of the fishery. Entry to the fishery is limited and harvest levels are managed through Total Allowable Catches (TAC) for target species. TAC's are determined using methods detailed in the Harvest Strategy, which was finalised by the AFMA board on 20 June 2008. The Harvest Strategy accounts for the ecological importance of SPF species by prescribing deliberately precautionary reference points.



Broader ecosystem impacts are monitored and managed in accordance with the fishery's Bycatch Action Plan (BAP) (refer to section 2.7) and Ecological Risk Assessments (ERAs) (refer to sub-section below). To ensure the ongoing effectiveness of these arrangements, a monitoring program (refer to section 3.2) and formal consultative framework (refer to sub-section below) has been established for the fishery.

Adopting a strategic approach to management of the SPF, developing and maintaining fisheries management best practice, including recognising and embracing the need for ecosystem based management

AFMA is committed to ecosystem based fishery management (EBFM). This approach is pursued in the SPF through a BAP, ERAs and a Harvest Strategy.

The BAP sets out actions to explicitly minimise the impacts of fishing on non-target species and ecological communities. The Harvest Strategy sets out management actions that monitor and assess biological and economic conditions in the fishery to maintain stocks at ecologically sustainable levels. The Harvest Strategy takes into account the ecological importance of SPF species.

AFMA conducts ecological risk assessments (ERAs) in all Commonwealth fisheries. ERAs assess the impact, both direct and indirect, a fishery's or sub-fishery's activities have on five ecological components of the marine ecosystem – target species; byproduct and bycatch species; threatened, endangered and protected (TEP) species; habitats; and ecological communities. A level 2 ERA analysis for both Midwater Trawl and Purse Seine methods in the SPF has been completed. A Rapid Level 3 Assessment is currently underway.

Managing the SPF resource on behalf of the Australian community, and in doing so ensuring that management arrangements are consistent with the requirements of key stakeholders, including other management jurisdictions

In 2005, AFMA appointed members to the first Management Advisory Committee (MAC) and Resource Assessment Group (RAG) for the fishery. These committees are responsible for providing expert management and assessment advice on the fishery. MACs and RAGs are comprised of a broad range of stakeholders, including members from industry, environmental groups, recreational fishing and other Government sectors. In addition to this consultative framework, AFMA seeks public comment on significant management policy decisions (for example, the fishery's BAP).

Within the life of this policy, developing a set of performance criteria by which the effectiveness of SPF management arrangements can be measured

Performance measures for the SPF have been developed and are in the draft Management Plan.

2.3. Compliance risks present in the fishery and actions taken to reduce these risks

The SPF has low levels of fishing effort when compared to other Commonwealth fisheries. At present, one vessel operates regularly in the fishery with other operators participating on an opportunistic basis. Because of these low levels of fishing effort, there is no compliance plan in place for the SPF. Observer coverage is used to detect compliance risks in the fishery. AFMA has processes in place to constantly monitor compliance risks, and to act on them as required.



2.4. Consultation processes

There have been no changes to the SPF consultation process since the renewal of the SPF WTO on 5th December 2007.

2.5. Description of cross-jurisdictional management arrangements

There have been no changes to the SPF cross-jurisdictional management arrangements since the renewal of the SPF WTO on 5th December 2007.

2.6. Outcomes of review processes

Not applicable.

2.7. Demonstration of compliance with threat abatement plans (TAPs), recovery plans, etc and also relevant domestic and international agreements

The SPF has a Bycatch Action Plan (BAP) in place which aims to ensure that the impacts of the fishery's bycatch on the ecosystem are sustainable and consistent with legislative requirements, including threat abatement plans (TAPs) and recovery plans. The BAP will be replaced by a Bycatch and Discard Workplan in 2009, which is a comprehensive plan based on the outcomes of the Ecological Risk Assessment (ERA) process.

The current BAP aims to:

- provide an understanding of the significant bycatch issues in the fishery
- develop mitigation strategies for the incidental capture of protected species
- commence development of mitigation strategies for other high risk bycatch species

As well as providing strategies for protecting species affected by bycatch, the BAP also implements strategies to protect the broader marine environment. The BAP includes data collection and analysis systems and performance indicators which ensure AFMA is meeting the objectives and management responses outlined in the BAP.

Progress towards meeting the BAP targets is monitored through an internal reporting process requiring six monthly progress reports to be submitted to AFMA's Environment Committee.

3. Research and monitoring

3.1. Research completed within the SPF

Many key management improvements have arisen from the fishery's research program.

- Quantitative biomass estimates using the Daily Egg Production Method (DEPM) have been used to guide the stock assessment process. The DEPM has been used to assess Blue Mackerel and Redbait stocks, the results of which were used in setting the TAC's for the 2008/09 season.
- A review of likely stock structure was used to set eastern and western zones of the fishery for the 2008/09 TAC setting.
- Harvest strategy developed based on stock research and risk assessment



- Midwater trawl dolphin and seal bycatch mitigation strategies were reviewed in light of the first quantitative evaluation of mitigation measures trialled in the fishery

Table 1: Key research projects in the SPF

| Research Project | Status | Principle investigator |
|---|--|------------------------|
| Enhanced data collection through focused programs (electronic monitoring) | Electronic onboard monitoring trial completed in November 2005 | AFMA |
| Zone A commercial catch sampling (State Government initiative) | Completed end of 2006 | TAFI |
| Development and evaluation of egg-based stock assessment methods for blue mackerel <i>scomber australicus</i> in southern Australia | Completed April 2008 | SARDI |
| An evaluation of dolphin and seal interactions with midwater trawls in the Commonwealth Small Pelagic Fishery, including an assessment of bycatch mitigation strategies | Completed February 2008 | TAFI |
| Management zones from small pelagic fish species stock structure in southern Australian waters | Completed April 2008 | CSIRO |
| Evaluation of egg production as a method of estimating spawning biomass of redbait off the east coast of Tasmania | Completed July 2008 | TAFI |
| Ecological Risk Assessment for Australian Commonwealth Fisheries Project | Currently undergoing Rapid Level 3 Risk Assessment (SAFE) | CSIRO |
| The trophodynamics of small pelagic fishes in the southern Australian ecosystem and the implications for ecosystem modeling of southern temperate fisheries | Project underway, end date Sept 2009 | CSIRO |

3.2. Current monitoring programs within the SPF

Existing data collection tools deployed by AFMA to monitor catch rates and the impact of the SPF and other fisheries on the marine environment in the fishery include:

a) Daily catch and effort logbooks

Logbooks provide a record of the fishing operations undertaken by SPF concession holders. The data recorded in logbooks includes species caught and their weight, discards, operational data and interactions with TEP species. This information provides information for research on the management of the SPF.

b) Independent observer coverage

Observer coverage provides a real-time account of commercial catches, discards and gear interactions with other species, as well as species data including length and weight. Additionally, onboard catch monitoring cameras were trialled in the fishery from 25 April 2005 to 4 June 2005. Currently there is 10% observer coverage for the purse seine sector and 10% coverage for the midwater trawl sector.

c) Catch disposal records

Catch disposal records (CDR) have been designed to record verifier information about fish catches. CDR were introduced on 1 July 2007 and currently monitor and manage catches within the TCL of the SPF. Under the proposed quota management regime, CDR will be used as a fisheries management tool. AFMA will deduct quota from an operator's total quota allocation on receipt of the verified weights from fish receivers (Part C of each CDR).



4. Catch data

4.1. Total catch of target species and species taken in other fisheries

Catches of target species in the SPF in 2007 were: blue mackerel 1416t, jack mackerel 680t and redbait 4262t. Table 1 lists the harvest limits set for these species in 2007.

SPF species are incidentally caught in eight other AFMA-managed fisheries. The majority of catches are taken in the Commonwealth Trawl (CT) and Great Australian Bight Trawl (GABT) sectors of the Southern and Eastern Scalefish and Shark Fishery (SESSF), and the East Coast Tuna Fishery (ECTF). AFMA logbook data indicates that these catches generally account for less than 50 tonnes in each fishery per year. However, annual catches of yellowtail scad of around 100 tonnes have been recorded in the ECTF. At present it is not possible to ascertain from AFMA logbook data what proportion of the ECTF bait catch is taken in Commonwealth waters. AFMA is working to collect this data through its ECTF observer program.

State catches of SPF species are generally minor (generally less than 6 tonnes annually) in all states adjacent to the fishery, with the exception of NSW. The NSW Ocean Haul Fishery has historically (pre 2004) taken 300-500 tonnes of both blue mackerel and yellow tail scad, and 20-40 tonnes of jack mackerel. Upon request, state catch data is provided by the responsible state agency to AFMA.

Estimates of recreational removals and Indigenous take from the stocks in the SPF are not as reliable as commercial estimates, although there are programs in place to collect regular data from the recreational sector in New South Wales (Charter Boat Monitoring Program - NSW DPI).

In August 2003 the National Recreational and Indigenous Fishing Survey was published. This project was a joint initiative of the Commonwealth and State/Territory Governments to obtain fisheries statistics to support the management of non-commercial fishing in Australia. Data were gathered in three aspects of this survey including the Recreational Fishing Survey (including on-site surveys), the Indigenous Fishing Survey and the Visiting International Fisher Survey.

The survey provided estimates of:

- the catch of small pelagic species (targeted/ caught incidentally)
- where they are mainly caught, and
- what proportion is discarded on a state-by-state basis (Table 2)

Table 2: Harvest limits (tonnes) for 2007

| Species | Zone A* | Zone B | Zone C | Zone D |
|----------------|---------------|---------------|--------------|--------------|
| Redbait | 17 000 | 1 000 | 1 000 | 1 000 |
| Blue mackerel | 3 400 | 5 000 | 3 500 | 3 500 |
| Jack mackerels | 13 600 | 4 000 | 2 500 | 2 500 |
| Total | 34 000 | 10 000 | 7 000 | 7 000 |

* Zone A limits are managed as a basket TAC. The species specific figures represent catch triggers within the total TAC.



Table 2: Summary of recreational fishing effort and catch by state for SPF species. Does not include data from Northern Territory. (Source: National Recreational and Indigenous Fishing Survey 2003).

| State of Residence | Number of fishers catching SPF species | Number of fishers surveyed | Percent fishers catching SPF species |
|--------------------|--|----------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| NSW | 126 | 2058 | 6.1 |
| VIC | 24 | 1453 | 1.7 |
| QLD | 19 | 2222 | 0.9 |
| SA | 64 | 1740 | 3.7 |
| WA | 176 | 2182 | 8.1 |
| TAS | 86 | 1282 | 6.7 |
| ACT | 6 | 216 | 2.8 |
| Total | 501 | 11153 | 4.5 |

5. Status of target stock

5.1. Resource concerns

According to the Australian Government's Bureau of Rural Sciences 2007 Fishery Status Report, in the Eastern Zone blue mackerel and redbait are not overfished and not subject to overfishing, while jack mackerel is uncertain. In the Western Zone, blue mackerel is not overfished and not subject to overfishing, while redbait and jack mackerel are uncertain.

5.2. Stock assessments

The Harvest Strategy sets out a stock assessment framework for SPF species. The Harvest Strategy is based on a fishery-independent stock assessment technique, known as Daily Egg Production Method (DEPM), which estimates the spawning biomass of small pelagic fishes. Employment of this quantitative technique has been a key development of the SPF stock assessment process.

The DEPM technique has been used to set the TAC of two key SPF species in the 2008/09 fishing season – Blue Mackerel (FRDC Project 2002/061) and redbait (FRDC project 2004/039).



6. Interactions with Threatened, Endangered and Protected species (TEPs)

6.1. Frequency and nature of interactions

The SPF is known to interact with three main TEP taxa; seals, dolphins and seabirds. The most prevalent type of TEP interaction recorded in the fishery is midwater trawl bycatch of seals and dolphins in around Tasmania.

Seals and Dolphins

Between October 2004 and May 2005, 25 dolphins were captured by midwater trawl. In response to this, AFMA supported research¹ aimed at monitoring dolphin and seal interactions with mid-water trawls in the SPF and developing by-catch mitigation measures.

Underwater camera footage taken as part of this research revealed no further interaction with dolphins but showed a high level of seal interaction - seals entered the net in 60% of observed shots. In attempt to improve the seal exclusion device (SED) capability, three configurations were progressively used in the study: small, bottom opening; large, bottom opening; and top opening. The small bottom-opening SED resulted in a 20% mortality rate, the large bottom-opening SED reduced this rate to 7%; there was insufficient evidence to evaluate the top opening SED in terms of reducing mortality.

Since 2004/05, no dolphin and ten seal interactions in the SPF have been recorded by operators in AFMA logbooks.

Birds

Seabirds are known to occur around vessels fishing in the SPF and have been sighted feeding on fish caught and lost from nets. No interactions have been reported in AFMA logbooks or detected by recent AFMA observer coverage (2006-07) in the fishery. Previous observer data (2005-06) has, however detected a low level of bird interactions with both trawl and purse seine (Table 3). Mortalities have only been observed during midwater trawling.

Table 3: Observed bird interactions in 2005-06 (source: AFMA observer data)

| Method | Zone | Species | # birds | Fate | Description |
|----------------|------|-------------------------|---------|-------|----------------------------------|
| Midwater trawl | A | Prion spp | 1 | alive | Landed on deck |
| | | Short-tailed shearwater | 4 | dead | |
| | | Short-tailed shearwater | 4 | alive | Untangled from net by crew |
| | B | Flesh-footed shearwater | 1 | alive | Untangled from net by crew |
| | | Flesh-footed shearwater | 3 | dead | |
| Purse seine | B | Storm petrel | 1 | alive | Landed on deck |
| | | Yellow-nosed albatross | 1 | alive | Light contact with gear on water |

¹ Dolphin and seal interactions with mid-water trawling in the Commonwealth Small Pelagic Fishery, including an assessment of by-catch mitigation strategies (PI: Jeremy Lyle, TAFI)



7. Impacts of the fishery on the ecosystem in which it operates

7.1. Results of any Ecological Risk Assessments

AFMA initiated the development of Ecological Risk Assessments (ERAs) for Commonwealth managed fisheries in 2001 to assist in prioritising and guiding research, data collection, monitoring and management. ERAs assess the impact, both direct and indirect, a fishery's or sub-fishery's activities have on five ecological components of the marine ecosystem – target species; byproduct and bycatch species; threatened, endangered and protected (TEP) species; habitats; and ecological communities. The assessments categorise species, habitats and communities into high, medium or low risk on the basis of their susceptibility to fishing activities and their ability to recover from fishing impacts.

ERAs proceed through a scoping stage and three progressive levels of analysis. This hierarchical approach is a cost and time efficient way of screening activities and identifying key ecological priorities for fisheries management. The approach is also precautionary with risks scored high in the absence of information or evidence to the contrary. A Level 2 ERA analysis for the Midwater Trawl and Purse Seine Sub-fisheries in the Small Pelagic Fishery, and all other major Commonwealth managed fisheries, have now been completed.

A residual risk process and Ecological Risk Management (ERM) framework have been developed to further refine and respond to the outcomes of ERAs. The residual risk process will consider additional information - particularly the mitigating effects of management arrangements that were not explicitly included in the ERAs, or were introduced after the ERA process commenced. A final stage to the ERA process, Rapid Level 3 Assessment, is currently underway for the SPF. The ERM framework will provide a consistent and effective process for fisheries managers to apply when responding to ERA outcomes.

The priorities identified in ERAs will complement and tie in with other initiatives. These include harvest strategies for target and byproduct species, Bycatch Action Plans, the development of additional bycatch and discarding actions, and ongoing initiatives to minimise any interactions with TEP species. The ERM framework aims to bring all of these initiatives together to deliver more streamlined and focused fisheries management, focusing efforts on the key issues and avoiding duplication.

7.2. Nature of impacts on the ecosystem

The impacts on the ecosystem have not changed since the renewal of the SPF WTO on 5th December 2007.



8. Progress in implementing recommendations and conditions resulting from the DEWHA assessment of the fishery

Recommendations - Wildlife Trade Operation, 5th December 2007 to 27th February 2009

| Recommendations | Level of Achievement | Deadline |
|---|---|--------------------------------|
| <p>R1. The statutory management plan for the SPF to be determined by 28 February 2009.</p> | <p>The development of the SPF statutory management plan was delayed. In light of new information provided to the AFMA board regarding stock delineation, the decision was made to re-zone the fishery to pursue stock based management. As a result, a more in depth consideration of SFR allocation provisions was required. A decision has been reached regarding SFR allocation, and the draft plan is due to be released for public comment in March/April 2009.</p> | <p>28 February 2008</p> |
| <p>R2. AFMA to continue to implement the SPF Bycatch Action Plan. In particular, AFMA to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • monitor the frequency of any interactions with protected species (particularly seals) and the adequacy of mitigation measures; • investigate and trial other potential bycatch mitigation measures for the fishery, where appropriate; and • further trial and develop the effectiveness of seal exclusion devices in the midwater trawl component of the fishery. | <p><i>Monitoring</i></p> <p>AFMA determines the frequency of interactions with protected species through logbook data and the observer program. Observer coverage is being maintained at 10% for both the purse seine and midwater trawl methods. This coverage was recommended by the SPF Resource Assessment Group and is comparable to coverage in other fisheries such as southern bluefin tuna (purse seine).</p> <p><i>Research and mitigation measures</i></p> <p>AFMA funded research to investigate possible midwater trawl dolphin and seal bycatch mitigation measures was completed in February 2008. With the development of a Bycatch and Discard Workplan for the SPF in 2009, AFMA will be reviewing management responses to this research.</p> | <p>Ongoing</p> |
| <p>R3. AFMA to continue to cooperate with relevant jurisdictions to pursue complementary management and research of shared small pelagic stocks and ensure that management arrangements for the fishery continues to take account of the results of research conducted.</p> | <p>AFMA continues to engage with State jurisdictions as required.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Negotiations have been undertaken with the Tasmanian Government regarding AFMA's proposal to manage Zone A with existing SPF zones as a single jurisdiction. Negotiations are still underway, and plans for a Joint Authority to manage Zone A have been set aside. • There are ongoing discussions with South Australia (PIRSA), regarding complimentary management arrangements. • The SPF MAC has a state representative member. | <p>Ongoing</p> |



Conditions - Wildlife Trade Operation, 5th December 2007 to 27th February 2009

Condition 1. *Operation of the Small Pelagic Fishery (SPF) will be carried out in accordance with the SPF management regime made under the Fisheries Management Act 1991.*

Since first declaring the Small Pelagic Fishery (SPF) an approved Wildlife Trade Operation on 29 November 2004, operation of the fishery has not deviated from the framework defined in the SPF Management Policy (SPFMP). Changes to management arrangements have been made in response to research on stock structure, but these are in line with the SPFMP and *Fisheries Management Act 1991*. There have been no changes to the SPFMP.

Condition 2. *The Australian Fisheries Management Authority (AFMA) to inform the Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts (DEWHA) of any intended amendments to the management arrangements that may affect the criteria on which EPBC Act decisions are based.*

AFMA Management has continued to inform DEWHA of the development and implementation of management arrangements in the fishery. This has been achieved through correspondence letters (see Attachment 1, correspondence letter dated 30 June 2008).

Also, a position as an observer at SPF Management Advisory Committee meetings has remained open to DEWHA.

Condition 3. *AFMA to produce and present reports to DEWHA annually as per Appendix B to the Guidelines for the Ecologically Sustainable Management of Fisheries - 2nd Edition.*

For each year the SPF has been accredited as a WTO, AFMA has continued to present to DEWHA Annual Reports which have met the requirements specified in Appendix B of *The Guidelines for the Ecologically Sustainable Management of Fisheries - 2nd Edition*.

Condition 4. *By 31 July 2008, AFMA to develop and finalise the Harvest Strategy for the SPF.*

The Harvest Strategy for the SPF was finalised on 20 June 2008.

Condition 5. *By 1 December 2008, AFMA to finalise the Ecological Risk Assessment (ERA) for the SPF. AFMA to then identify and implement appropriate management responses to address and mitigate risks and impacts identified in the ERA.*

A Level 2 ERA analysis for the Midwater Trawl and Purse Seine methods has been completed. A final stage to the ERA process, Rapid Level 3 Assessment, is currently underway for the SPF and is scheduled to be completed in February 2009.



Summary

The SPF has made good progress against the recommendations. The recommendations support existing management initiatives and targets set out in the Ministerial Direction and AFMAs commitments. AFMA Management therefore anticipates that all actions identified in the recommendations will be achieved.

The SPF has continued to meet the Conditions of the WTO as detailed in these annual reports. AFMA considers that in addressing the recommendations and meeting these conditions, the management of the fishery has improved significantly.

Based on quantitative biomass estimates, the fishery is moving towards stock based management arrangements. Zone boundaries have been reviewed to reflect this, and changes will be implemented with the management plan in 2009.

Implementation of the Harvest Strategy has aided in developing a consistent framework across AFMAs fisheries in determining harvest levels. It ensures a precautionary approach to achieving long term sustainability and profitability in the SPF.

The requirements of the BAP continue to be met. The contents of the BAP will be reviewed and improved with the development of a Bycatch & Discard Workplan in 2009.



ATTACHMENT 1



Australian Government
Australian Fisheries Management Authority

Ms Claire Howlett
Director Sustainable Fisheries Section
Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts
GPO Box 787
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Dear Ms Howlett

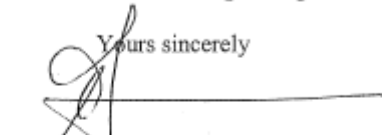
Thank you for your letter of 21 June 2008 seeking a progress report for Condition 4 of the Small Pelagic Fishery (SPF) Wildlife Trade Operation (WTO) approval.

I am pleased to advise that the Small Pelagic Fishery Harvest Strategy was finalised on 20 June 2008. A copy of the harvest strategy is at Attachment A. Please note that the harvest strategy has been implemented and will be reviewed and improved over the next 12 months. These first 12 months of operation will be a period of trialling the efficacy of the harvest strategy.

I would also like to take this opportunity to notify you of new SPF catch limit arrangements to be applied in 2008/09 for the SPF. In line with the SPF harvest strategy and stock based management, the Board has agreed to set eastern and western stock-based TAC limits for SPF and Informally Managed Fishing permits for 2008/09 instead of the zone-based Trigger Catch Levels currently in place. In addition to the TAC's, catch monitoring triggers will also apply. Full details of the new catch limit arrangements, along with other Board decisions relevant to the SPF are Attachment B.

If you have any queries in relation to the harvest strategy or other SPF management arrangements, please contact Ms Selina Stoute, SPF Manager, on (02) 6225 5304 or selina.stoute@afma.gov.au.

Yours sincerely



Nick Rayns
Executive Manager Fisheries


30 June 2008

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