

# East Coast Spanish Mackerel Fishery 2009

Progress against DEWHA conditions and recommendations



On 26 March 2009, the Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries was amalgamated with other government departments to form the Department of Employment, Economic Development and Innovation.

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## Progress in implementing Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts (DEWHA) conditions and recommendations for the East Coast Spanish Mackerel Fishery.

DEWHA made a range of recommendations to Fisheries Queensland (formerly Queensland Primary Industries and Fisheries), a service of the Department of Employment, Economic Development and Innovation in its initial assessment of the East Coast Spanish Mackerel Fishery in 2005, in order to address perceived risks or uncertainties. DEWHA's assessment of progress against these recommendations can be found at [www.environment.gov.au/coasts/fisheries/qld/east-coast-spanish-mackerel/pubs/report-07.pdf](http://www.environment.gov.au/coasts/fisheries/qld/east-coast-spanish-mackerel/pubs/report-07.pdf)

In October 2007 the fishery was reassessed and a new 3-year WTO was granted, along with a new set of conditions and recommendations. Details of the progress Fisheries Queensland has made in relation to the current conditions and recommendations are outlined in this document.

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### Condition 1:

Operation of the fishery will be carried out in accordance with the management regime in force under the Queensland *Fisheries Act 1995* and the Queensland Fisheries Regulation 2008.

Progress: Ongoing

All operations in 2008–09 were carried out under the appropriate legislation.

### Condition 2:

Fisheries Queensland to inform the Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts (DEWHA) of any intended changes to management arrangements that may affect the assessment of the fishery against the criteria on which EPBC Act decisions are based.

Progress: Ongoing

No changes to management arrangement were made in 2008–09 that negatively impacted on resource sustainability.

### Condition 3:

Fisheries Queensland to produce and present reports to DEWHA annually as per Appendix B to the *Guidelines for the Ecologically Sustainable Management of Fisheries – 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition*.

Progress: Ongoing

Fisheries Queensland continues to provide annual status reports.

**Recommendation 1:**

Fisheries Queensland to finalise and implement the annual district operational plans by June 2008, which incorporate and address the updated, compliance risks identified in the May 2007 Compliance Risk Assessment and future risk assessment.

**Progress: Complete**

QBFP District Operational Plans for 2008–09 have been finalised and implemented and include detailed strategies to address the priority compliance risks identified by the Queensland East Coast Spanish Mackerel Compliance Risk Assessment (May 2007).

**Recommendation 2:**

Fisheries Queensland to finalise and implement the ECSMF Performance Measurement System (PMS) in sufficient time for the outcomes to be reported in the 2008 ASR. Once implemented, Fisheries Queensland to monitor the status of the ECSMF in relation to the PMS. Within three months of becoming aware of a performance measure not being met, Fisheries Queensland to develop an appropriate management response.

**Progress: Complete**

The PMS for this fishery was finalised in July 2008 and has now been reported against in both the 2008 and 2009 annual status reports for the ECSMF.

**Recommendation 3:**

Fisheries Queensland to consider undertaking a further assessment of the minimum level of observer coverage needed in the ECSMF.

**Progress: Complete**

After three separate failed attempts to observe this fishery in 2008 (spotted mackerels were landed on each trip instead of Spanish mackerel, thus, with the current program set-up transferred observer ‘coverage’ from the ECSMF to the East Coast Inshore Fin Fish Fishery (ECIFFF)), it was agreed that the Queensland Fisheries Observer Program needed to be revised in its entirety.

After extensive fisheries-wide discussion, the previous three year rolling program was restructured to address the above problem, align better with management review plans, afford better opportunities to address specific concerns of fisheries managers, and meet WTO conditions. The following schedule was implemented:

- 2009 – A focus on Gulf Fisheries to obtain valuable information that can feed into the Gulf of Carpentaria Management Review Plan, as well as coverage in the ‘net’ shark and ray fishery (S symbol holders) which was established under new management arrangements for the ECIFFF.
- 2010 – A focus on east coast trawl fisheries (ECOTF, RIBF and FTF), which will complement existing data to be used in the East Coast Trawl Management Review Plan, plus ongoing coverage of S endorsed operators (net component of ECIFFF).
- 2011 – A focus on east coast line fisheries (RRFFF, ECSMF, CRFFF and DWFFF) to assist the review of the Coral Reef Fin Fish Management Plan, obtain data on Spanish mackerel interactions across all line fisheries and ECIFFF net operators targeting Grey or School mackerels (during S symbol coverage) and to obtain data on line-caught sharks.

Whilst this structure does not fully resolve the issue of observing an SM fisher who does not catch his target species, it does allow Fisheries Queensland to make better use of the data collected, since many line fishers hold multiple endorsements that will also be under scrutiny in 2011. A further benefit is that species data from multiple sources can be used in proposed stock assessments and/or reviews of management arrangements in any given year. For example, there is considerable spatial overlap of the various prawn sectors, and therefore monitoring all prawn species together (from a range of 'fisheries') affords many advantages over the old approach in which different 'fisheries' were allocated to different years.

This new structure will be reviewed towards the end of the 2011, but may continue on a 'net, trawl and line' rolling basis. The Spanish mackerel fishery will again be observed in 2011, along with the other east coast line fisheries.

#### **Recommendation 4:**

As part of the 2007 stock assessment, Fisheries Queensland to review the current Total Allowable Catch (TAC) for the ECSMF to ensure it is set at a sustainable level.

##### **Progress: In progress**

A Spanish mackerel stock assessment was completed in March 2008. The assessment, based on all catch and biological data available up to June 2007 indicated that the east coast Spanish mackerel stock is fully fished. Fisheries Queensland is updating the stock assessment with age and catch information, results are due early 2010. Fisheries Queensland will commence a review of management arrangements, including the TACC, following the release of the stock assessment in early 2010.

#### **Recommendation 5:**

Fisheries Queensland will incorporate the issue of spawning aggregations into the process for review of the Spanish mackerel TAC, and investigate the need for an enhanced level of protection to aggregations if necessary.

##### **Progress: In progress**

The Fishing and Fisheries Research Centre (FFRC) at James Cook University (JCU) is seeking FRDC support in 2010 for research into the effects of fishing on Spanish mackerel spawning aggregations; after an unsuccessful funding application in 2009. The research is planned to evaluate also how much protection is afforded to stocks under the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Representative Areas Program / revised zoning plan, and if the level of protection provided by no-fishing zones is sufficient in maintaining fishing mortality at sustainable levels.

**Recommendation 6:**

Fisheries Queensland to provide reliable estimates of recreational take and factor this take into stock assessments and management control, and to continue to investigate measures designed to control Spanish mackerel take by recreational fishers to ensure overall catch levels are sustainable.

**Progress: In progress**

Fisheries Queensland has recently completed the report on the regional boat ramp survey in south east Queensland, which provided fine-scale catch information for the southern part of the state. The report is now available online at [http://www.dpi.qld.gov.au/28\\_10738.htm](http://www.dpi.qld.gov.au/28_10738.htm).

Fisheries Queensland will commence another state-wide recreational fishing survey in 2010 and an updated estimate of recreational fishing participation, targeting of Spanish mackerel and catch levels will be available by the end of 2011. The state-wide survey is using an improved methodology which will result in recreational catch estimates with higher levels of precision and accuracy.

**Recommendation 7:**

Fisheries Queensland to continue monitoring the size composition of the retained commercial catch of Spanish mackerel and investigate options for protecting juvenile and large fish if identified if necessary.

**Progress: Complete**

The size of Spanish mackerel caught in the commercial sector is monitored annually by the Long Term Monitoring Program (LTMP) through catch sampling from fishers and fish processors. The Fisheries Observer Program (FOP) also undertakes regular measurement of Spanish mackerel at sea.

