

East Coast Trochus 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 Queensland East Coast Trochus Fishery.

The Queensland East Coast Trochus Fishery (ECTF) was granted a five-year exemption from export controls under the EPBC Act on 7 June 2005. As part of the assessment, 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 to address perceived sustainability risks or uncertainties. Details of the progress Fisheries Queensland has made in relation to the current recommendations are outlined in this document.

Recommendation 1:

Fisheries Queensland to inform DEWHA of any intended amendments to the management arrangements that may affect sustainability of the target species or negatively impact on protected species or the ecosystem.

Progress: Ongoing

There have been no management changes during the reporting period.

Recommendation 2:

From 2005, Fisheries Queensland to report publicly on the status of the fishery on an annual basis including explicit reporting against each performance measure (once developed).

Progress: Complete

This annual status report is the fourth to be completed. The report includes an assessment of the fishery against performance measures for the Performance Measurement System implemented in 2010.

Recommendation 3:

Fisheries Queensland to develop and implement a robust system to validate commercial logbook reporting of catch and effort in the fishery within two years.

Progress: Complete

Fisheries Queensland conducted a logbook validation exercise for the ECTF in 2007. The exercise determined that the overall level of discrepancy between catch reported prior to landing (deducted from quota) and through commercial catch logbooks was less than 4%. This is well within the acceptable bounds of precision ($\pm 10\%$) for catch reporting. Fisheries Queensland has developed an automated validation system to routinely identify discrepancies greater than $\pm 10\%$ that is due for roll out in 2010.

Recommendation 4:

Within two years, Fisheries Queensland to investigate extinguishing the unallocated quota of 50 tonnes.

Progress: Complete

Fisheries Queensland amended the Fisheries Regulation in 2008. The amendment included the removal of the annual quota of 300 t in the Trochus fishery in favour of more flexible management arrangements under licence conditions. The licences state the total allowable catch of trochus in the fishery is 250 t. Subsequently, Fisheries Queensland has issued six commercial harvest fishery licences with a combined total allowable commercial catch equaling 250 t.

Recommendation 5:

If the risk assessment to be conducted by Fisheries Queensland indicates that available stocks of trochus are at other than low risk of localised depletion, Fisheries Queensland to implement strategies to mitigate this risk in a timely manner.

Progress: Complete

Fisheries Queensland completed a desktop based Ecological Risk Assessment (ERA) of the fishery in 2009. The ERA determined that the fishery presents a moderate risk to trochus populations at the reef level. This is due to trochus being density dependent spawners and their minimal capacity to replenish populations by migrating between reefs. A performance measure to monitor fine scale catch rates was developed to mitigate local overfishing occurring.

Recommendation 6:

Within two years, Fisheries Queensland to develop a process to improve the estimates of recreational and Indigenous take and factor these into risk assessments, or any future stock assessments, and management controls.

Progress: Ongoing

Fisheries Queensland considers the take of trochus by the recreational and the Indigenous sectors is negligible. Fisheries Queensland will continue however to assess approaches to collect Indigenous fishers' data and improve estimates of the recreational catch through the RFISH state-wide surveys.

Fisheries Queensland will commence the next state-wide recreational fishing survey in 2010 to provide an updated estimate of recreational fishing participation and catch estimates. The state-wide survey is using an improved methodology which will result in recreational catch estimates with higher levels of precision and accuracy. The survey methodology allows for the recording of a wide range of species including the recreational take of trochus.

Fisheries Queensland is not aware of any information indicating the level of trochus take by Indigenous fishers is greater than negligible. Nevertheless, the take of trochus by the Indigenous sector was significantly constrained on 1 October 2008 when new restrictions were introduced with regards to traditional and customary fishing. The new provisions detailed purpose of use, permitted apparatus and location restrictions which functionally limit the scope of Indigenous harvest. Harvest of trochus by Indigenous fishers is now in line with recreational fishing regulations which limits individual take to 50 shells in possession and is subject to size limits.

Recommendation 7:

Fisheries Queensland to develop fishery specific objectives linked to performance indicators and performance measures for the target species.

Progress: Complete

Fisheries Queensland developed a Performance Measurement System (PMS) for the ECTF based on the outcomes of the ecological risk assessment conducted in 2009.

Commercial fishers in the trochus fishery were consulted during the development of the PMS. Fisheries Queensland implemented the PMS in 2010. Fishery performance for the 2008–09 season was reported against the PMS through the latest Annual Status Report.

