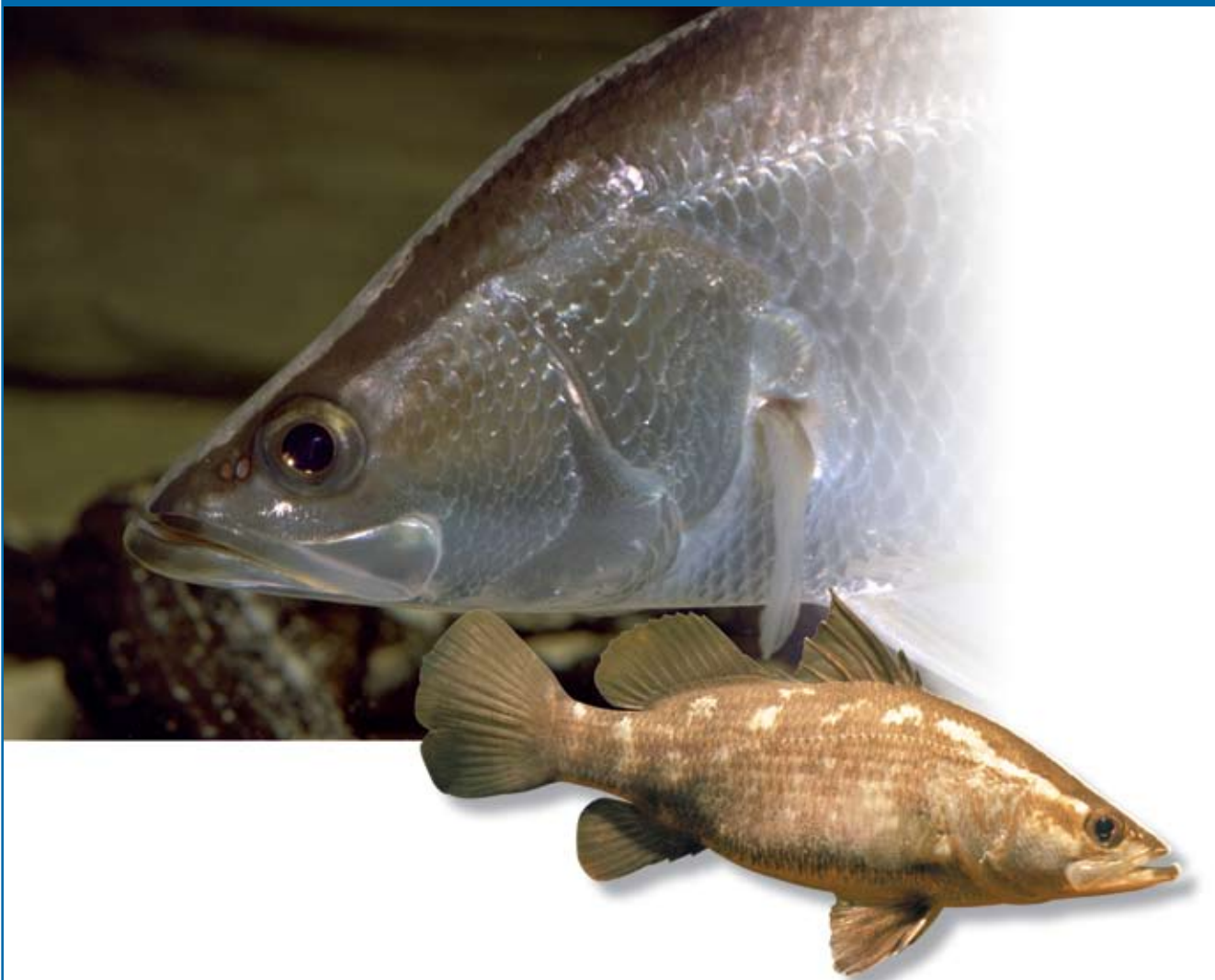


Gulf of Carpentaria Inshore Fin Fish Fishery 2010

Progress against DEWHA conditions and recommendations



Queensland Government

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Progress in implementing Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts (DEWHA) conditions and recommendations for the Gulf of Carpentaria Inshore Fin Fish Fishery.

DEWHA made a range of recommendations to Fisheries Queensland during its initial assessment of the Gulf of Carpentaria Inshore Fin Fish Fishery (GOCIFFF) in 2004 to address perceived risks or uncertainties. DEWHA's assessment of progress against these recommendations can be found at (<http://www.environment.gov.au/coasts/fisheries/qld/fin-fish/report-2007.html>)

The GOCIFFF was reassessed In August 2007 and a new two year Wildlife Trade Operation (WTO) was granted, along with a new set of conditions and recommendations. The WTO was later extended a further one year in August 2009 to allow sufficient time for Fisheries Queensland to review the management plan for the GOCIFFF (see <http://www.environment.gov.au/coasts/fisheries/qld/fin-fish/pubs/wto-july-09.pdf>) Details of the progress Fisheries Queensland has made in responding to the current conditions and recommendations are outlined below.

Condition 1:

Operation of the fishery will be carried out in accordance with the Queensland *Fisheries Regulation 1995* and the Queensland *Fisheries (Gulf of Carpentaria Inshore Fin Fish) Management Plan 1999* in force under the Queensland *Fisheries Act 1994*.

Progress: Completed and ongoing

Operation of the fishery in 2009 was carried out in accordance with the GOCIFFF management regime.

Condition 2:

Queensland Primary Industries & Fisheries (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: Completed and ongoing

A number of amendments to Queensland legislation that impact on this fishery took effect from March 1, 2009 (see below). Fisheries Queensland consulted with DEWHA prior to the implementation of these amendments, which are outlined below in response to Part 13 Condition 1.

Alignment between East Coast proposals for bag and size limits and those applying in the Gulf of Carpentaria

During the review of the Queensland East Coast Inshore Fin Fish Fishery it was identified that a range of measures needed to be implemented for the GOCIFFF at the same time to ensure consistency and to reduce complexity across Queensland fisheries.

The primary changes related to size and "in possession" limits and to arrangements relating to shark and these changes were implemented on 1 March 2009. In relation to shark a maximum size limit of 1.5m was introduced and "no take limits" were introduced for all sawfish and whale sharks. In addition limits were placed on white spotted guitarfish (5), grey reef sharks (1) and white tip reef sharks (1).

In relation to size limits and recreational bag limits the following changes were made, with the over-riding

intent of simplicity. Bold text indicates where the limits have been changed.

Species	Old size limits and recreational bag limits		New Limits post 1 March 2009	
	Bag	Size	Bag	Size
Amberjack and Samsonfish	No limit	No limit	2	75 cm
Barramundi	5	60-120 cm	5	60-120 cm
Bream (pikey, yellowfin and tarwhine)	No limit	23 cm	30	25 cm
Estuary cod	No limit	35-120 cm	5	38-120 cm
Mahi mahi	No limit	45 cm	5	60 cm
Flathead (not dusky)	No limit	30 cm	10	30 cm
Diamond scale mullet	No limit	No limit	20	30cm
Dusky flathead	5	40-70 cm	5	40- 75 cm
Giant trevally	No limit	35	20 for all trevally	No limit
Grass sweetlip	No limit	30 cm	10	30 cm
Barred javelin (spotted grunter)	10 or 20 fillets	40 cm	10 or 20 fillets	40 cm
Silver javelin (small spotted grunter)	No limit	30 cm	10	30 cm
Silver jewfish	No limit	45 cm	No limit	No limit
Black jewfish	5 (2 > 100 cm)	60-120 cm	5 (2 > 100 cm)	60-120 cm
Black kingfish (cobia)	10	75 cm	2	75 cm
Yellowtail kingfish	No limit	50 cm	2	60 cm
Golden snapper	10	35 cm	10	35 cm
Luderick	No limit	23 cm	10	30 cm
Grey mackerel	10	50 cm	5	60 cm
School mackerel	30	50 cm	10	50 cm
Shark mackerel	No limit	50 cm	10	50 cm
Spotted mackerel	10	50 cm	5	60 cm
Mangrove jack	5	35 cm	5	35 cm
Mulloway	10	45 cm	2	75 cm
Giant queenfish	No limit	45 cm	No limit	50 cm
King threadfin	5	60 cm	5	60 cm
Blue threadfin	20	40 cm	20	40 cm
Sea mullet	No limit	30 cm	20	30 cm
Tailor	20	30 cm	20	35 cm
Tarwhine	No limit	23 cm	30	25 cm
Wahoo	10	75 cm	2	75 cm
Whiting	No limit	23 cm	30	23 cm
Winter whiting	No limit	No limit	50	No limit
Shark or ray (line)	No limit	No limit	1	150cm
Swallowtail dart	No limit	No limit	30	30 cm
Garfish	No limit	No limit	50	No limit

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 – 2nd Edition*.

Progress: Completed and ongoing

The Annual Status Report for the reporting year 2009 was completed and provided to DEWHA in May 2010.

Part 13 Condition 1:

Fisheries Queensland to prohibit the retention of all EPBC Act listed chondrichthyan species in the GOCIFFF as a priority, but by no later than 31 July 2009.

Progress: Complete

This condition has been met through amendments to Queensland legislation that prohibit the take of EPBC Act listed chondrichthyan species that potentially interact with the GOCIFFF. These include speartooth shark species and all members of the Pristidae family (i.e. sawfish). The amendment took effect on 1 March 2009.

Recommendation 1:

Fisheries Queensland to prohibit the retention of all EPBC Act listed chondrichthyan species in the GOCIFFF.

Progress: Complete

This recommendation has been met through the amendments to Queensland legislation described in the Progress against Part 13 Condition 1. The amendments took effect on 1 March 2009.

Recommendation 2:

As a part of the review of the *Fisheries (Gulf of Carpentaria Inshore Fin Fish) Management Plan 1999*, Fisheries Queensland to specifically consider the management of CITES listed species, in particular members of the Pristidae family.

Progress: Complete

This recommendation was met through the amendments of Queensland legislation that prohibit the take of any members of the Pristidae family (i.e., sawfish) as described above. The amendments took effect on 1 March 2009. Queensland Fisheries Legislation also prohibits the take of the CITES listed humphead wrasse.

Recommendation 3:

Fisheries Queensland to monitor annual catch and catch rate trends (validated by observers) of those non-listed shark species identified as 'least sustainable' in the Northern Australian Sharks and Rays Phase II project (FRDC Project number 2002/064) to ensure that risks to the sustainability of these species are identified.

Progress: Ongoing

The GOCIFFF interacts with the following non-listed shark species identified as 'least sustainable' in the Northern Australian Sharks and Rays Phase II project:

Pigeye shark—*Carcharinus amboinensis*
Bull shark—*Carcharinus leucas*
Blacktip shark—*Carcharinus limbatus*
Australian Blacktip shark—*Carcharinus tilstoni*
Snaggletooth shark—*Hemipristis elongata*
Great Hammerhead shark—*Sphyrna mokarran*
Giant Shovelnose ray—*Rhinobatos typus*

New commercial logbooks have been issued for the N3 and N9 fisheries since 2006 and 2007 respectively, requiring operators to identify the species of shark taken to at least major shark and ray

species groups. The N9 fishery targets and catches the majority of shark in the GOCIFFF. The N9 logbook therefore has finer species resolution including: blacktip whalers, spot-tail shark, milk sharks, spinner shark, creek whaler, whitecheek shark, pigeye shark, graceful shark, sharptooth lemon shark, tiger shark, snaggletooth shark, hammerhead, winged hammerhead, shovelnose ray, guitarfish, sawfish, other sharks and mixed shark.

A minimum of three years of data across both fisheries was required to monitor for trends in the catches and catch rates for these species. Monitoring of data from 2007 to 2009 was reported in the Annual Status Report for the 2009 calendar year. It should be noted that a combined commercial possession limit of five of any guitarfish and shovel nose ray applied from 1 March 2009. This is likely to influence interpretation of catch figures for these species.

The Fisheries Observer Program recorded the following interactions with shark and ray species of interest in 2009 in the N3 fishery:

- 18 pigeye shark (50% utilised and 17% released alive (RA))
- 221 bull shark (9% utilised and 20% RA)
- 77 blacktip shark complex (0% utilised and 22% RA)
- 0 snaggletooth sharks
- 1 great hammerhead shark (released dead)
- 16 giant shovelnose ray (0% utilised and 94% RA)
- 9 whitespotted guitarfish (56% utilised and 44% RA).

Recommendation 4:

Fisheries Queensland to continue to improve estimates of recreational and Indigenous harvest. Once available, Fisheries Queensland to take estimates of IUU fishing, recreational and Indigenous harvests into account in stock assessments and to introduce management arrangements to mitigate any risks identified.

Progress: Ongoing

In 2010 Fisheries Queensland will commence a new statewide recreational fishing survey. This survey will provide current and robust data about the recreational harvest of ECIFFF species and other species by Queenslanders. The results of this survey will be available by the end of 2011.

On 1 October 2008 new restrictions were introduced with regards to traditional and customary fishing. New provisions detailed purpose of use, permitted apparatus and location restrictions which functionally limits the scope of Indigenous harvest.

The recently completed NHT funded research project 'A pilot study to develop methodology to determine Indigenous fishing impacts on Sharks and Rays in the NT' provided material that may prove useful in the future development of data collection programs aimed at monitoring and understanding Indigenous fishing in the Queensland GOC.

Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing vessel incursions are a recognised threat to the sustainability of northern Australian fisheries. The rate of IUU incursions in Australia has declined dramatically since 2006 and this trend has also continued in the Gulf of Carpentaria. In 2009 only one apprehension was recorded by the Australian Fisheries Management Authority in the Gulf of Carpentaria. The vessel was a Type 3 Shark boat (timber construction, approx. 15m in length) originating from Merauke, Indonesia. The vessel was equipped with a 2000 m gillnet, but had not commenced fishing operations. It is assessed that the vessel was going to target shark. Management of the IUU fishing issue in this region has continued to prove effective. Incursions in the Gulf of Carpentaria continue to remain at very low levels. (Ravanello, P., Australian Fisheries Management Authority, pers. com. 12th February 2010).

Recommendation 5:

Within 2 years, Fisheries Queensland to analyse the number, rate and type of protected species interactions of the SOCI data compared to the observer data available and review the adequacy of the protected species interactions information collection system. Fisheries Queensland to implement further measures to mitigate interactions, if necessary.

Progress: In progress

In December 2008, Fisheries Queensland commenced a review of its protected species reporting and education program. This included a review of the current Species of Conservation Interest (SOCI) logbook. The review identified several key issues that Fisheries Queensland intends to address through improvements to the SOCI reporting program. The main improvements include revising the SOCI logbook to better record fishing methods and updating the species list to include recently listed marine species and protected freshwater species.

Data are not yet available in a format suitable for this analysis required by this recommendation. Refinements to the information collection systems supporting the Fisheries Observer Program are progressing. Fisheries Queensland will begin the analysis once all observer data are entered and checked for accuracy.

Preliminary analysis of reported SOCI interactions available now indicate there are inconsistencies with the number, rate and type of protected species interactions reported in the SOCI logbook and those reported by fisheries observers. The final analysis, when complete, will be incorporated into the review of the SOCI logbook program.

In July 2009 a new shark identification guide including protected shark species was developed and sent to all S symbol holders on the east coast and net fishers in the Gulf. The guide is also available online at http://www.dpi.qld.gov.au/cps/rde/dpi/hs.xsl/28_11934_ENA_HTML.htm

Recommendation 6:

As a part of the review of the Performance Measurement System, Fisheries Queensland to include an objective and performance measure related to GOCIFFF impacts on the ecosystem.

Progress: In progress

Fisheries Queensland aimed to review the GOCIFFF PMS in 2009 however this has been delayed pending the review of the Gulf Management Plan and the final outcomes of the review of the Gulf fisheries Ecological Risk Assessment (ERA). Preliminary outcomes of the ERA indicate that, apart for a moderate risk from terrestrial impacts associated with land camps, the N3 and N9 fisheries pose a low to negligible risk on the ecosystem generally. Regardless, the new PMS will include a measure related to ecosystem impacts.

