

GULF OF CARPENTARIA COMMERCIAL FISHERMEN CODE OF CONDUCT

GULF OF CARPENTARIA
COMMERCIAL FISHERMEN

NET, LINE & CRAB
FISHERIES
N3 N6 N9 CI L4 L5

MANAGING THE GULF FISHERY FOR THE FUTURE

The Queensland Gulf of Carpentaria fishermen are a unique group of men & women who spend the fishing season at sea in the isolated waters of the Gulf of Carpentaria. Many leave families behind them but a few take their family, adding the trials of education to their already difficult lifestyle. Poor communications, long distance to medical help the constant battle with mud, mosquitoes, bad weather, cyclones, and jellyfish all add to the difficulties while trying to catch a premium product.

Principles of Gulf of Carpentaria Fishery:

- To maintain ecological sustainability and economic viability. Gulf of Carpentaria Fishermen have adopted a set of principles that forms the basis for the Code of Conduct.
- Adopt a Total Catchment Approach to Gulf Waters.
- Protection of the environment.
- Actively participate in conservation of threatened wildlife species.
- Support research and development of the above principles.



The Code:

Industry will work in conjunction with government & other stakeholders to ensure sustainability objectives of Fishery Management Plans are attained.

For the G.O.C Fishery to remain economically and ecologically sustainable, fishermen must:

- Ensure the Industry complies with all fisheries regulations pertinent to the Gulf of Carpentaria.
- Ensure the Industry Respects the rights and safety of others.
- Ensure the Industry actively protects the environment and endangered species.
- Ensure the Industry promotes the quality of seafood for human consumption.

To Comply with the Code of Conduct Fishermen will:

- Be familiar with and adhere to the current regulations as set out in the Gulf of Carpentaria Management Plan for N3 & N9 Fisheries and relevant sections of the Fisheries Regulations.
- Promote responsible environmental performance and advocate penalties for non-compliance.
- Promote effective consultative processes with governments, the community & other users.
- Use the Code to address environmental issues & extend self-management to infringement issues.

To Respect the Rights & Safety of others.

- Encourage consultation with the community & other users of the waterways to enable legitimate concerns and issues to be raised.
- Recognise the needs of the users of the region & promote methods to minimise user conflict.
- Promote good will in local communities.
- Ensure the correct uses net gear, lights & markers to ensure safety at sea
- Fishermen should ensure that all crew is aware of safety requirements for their vessels and fishing operations and hold all relevant certificates of competency.

To Protect the Environment:

- Encourage operators to work in accordance with fisheries ethics.
- Support a total catchment approach towards fisheries resource sustainability.
- Promote industry training and education opportunities in environment awareness.
- Correct disposal of all onboard refuses and used engine oil & filters.
- Trialing of pingers to warn dolphins of net locations. Trialing of other bycatch reduction devices.
- The responsibility lies with the fisher to report the capture of protected species to the appropriate authority.
- Completion of an Endangered Awareness Course.

THE N3 FISHERY - Inshore Gillnet Fishery

Queensland Gulf of Carpentaria rivers & creeks to 7 mile offshore. This is a multispecies fishery that targets Barramundi and King Salmon with lesser species such as Blue Salmon, Shark, Jewelfish & Queenfish. The majority of the fishermen work in the rivers and foreshores. The offshore area to 7 mile is normally fished July to October.

The number of entitlements has reduced from 212 in 1981 to 95 in 2000. This will be further reduced by an industry funded buyback scheme commenced in 1999 which continues for the life of the Gulf of Carpentaria Management Plan 1999 (5-10 years).

Initiatives such as a four-month total net closure in Gulf waters to 25 mile offshore, selected river closures Maximum of 14-metre length for primary vessels. Minimum and maximum net sizes: minimum fish lengths apply for most species and both minimum and maximum lengths for barramundi, that also apply to recreational anglers. Nets that cannot exceed 50mesh drop, maximum net lengths for inshore and estuaries. On board DPI observers, daily logbook programs that has been in place since 1978 all contribute to better management plans for the future of this fishery and ensure sustainable future stocks.



FISHING ETHICS

Know your capability & work towards this:

"Know your limits"

Promote high quality product

Collection & removal of unserviceable & abandoned fishing gear for disposal on land.

Clean up and disposal of paints and rubbish after careening.

Actively seek value adding for future products & actively promote methods for reduction of incidental bycatch

THE N9 FISHERY- Offshore Net Fishery.

This fishery covers the area in the Queensland Gulf of Carpentaria from 7 miles offshore to 25 miles offshore targeting fish other than barramundi. These vessels are fitted with compulsory VMS for position monitoring. Onboard DPI observers, funded by the N9 entitlement holders move randomly from vessel to vessel recording catch & bycatch information & other technical information. These vessels are subject to a range of restrictions to ensure sustainable stocks including maximum net drop; net must be a set net not a drift net. Minimum and maximum net mesh sizes and a four-month net closure that corresponds with the N3 Fishery.





THE N6 BAIT FISHERY

This symbol is a bait entitlement used primarily by crabbers for bait collection and line fishermen for Garfish to use trolling for Spanish Mackerel. Mullet is also targeted as bait for tourist and recreational use, net sizes are 25mm - 45mm 200 metres in rivers & foreshores & 400 metres offshore.

THE L5 LINE FISHERY

This is a line entitlement from the shoreline to 3 miles offshore in the Queensland waters of the Gulf of Carpentaria. Main target species is Spanish Mackerel. Caught by trolling using gar or spoons either from main vessel or with the use of dories.

L4 LINE FISHERY

This symbol is a line entitlement from the Shoreline in the Queensland waters of the Gulf of Carpentaria to 25 miles offshore. The main target species is Spanish Mackerel taken by trolling and dropline for reef species.



C1 mudcrab FISHERY

There has been an investment warning for The Gulf of Carpentaria Mud Crab Fishery, since 31st August 1997 crab fishers without history prior to this date may not be granted access under new management arrangement.

Keep it legal!

This Crab fishery is regulated by the number of pots per entitlement.
 Only male crabs may be taken. Minimum size limit of 150mm.
 Take only full crabs check quality of crabs on the grounds return light or unsuitable crabs to the water with care. Maintain temperature and water quality of stored live crabs.

GULF INSHORE NET FISHERY THE PAST AND THE FUTURE

Commercial fishers have been at the forefront of research & development in the Gulf inshore netfishery ever since the early 1950's when fisherfolk first commenced sending barramundi product in quantity to the East Coast. It is largely thanks to the efforts of a few visionary souls over the years, & the good sense of their followers, that the industry enjoys the prominence & respect that it has today: a multi-species multi-product fishery with national & international markets, & which is an economic cornerstone of the Gulf community, proactive in caring about the resource on which it depends & progressive in its outlook for the future.

Looking beyond barramundi, Gulf fishers have seen the need to promote the worth of a suite of inshore species in consumer markets around Australia & overseas. Prominent among these is king salmon, grunter and jewfish. Value adding of the landed catch has opened up specialty markets as well as reduced waste. There is now a move to diversify into other species in offshore waters, but to do so in a conservative way while the extent of reserves are established.

Understanding how highly prized species live & how their numbers change over time are essential for safeguarding a future for the fishery. Reports from Gulf fishers in the mid-1970's that not all was well with barramundi stocks helped catalyse investigations across northern Australia into this species. Present knowledge about threadfin salmon, jewfishes & grunter are a direct result of studies called for, paid for (through licence fees) and assisted by Gulf fishers during the late 1980's & 1990's.

The tradition among Gulf fishers of active involvement in research continues with the current on-board observer program, fish tagging exercises in several localities & the commencement of restocking programs in various Gulf rivers.

Gulf fishers have long pursued an active role in protection of the environment as a positive contribution towards quality of life in the Gulf area and sustaining a future for the fishery. The present network of Fish Habitat Areas along the Gulf coast owes much to the urging by fishers who first recognised the importance of these areas through their own experiences. The Gulf fishermen have lobbied hard to have community concerns about environmental harm and human health risks from coastal developments heard & acted on by authorities.

Getting along with neighbours is as necessary in the Gulf as anywhere else. Gulf netfishers recognise that they must share fisheries resources with indigenous folk as well as recreational fishers. The Gulf industry has a long history of successful negotiation with these other interest groups to achieve access arrangements to resources that all parties are comfortable with. In recognising the rights of indigenous communities, Gulf fishers have been well ahead of their time.

Correctly implemented, partnerships bring benefits to all involved. The Gulf of Carpentaria Commercial Fishermen have worked over many years with fisheries management agencies to get the best deal for members and to safeguard the fish stocks they harvest. The success of the accord shows that Co-operative management will be just as important in meeting the many new challengers for the Gulf fishery in the new millennium.



TURTLE BEING TAGGED BEFORE
RELEASE BY COMMERCIAL FISHERMEN



BARRAMUNDI BEING SAMPLED FOR
BIOLOGICAL INFORMATION BY RESEARCHERS

ENVIRONMENTAL INSTRUMENTS RELEVANT TO THE GULF OF CARPENTARIA FISHERIES

Key Legislation (Queensland and Commonwealth)

Fisheries Act 1994 (Qld)
Fisheries Regulations 1995 (Qld)

Fisheries (Gulf of Carpentaria Inshore Fin Fish)

Management Plan 1999 (Qld)
Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (Cwth)
Marine Turtle Recovery Plan (draft)
Coastal Protection and Management Act 1995 (Qld)
Gulf of Carpentaria Regional Coastal Management Plan
Marine Park Act 1982 (Qld)
Nature Conservation Act 1992 (Qld)
Nature Conservation (Digging) Conservation Plan 1999 (Qld)
Nature Conservation (Whales and Dolphins) Conservation Plan 1997 (Qld)
Environment Protection Act 1994 (Qld)
Transport Operations (Marine Safety) Act 1994 (Qld)
Transport Operations (Marine Pollution) Act 1995 (Qld)

National Policies and Strategies

National Strategy for Ecologically Sustainable Development 1992
National Strategy for the Conservation of Australia's Biological Diversity 1996
National Policy on Fisheries Bycatch 1999
Australia's Oceans Policy 1998
Australia National Plan of Action for the Conservation and Management of Sharks (under development)
National Fishing Industry Biodiversity Strategy 2001
Australian Seafood Industry Council Code of Conduct for a Responsible Seafood Industry

International Agreements and Treaties

UN Convention on the Law of the Sea 1982
UN Convention on Biological Diversity 1996
Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Flora and Fauna 1973
Ramsar Convention 1971
Convention for the Prohibition of Fishing with Long Drifters in the South Pacific Region and Protocol 1989
FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries 1995
International Plan of Action for the Conservation and Management of Sharks 1999

This code is a living document that was developed by the Gulf of Carpentaria Fishermen with assistance and finance accessed through DPI. It will be amended as required to meet emerging issues faced by fishermen in a responsible manner. Thanks are given to DPI - Northern Fisheries Centre for assistance, DPI - N1 and N9 observers and Gulf Fishermen for photos used through out this Code. This Code does not take the place of the Fisheries Regulations.

CONTACT: To find out more about the code or learn about the Gulf of Carpentaria Fishery contact

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