



Australian Government

Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts

Assessment of the
QUEENSLAND
ROCKY REEF FIN FISH FISHERY

APRIL, 2008

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Disclaimer

This document is an assessment carried out by the Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts of a commercial fishery against the Australian Government *Guidelines for the Ecologically Sustainable Management of Fisheries – 2nd Edition*. It forms part of the advice provided to the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and the Arts on the fishery in relation to decisions under Parts 13 and 13A of the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*. The views expressed do not necessarily reflect those of the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and the Arts or the Australian Government.

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Table 1: Summary of the QUEENSLAND (QLD) ROCKY REEF FINFISH FISHERY (RRFFF)

<p>Publicly available information relevant to the fishery</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Queensland <i>Fisheries Act 1994</i> • Queensland <i>Fisheries Regulation 2008</i> • <i>Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Act 1975</i> • Queensland <i>Marine Parks Act 1982</i> • Ecological Assessment of the QLD RRFFF – September, 2004 • Department of the Environment and Heritage (DEH) – Assessment of the QLD RRFFF – April, 2005 • Annual Status Report (ASR) 2005 – QLD RRFFF • ASR 2006 – QLD RRFFF • ASR 2007 – QLD RRFFF
<p>Area</p>	<p>The RRFFF area includes the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park (GBRMP), although fishing effort is concentrated in QLD waters south of the GBRMP, from Baffle Creek (24.5°S) south to the New South Wales (NSW) border (the L1, L6 and L7 QLD line fishery areas). However, fishers are permitted to harvest rocky reef fin fish species throughout QLD waters provided they have the appropriate line endorsement.</p>
<p>Fishery status</p>	<p>The QLD Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries (DPI&F) Reef Management Advisory Committee (Reef MAC) holds significant concerns about the status of the RRFFF.</p> <p>Snapper is considered overfished and the status of pearl perch and teraglin jew are unknown.</p>
<p>Target Species</p>	<p>Harvest includes a range of demersal and pelagic species associated with rocky reefs and inter-reefal areas offshore down to 200m. The key target species are:</p> <p>Snapper (<i>Pagrus auratus</i>);</p> <p>Pearl perch (<i>Glaucosoma scapulare</i>); and</p> <p>Teraglin (<i>Atractoscion aequidens</i>).</p> <p>Black kingfish or cobia (<i>Rachycentron canadum</i>) is increasingly becoming a target species and will be included as a key target species in future ASR's.</p> <p>Information on the biology of these key target species can be found in the April 2005 DEH assessment of the fishery located on the Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts (DEWHA) website.</p> <p>http://www.environment.gov.au/coasts/fisheries/qld/rocky-reef-finfish/report.html</p>
<p>By-product Species</p>	<p>By-product is not limited.</p> <p>Main minor species include dolphin fish or mahi mahi (<i>Coryphaena hippurus</i>), yellowtail kingfish (<i>Seriola lalandi</i>), amberjack (<i>Seriola dumerili</i>) and samsonfish (<i>Seriola hippos</i>).</p>
<p>Gear</p>	<p>Line fishery – handlines or rod and reel.</p> <p>Limit of up to six hooks per person.</p>

Season	All year.
Commercial harvest	<p>2004 – approximately 203t (110t snapper, 40t pearl perch, 20t teraglin jew, 33t by-product species)</p> <p>2005 – approximately 325t (including 219t snapper, 72t pearl perch, 37t by-product species)</p> <p>2006 – approximately 287t (including 173t snapper, 57t pearl perch, 25t black kingfish/ cobia, 14t teraglin jew, 18.5t by-product species)</p> <p>2005 harvest levels were the highest in 10 years with catch rates rising markedly from 2002-2005, despite concerns around the stock status of snapper.</p> <p>The increases in catches since 2002 may be attributed to increasing the minimum size limit (introduced in late 2002) to reduce the take of juveniles. However 2006 saw a decline in catch rates which may indicate a decline in abundance, despite the catch levels being the second highest reported levels, behind 2005, in ten years.</p>
Value of commercial harvest	<p>\$1.9 million Gross Value of Production (2007 ASR)</p> <p>Commercial operators sell almost exclusively on the domestic market.</p>
Take by other sectors	<p>Recreational take is larger than the commercial sector take (at times being twice the commercial harvest). The 2007 ASR states that the recreational sector harvests approximately 56% of the total harvest of RRFFF species.</p> <p>2002 – approximately 330t (280t snapper and 50t pearl perch)</p> <p>2005 – approximately 430t (310t snapper and 120t pearl perch)</p> <p>Charter harvest is relatively low being around 7% of the total harvest</p> <p>2004 – approximately 40t</p> <p>2005 – approximately 68t (43t snapper and 25t pearl perch)</p> <p>2006 – approximately 51t (31t snapper and 20t pearl perch)</p> <p>As was the case for the commercial sector, both the recreational and charter sectors also had high catch rates for 2005.</p> <p>There are no estimates for Indigenous harvest although it is thought to be low.</p>
Commercial licences issued	<p>Commercial operators within the RRFFF hold either L1, L6 or L7 licences capped at 1527 licences for the fishery.</p> <p>In 2006, approximately 151 licences were active.</p> <p>NB – 151 does not include active licences whose catch of rocky reef species was less than 60% of their total catch (e.g. dual licence holders).</p>

Management arrangements	<p>Input controls</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Hook and line limit ○ Limited entry (1347 licences/2623 boats) ○ Boats limited to 20m <p>Output controls</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Minimum size limits for snapper (35cm), pearl perch (35cm) and teraglin (38cm), black kingfish/ cobia (75cm), yellowtail kingfish (50cm) & dolphin fish/ mahi mahi (45cm)
Export	Very small as operators sell almost exclusively on the domestic market.
Bycatch	<p>Based on observer data (32 observer days in 2005) a large part of the bycatch is undersize target species however the total volume/composition of the RRFFF bycatch is not quantified.</p> <p>From the observer data estimates of bycatch released alive are:</p> <p>2% of snapper caught (undersized);</p> <p>42% of pearl perch caught (undersized); and</p> <p>6% of other species (undersized, unmarketable or not permitted).</p> <p>There are no specific bycatch mitigation methods employed, however the minimum size limits have been set so as to reduce post release mortality.</p>
Interaction with Protected Species¹	<p>RRFFF fishers have only moved to a new logbook in mid 2007, which now requires reporting of interactions with protected species.</p> <p>RRFFF holding dual licences that required protected species reporting (for the other fishery) reported no interactions in 2006.</p> <p>Fishery observers have not recorded any protected species interactions to date.</p>
Ecosystem Impacts	<p>Due to the benign harvesting method used in the fishery (line fishing), impacts to the physical ecosystem are negligible.</p> <p>However the impact of the RRFFF on target stock sustainability may have an impact on the ecosystems sustainability in the long term if the target species collapse.</p>
Impacts on World Heritage property	<p>The assessment also considered the possible impacts on the World Heritage values of the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area (GBRWHA). Although the RRFFF boundary overlaps with the GBRWHA the majority of fishing occurs outside of the GBRWHA. Additionally as the RRFFF is a line fishery there is limited impact on the physical ecosystem within the GBRWHA.</p> <p>On this basis DEWHA considers that an action taken by an individual fisher, acting in accordance with the RRFFF management regime in force under the Queensland <i>Fisheries Regulation 2008</i> and the Queensland <i>Fisheries Act 1994</i>, would not be expected to have a significant impact on a matter protected by the <i>Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999</i> (EPBC Act).</p>

¹ 'Protected species' means all species listed under Part 13 of the EPBC Act, including whales and other cetaceans and threatened, marine and migratory species.

Table 2: Progress in implementation of recommendations made in initial assessment of the RRFFF

Condition	Progress	Recommendation Action
<p>1. Operation of the fishery will be carried out in accordance with the QLD RRFFF management regime in force under the Queensland <i>Fisheries Act 1994</i> and the Queensland <i>Fisheries Regulation 1995</i>.</p>	<p><i>Ongoing</i></p> <p>The fishery has operated in accordance with the legislated management regime over the course of the current export approval.</p> <p>The QLD Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries (DPI&F) notified DEWHA of a review and subsequent replacement of the <i>Fisheries Regulations 1995</i> to the <i>Fisheries Regulations 2008</i> on 1 April 2008. As the changes were administrative in nature, the delegate for the Minister of the Environment, Heritage and the Arts determined that the assessment of the RRFFF in 2005 against the EPBC Act criteria remained valid and a reassessment at that time was not required. Therefore the EPBC Act instruments were simply remade to reflect the legislative changes.</p>	<p>This condition has been met and will continue to apply under the new Wildlife Trade Operation (WTO) declaration for this fishery for the next two years (WTO Condition 1, Table 4).</p>
<p>2. The DPI&F will advise the Department of the Environment and Heritage (now DEWHA) of any material change to the QLD RRFFF's management arrangements that could affect the criteria on which EPBC Act decisions are based, within 3 months of that change being made.</p>	<p><i>Ongoing</i></p> <p>In addition to notifying DEWHA of the change in regulations, DPI&F regularly inform DEWHA of any changes to the management arrangements for the RRFFF.</p>	<p>This condition has been met and will continue to apply under the new WTO declaration for this fishery for the next two years. (WTO Condition 2, Table 4)</p> <p>There will be one slight change to the condition to acknowledge that DEWHA needs to be notified of intended changes so that, if required, actions can occur prior to the change to ensure that EPBC Act accreditations remain valid.</p>

<p>3. Reports to be produced and presented to the Department of the Environment and Heritage (now DEWHA) annually, and to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Information sufficient to allow assessment of the progress of the QLD DPI&F in implementing the recommendations made in the <i>Assessment of the Queensland RRFFF 2005</i>; ○ A description of the status of the fishery and catch and effort information; ○ A statement of the performance of the fishery against objectives, performance indicators and measures, once developed; and ○ Research undertaken or completed relevant to the fishery. 	<p><i>Ongoing</i></p> <p>ASRs for the RRFFF were prepared in 2005, 2006 and 2007. These reports are publicly available from DPI&F website. The reports contain information on progress in implementing recommendations, a description of the fishery, catch and effort trends and research undertaken or completed relevant to the fishery. DPI&F has almost finalised a Performance Measurement System (PMS) for the RRFFF which will include a statement of the performance of the fishery against objectives, performance indicators and measures. DPI&F will report on the performance of the RRFFF against the performance measures in the ASRs.</p>	<p>DEWHA considers that this condition has been met and notes that, as part of the new WTO declaration for this fishery, this condition remains in force for a further two years (WTO Condition 3, Table 4).</p>

Recommendation	Progress	Recommended Action
<p>1. DPI&F to inform the then Department of the Environment and Heritage (now DEWHA) of any intended management arrangement that may affect the sustainability of the target species or negatively impact on by-product, bycatch, protected species or the ecosystem.</p>	<p><i>Ongoing</i></p> <p>In 2006, L6 and L7 fishery symbols were given the opportunity to convert to an L1 to simplify licensing arrangements. All but one licensee took up this opportunity (28 converted), which resulted in a small expansion of the fishing area for these fishers (as the L6 and L7 areas were a subset of the L1 area).</p> <p>DPI&F have advised that a management plan for the RRFFF is the next priority for development once the Inshore Regulatory Impact Statement process is finalised.</p>	<p>DEWHA expects that DPI&F will advise of any changes to the management regime in the future. This remains a condition in force under this new export approval (WTO Condition 2, Table 4).</p>
<p>2. By the end of 2006, DPI&F to develop fishery specific objectives linked to interim performance indicators and performance measures for target, by-product, bycatch, protected species and impacts on the ecosystem. Within three months of becoming aware that a performance measure has not been met, the DPI&F to finalise a clear timetable for the implementation of appropriate management responses.</p>	<p><i>In progress</i></p> <p>DPI&F held a workshop with fisheries managers, researchers and industry representatives in 2006 to develop operational objectives and performance measures for the RRFFF. Outcomes of this process were reviewed by the Reef Scientific Advisory Group (SAG). The PMS is in the final stages of development and is planned to be implemented as policy and provided to DEWHA in April/May, following consideration by the SAG and the Reef MAC.</p>	<p>DEWHA considers that this recommendation, although significantly progressed, is not complete.</p> <p>DEWHA expects to receive a copy of the PMS in the upcoming months and at that time will be able to determine if the PMS meets all of DEWHA's expectations. Notwithstanding this, DEWHA expects that post the PMS receiving formal endorsement it will be implemented as a matter of priority and management actions developed and followed if performance measures are not met.</p> <p>This recommendation will continue under Recommendation 1, Table 4 of the new export approval.</p>

<p>3. From 2005, DPI&F to report publicly on the status of the fishery on an annual basis, including explicit reporting against each performance measure, once developed.</p>	<p><i>Ongoing</i></p> <p>DPI&F have provided ASRs on the RRFFF since 2005.</p>	<p>DEWHA considers that this recommendation has been met and expects that it will continue to be met through upcoming ASRs that report on the performance of the fishery against the PMS.</p>
<p>4. DPI&F to conduct a compliance risk assessment of the RRFFF and develop a strategy to implement key outcomes within two years.</p>	<p><i>Complete</i></p> <p>DPI&F conducted a compliance risk assessment for the RRFFF in early 2007, in order to determine the compliance priorities and allow for the most effective targeting of Queensland Boating and Fisheries Patrol (QBFP) resources to address higher risk issues.</p> <p>Outcomes of the risk assessment have been incorporated into QBFP strategic and operational plans and will be reviewed annually.</p> <p>Prioritisation of action under the plans between fisheries is currently being determined by QBFP with outcomes expected later in 2008.</p>	<p>DEWHA considers that this recommendation is complete although will review the outcomes of the QBFP operational plans and specific compliance activity undertaken for the RRFFF during the next reassessment.</p>
<p>5. DPI&F to continue to pursue collaborative management of shared rocky reef stocks with the Australian Fisheries Management Authority (AFMA) and NSW Department of Primary Industries (NSW DPI).</p>	<p><i>Ongoing</i></p> <p>DPI&F met with NSW DPI in April 2006 and committed to an ongoing collaboration with respect to managing shared rocky reef stocks.</p>	<p>DEWHA does not consider that this recommendation has been completed.</p> <p>Only two meetings have occurred to date with NSW DPI and no meetings have occurred with AFMA.</p> <p>Due to the stock concerns with snapper, and NSW DPI's review of their management arrangements (review of snapper minimum size limits) DEWHA considers it timely that this</p>

		<p>collaborative work be undertaken to ensure sustainability of stocks which cross jurisdictional boundaries.</p> <p>Therefore this recommendation will continue as Recommendation 2, Table 4 under the new export approval.</p>
<p>6. DPI&F to develop and implement a robust system to validate commercial logbook reporting in the fishery within 18 months.</p>	<p><i>Ongoing</i></p> <p>DPI&F's logbook validation strategy for the RRFFF involves the use of independent observer data to validate logbook information. The first validation report for this fishery was completed in 2006, with a high level of accuracy of logbook reporting found.</p>	<p>DEWHA acknowledges the work undertaken by DPI&F in implementing the Fisheries Observer Program (FOP) in order to meet this recommendation.</p> <p>However as the FOP (which is QLD wide) is still in early implementation stages DEWHA is unable to say that this recommendation has been met until it can be satisfied that the FOP is providing adequate coverage of the RRFFF in order to scientifically validate the logbook data.</p> <p>Therefore this recommendation will be continued under Recommendation 4, Table 4, of the new export approval.</p>
<p>7. Within 18 months, DPI&F to develop a process to improve estimates of recreational take, which will be progressively implemented over the next 3 years.</p>	<p><i>In progress</i></p> <p>In 2005 DPI&F commissioned the Australian Bureau of Statistics to review the differences between the Recreational Fishing Information System (RFISH) surveys and the National Recreational and Indigenous Fishing Survey and investigate possible new methods to improve future RFISH surveys.</p>	<p>DEWHA acknowledges the progress made on this recommendation and notes the ongoing work to continue to improve recreational harvest estimates into the future.</p> <p>However due to the significant key target species stock concerns DEWHA recommends that this work continue and be broadened to encapsulate improving estimates from all sectors (not just recreational). DEWHA see this as imperative as</p>

	<p>A workshop was held in 2006 to further investigate improvements to estimates of recreational participation and catch.</p> <p>In response to the results of study, and the April 2006 workshop, DPI&F have commenced planning of a pilot regional survey of recreational fishing in southeast QLD. The survey will test the bus route creel survey methodology and interviews with anglers will be conducted at boat ramps from November 2007. A revised state-wide diary program, focussed on recreational boat owners will also commence in November 2007.</p>	<p>this data will underpin any work by DPI&F in setting appropriate sustainable harvest levels for the species.</p> <p>Therefore this recommendation will continue as a part of Recommendation 3, Table 4.</p>
<p>8. DPI&F to develop a stock assessment program that considers all commercial, recreational, charter and indigenous harvest, provides information on the status of target species and estimates ecologically sustainable harvest levels for target species of the RRFFF.</p>	<p><i>Partially completed</i></p> <p>DPI&F completed a stock assessment for snapper in 2006, using stock reduction analysis methodology. It has since been independently reviewed and its results supported. Snapper has been included in a three year stock assessment strategy developed by DPI&F.</p> <p>DPI&F have also advised that they have developed a stock assessment program up until the end of 2010 which includes harvest from all sectors in its analysis. However, given that there are limited stock assessment resources, there are 34 other species from a range of fisheries that have been identified as higher priority for stock assessment over pearl perch and teraglin jew up until 2010. Therefore, other means of assessment will be used for these species e.g. catch rates</p>	<p>DPI&F have not completed this recommendation.</p> <p>DEWHA notes that a stock assessment has only been completed for snapper and that stock assessments are unlikely to occur for the three other key target species until after 2010.</p> <p>DEWHA also notes that the stock assessment for snapper indicated that current fishing mortality is too high to ensure the long term sustainability of the fishery.</p> <p>In light of the concerns and uncertainty surrounding the key target species for the RRFFF, DEWHA continues to recommend that stock assessments be completed as soon as possible to ensure that ecologically sustainable harvest levels can be determined.</p>

	analysis and analysis of life history characteristics over time.	(Recommendation 3, Table 4)
9. DPI&F to identify areas of localised depletion by the end of 2006, and progressively implement relevant mitigation measures over the next 3 years.	<p><i>In progress</i></p> <p>Commercial logbook data is being assessed to investigate spatial changes in catch and effort. This recommendation is to be addressed through the longer term management arrangements for the fishery.</p>	<p>DEWHA considers that this recommendation has not been completed.</p> <p>DEWHA still considers this a key issue and as such this recommendation will continue under Recommendation 5, Table 4.</p>
10. DPI&F to develop and implement a recovery strategy by the end of 2006 to actively promote the recovery of overfished RRFFF target species to ecologically viable stock levels.	<p><i>In progress</i></p> <p>DPI&F is working towards a recovery strategy in consultation with key stakeholders. This recommendation is to be addressed through the longer term management arrangements for the fishery.</p> <p>DPI&F have advised that the recovery strategies will be incorporated into the management plan once it is developed. The species that will be looked at are snapper, pearl perch, teraglin jew and black kingfish/ cobia.</p>	<p>DEWHA considers that this recommendation has not been met.</p> <p>DEWHA continues to be concerned that current management measures do not ensure that harvest is within ecologically sustainable levels, particularly due to the significant concerns following the snapper stock assessment.</p> <p>DEWHA acknowledges that rebuilding strategies will be developed for all key target species when the management plan is developed and will review their development at the next assessment of the RRFFF.</p> <p>However as a recovery strategy has not been developed for snapper over the past three years, despite the ongoing, scientifically supported, stock concerns DEWHA considers action on this recommendation needs to be significant priority for RRFFF over the next two years. As such this recommendation is being elevated to Condition 4, Table 4.</p>

11. DPI&F to develop and implement a system sufficient to identify changes in the composition and quantity of bycatch, within two years.	<p><i>Completed</i></p> <p>Information is being sourced from the DPI&F fishery observer program and a new Long Term Monitoring Program (LTMP). Bycatch data will be reported in the annual status reports, including trends over time once sufficient data has been collected.</p>	<p>DEWHA considers this recommendation complete and expects that DPI&F will continue to refine the FOP and LTMP in order to ensure changes in the composition and quantity of bycatch are effectively monitored.</p> <p>However as the FOP and LTMP is in early stages of implementation, DEWHA will review progress against this area at the time of the next assessment.</p>
12. Within one year, to support the implementation of the Species of Conservation Interest logbooks, DPI&F to ensure that an education program for fishers, both recreational and commercial, is developed and implemented, to promote the importance of protected species and accurate incident reporting.	<p><i>Completed</i></p> <p>A protected species education program was released in September 2005. Material was delivered to both commercial and recreational fishers about ways to minimise interactions with protected species, how to handle them should an interaction occur and the importance of accurate reporting of interactions.</p>	<p>DEWHA considers this recommendation to be met and expects that implementation of the new logbook reporting requirements in conjunction with the FOP will continue to improve the importance of protected species reporting.</p>

Table 3: DEWHA assessment of the RRFFF against the requirements of the EPBC Act related to decisions made under Parts 13 and 13A

Please Note – the table below is not a complete or exact representation of the EPBC Act. It is intended as a summary of relevant sections and components of the EPBC Act to provide advice on the fishery in relation to decisions under Parts 13 and 13A. A complete version of the EPBC Act can be found on the DEWHA website.

Part 13

<p>Division 1 Listed threatened species Section 208A Minister may accredit plans or regimes</p>	<p>DEWHA assessment of the RRFFF</p>
<p>(1) Minister may, by instrument in writing, accredit for the purposes of this Division:</p> <p>(c) a plan of management, or a policy, regime or any other arrangement, for a fishery that is:</p> <p>i. made by a State or self-governing Territory; and</p> <p>ii. in force under a law of the State or self-governing Territory;</p> <p>if the Minister is satisfied that:</p> <p>(f) the plan, regime or policy requires persons engaged in fishing under the plan, regime or policy to take all reasonable steps to ensure that members of listed threatened species (other than conservation dependent species) are not killed or injured as a result of the fishing; and</p>	<p>The RRFFF will be managed under the management regime for the fishery made under the Queensland <i>Fisheries Management Act 1994</i> and the Queensland <i>Fisheries Regulation 2008</i>.</p> <p>The management regime for the RRFFF was accredited in May 2005.</p> <p>In March 2008 DPI&F advised DEWHA that on 1 April 2008 the <i>Fisheries Regulation 1995</i> were being replaced with the <i>Fisheries Regulation 2008</i>. The change in regulations did not result in any change to the management of the RRFFF and were administrative in nature. Although the change did not affect the original assessment of the RRFFF against the criteria on which the May 2005 decision was made, the RRFFF required a new accreditation to be granted which referred to the correct QLD legislation. As such the RRFFF was given a new Part 13 declaration in early April 2008.</p> <p>The management arrangements for the RRFFF have not significantly changed since the April 2008 accreditation was granted. Consequently, a new Part 13 declaration is not needed at this time as DEWHA considers that the RRFFF still takes all reasonable steps to ensure that threatened species are not killed or injured. Information provided by DPI&F indicates that there have been no</p>

<p>(g) the fishery to which the plan, regime or policy relates does not, or is not likely to, adversely affect the survival or recovery in nature of the species.</p>	<p>recorded interactions with threatened species in the RRFFF, however improved logbook reporting requirements have recently been adopted. Therefore, DEWHA considers the current operation of the RRFFF is not likely to adversely affect the survival or recovery in nature of any threatened species.</p>
<p>Division 2 Migratory species Section 222A Minister may accredit plans or regimes</p>	<p>DEWHA assessment of the RRFFF</p>
<p>(1) Minister may, by instrument in writing, accredit for the purposes of this Division:</p> <p>(c) a plan of management, or a policy, regime or any other arrangement, for a fishery that is:</p> <p>i. made by a State or self-governing Territory; and</p> <p>ii. in force under a law of the State or self-governing Territory;</p> <p>if satisfied that:</p> <p>(f) the plan, regime or policy requires persons engaged in fishing under the plan, regime or policy to take all reasonable steps to ensure that members of listed migratory species are not killed or injured as a result of the fishing; and</p> <p>(g) the fishery to which the plan, regime or policy relates does not, or is not likely to, adversely affect the conservation</p>	<p>The RRFFF will be managed under the management regime for the fishery made under the Queensland <i>Fisheries Management Act 1994</i> and the Queensland <i>Fisheries Regulation 2008</i>.</p> <p>The management regime for the RRFFF was accredited in May 2005.</p> <p>In March 2008 DPI&F advised DEWHA that on 1 April 2008 the <i>Fisheries Regulation 1995</i> were being replaced with the <i>Fisheries Regulation 2008</i>. The change in regulations did not result in any change to the management of the RRFFF and were administrative in nature. Although the change did not affect the original assessment of the RRFFF against the criteria on which the May 2005 decision was made, the RRFFF required a new accreditation to be granted which referred to the correct QLD legislation. As such the RRFFF was given a new Part 13 declaration in early April 2008.</p> <p>The management arrangements for the RRFFF have not significantly changed since the April 2008 accreditation was granted. Consequently, a new Part 13 declaration is not needed at this time as DEWHA considers that the RRFFF still takes all reasonable steps to ensure that migratory species are not killed or injured. Information provided by DPI&F indicates that there have been no</p>

<p>status of a listed migratory species or a population of that species.</p>	<p>recorded interactions with migratory species in the RRFFF, however improved logbook reporting requirements have recently been adopted. Therefore, DEWHA considers the current operation of the RRFFF is not likely to adversely affect the survival or recovery in nature of any migratory species.</p>
<p>Division 3 Whales and other cetaceans Section 245 Minister may accredit plans or regimes</p>	<p>DEWHA assessment of the RRFFF</p>
<p>(1) Minister may, by instrument in writing, accredit for the purposes of this Division:</p> <p>(c) a plan of management, or a policy, regime or any other arrangement, for a fishery that is:</p> <p>i. made by a State or self-governing Territory; and</p> <p>ii. in force under a law of the State or self-governing Territory;</p> <p>if satisfied that:</p> <p>(f) the plan, regime or policy requires persons engaged in fishing under the plan, regime or policy to take all reasonable steps to ensure that cetaceans are not killed or injured as a result of the fishing; and</p> <p>(g) the fishery to which the plan, regime or policy relates does</p>	<p>The RRFFF will be managed under the management regime for the fishery made under the Queensland <i>Fisheries Management Act 1994</i> and the Queensland <i>Fisheries Regulation 2008</i>.</p> <p>The management regime for the RRFFF was accredited in May 2005.</p> <p>In March 2008 DPI&F advised DEWHA that on 1 April 2008 the <i>Fisheries Regulation 1995</i> were being replaced with the <i>Fisheries Regulation 2008</i>. The change in regulations did not result in any change to the management of the RRFFF and were administrative in nature. Although the change did not affect the original assessment of the RRFFF against the criteria on which the May 2005 decision was made, the RRFFF required a new accreditation to be granted which referred to the correct QLD legislation. As such the RRFFF was given a new Part 13 declaration in early April 2008.</p> <p>The management arrangements for the RRFFF have not significantly changed since the April 2008 accreditation was granted. Consequently, a new Part 13 declaration is not needed at this time as DEWHA considers that the RRFFF still takes all reasonable steps to ensure that cetaceans are not killed or injured.</p> <p>Information provided by DPI&F indicates that there have been no</p>

<p>not, or is not likely to, adversely affect the conservation status of a species of cetacean or a population of that species.</p>	<p>recorded interactions with cetaceans in the RRFFF, however improved logbook reporting requirements have recently been adopted. Therefore, DEWHA considers the current operation of the RRFFF is not likely to adversely affect the survival or recovery in nature of any cetaceans.</p>
<p>Division 4 Listed marine species Section 265 Minister may accredit plans or regimes</p>	<p>DEWHA assessment of the RRFFF</p>
<p>(1) Minister may, by instrument in writing, accredit for the purposes of this Division:</p> <p>(c) a plan of management, or a policy, regime or any other arrangement, for a fishery that is:</p> <p>i. made by a State or self-governing Territory; and</p> <p>ii. in force under a law of the State or self-governing Territory;</p> <p>if satisfied that:</p> <p>(f) the plan, regime or policy requires persons engaged in fishing under the plan, regime or policy to take all reasonable steps to ensure that members of listed marine species are not killed or injured as a result of the fishing; and</p> <p>(g) the fishery to which the plan, regime or policy relates does</p>	<p>The RRFFF will be managed under the management regime for the fishery made under the Queensland <i>Fisheries Management Act 1994</i> and the Queensland <i>Fisheries Regulation 2008</i>.</p> <p>The management regime for the RRFFF was accredited in May 2005.</p> <p>In March 2008 DPI&F advised DEWHA that on 1 April 2008 the <i>Fisheries Regulation 1995</i> were being replaced with the <i>Fisheries Regulation 2008</i>. The change in regulations did not result in any change to the management of the RRFFF and were administrative in nature. Although the change did not affect the original assessment of the RRFFF against the criteria on which the May 2005 decision was made, the RRFFF required a new accreditation to be granted which referred to the correct QLD legislation. As such the RRFFF was given a new Part 13 declaration in early April 2008.</p> <p>The management arrangements for the RRFFF have not significantly changed since the April 2008 accreditation was granted. Consequently, a new Part 13 declaration is not needed at this time as DEWHA considers that the RRFFF still takes all reasonable steps to ensure that listed marine species are not killed or injured.</p> <p>Information provided by DPI&F indicates that there have been no</p>

<p>not, or is not likely to, adversely affect the conservation status of a listed marine species or a population of that species.</p>	<p>recorded interactions with listed marine species (including syngnathids and seasnakes) in the RRFFF, however improved logbook reporting requirements have recently been adopted. Therefore, DEWHA considers the current operation of the RRFFF is not likely to adversely affect the survival or recovery in nature of any listed marine species.</p>
<p>Section 303AA Conditions relating to accreditation of plans, regimes and policies</p>	<p>DEWHA assessment of RRFFF</p>
<p>(1) This section applies to an accreditation of a plan, regime or policy under section 208A, 222A, 245 or 265.</p>	<p>DEWHA recommends that the RRFFF accreditations under sections 208A, 222A, 245 and 265 remain.</p>
<p>(2) The Minister may accredit a plan, regime or policy under that section even though he or she considers that the plan, regime or policy should be accredited only:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) during a particular period; or (b) while certain circumstances exist; or (c) while a certain condition is complied with. <p>In such a case, the instrument of accreditation is to specify the period, circumstances or condition.</p>	<p>No condition has been imposed on RRFFF under Part 13.</p>
<p>(7) The Minister must, in writing, revoke an accreditation if he or she is satisfied that a condition of the accreditation has been contravened.</p>	

Part 13A

Section 303DC Minister may amend list	DEWHA assessment of the RRFFF
<p>(1) Minister may, by instrument published in the Gazette, amend the list referred to in section 303DB (list of exempt native specimens) by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) including items in the list; (b) deleting items from the list; or (c) imposing a condition or restriction to which the inclusion of a specimen in the list is subject; or (d) varying or revoking a condition or restriction to which the inclusion of a specimen in the list is subject; or (e) correcting an inaccuracy or updating the name of a species. 	<p>No amendment to the list of exempt native specimens (LENS) is required as product sourced from the RRFFF approved wildlife trade operation is already included on the LENS.</p>
Section 303FN Approved wildlife trade operation	DEWHA assessment of the RRFFF
<p>(2) The Minister may, by instrument published in the <i>Gazette</i>, declare that a specified wildlife trade operation is an <i>approved wildlife trade operation</i> for the purposes of this section.</p>	
<p>(3) The Minister must not declare an operation as an approved wildlife trade operation unless the Minister is satisfied that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) the operation is consistent with the objects of Part 13A of the Act; and 	<p>The RRFFF is consistent with objects of Part 13A (listed after this table) as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ the RRFFF will not harvest any Convention on the International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) listed species; ▪ there are management arrangements in place to ensure that the resource is being managed in an ecologically sustainable way (see Table 1) the completion of Condition 4 and Recommendation 6 are important factors in meeting this requirement; ▪ the operation of the RRFFF is unlikely to be unsustainable and threaten biodiversity within the next 2 years. Condition 4 is a critical factor in meeting this requirement; and ▪ the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Regulations 2000 do not specify fish as a class of animal in relation to the welfare of live specimens.

<p>(b) the operation will not be detrimental to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. the survival of a taxon to which the operation relates; or ii. the conservation status of a taxon to which the operation relates; and <p>(ba) the operation will not be likely to threaten any relevant ecosystem including (but not limited to) any habitat or biodiversity; and</p> <p>(c) if the operation relates to the taking of live specimens that belong to a taxon specified in the regulations – the conditions that, under the regulations, are applicable to the welfare of the specimens are likely to be complied with; and</p> <p>(d) such other conditions (if any) as are specified in the regulations have been, or are likely to be, satisfied.</p>	<p>DEWHA considers that the RRFFF will not be detrimental to the survival or conservation status of a taxon to which it relates within the next 2 years, given the management measures currently in place, which include: limited entry, gear restrictions, and minimum size limits. The completion of Condition 4 is a critical factor in meeting this requirement.</p> <p>DEWHA considers that the RRFFF will not threaten any relevant ecosystem within the next 2 years, given the management measures currently in place, which include: limited entry, gear restrictions, and minimum size limits.</p> <p>The Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Regulations 2000 do not specify fish as a class of animal in relation to the welfare of live specimens.</p> <p>No other conditions are specified in relation to commercial fisheries in the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Regulations 2000.</p>
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<p>(4) In deciding whether to declare an operation as an approved wildlife trade operation the Minister must have regard to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) the significance of the impact of the operation on an ecosystem (for example, an impact on habitat or biodiversity); and (b) the effectiveness of the management arrangements for the operation (including monitoring procedures). 	<p>DEWHA considers that the RRFFF will not have a significant impact on any relevant ecosystem within the next 2 years, given the management measures currently in place, which include: limited entry, gear restrictions, and minimum size limits.</p> <p>The management arrangements that will be employed for the RRFFF are likely to be effective. Management arrangements include limited entry, gear restrictions, and minimum size limits. The performance of the RRFFF will be reviewed annually, against a series of objectives, performance measures and reference points for the target species and ecosystem impact. Recommendation 1 is an important factor in meeting this requirement.</p>
<p>(5) In deciding whether to declare an operation as an approved wildlife trade operation the Minister must have regard to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) whether legislation relating to the protection, conservation or management of the specimens to which the operation relates is in force in the State or Territory concerned; and (b) whether the legislation applies throughout the State or Territory concerned; and (c) whether, in the opinion of the Minister, the legislation is effective. 	<p>The RRFFF will be managed under the management regime for the fishery made under the Queensland <i>Fisheries Management Act 1994</i> and the Queensland <i>Fisheries Regulation 2008</i>.</p> <p>The Queensland <i>Fisheries Management Act 1994</i> and the Queensland <i>Fisheries Regulation 2008</i> applies throughout QLD waters.</p> <p>The management arrangements that will be employed for the RRFFF are likely to be effective. Management arrangements for the RRFFF are in force under the Queensland <i>Fisheries Management Act 1994</i> and the Queensland <i>Fisheries Regulation 2008</i>. Management arrangements include limited entry, gear restrictions, and minimum size limits. The performance of the RRFFF will be reviewed annually, against a series of objectives, performance measures and reference points for the target species and ecosystem impact. Recommendation 1 is an important factor in meeting this requirement.</p>

<p>(10) For the purposes of section 303FN, an operation is a wildlife trade operation if, and only if, the operation is an operation for the taking of specimens and:</p> <p>(d) the operation is a commercial fishery.</p>	<p>The RRFFF is a commercial fishery.</p>
<p>(10A) In deciding whether to declare that a commercial fishery is an approved wildlife trade operation for the purposes of this section, the Minister must rely primarily on the outcomes of any assessment in relation to the fishery carried out for the purposes of Division 1 or 2 of Part 10.</p>	<p>No assessment of the RRFFF has been carried out under Part 10 of the EPBC Act.</p>
<p>(10B) Subsection (10A) does not limit the matters that may be taken into account in deciding whether to declare that a fishery is an approved wildlife trade operation for the purposes of this section.</p>	
<p>Section 303FR Public consultation</p>	<p>DEWHA assessment of the RRFFF</p>
<p>(1) Before making a declaration under section 303FN, the Minister must cause to be published on the Internet a notice:</p> <p>(a) setting out the proposal to make the declaration; and</p> <p>(b) setting out sufficient information to enable persons and organisations to consider adequately the merits of the proposal; and</p> <p>(c) inviting persons and organisations to give the Minister, within the period specified in the notice, written comments about the proposal.</p>	<p>DEWHA considers that consultation requirements of the EPBC Act for declaring a WTO have been met. A public notice, which set out the proposal to declare the RRFFF a WTO and included the 2005, 2006 and 2007 RRFFF Annual Status Reports, was released for public comment which closed on 14 March 2008 with no submissions received.</p>
<p>(2) A period specified in the notice must not be shorter than 20 business days after the date on which the notice was published on the Internet.</p>	<p>A public notice, which set out the proposal to declare the RRFFF a WTO and included the 2005, 2006 and 2007 RRFFF Annual Status Reports was released for public comment on 13 February 2008 and closed on 14 March 2008, a total of 21 business days.</p>

<p>(3) In making a decision about whether to make a declaration under section 303FN, the Minister must consider any comments about the proposal to make the declaration that were given in response to the invitation in the notice.</p>	<p>No public comments about the proposal were received.</p>
<p>Section 303FT Additional provisions relating to declarations</p>	<p>DEWHA assessment of the RRFFF</p>
<p>(1) This section applies to a declaration made under section 303FN, 303FO or 303FP.</p>	<p>A declaration for the RRFFF will be made under section 303FN.</p>
<p>(4) The Minister may make a declaration about a plan or operation even though he or she considers that the plan or operation should be the subject of the declaration only:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) during a particular period; or (b) while certain circumstances exist; or (c) while a certain condition is complied with. <p>In such a case, the instrument of declaration is to specify the period, circumstances or condition.</p>	<p>The standard conditions applied to commercial fishery WTOs include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • operation in accordance with the management regime; • notifying DEWHA of changes to the management regime; and • annual reporting in accordance with the requirements of the Australian Government <i>Guidelines for the Ecologically Sustainable Management of Fisheries – 2nd Edition</i>. <p>The WTO instrument for the RRFFF specifies the standard and any additional conditions applied.</p>
<p>(8) A condition may relate to reporting or monitoring.</p>	<p>One of the standard conditions relates to reporting.</p>
<p>(9) The Minister must, by instrument published in the <i>Gazette</i>, revoke a declaration if he or she is satisfied that a condition of the declaration has been contravened.</p>	
<p>(11) A copy of an instrument under section 303FN, or this section is to be made available for inspection on the Internet.</p>	<p>The instrument for the RRFFF made under sections 303FN and the conditions under section 303FT will be gazetted and made available on the DEWHA website.</p>

Part 16

Section 391 Minister must consider precautionary principle in making decisions	DEWHA assessment of the RRFFF
(1) The Minister must take account of the precautionary principle in making a decision under section 303DC and/or section 303FN, to the extent he or she can do so consistently with the other provisions of this Act.	The precautionary principle must be considered when making a decision to include specimens on the LENS.
(2) The precautionary principle is that lack of full scientific certainty should not be used as a reason for postponing a measure to prevent degradation of the environment where there are threats of serious or irreversible environmental damage.	

Objects of Part 13A

- (a) to ensure that Australia complies with its obligations under CITES and the Biodiversity Convention;
- (b) to protect wildlife that may be adversely affected by trade;
- (c) to promote the conservation of biodiversity in Australia and other countries;
- (d) to ensure that any commercial utilisation of Australian native wildlife for the purposes of export is managed in an ecologically sustainable way;
- (e) to promote the humane treatment of wildlife;
- (f) to ensure ethical conduct during any research associated with the utilisation of wildlife; and
- (h) to ensure the precautionary principle is taken into account in making decisions relating to the utilisation of wildlife.

Final DEWHA conditions and recommendations to DPI&F for the RRFFF.

The material submitted by the DPI&F demonstrates that the management arrangements for the RRFFF meet most of the requirements of the Australian Government's *Guidelines for the Ecologically Sustainable Management of Fisheries – 2nd Edition*.

Management of the RRFFF include limited entry, minimum size limits, spatial restrictions, gear restrictions (3 line/6 hook per person limit), vessel restrictions (boats limited to 20m), and in possession limits for the recreational sector (limit of 5 per species for key species such as snapper, pearl perch, teraglin jew, and a limit of 10 for black kingfish/ cobia).

Despite the management arrangements in place in the RRFFF, DEWHA has identified a number of risks and uncertainties that must be managed in a timely manner in the RRFFF to ensure that impacts are minimised:

- The significant sustainability concerns surrounding the harvest of snapper and the lack of a formal recovery strategy;
- Relatively large and increasing recreational take, which is currently higher than the commercial take and the need for improved management arrangements to ensure that RRFFF sector harvest levels result in a fishery wide cumulative harvest which is ecologically sustainable;
- Lack of a finalised and implemented PMS, which has specific objectives linked to performance indicators and performance measures for target, by product, bycatch, protected species and impacts on the ecosystem;
- Need to review the current observer program coverage in the RRFFF to ensure continued validation of logbook data; and
- The need for improved collaboration with adjacent jurisdictions on shared stocks.

DEWHA is satisfied that the RRFFF will not be detrimental to the survival or conservation status of the taxon to which they relate in the short term. Similarly, it is not likely to threaten any relevant ecosystem in the short term. To contain and minimise the risks in the longer term, conditions and recommendations have been made. The immediate key challenges for this fishery are to: develop management arrangements that encompass all sectors of the RRFFF, which stop the decline of, and promote the recovery of snapper; set fishery wide ecologically sustainable harvest levels; and formalise a management plan. DEWHA considers that until it can be demonstrated that these issues have been adequately addressed, a two-year WTO declaration is appropriate for the RRFFF.

Given the low level of protected species interactions under current fishing operations, DEWHA considers that the operation of the RRFFF does not, or is not likely to, adversely affect the survival in nature of a listed threatened species or population of that species, or the conservation status of a listed migratory species, cetacean or listed marine species or a population of any of those species. For these reasons, the management arrangements were accredited under Part 13 of the EPBC Act in May 2005. Since there have been no changes in the management arrangements since the initial assessment of the RRFFF, DEWHA considers that the existing Part 13 accreditation remains valid.

Table 4: RRFFF Assessment– Summary of Issues, Conditions and Recommendations April, 2008

	Issue	Conditions
1	<p><u>General Management</u> Export decisions relate to the arrangements in force at the time of the decision. In order to ensure that these decisions remain valid and export approval continues uninterrupted, DEWHA needs to be advised of any changes that are made to the management regime and make an assessment that the new arrangements are equivalent or better, in terms of ecological sustainability, than those in place at the time of the original decision. This includes operational and legislated amendments that may affect sustainability of the target species or negatively impact on by-product, bycatch, protected species or the ecosystem.</p>	<p>Condition 1: Operation of the fishery will be carried out in accordance with the Queensland Rocky Reef Fin Fish Fishery management regime in force under the Queensland <i>Fisheries Act 1994</i> and the Queensland <i>Fisheries Regulation 2008</i>.</p> <p>Condition 2: The Queensland Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries (DPI&F) 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 assessment of the fishery against the criteria on which <i>Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999</i> (EPBC Act) decisions are based.</p>
2	<p><u>Annual Reporting</u> It is important that reports be produced and presented to DEWHA annually in order for the performance of the fishery and progress in implementing the recommendations in this report and other managerial commitments to be monitored and assessed throughout the life of the declaration. Annual reports should follow Appendix B to the <i>Guidelines for the Ecologically Sustainable Management of Fisheries - 2nd Edition</i> (the Guidelines) and include a description of the fishery, management arrangements in place, research and monitoring outcomes, recent catch data for all sectors of the fishery, status of target stock, interactions with protected species, impacts of the fishery on the ecosystem in which it operates and progress in implementing DEWHA conditions and recommendations. Electronic copies of the Guidelines are available from the DEWHA website at http://www.environment.gov.au/coasts/fisheries/publications/guidelines.html</p>	<p>Condition 3: DPI&F to produce and present reports to DEWHA annually as per Appendix B to the <i>Guidelines for the Ecologically Sustainable Management of Fisheries - 2nd Edition</i>.</p>

3	<p><u>Key target species stock status Concerns</u></p> <p>In the 2005 Assessment of the RRFFF, DEWHA considered the recovery of overfished stocks to be a management priority, especially as snapper stocks appeared to have been declining for at least 50 years. In line with Objective 2 of the Guidelines, DEWHA made a recommendation for DPI&F to develop and implement a recovery strategy by the end of 2006 to actively promote the recovery of overfished RRFFF target species to ecologically viable stock levels. This recommendation was also linked closely with another recommendation for DPI&F to develop a stock assessment program that considers all commercial, recreational, charter and indigenous harvest, provides information on the status of target species and estimates ecologically sustainable harvest levels for target species of the RRFFF.</p> <p>The 2006 DPI&F commissioned snapper stock assessment indicated that fishing mortality is currently too high to ensure the long term sustainability of the fishery. The DPI&F Reef MAC also holds significant ongoing concerns about the status of the RRFFF, in particular snapper. Additionally, increases in snapper catches have been seen across all sectors since the 2005 assessment with the most recent catches taking a slight decline which may indicate a decline in abundance (2007 ASR RRFFF). Whilst DEWHA acknowledges that any positive effects of the 2002 increase in minimum size limit for snapper may start to flow through in the upcoming years, DEWHA considers that a formal rebuilding strategy must be put in place as a matter of priority in order to ensure the sustainability of the stock.</p> <p>DPI&F have advised (see Recommendation 6) of the intention to investigate the development of non-legislative instruments to manage fisheries in a more responsive manner. However, until that time, DEWHA are aware that changes to the management of snapper will require legislative amendment, which can be a lengthy process (i.e. requires formal consultation) some of which is outside of DPI&F's control (e.g. cabinet sign-off).</p>	<p>Condition 4: DPI&F to develop a recovery strategy for snapper, which outlines clear timeframes for implementation, by 31 October 2009. The recovery strategy will incorporate latest stock assessment data, will be applicable to all sectors (commercial, recreational, charter and indigenous), and will actively promote the recovery of snapper to ecologically viable stock levels.</p>
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	Issue	Recommendation
4	<p><u>Finalisation of the Performance Measurement System (PMS)</u> A recommendation was made in the 2005 DEWHA assessment for DPI&F to develop fishery specific objectives linked to interim performance indicators and performance measures for target, by-product, bycatch, protected species and impacts on the ecosystem. Additionally, within three months of becoming aware that a performance measure had not been met, DPI&F were to finalise a clear timetable for the implementation of appropriate management responses.</p> <p>DEWHA acknowledges that the PMS is in the final stages of development and has been advised that the PMS is expected to be provided to DEWHA and implemented in the upcoming months following SAG and Reef MAC endorsement and Deputy Director General sign off.</p> <p>DEWHA commends DPI&F for developing this key management document and recommends that the PMS be implemented as a matter of priority, post its sign off. DEWHA additionally recommends that DPI&F regularly monitor and assess the RRFFF against the PMS to ensure the sustainable management of the RRFFF and report upon the status of the fishery in relation to the PMS in the QLD ASRs.</p>	<p>Recommendation 1: DPI&F to implement the RRFFF Performance Measurement System (PMS) in sufficient time to be reported upon within the 2008 Annual Status Report (ASR). Once implemented, DPI&F to monitor the status of the RRFFF in relation to the PMS. Within 3 months of becoming aware that a performance measure has not been met, the DPI&F to finalise a clear timetable for the implementation of appropriate management responses.</p>
5	<p><u>Cross jurisdictional management</u> As highlighted in the 2005 DEWHA assessment the spatial distribution of key target stocks in the RRFFF are known to incorporate NSW and Commonwealth waters, where significant commercial and recreational harvest also takes place. Therefore a recommendation was developed by DEWHA for DPI&F to pursue collaborative management of shared rocky reef stocks with adjacent fisheries management agencies.</p> <p>DEWHA understands that DPI&F met with NSW DPI in April 2006 and more recently in March 2008, but did not meet with the AFMA during the last WTO period. DEWHA does however acknowledge that in 2007 a joint Reef SAG process was developed, which discusses RRFFF issues and on which AFMA is a member.</p> <p>DEWHA continues to consider this collaboration as a priority, particularly in light of the snapper stock concerns and the differences in QLD and NSW management arrangements.</p>	<p>Recommendation 2: DPI&F to continue to pursue collaborative management of shared rocky reef stocks, with priority to be given to snapper, with the Australian Fisheries Management Authority and the New South Wales Department of Primary Industries.</p>

<p>6 <u>Key target species management across all sectors of the RRFFF</u></p> <p>A priority in the 2005 DEWHA assessment for was DPI&F to improve the data being gathered on recreational take within the RRFFF and also to develop stock assessments for the target species in the RRFFF.</p> <p>Since the last assessment improvements have been made to enhance the data being collected, particularly in the recreational sector, however DEWHA considers that this work should continue and expand to all sectors with the results being factored into stock assessments (or other assessment method) for the key target species. This is due to the importance of this information in the management of the RRFFF and the need to avoid similar stock concerns currently being experienced by snapper.</p> <p>Since the last assessment only snapper has had a formal stock assessment completed. DPI&F have advised that a stock assessment program up to 2010 has been developed across all QLD fisheries and that given the limited stock assessment resources and that 34 other species from other fisheries have been identified as higher priorities for stock assessment, pearl perch and teraglin jew will not have formal stock assessments completed prior to 2010, but instead will be assessed using other methods. DEWHA continues to recommend (as per Objective 1 of the Guidelines) that formal stock assessments be completed for all key target species within the RRFFF for the long term sustainable management of the stocks, however realises that due to resource constraints that utilisation of other assessment methods to set sustainable harvest levels will need to be adopted to account for the uncertainty within the data and as such be set at suitably precautionary levels in order to ensure the long term sustainability of the stocks.</p> <p>As recreational harvest within the RRFFF accounts for a little over half of the total RRFFF catch it is critical that management arrangements for the fishery account for catch from all sectors to ensure that the overall total catch of key target species from all sectors is sustainable. DEWHA is concerned that without a shared management framework, total cumulative harvest will continue to be unsustainable in medium to long term. Therefore implementation of improved management arrangements, under Recommendation 6, will ensure that the overall RRFFF catch levels are sustainable.</p> <p>At the time of the last assessment snapper, pearl perch and teraglin jew were identified as the key target species of the RRFFF. Since the last assessment black kingfish (cobia) harvest has</p>	<p>Recommendation 3: DPI&F to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ continue to improve estimates of harvest of key target species from all sectors; and ○ factor this data into stock assessments (or other assessment method) to determine suitably precautionary estimates of ecologically sustainable harvest levels.
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	<p>increased above teraglin jew, and as such DEWHA recommends that the new Recommendation 3 cover all four species (noting that for snapper this recommendation will have close links with the recovery strategy developed under Condition 4).</p>	
7	<p><u>Observer coverage</u> In the 2005 assessment, DEWHA raised concerns with the lack of validation of catch and effort logbook information within the RRFFF, for both target and by-product species, especially as the management and performance of the fishery relies heavily on fishery dependent data.</p> <p>DEWHA commends the DPI&F's on the establishment of the FOP, in response to Recommendation 6, to validate commercial logbook information and notes that the first validation for the RRFFF found a high level of accuracy in reporting. DEWHA also acknowledges that the observer program is the sole system for identifying changes in the composition and quantity of bycatch/non-retained species for the RRFFF (2005 – Recommendation 12).</p> <p>DEWHA acknowledges that the FOP covers all QLD fisheries and as such has a monitoring strategy that will, over a three year period allow adequate coverage of a range of fisheries to meet both Departmental data requirements and DEWHA recommendations.</p> <p>Although observer coverage of the RRFFF to date has been low (13 days over 6 trips in 2006 and no days reported for 2007) DEWHA notes that the FOP is targeting the RRFFF in 2008 and has allocated 50 days to obtain baseline data regarding catch composition and fisher submitted logbook validation.</p>	<p>Recommendation 4: DPI&F to continue to improve systems used to validate commercial logbook catch and effort data, and protected species reporting, including a review of the level of observer coverage in the RRFFF.</p>
8	<p><u>Localised depletion</u> The 2005 DEWHA Assessment considered it important that increased consideration be given to the spatial structure of species taken in the RRFFF with regard to the fishing effort of all sectors in the fishery and the interconnectivity of stocks in other jurisdictions and as such a recommendation was developed.</p> <p>Although some work has been completed by DPI&F on this recommendation by assessing logbook data to investigate spatial changes in catch and effort, DEWHA considers further work</p>	<p>Recommendation 5: DPI&F to continue to monitor temporal and spatial changes in catch and effort data for key target species.</p>

	needs to be undertaken (and incorporated in the improved management arrangements) for the long term sustainability of the RRFFF.	
9	<p><u>Management arrangements</u></p> <p>In the 2005 DEWHA assessment, DPI&F identified the need to develop a management plan for the RRFFF but stated that due to competing priorities it was not likely to occur for a number of years. DPI&F have advised that development of improved management arrangements for the RRFFF is the next priority following the finalisation of the Inshore Regulatory Impact Statement process, which is currently underway. DPI&F have also advised of the intention to investigate the development of non-legislative instruments, resulting in the management arrangements for the RRFFF that are implemented through legislation and policy. This is in order to deliver a management system which is more responsive and flexible to changes within the fishery.</p> <p>DEWHA consider the development and finalisation of improved management arrangements for the RRFFF within the next two years as a matter of priority, particularly to address issues such as, but not limited to, significant key target stock concerns raised by the DPI&F Reef MAC and recent independent stock assessments as well as addressing take from all sectors of the fishery.</p> <p>Development and implementation of improved management arrangements should incorporate all of the aspects outlined within the Conditions and Recommendations of this WTO as well as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ address the potential for latent effort to become active; ○ improve input controls to cap effort; and ○ limit target species able to be harvested <p>in order to be able to ensure the long term sustainability of the RRFFF.</p>	<p>Recommendation 6: DPI&F to continue the development and implementation of improved management arrangements for the RRFFF to limit the cumulative harvest by all sectors, of all target species to ecologically sustainable levels.</p>

Acronyms

AFMA	Australian Fisheries Management Authority
ASR	Annual Status Report
CITES	Convention on the International Trade in Endangered Species
DEH	The then Department of the Environment and Heritage
DEWHA	Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts
DPI&F	Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries
EPBC Act	<i>Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999</i>
FOP	Fisheries Observer Program
GBRMP	Great Barrier Reef Marine Park
GBRWHA	Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area
LTMP	Long Term Monitoring Program
LENS	List of Exempt Native Specimens
NSW	New South Wales
NSW DPI	New South Wales Department of Primary Industries
PMS	Performance Measurement Systems
QBFP	Queensland Boating and Fisheries Patrol
QLD	Queensland
Reef MAC	Reef Management Advisory Committee
RFISH	Recreational Fishing Information System
RRFFF	Rocky Reef Finfish Fishery
SAG	Scientific Advisory Group
WTO	Wildlife Trade Operation