

Rocky Reef Fin Fish Fishery 2009

Updated progress against DEWHA Conditions and
Recommendations for fishery reassessment

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Fisheries Queensland, part of the Department of Employment, Economic Development and Innovation (DEEDI), seeks to maximise the economic potential of Queensland's primary industries on a sustainable basis.

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

DEWHA made a range of recommendations to Fisheries Queensland during its initial assessment of the Rocky Reef Fin Fish Fishery (RRFFF) in 2005, in order to address perceived risks or uncertainties. DEWHA's assessment of progress against these recommendations can be found at www.environment.gov.au/coasts/fisheries/qld/rocky-reef-finfish/pubs/report08.pdf

In 2008 the fishery was reassessed and a new two year WTO was granted with a new set of conditions and recommendations. Details of the progress Fisheries Queensland has made in relation to the current recommendations are outlined in this document.

Condition 1:

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

Progress: Ongoing

All operations in 2009 were carried out under the appropriate legislation.
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Condition 2:

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

Progress: Ongoing

No changes to management arrangements were made in 2009 that negatively impacted on resource sustainability.
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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: Ongoing

Fisheries Queensland continue to provide annual reports.
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Condition 4:

Fisheries Queensland 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 and will actively promote the recovery of snapper to ecologically viable stock levels.

Progress: Completed

The status of the snapper stock, based on recent assessments, is likely to be fully fished to overfished. In 2008, Fisheries Queensland initiated the formation of a Stakeholder Network Working Group (SNWG) to develop new management arrangements for the fishery in partnership. Membership of the SNWG comprised of commercial fishers, recreational fishers, charter operators, tackle retail trade, seafood marketing sector, fisheries scientists, fisheries managers and NSW Fisheries. Media and conservation sectors were also involved in the process. Subcommittees of the SNWG also included the broader marine sector. The SNWG was tasked with identifying and prioritising fishery issues, facilitating consultation with the broader community and making recommendations for the management of the fishery. Management options developed by the SNWG were put out for consultation in September and October 2008 and followed up through a series of port meetings between the Gold Coast and Mackay. Responses from the community consultation process and outcomes of the 2008 snapper stock assessment were considered by the SNWG in making management recommendations to Fisheries Queensland. These recommendations are currently being considered by Fisheries Queensland before submission to the Minister for consideration.

Recommendation 1:

Fisheries Queensland to implement the RRRFF Performance Measurement System (PMS) in sufficient time to be reported upon within the 2008 Annual Status Report. Once implemented, Fisheries Queensland to monitor the status of the RRRFF in relation to the PMS. Within 3 months of becoming aware that a performance measure has been triggered, Fisheries Queensland are to finalise a clear timetable for the implementation of appropriate management responses.

Progress: Completed

Fisheries Queensland has reported against the PMS in both the 2008 and 2009 annual status reports for this fishery.

Recommendation 2:

Fisheries Queensland 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 DPI.

Progress: Completed and ongoing

Fisheries Queensland meet with NSW DPI biannually as a part of an ongoing collaboration with respect to managing shared rocky reef stocks. NSW DPI is also a member of the Stakeholder Network Working Group reviewing management arrangements for the fishery. Collaboration between the departments ensures management arrangements in place benefit the shared stocks.

Recommendation 3:

Fisheries Queensland to

- 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.

Progress: Completed

Since the last reassessment, Fisheries Queensland has now completed the first regional recreational fishing survey for key species in this fishery for the south east Queensland region. This survey provided accurate recreational fishing data over a fine spatial scale and the results were incorporated into the latest snapper stock assessment. The report can be found online at www.dpi.qld.gov.au/28_15883.htm. In August 2010 Fisheries Queensland will also be commencing a new state-wide recreational fishing survey, and updated accurate estimates of catch (harvest and release) will be available by December 2011.

In addition, improvements to recreational, commercial and charter harvest estimates are part of the key discussions on potential changes to management arrangements that the SNWG are consulting on.

Recommendation 4:

Fisheries Queensland 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.

Progress: Completed

Fisheries Queensland logbook validation project for this fishery was completed in October 2006 and found a high level of accuracy in logbook reporting. The next validation round is planned to commence in mid 2010. Validation of logbook information provides confidence in the level of reporting accuracy by commercial fishers. Fisheries Queensland continue to work towards improvement through validation using fishery independent observers to record catch, effort, and protected species interactions. A recent review of the level of observer coverage in all Queensland Fisheries has resulted in a new program structure to align better with management plan reviews, address current concerns of fisheries managers, and meet WTO conditions. As such, all east coast line fisheries (including the RRFFF) will be monitored in 2011. The completion of this review, and the continued logbook validation activities that are now a part of Fisheries Queensland core business, has resulted in the meeting of recommendation 4 of the current WTO.

Recommendation 5:

Fisheries Queensland to continue to monitor temporal and spatial changes in catch and effort data for key target species.

Progress: Completed and ongoing

Fisheries Queensland closely monitor catch and effort trends through the annual status reporting, the performance measurement system, and the annual stock status assessment workshops. Results are available annually through the status report.

Recommendation 6:

Fisheries Queensland 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.

Progress: In progress

Fisheries Queensland has begun a review of the fishery management arrangements with the objective to implement new arrangements that will rebuild the snapper stock over a ten year period. Fisheries Queensland intends to implement new management arrangements for the fishery once the requirements for public consultation and processes for change of state fisheries legislation are met. The strategies and options for the recovery plan are currently undergoing development prior to public consultation. Fisheries Queensland believe that this recommendation will be met upon completion of this review and implementation of improved management arrangements.

