DRAFT

Application to the Department of Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts

For

Re-Assessment of the Tasmanian Giant Crab Fishery

Against the Guidelines for the Ecologically Sustainable Management of Fisheries

Department of Primary Industries and Water
Wild Fisheries Management Branch

Tasmania
Explore the possibilities

1. Background

The Tasmanian Giant Crab fishery was initially assessed by the then Environment Australia against the guidelines for the ecological sustainable management of fisheries in 2003 and the fishery was declared an approved Wildlife Trade Operation (WTO), under Part 13A of the *EPBC* Act. This declaration would allow the export of product from the fishery under permits for the next three years. The Fishery was then re-assessed against the guidelines by the Department of Water and Environment in 2006 and was given an exemption for export approval for a further three years, this approval expires in June 2009.

This report is to update the Department of Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts (DEWHA) on changes to the Tasmanian Giant Crab Fishery, to enable re-assessment of the fishery against the Guidelines for the Ecologically Sustainable Management of Fisheries.

This report should be read in conjunction with:

- The two previous assessments of the Giant Crab fishery under part 13A of the EPBC Act which can be found at ***http://www.environment.gov.au/coasts/fisheries/tas/giant-crab/submission-apr06.html*** and ***http://www.environment.gov.au/coasts/fisheries/tas/giant-crab/submission.html***

- The current Tasmanian Giant Crab Fishery Management plan (Fisheries (Giant Crab) Rules 2006) which can be found at ***http://www.thelaw.tas.gov.au/tocview/index.w3p;cond=ALL;doc_id=%2B7%2B2006%2BAT%40EN%2B20090327100000;histon=;prompt=;rec=;term=Giant%20Crab***

- The latest Tasmanian Giant Crab Fishery stock assessment (*Fishery Assessment Report Tasmanian Giant Crab Fishery- 2007/08*) which can be found at ***http://www.tafi.org.au/index.php/site/publications/category/giant_crab/***

2. Fishery Overview

Historically associated with the Southern rock lobster fishery, the Giant crab fishery developed substantially during the 1990s, and has been managed by Tasmania using an Individual Transferable Quota (ITQ) system since 1999.

The crab fishery is a limited entry, minor pot fishery with a small number (< 12) of specialised licensed fishers harvesting over 90% of the total allowable catch. In

season 2007/08, 22 fishers recorded landing 53.2 tonnes of giant crab of which eight fishers landed more than 1 tonne. The total value of the giant crab fishery is estimated at 2 million dollars, with the major markets being domestic (mainly Melbourne and Sydney) and export markets. Although the species can reach 45cm carapace width (CW) and over 17.5 kg weight, market preferences mean it is commonly marketed at less than 20cm CW and less than 4kg.

The fishery operates in deep water (120 – 250m) at the edge of the continental shelf. The area of the fishery includes waters surrounding the state of Tasmania generally south of 39º12' and out to the outer edge of the Australian Exclusive Economic Zone. Part of the fishery area is in Commonwealth waters however the entire fishery is managed by Tasmania under an Offshore Constitutional Settlement (OCS) between the Commonwealth Government and the Government of Tasmania. Figure 1 below indicates the area of the fishery and those areas which receive the greatest fishing intensity.

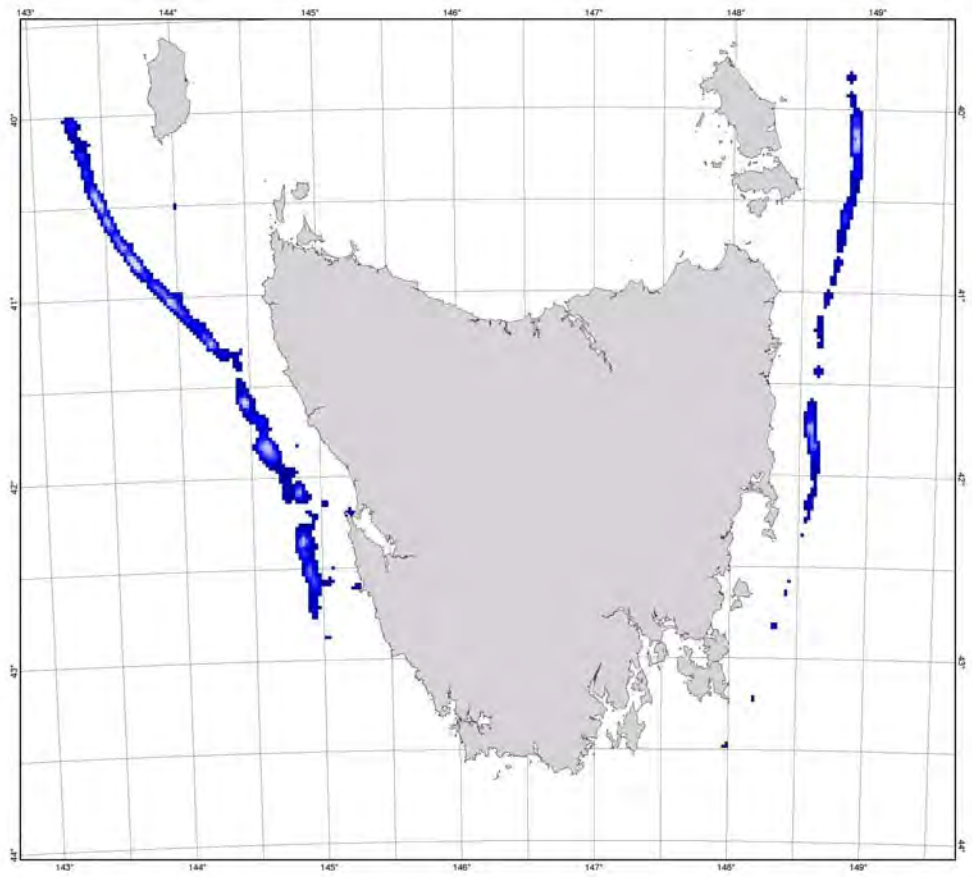

Figure 1: Area of the Tasmanian giant crab fishery based on spatial distribution of fishing effort.

The fishery initially harvested giant crabs with modified rock lobster pots, however larger, heavier steel pots are now being used in targeted giant crab fishing. There are limits on the number, dimensions and structure of giant crab traps that can be deployed from each licensed vessel. Each trap must have one or two escape gaps of defined minimum dimensions. Fishery management arrangements

include temporal closures, maximum and minimum size limits, and a prohibition on the take of berried females. In addition to gear limitations, there is limited entry to this fishery and a total allowable catch (TAC) There are currently 90 licences.

Due to the depth of that giant crabs are found, take of giant crab by the indigenous and recreational sectors is not significant. Recreational fishers are permitted to a possession limit of one giant crab and only crabs with a CW between 150- 215mm. Giant crab forms part of the bycatch of the Tasmanian Rock Lobster Fishery, where it is subject to a 5 tonnes upper harvest limit in that fishery (performance measure) and restricted to a possession limit of up to 10 giant crabs at any one time, in 2007/08 rock lobster fishers reported catching 61killograms of giant crab.

Bycatch from the giant crab fishery is considered negligible, with most of the bycatch comprising of cod, conger eel, ling and morwong. Given that fishery operates in deep water away from any coast the risk of interactions with endangered, threatened or protected species is assessed to be very low, with no protected species interactions reported by fishers targeting crabs in season 2007/08. The impact of the crab traps on the benthic habitat is also assessed to be of low risk by virtue of a small total annual 'footprint' of approximately 150m x 150m, it should be noted that around 40,000 crab traps are set per season, this is 2% of the total traps set for rock lobster in Tasmanian waters.

3. Key Changes to the Tasmanian Giant Crab Fishery since the last assessment

Since the last assessment of the Tasmanian Giant Crab Fishery, no changes have been made to the management plan for the fishery. However for the 2009/10 season which commenced on 1 March 2009 two changes have been made to the general management of the fishery, these are:
the TAC for Tasmanian Giant Crab Fishery has been reduced from 62.1 tonnes to 51.75 tonnes and the minimum size limit for male giant crabs has been reduced from 150mm to 140mm. Since the last assessment new performance indicators for the giant crab fishery have been developed and were run alongside the current performance indicators in the latest stock assessment.

TAC Reduction

The TAC has been reduced for the 2009/10 as a number of performance indicators for giant crab were not met, these include:

- Catches were lower than the catch limit reference point, set at 90% of the TAC. From the 2007/08 stock assessment reported catch of giant crab was 53.2 tonnes, representing only 84% of the 62.1 tonne TAC.
- State wide commercial catch rates have declined in two consecutive years.

- Regional commercial catch rates have declined by more than 20% in the east and west over the past two years.

In making the decision to reduce the giant crab TAC the following was considered:

- In the east of the fishery egg production estimates and total biomass estimates are at healthy levels.
- In the western region of the fishery egg production and the total exploitable biomass are at the lower end of preferred ranges.
- Catch rates of commercial fishers have declined for each of the last two years on each of the costs.
- The TAC was not taken in the last year with a 16 % shortfall.
- Model projections indicate that catch rates will continue to decline under the current TAC of 62.1 tonnes, though egg production is likely remain stable due to protection of females from the size limit.

Details of the performance of the giant crab fishery against the performance indicators can be found in the *Fishery Assessment Report for the Tasmanian Giant Crab Fishery 2007/08* (stock assessment) in section 3.1 starting on page 8.
The 2007/08 stock assessment reported that the state wide model predicted that with the TAC maintained at 62.1 tonnes the fishery was highly likely to experience a further decline in catch rates and exploitable biomass. A TAC of 51.8 tonnes would see an improvement in catch rates and exploitable biomass, with any stock recovery likely to occur slowly. It is acknowledged that there are distinct spatial differences in the state of the stocks between the east and west regions of the fishery. The options for cost effective spatial management are limited. DPIW will reassess the spatial issues when next year's stock assessment is available

Another factor that has a significant impact on whether the TAC is taken from one year to the next, is the market for giant crab. The opportunity for fishers to receive a premium price for giant crab is very short and usually coincides with the summer months. Prices then drop sharply and catchability significantly declines over winter, thus significant quantities of giant crab may remain uncaught.

Male Size Limit Change

The male size limit was reduced by 10mm to improve catch rates for male giant crabs and increase egg production towards the target reference point of 40%. This was supported by preliminary results of the project titled " FRDC2006/022 Re-assessing giant crab size limits to optimise value and sustainability of the fishery" and could have a significant and positive impact on egg production. The benefits of reducing the male size limit include:

- Higher catch rates for male giant crab.

- Increased egg production as the proportion of males making up the total catch should be higher.
- A higher proportion of the catch is likely to be in the premium price size range for the market.

It is expected that the reduction in TAC and male size limit will have a slow beneficial impact on giant crab stocks, though it needs to be recognised that any management changes made to the giant crab fishery will result in a delayed response from the stock due to slow giant crab growth rates and long inter-moult periods. DPIW acknowledges that there is some uncertainty and wide confidence limits in the stock assessment regarding future stock responses to management actions and the timeframe within which these responses will show up in the stock assessment. This uncertainty is due to a number of factors including; the short time series of fisheries data, biology of the species and the small number of participants in the fishery.

New Performance Indicators

In consultation with the Crustacean Fishery Advisory Committee and TAFI, DPIW has developed a new set of performance indicators which aim to provide target and limit reference points for biomass, egg production, harvest rate, giant crab bycatch, protected species, byproduct, and undersize abundance. A version of the proposed target reference points were run along side the existing performance indicators in the 2007/08 giant crab stock assessment (see page III of the *Fishery Assessment Report Tasmanian Giant Crab Fishery- 2007/08*), these performance indicators will be further refined in the lead up to the 2008/2009 assessment. When finalised the new performance measures will be documented in the giant crab policy document framework for further discussion with industry.

Target reference points currently under review for revised management plan:

- Total biomass in current year above 40% of highest historical levels
- Egg production in current year above 40% of highest historical levels
- Total biomass in 5 years above 40% of highest historical levels
- Egg production in 5 years above 40% of highest historical levels
- Harvest rate in 5 years above current levels
- Giant crab bycatch from all sectors above 5% of TAC
- Protected species and byproduct
- Undersize abundance

4. Recently completed and Current Research.

There are a number of project relating to giant crab that have been recently completed or are underway.

The FRDC funded project titled "*Understanding shelf-break habitat for sustainable management of fisheries with spatial overlap*" has been completed and the final report has been submitted to the FRDC for review. To date the final report has not been released.

This project specifically focused on the west coast of Tasmania where the Tasmanian Giant Crab fishery and the Commonwealth trawl fishery overlap. A gear interaction risk analysis of shelf break habitats will be conducted, to assess fishing impacts on the shelf break habitat utilised by giant crabs. The objectives of the project are:

- Define and map key habitats on the shelf edge (~80-180 fm) at key locations around Tasmania where fisheries using different gear types interact.
- Evaluate using video to obtain stock assessment information such as abundance, sex ratio, condition and size of target species, primarily the giant crab.
- Detail the distribution of exploited shelf-edge species in relation to habitat features.
- Evaluate ecosystem links within habitats based on trophic, temperature and current-flow data.
- Evaluate using video to obtain stock assessment information such as abundance, sex ratio, condition and size of target species, primarily the giant crab.

Preliminary outcomes of the project in relation to the key objectives were reported in the *Fishery Assessment Report Tasmanian Giant Crab Fishery 2007/08* and can be found on page 35.

The FRDC project titled "Re-assessing giant crab size limits to optimise value and sustainability of the fishery" is close to completion, the objectives of the project are:

- Describe the reproductive status of the fished giant crab population and compare it to that of the virgin population.
- Assess the implications of changes in current size limits, and document options that best balance the aims of optimising value while rebuilding stocks.

TAFI is currently conducting a project which aims to assess the potential of lost giant crab traps to ghost fish using a camera to attached to a trap to collect still images of a crab trap in-situ, this will be used to examine crab entry and exit

behavior over an extended period of time. A camera system has been designed which is rated to 200m, and will take still photographs at 30 minute intervals for up to four weeks. After overcoming some technical issues, related to the depth that the equipment will be working, and lighting and memory capacity to enable the deployment of the equipment for a prolonged period, the giant crab trap and camera system has been deployed on the giant crab fishing grounds. It is expected to have some results from the trial over the next few months.

5. Progress in Implementing recommendations from the previous assessment.

Conditions

- *Operation of the TGCF will be carried out in accordance with the management regime in force under the Living Marine Resources Management Act 1995.*

  Since the last reassessment of the TGCF, operation of the TGCF has been carried out in accordance with the management regime in force under the LMRMA Act.

- *The Tasmanian Department of Primary Industries and Water (DPIW) to advise the Department of the Environment and Heritage (DEH) of any material change to the TGCF management arrangements that could affect the criteria on which Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (EPBC Act) decisions are based, within three months of that change being made.*

  Since the last assessment no changes have been made to the TGCF management arrangements, other than those which have been reported above. It is worth noting that the giant crab management plan (the Fisheries (Giant Crab) Rules 2006) is due for review in 2010.

- *Reports to be produced and presented to DEH annually, and to include:*
  - *Information sufficient to allow assessment of the progress of DPIW in implementing the recommendations made in the Assessment of the Tasmanian Giant Crab Fishery 2006;*
  - *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.*

  Since the last assessment DPIW has reported annually on progress being made in implementing the recommendations, reported on the status of the fishery and catch and effort information which is covered by the TAFI stock

assessment, the stock assessment also provides an assessment of the fishery against the objectives and performance indicators. The annual reports also reported on research being undertaken in the TGCF.

- *DPIW, by the end of July 2007, to develop a strategy that provides for defining and monitoring robust target levels of sustainable yield and biomass for giant crab stocks in the TGCF. The strategy should include provisions to review and minimise the impacts of discarded giant crabs and review and address any requirements for additional giant crab assessment and monitoring data.*

  Draft Framework for assessing the Giant Crab Fishery (as documented in July 2007)

  Objective 1 (Sustainability)

  Manage the risk of recruitment overfishing by maintaining the population of mature giant crab across the whole fishery above defined limit reference points

  Strategies

  1. Risk of recruitment overfishing is primarily managed through the female minimum size limit which aims to satisfy the limit reference point independently of other management strategies.
  2. Limit the commercial catch through setting a TAC
  3. Seasonal closures, and prohibition on retaining berried females
  4. Promote better fishing practices (Clean Green,)

  Resource Performance Indicators

  Limit reference points

  1. Statewide egg production to be greater than 25% of virgin egg production.
  2. Harvest rate in 2012 is no greater than highest historical rate
  3. Giant crab bycatch from all sectors to be less than 5% of the TAC

  Other indicators

  1. Temporal trends in undersize catch rates (sustained low catch rates of undersize indicate low recruitment)
  2. Temporal trends in spatial distribution of egg production (on the scale of east and west coast)
  3. Temporal trends in spawning biomass
  4. Temporal trends in sex ratio of catch
  5. Temporal trends in trawl fishing effort in habitats important for recruitment.

  Objective 2 (Economic)

Manage the legal biomass to optimise the community benefit from the resource.

Indicators
1. Monitor legal size biomass
2. Monitor GVP
3. Monitor Annual catch as % of TAC
4. Monitor catch rates (statewide, east, west regions)

The stock assessment model has now been used for four years, and only recently has data been sufficient to estimate the productivity of the fishery, hence the development of target reference points for trial in the most recent assessment, these target reference points will be further refined for the next stock assessment. In consultation with the Crustacean Fishery Advisory Committee and TAFI, DPIW has developed a new set of performance indicators which aim to provide target levels for biomass, egg production, harvest rate, giant crab bycatch, protected species, byproduct, and undersize abundance. The new target reference points for the giant crab fishery were trailed along side the existing performance indicators in the 2007/08 giant crab stock assessment, both target and limit reference points will be further refined. When finalised the new performance measures will be documented in the giant crab policy document framework for further discussion with industry. It is aimed to have the new policy document completed prior to the review of the management plan in 2010.

TAFI and DPIW continue to promote the use electronic callipers and GPS loggers as a tool to obtain data for the giant crab assessment. However it recognised that more data is required from the east coast part of the fishery to enable a robust assessment to continue, this has been identified as a priority. It is accepted that it is not viable to put observers on giant crab boats, as the daily numbers of crabs caught is low combined with long trips is not an efficient use of observer sea time, thus providing electronic callipers to giant crab fishers is the most efficient method for obtaining giant crab assessment data.

The impact of giant crab discards will continue to be assessed through information provided by fishers. Tasmanian giant crab fishers provide information on number of undersize grabs released, from this catch rates of undersized crabs released provides an indication of undersize abundance and possible strength of future recruitment. The *Fishery Assessment Report Tasmanian Giant Crab Fishery 2007/08* (page 17) reports that undersized catch rates on the west coast have steadily increased over the past seven

years, and this could indicate a future increase in the number of crabs recruiting into the exploitable biomass. The CPUE of undersize crab data and results of the shelf break habitat study indicates that the undersize abundance appears to be concentrated in the north west of the fishery, this information could be used to reduce fishing pressure in those areas should it be found that the discard of undersize giant crabs is having an adverse impact on the stock.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1: Within 18 months, DPIW to develop and implement a program for reporting byproduct species taken in the fishery and develop measures to periodically validate byproduct species taken in the TGCF. DPIW to also develop and implement preliminary performance measures for key byproduct species within two years.

As of 1 June 2007 giant crab byproduct has been reported in the Giant Crab Catch Record Book a catch and effort log book for the giant crab fishery, this has made for a more effective reporting of byproduct, as fishers now only have to fill in a single log book for their giant crab fishing operations. Giant crab fishers are required to record in the catch record book any byproduct retained for commercial sale, personal use or retained for use as bait. Previously any retained byproduct from the giant crab fishery was recorded in a separate general fish return, this is a significant improvement in the assessment of retained byproduct as before it was not possible to separate byproduct retained by giant crab fishers and rock lobster fishers in the DPIW Integrated Catch and Effort (ICE) database. A copy of the new giant crab catch and effort log book is attached.

New byproduct reporting arrangements have been in place for close to two years, and records indicate that very little byproduct is retained by giant crab fishers. A recent audit of Giant Crab Catch returns (between June 2007 and December 2008) indicated that of 56 monthly returns from fishers who caught more than one tonne of giant crab eight returns recorded retaining any byproduct. Byproduct is now reported in the annual Giant Crab Fishery Stock Assessment, with performance measures for byproduct currently being developed and trialed in the most recent giant crab fishery assessment. These performance indicators were reported in the 2007/08 stock assessment, where four species of byproduct were reported with the greatest total of catch being the southern conger eel at 70kg (see page 20 of the *Fishery Assessment Report Tasmanian Giant Crab Fishery- 2007/08*).

Validation of byproduct reporting has progressed in parallel with the introduction of the new catch record book. Marine Police have continued to check the accuracy of catch records whilst conducting inspections at sea and during the monitoring of giant crab unloading at the wharf. Marine Police have reported

acceptable compliance with the new byproduct reporting procedures. DPIW will continue to raise awareness with giant crab and rock lobster fishers on the importance of recording byproduct retained, through annual port meetings and through the Tasmanian fishing industry magazine "Fishing Today".

Recommendation 2: DPIW to implement, within 18 months, measures to monitor changes in the composition and quantity of bycatch species. The effectiveness of these measures should be periodically reviewed to ensure the validity of bycatch estimates.

Whilst bycatch is not required to be reported, giant crab Fishers continue to use disposable cameras to record bycatch taken in giant crab traps. For the 2009/10 season three cameras have been issued to six of the major giant crab fishers. The cameras are used to take pictures of the content of traps with each photo showing the content of one trap. Fishers sampled every 2nd or 3rd trap, with sampling also including empty traps. Initially 423 traps were sampled with the sampling continuing. These photos are analysed by TAFI, for composition and quantity of bycatch species taken in giant crab traps. The data collected through the use of disposable cameras has been compared with data obtained by observers in the Victorian giant crab fishery as method to validate estimates of bycatch, this indicated that both species composition and catch rates were similar between Tasmanian and Victorian giant crab fisheries and confirms byctach from the Tasmanian giant crab fishery is low.

Incidence of bycatch recorded through the Tasmanian camera survey is higher than that recorded through the Victorian observer survey. This maybe caused by under-sampling of pots without bycatch in the Tasmanian survey (that is, fishers tend to forget to take the photo when the trap does not contain bycatch). Regardless of the cause, this provides evidence that the camera system is a conservative data collection tool for bycatch monitoring because it appears to overestimate bycatch.

Total catch of bycatch species for the Tasmanian giant crab fishery in 2006 is estimated from the sub sample recorded through camera surveys. Total pot lifts in 2006 was 40,079. This suggests that most significant bycatch impact from the Tasmanian crab fishery is on cod, whiptails, morwong although less than 1000 individuals of each taxa are estimated to be removed each year.

Table 1 Comparison of catch rates for bycatch species sampled in the Tasmanian and Victorian giant crab fisheries. Potential impact is based on qualitative risk assessment forum conducted in 2006 and takes account of whether species are returned or retained, and whether they can be returned apparently unharmed.

	Tasmania			Victoria		Potential impact
Species	Catch rate (per pot)	Rank	Estimated fishery catch (n)	Catch rate (per pot)	Rank	
Shark, Draughtboard	0.085	1	3418	0.012	2	Nil – Returned healthy
Crab, Hermit	0.043	2	1711	0.660	1	Nil – Returned healthy
Cod, Unidentified	0.019	3	749	0.004	3	Dead and/or retained (100%)
Whiptail	0.019	4	749	0.002	6	Dead and/or retained (100%)
Eel, Conger	0.016	5	641	0.001	7	Some retained, most returned healthy
Morwong	0.008	6	320	0.003	4	Dead and/or retained (100%)
Shark, Gummy	0.005	7	212	0.000	9	Some retained, most returned healthy
Ling, Rock	0.003	8	108	0.000	10	Dead and/or retained (100%)
Leatherjacket	0.003	9	108	0.002	5	Dead and/or retained (100%)
Perch, Unidentified	0.003	10	108	0.000	8	Dead and/or retained (100%)

TAFI observers continue to collect bycatch data from rock lobster pots set in water deeper than 70m, the initial results from this program were reported in the recently submitted 2007/08 annual report. The results indicated that the most abundant bycatch item were hermit crabs (which are returned to the water alive) and corresponds with the results of bycatch estimates from methods outlined above. Quantities of other bycatch species were negligible.

Recommendation 3: DPIW, in collaboration with industry, to continue to encourage and monitor the adoption of the environmental code of practice, the 'Clean Green Program', in particular those measures that minimise the impacts of trap loss and potential ghost fishing.

DPIW continues to encourage giant crab fishery participants to participate in the Southern Rock Lobster (SRL) Clean Green program. Of the 22 vessels who recorded landing of giant crab in 2008/09 seven have completed the SRL Clean Green program.

Industry members have reported that trap loss has reduced since interactions with the commonwealth trawl sector have declined. TAFI is currently assessing the potential of lost giant crab traps to ghost fish, by mounting a trap with a camera which will record activity in a giant crab trap over a period of time. After overcoming some initial technical issues, the camera mounted trap was recently deployed, more details about the research is explained above. Data from the experiment should become availed over the next six months. It is expected to show that as soak time is increased giant crab catch will be reduced as the bait deteriorates and is consumed.

TAFI has already demonstrated that the potential for giant crab traps to ghost fish is minimal, with an analysis of trends in catch rates versus soak time indicating a gradual decline in giant crab catches with increased soak time as is demonstrated by figure 2 below.

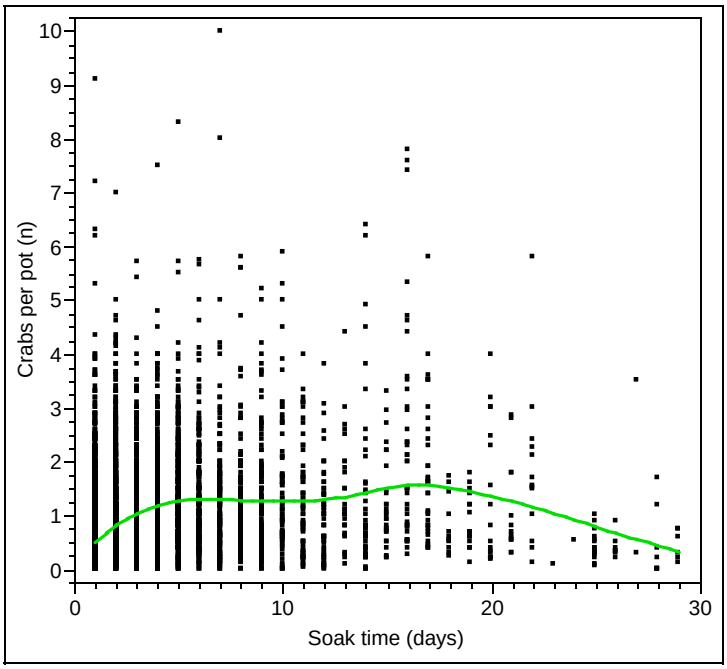

Figure 2: Trends in catch rate of crabs with increasing soak time. Catch rate is measured as crabs per pot lift with a single record for each shot. Data is drawn from 9900 shots between 2000 and 2007 inclusive. The fitted spline attempts to illustrate the trend in catch rate with soak time, which is visually obscured by the large number of overlapping records. Catch rates climb rapidly over the first 5 days, reach a peak at day 17, and then decline steadily. The decline after day 17 indicates that crabs can escape from traps.

Recommendation 4: DPIW to continue to collaborate with AFMA and implement measures to mitigate against impacts of harvest of and incidental damage to giant crabs and their habitat by trawling activity in the TGCF. In particular, DPIW to consult further with AFMA to ensure accurate reporting by Commonwealth trawl operators of giant crab catch from the area of the TGCF for inclusion in the stock assessment and TAC setting processes.

Since the last assessment DPIW has continued to collaborate with AFMA regarding the impacts of the Commonwealth trawl sector on the giant crab fishery. At a meeting between DPIW, AFMA and TAFI in September 2008 the results of the FRDC funded project looking at the giant crab shelf break habitat were presented. It was agreed that the outcomes of the study should be presented to the South East Trawl Fishing Industry Association (STFIA), however this can not occur until the FRDC approves the report for release. At present the shelf break habitat report is still being reviewed and FRDC have requested some further analysis.

Giant crab industry members report that the current voluntary exclusion areas negotiated in 2004 between the two industry groups are working well, with the vast majority of operators adhering to them. Once the report is released, DPIW anticipates that further discussions will be facilitated between the industry groups to review both location and effectiveness of the voluntary exclusions zones in light of the shelf break habitat study results. Areas assessed as being significant habitat for juvenile or adult giant crabs that have a moderate to high risk of being vulnerable to fishing activity would obviously be of priority for discussion.

At the meeting between DPIW, AFMA and TAFI held in September 2008 the issue of reporting by Commonwealth trawl operators of giant crab catch was discussed. It was agreed that AFMA would provide TAFI data on giant crab catch from the area of the giant crab fishery each April, and TAFI agreed to only publish aggregated giant crab bycatch data at a spatial level of east and western halves of the fishery. Methods to improve the reporting of giant crab bycatch were discussed, and it was believed trawl observer data could be better utilised to give an estimate of giant crab bycatch. DPIW has committed to produce crab identification cards for SE Commonwealth trawl operators in an effort to improve the reporting of giant crab bycatch.

In the most recent giant crab stock assessment TAFI reported on giant crabs taken by the trawl sector for the first time (see page 10 of the *Fishery Assessment Report Tasmanian Giant Crab Fishery- 2007/08*), the data supplied by AFMA and compiled by TAFI indicates a significant drop in the take of giant crab by trawlers since 2004 where 19.6 tonnes of unspecified crab was landed in south east ports compared to 4.9 tonnes landed in 2007. Data collected by observers could not be included in the assessment due to problems with the AFMA database in extracting observer observations.