



Australian Government
Australian Fisheries Management Authority



Future Operating Environment for Commonwealth Fisheries

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 Protecting **our** fishing future

ABOUT THIS DOCUMENT

On 14 December, the Federal Minister for Fisheries, Forestry and Conservation Senator Ian Macdonald issued a formal direction to the Australian Fisheries Management Authority (AFMA) to take decisive action to ensure the sustainability of our fish stocks and to secure the Australian fishing industry's future. The direction was issued as part of the Australian Government's \$220M *Securing our Fishing Future Initiative*, announced in November 2005.

The direction states that:

The Australian Government considers that decisive action is needed immediately to halt overfishing and to create the conditions that will give overfished stocks a chance to recover to an acceptable level in the near future.

This document outlines the actions AFMA will take to give effect to the Australian government's direction and provides Commonwealth fishing holders with a clear understanding of the future operating environment in Commonwealth fisheries.

HOW WILL AFMA RESPOND TO THE GOVERNMENT'S DIRECTION?

AFMA is committed to ecological and economic sustainability of the fishing industry. In response to the Australian government's direction, AFMA will implement the following measures in all Commonwealth fisheries:

SUSTAINABLE STOCKS

- A new Harvest Strategy Framework will be applied to all Commonwealth managed fisheries by 2008. The framework sets the 'goalposts' for managing catches by setting agreed target and limit reference points and clear decision rules for each species. The framework has been used for some time in Australia's sub-Antarctic fisheries and was most recently used to establish Total Allowable Catches in the Southern and Eastern Scalefish and Shark Fishery.

MANAGING RISK

- 'Ecological Risk Assessments' (ERA's) identify the risks that fishing poses to the ecological sustainability of the marine environment and help prioritise management needs. ERA's will be completed for all Commonwealth fisheries during 2006. Many of our future fisheries management decisions will be based on the outcomes of the ERA process.



IMPROVED COMPLIANCE AND DATA

To improve compliance and data and minimise management costs, the following actions will be introduced into Commonwealth fisheries:

- Vessel Monitoring Systems (VMS) will become compulsory in all Commonwealth fisheries.
- On-board catch-monitoring cameras will also be increasingly used to complement existing Observer programs.
- An electronic licensing transaction system will be developed, including the capacity for “self-service” for some transactions.
- Administrative rather than prosecution based penalties will be used more frequently for fisheries offences to reduce management costs borne by the whole industry rather than the offending individual.
- The integrity of fisheries management arrangements will be improved through measures designed to minimise the black market in illegally caught fish.
- Measures to protect threatened, vulnerable or endangered species will be enhanced and further developed where necessary.

REDUCING DISCARDING AND BYCATCH

- Discarding of species subject to a total allowable catch limit or quota management will be illegal in all Commonwealth fisheries by 2007.
- Assess and implement measures to significantly reduce bycatch in all Commonwealth fisheries, with the goal to halve it by 2008.

EFFICIENT MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS

- AFMA will support the negotiation of new Offshore Constitutional Settlement arrangements that improve the integrity of its management systems that are being developed by the Australian Government with the States and Northern Territory.
- AFMA will begin the process of reviewing those fisheries not on ITQ management during 2006.



FISHERY SPECIFIC ACTIONS

Southern and Eastern Scalefish and Shark Fishery:

1. Reminder that TACs for 2006 and 2007 have been announced and 2007 TACs will only be varied where these are consistent with the outputs from the Harvest Strategy Framework.
2. Except for some targeted fishing for orange roughy and alfonsino, most waters below approximately 700m in the SESSF will be closed to fishing from 1 January 2007 to enable the rebuilding of deepwater species from overfishing and to take a more precautionary approach to possible fishing impacts on deepwater ecosystems.
3. To expedite the recovery of depleted stocks, Spatial fishery closures, including restrictions on the use of each gear type in certain depths across the fishery, will be implemented from 2006. The closures will address the main ecological impacts of the fishery on vulnerable species and important fishery habitats.
4. Within season quota reconciliation will come into effect from 2006 to ensure that only vessels with adequate levels of quota can go fishing.

Eastern Tuna and Billfish Fishery

1. The Total Allowable Effort (TAE) and the sub-areas factors will be set to limit the number of hooks that can be set in the mainland AFZ to 7 million and allow for up to 2.5 million to be set in the rest of the fishery in 2007. The figures will be reviewed as further data becomes available and in light of any decisions about allocation in the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission and any decisions made on resource sharing.
2. It is intended that the initial TAE set under the Plan will be 7.8 million clips. The initial sub-area factors that will be applied to the fishery are expected to be:

a. Mainland AFZ	1.0
b. The Norfolk Island zone and associated high-seas region	0.7
c. The remainder of the fishery	0.2
3. There may be a need for further sub-area factors, area closures or restrictions to address other issues such as threatened, endangered and protected species and the localized depletion of swordfish. These arrangements will be developed through the RAG and MAC process over the next 18 months.



4. Any decisions made by the Australian government on resource sharing with the recreational sector may impact on the management arrangements for the commercial fishery.
5. The level of observer coverage will be increased to 8.5% in 2007 to ensure adequate coverage. In line with decisions of the WCPFC it may be necessary for international observers to be carried on Australian boats. The additional costs for the placement of international observers would need to be met by concession holders in the fishery.
6. Catch Disposal documentation will be implemented in early January 2006 and will remain in place for the fishery under the management plan.
7. The feasibility of moving to a fishery independent survey to provide information for stock assessment will be examined. Costs of such a survey will have to be met in line with cost recovery policy (currently 80% industry/20% government)
8. To manage the use of hooks in the fishery every operator will be required to install a drum monitoring system by 2007.
9. The Broadbill swordfish TAC is set at 1,400 tonnes for 2006 and will be strictly enforced. Similar measures will be taken to prevent overfishing of other species if necessary.
10. To monitor the impacts of the fishery on threatened, endangered and protected species and ensure compliance with anti-discarding policy the current observer program, or an electronic equivalent, will be an on-going measure.

Bass Strait Central Zone Scallop Fishery

1. The total allowable catch should be set at zero for a minimum of three years from January 2006, excluding official stock surveys.
2. Reminder that boat SFRs in this fishery will be extinguished in February 2007 in accordance with the Management Plan.

AFMA will work closely with the Australian Government and the Department of Agriculture Fisheries and Forestry on legislative reforms that will be required to implement some of these new arrangements. In particular, new, more cost effective, compliance arrangements will require legislative amendments.

AFMA will continue to work with the Commonwealth Fisheries Association and Australian Seafood Industry Council on initiatives to improve the cost-effectiveness of fisheries management.



For those remaining in the industry, a \$15 million subsidy for AFMA fisheries management fees will be brought in for 3 years on a reducing scale, commencing 2006-07.

