



Northern Prawn Fishery 2008 Tiger Prawn Season Information Sheet

1. Season dates

The 2008 tiger prawn season will commence on 08:30 hours UTC on 1 August 2008. This equates to: 1 August 18:30 QLD, 18:00 NT and 16:30 WA.

The 2008 tiger prawn season will extend for a maximum of 17 weeks (close on 2230 hours UTC 30 November 2008) from the start of the season, **unless** the following decision rule is triggered:

- a) if the average prawn catch per boat (**fishing** in the NPF) per night is **less** than 300 kg for the 12th week of the season; then
- b) the fishery will close at the end of the 15th fishing week.

To facilitate the assessment of whether an early closure should be applied, a “representative sample” of the catch rates for the season across the fleet is required. This decision rule is applied only if all catch data (kg/day, or total catch and total days) for the whole fleet (or >95% of NORMAC members and advisors) is supplied for the **period of the the 12th week of the season by 3 days after the end of that week.**

2. SFR conditions

SFR holders and operators are reminded that all vessels operating in the NPF must keep a copy of the Certificate of Statutory Fishing Right (SFR) onboard the vessel at all times.

3. Logbook change

There has been two changes to the NPF15 logbook in the ‘Information’ section and the ‘Gear Sheet’. As a result of these changes it was necessary to rename the logbook, as such the new logbook is the NP16. Please note that Operators can remain using their NP15 logbook.

Instructions section

The description of the reporting date for the log sheets has changed from “by the 14th day of the following month”(for example, logsheets for March are due by the 14th of April), to “Vessels must submit their completed up-to-date logsheets to AFMA each time they return to port or rendezvous with a mothership that holds an AFMA Carrier Boat Permit. All remaining logsheets must be submitted to AFMA within two weeks of the Season end”. These changes to the instructions were undertaken to ensure there is regular and timely returns of log sheets during the seasons. Operators should note that even if they don’t receive a new book (NP16), they will be required to submit their NP 15 as per these new instructions for this coming season. As such, this notice is the notice of a change to the instruction in their current NP15.





Gear sheet

The gear sheet has been amended to include an additional column which specifies the number of nets the vessel is using (excluding try nets). This change is necessary to allow improved data analysis.

4. Vessel Gear Sheets

A reminder to all SFR holders and skippers that the submission of gear sheets at the beginning of each season and whenever gear is changed is mandatory. These gear sheets are used by AFMA Management and CSIRO to assess effort shifts in the fishery and are an essential information requirement in the fishery. Please ensure they are completed and forwarded with your completed logsheets. Also please ensure that all logsheets are submitted to AFMA by the prescribed date. To help ensure that logsheets are received by AFMA by the due date vessels should post their logsheets in the pre-paid envelope each time they come to shore or meet up with the mother boat.

5. Small prawn move-on-provision

As per last year the NPF industry will again implement a process for monitoring small prawns and to voluntarily move away from areas if small prawns begin moving in before the fishery closes. The decision rules and processes are the same as those in place last year. The NPF Industry Pty Ltd will circulate these to all SFR holders / skippers in due course.

6. Closures

All fishing closures during the 2008 tiger season, as per last year, are in effect. This includes the daylight closure from 0800 to 1800 (local time) in the Gulf of Carpentaria (GOC). Closures are described in NPF Direction No. 119 Second Season Closures, copies have been sent to SFR holders and all current Directions are available on AFMA's website at www.afma.gov.au

7. Navigating in closed areas update

During 2007 AFMA conducted trials in the NPF to assess the feasibility of proposed regulations for navigating in closed areas. The trial proved successful with only one change proposed being the reduction of the one hour requirement to transit through a closure to a 30 minute requirement. This draft regulation is still progressing and attached is a recent letter to NORMAC and a *frequently asked questions* sheet addressing comments and concerns received during the consultation process.

8. Gear requirements

All fishing gear requirements for the 2008 tiger season including turtle excluder devices and bycatch reduction devices as per previous years are in effect. A reminder that AFMA compliance undertakes at sea operations which include inspections of any non-compliance with the gear requirements outlined in NPF Direction No. 107 (as described in the 2008 NPF information book).





9. Scientific observers & Crew Member Observers

A number of AFMA scientific observers will be moving throughout the fleet during the season. These observers will be collecting information on catch including bycatch and interactions with threatened, endangered and protected species (e.g. turtles and sea snakes). Again, operators are requested to assist with observers coming on-board vessels and to help them carry out their duties. These scientific observers, along with the Crew Member Observers, are integral in collecting information on the fishery to show ecological sustainability.

10. July CSIRO prawn monitoring survey

The prawn monitoring survey is currently underway and is expected to finish in late July. As soon as the data has been consolidated and verified by CSIRO, we will forward it to all SFR holders and place it on the AFMA Website.

11. NPF 2007 Data Summary

The 2007 NPF Data Summary has been provided to SFR holders and is available on AFMA's website. The Data Summary presents the catch and effort logbook data provided by operators in the fishery. The data is presented in a summarised format in order to provide an overview of activity in the fishery for the first and second seasons in 2007 without compromising data confidentiality.

The NPF Section Staff wish you all the best for a very productive tiger prawn season.

Contact details

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10 June 2008

Mr Stuart Richey
Chair, NORMAC
C/- Executive officer, Ms Annie Jarrett
PO Box 756
CALOUNDRA QLD 4551

Dear Mr Richey

Navigating in closed areas regulation

Please find enclosed a *frequently asked questions* sheet addressing comments and concerns received during the consultation process on the draft regulation for navigating in closed areas.

During 2007 AFMA conducted trials in the Northern Prawn fishery (NPF) to assess the feasibility of the proposed regulation in cost effectively monitoring navigation in areas closed to fishing. The trial proved successful with the only change proposed being the reduction of the one hour requirement to transit through a closure to a 30 minute requirement.

In March 2008 the Northern Prawn Fishery Management Advisory Committee (NORMAC) were provided with the results of the trial and agreement to the regulation was obtained. AFMA has also sought support from the Commonwealth Fisheries Association (CFA) with the implementation of the draft regulation across all Commonwealth fisheries.

AFMA believes the regulation will provide for greater consistency and improved efficiencies in the monitoring of areas closed to fishing across all Commonwealth fisheries.

If you have any further queries regarding the implementation of the navigating in closed areas regulation please contact Chelsea Nash, Senior Policy Officer (02) 6225 5456 or chelsea.nash@afma.gov.au

Yours sincerely

Paul Murphy
General Manager
Fisheries Operations Branch

Frequently Asked Questions

In April 2007, the navigating in closed areas regulation was sent to management advisory committees (MACs) and the Commonwealth Fishing Association (CFA) for comment. Comments received on the draft regulation indicated general support for AFMA to monitor closed areas in a cost effective manner using VMS. Several comments were received in relation to the draft regulation and these are addressed below.

1. Why has AFMA proposed the draft regulation across all Commonwealth fisheries?

To achieve a cost effective and consistent approach to monitoring of fishing in closed areas.

A uniform approach, across all Commonwealth fisheries, to the monitoring of navigation within closures is less expensive and simpler for AFMA to apply and enforce than current monitoring methods, such as aerial and at-sea surveillance, which are used to verify possible unauthorised fishing in closures.

For the navigation regulation to be cost-effective across all Commonwealth fisheries it needs to be consistent. The implementation of different rules in different fisheries would lead to additional resources needed to monitor the various arrangements. While the current draft regulation may require some small compromises within fisheries, a consistent approach will ensure the integrity of monitoring closures across all Commonwealth fisheries is maintained.

2. Is there added operational costs of extra steaming to avoid closures or spending extra time in small closed areas to reach the minimum one hour?

AFMA has ascertained that the minimum requirement of one hour can be changed to 30 minutes and as a result this should reduce the need to undertake extra steaming to avoid closures or spending additional time inside a closure to meet the minimum time requirement.

New operational practices may need to be adopted by fishing operators to ensure compliance with the navigation regulation, but AFMA does not consider these will incur significant costs when compared with the benefits of implementing the new regulation.

There are not many small closures that will significantly interfere with the operations of Commonwealth fishing vessels. Transit corridors may be considered to deal with small closures that need to be transited in less than 30 minutes (i.e. 3nm coastal water zones into ports).

3. Are vessels fitted with drum monitors exempt from the new regulation?

No. Drum monitors are currently being trialled but at this time are not a compulsory requirement for vessels in any Commonwealth fishery. At this time all Commonwealth vessels will need to comply with the draft regulation irrespective of the outcome of the drum monitoring trial.

This provision can be revisited should at a later stage drum monitors be fitted and functioning in Commonwealth fisheries.

4. Does this prevent a scientific permit being issued that allows a boat to fish in a closed area?

Section 37B(d)(ii) of the regulation allows vessels which hold a scientific permit to conduct research in closed zones. The scientific permit must specify that the vessel is required to fish for the purposes of research in the specific closure.

5. If an AFMA observer is carried on board a vessel, do these conditions still apply?

Yes, irrespective of carrying an observer on board a vessel, the regulation conditions would still apply.

The AFMA observer program provides a data collection and verification service to fisheries management, researchers and industry. Observers are placed on vessels to collect scientific data and other fisheries management data. They do not perform an enforcement role.

6. What if a longline accidentally drifts into a closure? Is the vessel able to retrieve it without facing penalties?

Yes, but only under strict agreed arrangements with AFMA. Under the *Fisheries Management Act 1991* fishing gear drifting into a closed area is considered to be fishing in that area, regardless of where the line was set.

If fishing gear drifts into a closure operators must firstly contact AFMA, prior to entering the closure, to receive approval to enter the closed area for the purpose of retrieving a longline. The operator must follow all AFMA directions, moving directly to the longline and retrieving it as quickly as possible, then leaving the closure by the most direct route.

The onus will remain on operators to proactively avoid setting longlines in areas where they may drift into a closure.

7. What if a vessel needs to seek anchorage in a closed area, or is unable to maintain the minimum speed of 5 knots in rough weather/sea conditions?

The master of the vessel should notify the AFMA duty officer as soon as possible of such an event.

Under section 37D(3)(a) of the regulation, the master of a boat will meet the requirements of the regulation if they notify AFMA of the circumstances of which they are seeking anchorage in the closure and approval has been granted. This includes any unforeseen emergencies or circumstances beyond the control of the master of the boat.

8. In closures that apply for less than 24 hours, what if a vessel is not able to maintain a travelling speed of 5 knots or more or remain stationary for a minimum of 30 minutes due to:

- ***Drifting/dragging anchor?***

AFMA considers that the drifting and/or dragging of anchors will not trigger a breach of the navigation regulation providing that the speed of the vessel when compared with co-located vessels or information on sea and weather conditions specific to the vessels position, support the potential for drifting or dragging.

If operators are concerned that when they anchor they will drift substantially, the AFMA duty officer can be notified.

- **Searching?**

Searching in an area closed to fishing is not allowed (including daylight closures). As defined under the *Fisheries Management Act 1991* (the Act) searching for fish is considered fishing. Consequently any vessel in a closure whose movements can be interpreted by AFMA as fishing could be considered in breach of the regulation.

- **Streaming/cleaning?**

Streaming and cleaning of gear in a closure is not allowed. To avoid any misinterpretation associated with movements which could be interpreted by AFMA as fishing, streaming and cleaning activities should not be conducted during closure times. Breaches of this requirement could potentially instigate compliance action.

- **Transferring people and equipment from one vessel to another at the end of the daylight shot or later in the afternoon before heading out to the fishing grounds?**

For the transferring of people or equipment whilst in a closure, operators are required to steam to the necessary location at a minimum of 5 knots for at-least 30 minutes and then remain stationary for a minimum of 30 minutes to comply with the regulation conditions.

If these requirements are not able to be complied with, the AFMA duty officer is to be contacted and any directions given by AFMA are to be followed.

9. How do I contact the AFMA Duty Officer?

A duty officer is available daily to take calls from operators who need to seek an exemption where certain circumstances may inhibit the ability to meet the specified requirements. The duty officer number is **0419 205 329**. AFMA should be advised immediately if the requirements cannot be adhered to or where operators are concerned that they may breach the conditions.

Each case or situation will be evaluated by AFMA on its individual circumstances at the time of the event. However, if the vessel is travelling in a manner that is not in accordance with the regulation and AFMA suspects the vessel activity to be consistent with fishing, the burden of proof that the vessel was not fishing will lie with the master of the vessel.

10. Is the regulation also applicable to Marine Park Areas (MPA) monitoring?

Yes, the regulation is also applicable to Commonwealth Marine Park Areas (MPAs). MPAs comprise specific usage zones which may be closed to fishing. AFMA and Department of Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts (DEWHA) have reached an agreement whereby AFMA will monitor MPAs via VMS consistent with the draft regulation. All the costs associated with monitoring activities in MPAs will be paid for by DEWHA.

11. Is the new regulation a problem with multi endorsed fishing vessels and closed areas?

The regulation only applies to fishing methods and/or fisheries that are prohibited from fishing in designated closures.

12. When will the draft regulation come into force?

AFMA has commenced the steps necessary to finalise and implement the regulation and expects it to come into effect in late 2008. All operators will be advised via a media campaign prior to the commencement date.

13. Who can I contact for more information?

Please contact AFMA if you have any further questions regarding the draft regulation for monitoring of closed areas. Enquiries can be directed to Domestic Compliance on (02) 6225 5456 or domestic.compliance@afma.gov.au