

Six-monthly bycatch action plan progress report

MAC / Fishery: TSPMAC / Torres Strait Prawn Fishery

BAP release date: 2005

Report date: March 2008

Issue: Threatened species and protected species		
Strategy (1): Modify fishing gear to minimise turtle and other bycatch		
Performance indicator (output)	Actions taken for output	Output achieved (y/n) and date
The TSPMAC will continue to examine developments in the ECOTF, NPF and related ongoing research to ensure that the most effective TED and BRD designs are used in the TSPF.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A new "popeye fishbox" BRD has been tested in the NPF. The "popeye fishbox" BRD was approved by the PZJA at its 21st meeting of 28-29 August 2007. The BRD is currently being added to FMN 82. The amended notice should be signed by the Minister by in early 2008. PZJA agencies are meeting with The US TED accreditation team on 7 April 2008 to discuss TED design for export accreditation to the US 	yes
Management agencies, the Queensland Seafood Industry Association and Torres Strait Prawn Entitlement Holders' Association will encourage and facilitate further trialling and development of BRDs in Torres Strait including providing available information to all licence holders.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Management agencies will review the effectiveness of all BRDs with possibly intentions of removing some less effective BRDs from the fishery (FMN 82). 	yes - ongoing
Compulsory use of BRDs introduced by 1 Mar 2004.	Compulsory BRDs were introduced 1 March 2004 as FMN 70 (now FMN 82). An additional BRD is currently being added to this FMN.	Yes
Monitoring bycatch and turtle interactions through observer programme by 1 Mar 2005.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The observer program commenced during 2005 season. Observers record bycatch, protected species and turtle interactions. 	Yes
Desired outcome: Effective TEDs and BRDs used in the fishery.		
Outcome achieved? Yes – Managers and the TSPMAC have been monitoring outside experience, particularly with TEDs, with a view to improving practice in this fishery. A new BRD has been implemented in the fishery, and managers are currently reviewing all BRD's under FMN 82, with possible intentions to remove the less effective and currently unutilised BRD's from the fishery.		

Issue: High risk and other bycatch species		
Strategy (2): To ensure bycatch is monitored in the TSPF		
Performance indicator (output)	Actions taken for output	Output achieved (y/n) and date
The TSPMAC and management agencies will introduce an effective monitoring programme acceptable to all stakeholders to monitor the amounts and composition of bycatch.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The observer program was introduced in 2005 is ongoing. The program aims to verify target catch levels, and collect data on bycatch and TEP species. • Results of 2004-2006 bycatch data collected during annual surveys suggest little or no change in bycatch composition since 1980s. • Limited bycatch data is being collected during 2007 and 2008 through Long Term Monitoring Program surveys (rate ratio of bycatch to prawn catch). • The popeye fish excluder BRD had promising results in the NPF which are likely to transfer to the TSPF if industry uptake of the BRD is good. 	Yes – ongoing.
The TSPMAC will identify and monitor indicator species and set threshold reference points.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Base-line data being collected through observer and LTM programs. Biological reference points for key species will be set in accordance with the TSPF Plan. 	Yes – ongoing but longer term.
AFMA and the TSPMAC will develop a crew based observer programme to monitor and validate the amounts and composition of target species and bycatch, particularly in regard to protected species in the fishery. Based on the monitoring programme, AFMA and the TSPMAC will identify if there are areas of the prawn fishery where vulnerable species may require further protection.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A crew based monitoring program may not be the most appropriate way to monitor the fishery. A scientific observer program (AFMA based) is being used because of reports from industry of high crew turnover. • The 2008 TSPF observer program is currently being tailored to better suit current management issues for the fishery. 	Yes – but via AFMA's scientific observer program.
AFMA will continue to collect information on bycatch through logbooks and targeted research programs and will support research targeted at reducing bycatch.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comparisons between the scientific observer data and the logbook data are required to evaluate the usefulness of the logbook data and or where improvements in the logbook data are required. 	Partially – data are being collected to evaluate.
AFMA in consultation with the TSPMAC will develop threshold reference points for indicator species by 1 Mar 2006.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As above, data are still being collected. • Reference points will be set by the PZJA in accordance with the TSPF Plan by mid 2009. 	Partially – data collection ongoing.

AFMA in consultation with the TSPMAC will develop management responses when threshold reference points are reached.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Management responses are being developed as a part of the TSPF harvest strategy. An interim HS will be in place by mid-2008 season with the aim of developing a long term harvest strategy for the 2009 season. 	Currently being developed.
Queensland Boating and Fisheries Patrol will monitor compliance with TED and BRD regulations on behalf of the PZJA.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> QBFP continue to maintain an active compliance role in Torres Strait Fisheries TED and BRD compliance remains a priority. 	Yes – Ongoing.
Observer program in place by 1 Mar 2005	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The observer program began in 2005 and is an ongoing program within the fishery. 	Yes.
All vessels meet TED and BRD requirements.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Only one breach of TED condition has been recorded in several years 	Yes – ongoing.
Desired outcome: Effective monitoring programme and reference points introduced by Mar 2006 and refined through life of BAP.		
Outcome achieved? The monitoring program objective has been achieved to the extent made possible by the data available and will continue to be developed over this 2008 season. The reference point objective should be attained by mid-2009 after implementation of the Management Plan.		

Issue: High risk and other bycatch species		
Strategy (3): Maximise the survival of bycatch		
Performance indicator (output)	Actions taken for output	Output achieved (y/n) and date
TSPMAC monitor research being undertaken on systems to reduce mortality of bycatch species on deck using hoppers or similar devices with the aim of introducing these systems into the TSPF.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Managers and the TSPMAC continue to monitor research projects evaluating hoppers in the QECTF. There are several boats with hoppers operating in Torres Strait. 	Yes – ongoing
Desired outcome: Codes developed and released by 1 March 2006.		
Outcome achieved? YES		

Issue: Removal of habitat		
Strategy (4): Manage the physical impacts of trawling		
Performance indicator (output)	Actions taken for output	Output achieved (y/n) and date
Existing and future research projects, being undertaken by CSIRO and QDPI include studies on bycatch composition in prawn fisheries, effects of TEDs, and management strategy evaluations of spatial closures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Effectiveness of TEDs can be determined through logbook data, which includes compulsory reporting of and TEP species caught. Limited bycatch data are collected through the QDPI Long Term Monitoring Program. The program measures weight ratio of bycatch to prawn catch. Compositions are not currently measured. The last detailed bycatch study was conducted from 2004-2006 by QDPI. It indicated bycatch composition had not markedly changed since the mid 1980s. 	Ongoing

<p>Closures currently in place to protect seagrass beds and other critical fishery habitats will be retained. However, if research identifies additional critical fisheries habitats, measures will be implemented as quickly as possible to ensure their protection. AFMA in consultation with the TSPMAC will be working towards the prevention of the expansion of the prawn fishery into areas that are presently not trawled.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Closures remain in place. • Annual analysis of logbook data indicated that there has been no change in fishing patterns. • Pending PZJA approval, additional closures will be implemented under the Management Plan around Deliverance Island and Kerr Islet and Turu Cay to provide protection for Dugong and turtles (has industry and PZJA standing committee support). • Pending PZJA approval, a voluntary closure which is an extension of the closure east of warrior reef to protect small prawn, will be implemented for Mar/April of the 2008 season (and proposed to be implemented for future seasons). 	<p>Ongoing</p>
<p>Continue the use of days allocation to constrain effort.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use allocations are continuing to be used in the fishery. • Effort control will be unitised under the management plan, however will still be allocated annually to operators in the form of fishing days. 	<p>Yes – ongoing</p>
<p>Cooperate with the National Oceans Office to develop a system of representative protected areas within Torres Strait identified as part of the regional marine plan process.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • this no long applied to Torres Strait Fisheries 	<p>NA</p>
<p>Desired outcome: The rate of habitat removal does not increase.</p>		
<p>Outcome achieved? YES</p>		

Issue: Impact of total bycatch on the broader ecosystem		
Strategy (5): Conduct an ecological risk assessment		
Performance indicator (output)	Actions taken for output	Output achieved (y/n) and date
Ecological risk assessment completed by Nov 2005	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Level 1 Ecological Risk Assessments have been completed. We are expecting level 2 ERA's to be completed by end 2008. Residual risk will be completed once level 2 analyses are received 	No
Following the ecological risk assessment the TSPMAC will develop appropriate management responses for high risk species within 12 months of ecological risk assessment.	Will commence upon completion of ERA	No
Desired outcome: Total impact of bycatch on the ecosystem reduced.		
Outcome achieved? No – outcome not expected to be achieved under BAP until early 2009 and will be subject to resourcing in AFMA.		

Issue: Communication of bycatch issues		
Strategy (6): Continue to make information regarding bycatch available to both fishers and the community		
Performance indicator (output)	Actions taken for output	Output achieved (y/n) and date
Advice on “friendly handling” of turtles accidentally caught in trawls will continue to be included with logbooks and the Torres Prawn Handbook issued to all boats, selected libraries and other interested persons at the start of the season each year, and will be regularly reviewed and up-dated.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Procedures are included in these publications 	Yes – ongoing

<p>The TSPMAC will collaborate with Australian prawn fisheries to develop educational and information packages about bycatch and to promote awareness of what is being done to reduce impacts of trawling.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Managers are cooperating with ECOTF managers to prepare a BRD handbook for trawl fishers (included in the TSPF Handbook). • Bycatch information developed for the NPF fishery will be updated and modified for the Torres Prawn fishery using observer information • The TSPMAC encouraged Torres Strait prawn fishers to attend bycatch reduction workshops hosted by the Australian Maritime College, CSIRO Marine & Atmospheric Research (Cleveland) and AFMA, which aims to bring fishers and scientists together to evaluate the potential of a range of new, innovative options to reduce bycatch. No workshops are currently scheduled for 2008. 	<p>Yes – ongoing</p>
<p>Desired outcome: The TSPMAC and the PZJA will monitor the implementation of this plan and conduct a major review of the BAP every two years.</p>		
<p>Outcome achieved? YES</p>		

Additional comments

1: Recent results of bycatch related research and how these results will be addressed in the fishery

The AFMA *Observer Operations Report: Torres Strait Prawn Fishery 2007 Season* is currently in preparation.

2: New/emerging bycatch issues

The TSPMAC is willing to discuss and approve BRD's as they are developed provided that they are effective.