



Australian Government

Australian Fisheries Management Authority



AFMA UPDATE

A NEWSLETTER FROM THE AUSTRALIAN FISHERIES MANAGEMENT AUTHORITY

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NEW FUTURE FOR EAST AND WEST TUNA & BILLFISH FISHERIES

The AFMA Board has determined management plans for the Eastern Tuna and Billfish Fishery and the Western Tuna and Billfish Fishery that will lay the foundations for a sustainable fishery and a more secure future for fishers.

The Eastern Tuna and Billfish Fishery will be managed by an individually tradable effort unit system. Fishing effort will be managed by limiting the number of hooks that fishermen can set each fishing season. The Western Tuna and Billfish Fishery will be managed by an individually tradeable quota or 'output' control. Under this plan a total allowable catch will be determined for each species. The result for fishermen will be secure access to the fishery through transferable Statutory Fishing Rights allocated as a portion of the total allowable fishing effort or catch.

The determination of these plans follows an extensive consultation process with stakeholders. Following formal acceptance by the Minister, implementation of the plan is expected to commence in July 2005. The first step in implementation is commencement of the process for allocating statutory fishing rights (SFRs).

NEW MEASURES TO PROTECT SEABIRDS AND SHARKS IN ETBF

Following a recommendation from the Eastern Tuna Management Advisory Committee (ETMAC), AFMA has made an in-principle decision to implement new arrangements to reduce seabird interactions in the East Coast Tuna and Billfish Fishery (ETBF). The new arrangements will allow day-setting in ETBF waters south of 25° South subject to the adoption of new line-weighting and tori line designs. The final stages of research into an appropriate line-weighting setup are currently occurring. Once this is finalised, AFMA will be holding a series of workshops in key ports to outline the details of the new arrangements to operators. Stay tuned for workshop dates.

A ban on the use of wire traces has also been extended across all waters of the ETBF to reduce the unintended take of sharks during longline fishing operations. In taking this decision, AFMA was mindful of the recommendation of the Minister for the Environment and Heritage that AFMA introduce measures to reduce the incidence of capture, injury and mortality to shark species susceptible to fishing pressure. Variations will be made to existing conditions on fishing permits, effective from 1 July 2005.

ARRANGEMENTS SET FOR BASS STRAIT CENTRAL ZONE SCALLOPS

AFMA has agreed to a recommendation from the Bass Strait Scallop Fishery Management Advisory Committee (ScallopMAC), to leave the current Total Allowable Catch (TAC) of 1,000 tonnes and the current eastern closure off Flinders Island in place. However, from 1 June 2005, the entire western half of the fishery (west of 146° East) will be closed to fishing, except for exploratory fishing through scientific fishing permits. Consistent with advice from ScallopMAC, AFMA will facilitate exploratory fishing in the western half of the fishery and unsurveyed areas of the Flinders closure.

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STEADY AS SHE GOES FOR SMALL PELAGICS FISHERY

AFMA has decided to retain the trigger catch limits in the Small Pelagic Fishery for the 2005/06 fishing season at the same level as 2004/05.

The AFMA Board has also decided to retain the existing boat nomination freeze in the fishery until it makes a decision on the allocation of Statutory Fishing Rights (SFRs) under a Management Plan for the fishery, which is now being developed. The existing policy is ensuring that the fishery is not being over-capitalised.

In developing a Management Plan for the Small Pelagic Fishery, the unallocated Trigger Catch Limit for yellowtail scad will remain in place, while SFRs will be allocated for 'jack mackerels' rather than species-specific SFRs for peruvian jack mackerel and greenback jack mackerel.

MANAGING STRIPED MARLIN

In the absence of an agreed Total Allowable Commercial Catch (TACC), AFMA has agreed to an interim approach for striped marlin for the Western Tuna and Billfish Fishery (WTBF) until reviewed in light of resource sharing policy, or striped marlin quota SFRs take effect under the WTBF Management Plan.

Industry will voluntarily limit catches of striped marlin catch across the fishery to under 125t and to release striped marlin that are retrieved in a live and vigorous condition in the interim period. Should the total catch reach 100t, the WTBF Management Advisory Committee will convene to review the circumstances and provide advice to the AFMA Board. In addition, a structured program of data collection on striped marlin is to be implemented to provide for future decision making.

GULPER SHARK LIMIT SET FOR GAB TRAWL

AFMA has endorsed a catch/trigger limit of 500kgs per month, per vessel for 2005 for gulper sharks in the Great Australian Bight Trawl sector. The Southern and Eastern Scafish and Shark Resource Assessment Group will provide advice on longer term catch limits at its September meeting.

TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR FIVE EPBC ASSESSMENTS OUT FOR COMMENT

AFMA has commenced preparation of five assessment reports for the purposes of strategic and export approval under the Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999. Assessments of these fisheries will be based on fishery specific terms of reference. Interested parties are invited to comment on the draft terms of reference for the following Commonwealth Fisheries: Torres Strait Pearl Shell, Trochus and Crab Fisheries; New and Exploratory Fisheries in the CCAMLR Region; and Informally Managed Fishing Permits. Comments should be sent by the closing date of Monday 4 July 2005 to Cate Coddington, Environment Policy Section, AFMA, PO Box 7051, Canberra BC, ACT 2610, by fax: (02) 6272 5167, or e-mail: cate.coddington@afma.gov.au. Copies are available on AFMA's website at <http://www.afma.gov.au/services/environment/stratassess/drafts.php>.

JOB OPPORTUNITY TO REPRESENT FISHING INDUSTRY

The Commonwealth Fisheries Association is seeking the services of a part-time Chief Executive Officer, based in Canberra. The position will entail liaison with policy makers (Ministers, politicians and Government agencies), preparation of submissions, media work, and representing the Association at various meetings. The position is supported by an industry based Executive Officer. For more information, please contact Mr Michael Thomas, CFA President on Phone: 0408 817 466.

AFMA UPDATE MAILING DETAILS Please FAX this page back on (02) 6272 5036 or phone 1300 723 621

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