



Australian Government  
 Australian Fisheries Management Authority



# ENVIRONMENTUPDATE

A NEWSLETTER FROM THE AUSTRALIAN FISHERIES MANAGEMENT AUTHORITY

Issue 26, June 2006

**Inside this edition:**

Assessment reports .....	2
Establishing Ecosystem Based Fisheries Management Project.....	3
Ecological Risk Assessments for Commonwealth Fisheries .....	4
Bycatch action plans (BAPs) .....	4
Review of BAPs.....	4
Oceans Policy.....	5
High seas governance.....	5
United Nations Fish Stocks Agreement Review Conference.....	5
Bioregional Planning .....	6
Marine protected areas.....	6
South East Marine Protected Areas.....	6
Updated marine protected area management plans.....	7
Protected Species Reporting .....	8
Marine turtles .....	8
New Marine Turtle Recovery Plan.....	8
New research into the effects of circle hooks in longline fisheries.....	8
Dugongs .....	8
Nominations under the EPBC Act.....	10
Recent nomination .....	11
Seals.....	11
National seal strategy group.....	11
Sharks.....	11
Shark meetings.....	11
Dolphins and Seals in the Small Pelagic Fishery .....	12
Seabirds.....	12
Draft TAP for the Incidental Catch (or Bycatch) of Seabirds during Oceanic Longline Fishing Operations .....	12
Subscribing for the Environment Update and other AFMA publications .....	13
AFMA's Environment Update.....	13
Ecological risk management and a new look for AFMA's Environment Policy Team.....	13
Environment Policy Section contacts.....	14

## Assessment reports

AFMA completed all required assessment reports, within the requisite timeframe of 31 December 2005, to meet the export and strategic assessment requirements for all Commonwealth managed fisheries which have an export component under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act).

Through the assessment process, AFMA sought accreditation of fisheries under Part 13 of the EPBC Act, which relates to interactions with protected species.

AFMA prepared the assessment reports for each fishery in accordance with the *Guidelines for the Ecologically Sustainable Management of Fisheries* to address the EPBC Act requirements.

Copies of assessment reports are available from AFMA's website ([www.afma.gov.au](http://www.afma.gov.au)) or by contacting AFMA's Environment Policy Section (details at the end of Environment Update).

DEH assessment reports and recommendations can be viewed at the DEH website at: <http://www.deh.gov.au/coasts/fisheries/commonwealth/index.html>

### Assessments completed by the Minister for the Environment and Heritage

- Heard Island and McDonald Islands Fishery
- Bass Strait Scallop Fishery
- Northern Prawn Fishery
- Southern Bluefin Tuna Fishery
- Coral Sea Fishery
- Southern Squid Jig Fishery
- Western Tuna and Billfish Fishery
- Western Trawl Fisheries
- Torres Strait Tropical Rock Lobster Fishery\*
- Eastern Tuna and Billfish Fishery
- Torres Strait Sea Cucumber Fishery\*
- Southern and Eastern Scalegfish and Shark Fishery
- Small Pelagic Fishery
- Skipjack Tuna Fishery
- Torres Strait Prawn Trawl Fishery\*
- Torres Strait Finfish Fishery\*
- New and Exploratory Fisheries in the CCAMLR Region
- Macquarie Island Fishery
- Informally Managed Fishing Permits
- Torres Strait Trochus Fishery\*

### Drafting under way (no export component)

- Torres Strait Turtle and Dugong Fishery\*
- Torres Strait Pearl Shell Fishery\*
- Torres Strait Crab Fishery\*

\*(managed by the Torres Strait Protected Zone Joint Authority)

### Torres Strait Turtle & Dugong Fishery Assessment Report

The Torres Strait Protected Zone Joint Authority recently approved release of the draft report for public comment, subject to final agreement on the terms of reference (TOR) for the strategic assessment.

AFMA had previously received several public comments on the draft TOR, mainly focussing on traditional fishing methods and the ecological sustainability of the fishery. The final TOR for the Torres Strait Turtle & Dugong Fisheries Assessment Report have now been agreed between the Minister for the Environment and Heritage and the Minister for Fisheries.

The draft Torres Strait Turtle and Dugong Fisheries Assessment Report has subsequently been released for public comment until **8 September 2006**.

For further details and to access a copy of the draft Torres Strait Turtle and Dugong Fisheries Assessment Report, visit our website on: <http://www.afma.gov.au/environment/assessment/comment.htm>

These exclusively traditional fisheries are very different from all other Commonwealth managed fisheries. Given the enormous culturally and social significance of turtle and dugong to Torres Strait Islander and Aboriginal communities, and the need for effective consultation with the communities across Torres Strait, AFMA and its PZJA partners AFMA will exceed the statutory requirements for consultation on these strategic assessments. The public comment period has been extended to allow for culturally appropriate consultations.

For further information on the Torres Strait Turtle and Dugong consultation process, please contact Torres Webb, AFMA Environment Policy Section, on (02) 6272 5058

### **Review of strategic assessments**

Two fisheries that were assessed in the first round of the strategic assessments need to be reassessed. These fisheries are the Bass Strait Scallop Fishery and the Southern and Eastern Scalefish and Shark Fishery (SESSF).

The Wildlife Trade Operation (WTO) for the Bass Strait Scallop Fishery expired on 22 April 2006. This was the first AFMA-managed fishery to require reassessment. Because the Total Allowable Catch for the fishery will be zero for at least the next three years AFMA has advised the Department of the Environment and Heritage (DEH) that it does not intend to seek further export accreditation at this stage.

The WTO for the SESSF expires on 22 December 2006. AFMA and DEH have agreed on a reassessment process for that fishery. This involves the preparation of a report on the fishery. The report is structured in three major sections. Part 1 documents changes in the management arrangements for the SESSF since AFMA's 2003 assessment report was submitted. Part 2 outlines measures implemented in relation to each of the Minister's 18 recommendations under the current WTO. Part 3 describes other proposed initiatives that are underway in the SESSF to further improve management of the fishery.

AFMA, DEH and state and territory fisheries authorities are presently discussing the form future reassessments will take. A workshop under the auspices of the Australian Fisheries Managers Forum was held on 12 May 2006 to progress this issue. The workshop agreed to establish a working group comprising DEH, two State representatives and an AFMA representative (Paul Ryan) to look at the assessment methodology, alignment and timing.

For further information on assessment reports please contact Paul Ryan, AFMA Environment Policy Section on (02) 6272 5266.

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## **Establishing Ecosystem Based Fisheries Management Project**

In 2003, AFMA was granted \$2.71 million through the Australian Government Natural Heritage Trust (NHT) for a three year "Establishing Ecosystem Based Fisheries Management (EBFM)" project.

Throughout the project, AFMA has undertaken a number of activities that are assisting AFMA to better implement EBFM. The key activities completed in this project have been:

- Undertaking refined ecological risk assessments for all major AFMA managed fisheries and initiating the application of the results as part of fisheries management;
- Enhanced collection and management of fisheries data, primarily through targeted observer coverage in small fisheries, trialling electronic data collection tools (cameras); establishing strategic data plans for each fishery and improving the integration of fishery databases;
- Establishing an industry and public communication program to raise awareness and understanding of EBFM efforts in AFMA fisheries, including industry liaison officers and port based workshops and public communication materials; and
- Assisting fisheries to implement bycatch reduction initiatives, including the provision of tori lines and de-hookers in the pelagic longline fisheries; assisting the investigating of cetacean mitigation in mid-water trawling and assisting work on bycatch mitigation devices in the Northern Prawn Fishery.

AFMA has been successful in gaining an extension of the NHT funding for the EBFM project until June 2008 allowing further implementation of EBFM through selected activities.

For more information on the “Establishing Ecosystem Based Fisheries Management” project, please contact Tim Smith, AFMA Environment Policy Section on (02) 6272 5631.

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## Ecological Risk Assessments for Commonwealth Fisheries

AFMA and CSIRO have been undertaking the Ecological Risk Assessment for Commonwealth Fisheries (ERACF) Project since 2001 to undertake an ecological risk assessment (ERA) for all major AFMA managed fisheries. ERAs will be a key tool in helping AFMA move to an EBFM approach and to respond to the legislative assessment and reporting requirements on fisheries. The ERAs will be a valuable tool for fisheries managers to prioritise research, data collection; monitoring and management needs in a strategic manner and assess the risk posed to all components of the ecosystem.

### Phase II assessments:

Phase II of the ERA project began in October 2004 and will finish in late 2006. CSIRO has recently refined the ERA methodology and is currently applying it to the majority of AFMA fisheries, focusing on undertaking level 2 assessments. Specific ERA workshops have been held for most fisheries over the last 12 months to discuss the preliminary results and obtain input from fishery stakeholders to ensure the results are an accurate reflection of the risk posed by the fishery.

Draft final risk assessments for the major AFMA managed fisheries were completed by 30 June 2006. After further consideration by AFMA and the relevant MACs, final reports for the fishery will be completed by the end of 2006.

### Risk Management Framework:

To ensure a consistent process across all AFMA managed fisheries for responding to the ERA outcomes, AFMA has developed an Ecological Risk Management (ERM) Framework. The framework provides an outline of the process for individual fisheries to respond to the results of the ERA.

The ERM framework will also provide a streamlined approach to meet all fisheries environmental reporting and assessment needs. AFMA is engaging in discussions with the Department of the Environment and Heritage (DEH) to ensure that the ERM framework is suitable for meeting their reporting requirements.

Once the ERAs are finalised, AFMA will then implement the ERM framework to allow fisheries to adequately respond to the ERA results. Establishing the management responses in each fishery will be undertaken by AFMA using the normal fisheries consultative processes. Applying the framework will begin early in the second half of 2006.

AFMA has appointed an ERM unit, within the Environment Policy Section, to facilitate the application of the framework within each fishery. Please see the Ecological risk management and a new look for AFMA's Environment Policy Team section (page 13) for more information.

For more information on any aspect of the ERAs or the ERM Framework, please contact Tim Smith, Manager Ecological Risk, on (02) 6272 5631.

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## Bycatch action plans (BAPs)

### Review of BAPs

The *Commonwealth Policy on Fisheries Bycatch* commits AFMA to review BAPs every two years. AFMA has finalised the BAPs for major Commonwealth Fisheries with the exception of the Southern and Eastern Scalefish and Shark Fishery (SESSF). The SESSF BAP combines the BAPS of the South East Trawl, the Gillnet, Hook and Trap and the Great Australian Bight fisheries.

A final draft version of the SESSF BAP was considered by the MACs in November 2005 and further comments were taken into account. As the proposed management measures for the SESSF developed in response to the Ministerial Direction will address a number of key issues identified in the BAP, the Environment Committee has agreed to defer consideration of the SESSF BAP until comments from the Industry Associations and MACs are received following their June meetings and these are considered by the AFMA Board. Following this AFMA and the MACs will revise the BAP before seeking public comment in late 2006.

Copies of BAPs are available from the AFMA website at [www.afma.gov.au](http://www.afma.gov.au). Alternatively, they may be obtained by contacting Cate Coddington, AFMA Environment Policy Section on (02) 6272 4208 or by email to [cate.coddington@afma.gov.au](mailto:cate.coddington@afma.gov.au).

#### **Finalised BAPs**

- Northern Prawn Fishery
- Antarctic Fisheries
- Bass Strait Scallop Fishery
- Southern Squid Jig Fishery
- Tuna longline and minor line fisheries
- Tuna Purse Seine Fishery
- Torres Strait Prawn Fishery
- Torres Strait Finfish Fishery
- Small Pelagic Fishery

#### **BAPs being drafted - awaiting approval for release for public comment**

- Southern and Eastern Scalefish and Shark Fishery

For further information on Bycatch Action Plans please contact Paul Ryan, AFMA Environment Policy Section on (02) 6272 5266.

## **Oceans Policy**

### **High seas governance**

Over the past few years there has been increasing discussion on the issue of high seas governance; including the use of marine protected areas and the proposal for a moratorium on trawling on seamounts. The issue has been discussed at the United Nations open-ended Informal Consultative Process on Oceans and Law of the Sea (UNICPOLOS) in 2004 and again in 2005. The issue was on the agenda again at the seventh meeting, which commenced in New York on 12 June 2006.

Outcomes of the meeting will feature in the next edition of Environment Update.

### **United Nations Fish Stocks Agreement Review Conference**

The United Nations Fish Stocks Agreement (UNFSA) Review Conference was held in New York from 22 to 26 May 2006. The Review Conference's mandate was: (i) to assess the adequacy of the Agreement's provisions for securing the conservation and management of straddling and highly migratory fish stocks and; (ii) if necessary, to propose means of strengthening implementation.

While many of the Review Conference's final proposals were based largely on previously agreed language, the Australian delegation ensured that key Australian proposals for tackling illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing were incorporated into the Review Conference outcome document. Crucially, the momentum generated by the Review Conference saw up to 14 non-States Parties to the UNFSA indicate an intention to accede to the UNFSA.

For further information AFMA's involvement on high seas governance and oceans policy please contact Paul Ryan, AFMA Environment Policy Section on (02) 6272 5266.

## Bioregional Planning

Regional Marine Planning processes conducted by the Department of Environment and Heritage (DEH), such as the South East Regional Marine Plan and South East Marine Protected Areas (MPAs), are changing to bioregional planning. Bioregional plans are created under s176 of the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* and will include information on key habitats, plants, animals, natural processes, human uses and benefits and threats to the long-term ecological sustainability of the region. Bioregional Plans are likely to be based on the same marine regions identified previously by DEH and be divided into South-West, North-West, Northern, and Eastern Central regions.

Bioregional Plans aim to be more streamlined than their predecessors, and will incorporate identification of MPAs in each marine region within the plan. \$37.7 million of funding over the next four years has been assigned to bioregional planning by the Australian Government.

As for Regional Marine Planning, Bioregional Plans aim to provide a detailed picture of each marine region as a reference document for industry, such as commercial fishers, and provide a guide to decision makers, such as AFMA and DAFF. The commercial fishing industry, NGO's and other stakeholders will have opportunities to comment on information and proposed MPAs under the bioregional plans. AFMA and other government agencies will also have many opportunities to provide feedback to DEH during the bioregional planning process.

More information about bioregional planning can be found on the DEH website at: <http://www.deh.gov.au/minister/env/2006/mr09may206.html>

For further information on AFMA's involvement in Bioregional Planning please contact Amanda Parr, Environment Policy section, on 02 6272 5228.

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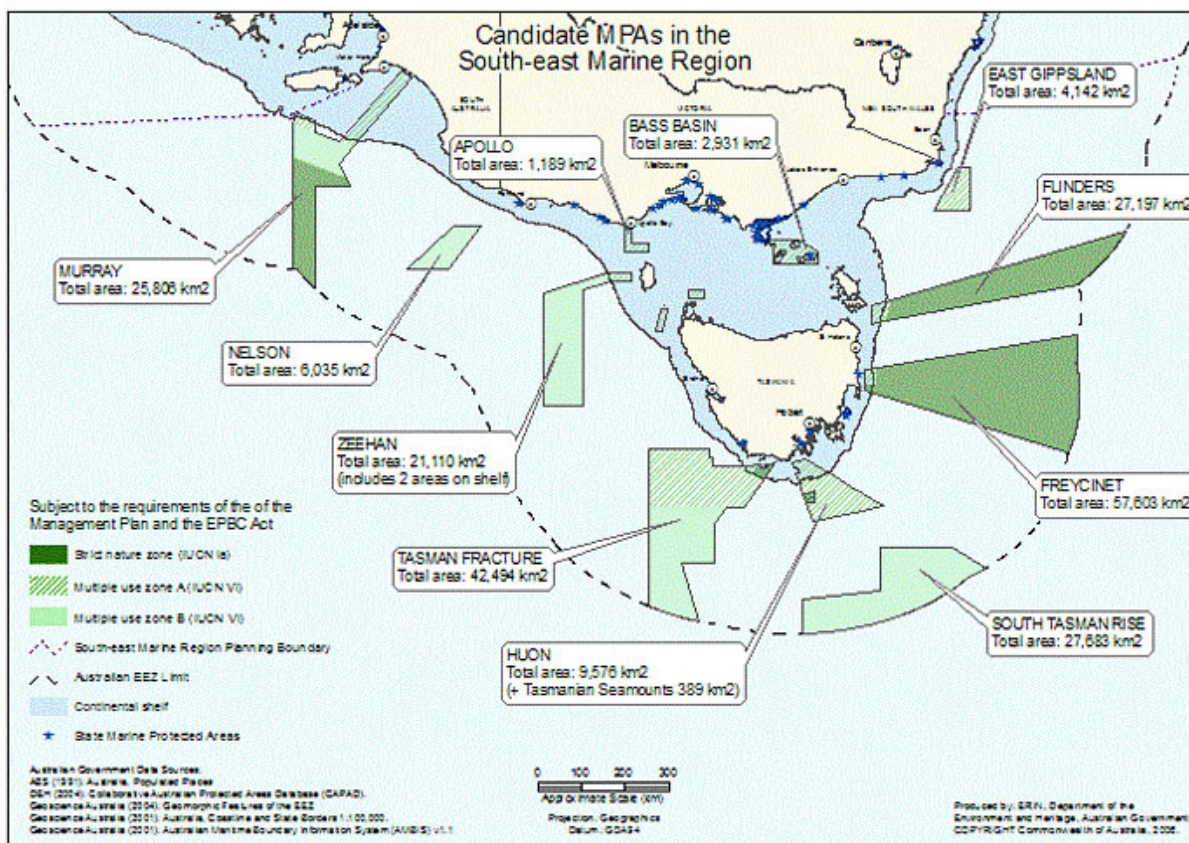
## Marine protected areas

### South East Marine Protected Areas

The Minister for the Environment and Heritage has announced on 5 May 2006 13 new Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) in the South East Marine Region. These new Commonwealth MPAs are located off the coast of Tasmania, Victoria and parts of NSW and SA, and some extend out to 200 nm off Australia's coast.

The MPAs were developed over a number of years with input from AFMA, the commercial fishing industry and other stakeholders, and, once declared later this year, they will form part of the National System of Representative Marine Protected Areas (NSRMPAs). A notable contribution to the consultation process was a submission by the Tasmanian Aquaculture and Fisheries Institute (TAFI) on the likely socio-economic impacts of the SE MPAs

There will be three zones within the MPAs: strict nature reserve, multiple use zone A and multiple use zone B. Commercial fishing is only allowed in multiple use A zones, and is restricted to dropline, hook, and longlining. Demersal trawl, Danish seine, mesh netting and scallop dredge will be prohibited throughout all MPAs.



More information about the new South East MPAs can be found at the DEH website: <http://www.deh.gov.au/coasts/mpa/southeast/index.html>

## Updated marine protected area management plans

A new management plan for the Elizabeth and Middleton Reefs Marine National Nature Reserve was released by the Department of Environment and Heritage (DEH). The main changes to the management plan relevant to the Eastern Tuna and Billfish Fishery are:

- all fishing and pleasure vessels cannot enter or anchor in waters adjacent to Elizabeth Reef
- throughout the nature reserve there are more prescriptions related to commercial fishers than under the previous plan, e.g. fishing gear must be stowed whilst within the marine reserve.

AFMA submitted comments on the draft plan during the public comment phase, as did members of the Eastern Tuna MAC. DEH revised the plan in light of comments received. Copies of the draft plan are available at <http://www.deh.gov.au/coasts/mpa/elizabeth/plan/pubs/elizabeth-plan.pdf> or by contacting the Department of Environment and Heritage on 1800 803 772.

The Mermaid Reef Marine National Nature Reserve, located 300km north-west of Broome, is managed by DEH. The management plan for Mermaid Reef will expire in May 2007, and DEH have begun the process of developing a new management plan for 2007 – 2014. DEH anticipates releasing a new draft management plan for public comment in mid-2006 as part of the normal statutory process for redrafting management plans. Commonwealth fisheries that may be interested in any changes are the North West Slope trawl and Western Tuna and Billfish. AFMA will provide a summary of the proposed changes to these MACs, to facilitate an opportunity to comment on issues that may affect the fishery.

For further information on AFMA's involvement in marine protected areas please contact Amanda Parr, AFMA Environment Policy Section on (02) 6272 5228.

## Protected Species Reporting

The new arrangements for streamlining reporting by fishers of protected species interactions with fishing operations in all Commonwealth fisheries started on 1 April 2006.

The arrangements were developed through a memorandum of understanding (MOU) negotiated between AFMA and DEH. The reporting burden of fishers is minimised as they will only need to report protected species interactions in their logbook and not directly to DEH. AFMA will provide summary reports by fishery to DEH on their behalf using the information provided in their logbook.

AFMA wrote to industry regarding the implementation of this new reporting arrangement and provided concession holders with information about the MOU and its implications for them. Concession holders were also provided with the option of not participating in this arrangement. There were no concession holders who have decided not to participate.

AFMA will continue to write to concession holders who are new to Commonwealth fisheries about the arrangement.

For more information on protected species reporting please contact Tim Smith, AFMA Environment Policy Section on (02) 6272 5631.

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## Marine turtles

### New Marine Turtle Recovery Plan

The Australian Government Department of the Environment and Heritage has redrafted the Recovery Plan for Marine Turtles in Australia. The draft plan was released for public comment for three months, closing on 21 March 2006.

The draft plan that was made available for public comment was divided into two separate documents - an 'Issues Paper' and a 'Recovery Plan'.

The Issues Paper will be an evolving document, where the outcomes of new research can be incorporated. This will allow it to be updated with current research and knowledge of biology, threats and conservation.

The Recovery Plan, when finalised, will be a 5-year statutory document under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act*, and will identify actions aimed at assisting the recovery of marine turtle species.

### New research into the effects of circle hooks in longline fisheries

The Australian Government Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry commissioned a pilot study into the effects of circle hooks in Australia's longline fisheries. The aim of this research was to determine whether circle hooks, which have been shown in some overseas fisheries to reduce bycatch, as well as post-capture mortality in turtles-are economically viable and commercially practical in our fisheries.

The researchers are currently exploring funding options to progress to the next stage of this project.

If you would like any further information on marine turtles please contact Paul Ryan, AFMA Environment Policy Section, on (02) 6272 5266.

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## Dugongs

The Second Meeting on Dugong Conservation in the Indian Ocean and South-east Asian region under the auspices of the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS) was held in Bangkok, Thailand from 15 to 18 May 2006, co-hosted by the Governments of Thailand and Australia. AFMA's Environmental Assessments Manager, Paul Ryan, was part of the Australian delegation.



The meeting agreed on a draft Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) and a draft Conservation and Management Plan for dugong which will, if accepted, allow for regional dugong conservation throughout the dugong's range. Dugongs have a huge range spanning some 140,000 km of coastline of almost 50 coastal and island states between East Africa and Vanuatu and the latitudes of about 27 degrees north and south of the equator.

Australia's position to develop a non-legally binding MoU was supported strongly at the meeting. The MoU acknowledges the shared responsibility of Signatory States and establishes a cooperative approach that will promote the conservation and protection of dugong in order to assist the recovery of depleted populations. This ensures the traditional economic, spiritual and cultural significance of dugongs to Australian Indigenous peoples is recognised and promotes increased capacity of range states in developing and implementing conservation and management actions.

The Conservation and Management Plan provides key priority objectives and actions for the conservation and management of dugong populations. The meeting recognised that the Conservation and Management Plan would need to have a strong focus on habitat protection and conservation, particularly for seagrass habitats. There was strong support to focus on capacity building to undertake conservation and management actions. The meeting also considered examples of conservation and management actions and agreed that the examples would be incorporated as an attachment to the Conservation and Management Plan. The actions identified in the penultimate draft plan are consistent with Australia's current dugong conservation and management activities.

The next steps will be finalising the penultimate drafts of the Final Meeting Report, '*Memorandum of Understanding on the Conservation and Management of Dugongs and their Habitats throughout their Range*' and the '*Conservation and Management Plan for Dugongs*'. These will be circulated in the next few weeks to delegates for final comment and approval by capitals.

It was anticipated that it will take 6 to 12 months to coordinate arrangements with the willing parties to sign the MoU and hold the first official meeting of the Signatory Parties.

For further information on dugong please contact Paul Ryan, AFMA Environment Policy Section on (02) 6272 5266.

## Nominations under the EPBC Act

The Department of Environment and Heritage (DEH) has received a number of nominations under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act) relevant to marine species and fisheries. The following have been nominated for listing as threatened species under the EPBC Act:

- Orange Roughy (*Hoplostethus atlanticus*)
- Eastern Gemfish (*Rexea solandri*)
- School Shark (*Galeorhinus galeus*)
- Harrison's Deepsea Dogfish (*Centrophorus harrissoni*)
- Endeavour Dogfish (*Centrophorus moluccensis*)
- Southern Dogfish (*Centrophorus uyato*)
- Flesh-footed Shearwater (*Puffinus carneipes*)

Each nomination is assessed by the Threatened Species Scientific Committee to determine whether it meets the criteria for listing and then the Committee's advice and subsequent recommendations are forwarded to the Minister for the Environment and Heritage for the final decision.

In Environment Update 25 we wrote about the decision by the Minister for the Environment and Heritage, Senator the Hon Ian Campbell, not to list the Southern Bluefin Tuna under the EPBC Act. The Minister concluded that to list the Southern Bluefin Tuna, as a threatened species under the EPBC Act, would have been detrimental to the survival of the species, as it may weaken Australia's ability to influence both the management of the global fishing effort and the global conservation of the species. As a result, conservation of the Southern Bluefin Tuna in Australian waters could not be achieved.

HSI subsequently appealed the decision not to list the Southern Bluefin Tuna through the Administrative Appeals Tribunal. The original decision made by the Minister was upheld.

On 18 May 2006 the Minister for the Environment and Heritage announced that a recommendation to list orange roughy would be made available to the public. Expert advice from the Threatened Species Scientific Committee has recommended that orange roughy is eligible to be listed as endangered. Further analysis by the Department of the Environment and Heritage supports the conclusion that the species in Australia has undergone an unplanned and severe decline in numbers.

Even though there has already been a three month public comment period for this nomination, the Minister has decided to release the advice for a period of four weeks for the public to consider. The Minister for Fisheries, Forestry and Conservation, Senator Eric Abetz, agrees that this additional comment period reflects the significance of the recommendation, and the fact that there will be a great deal of community and sectoral interest in it.

AFMA has lodged a submission which is available on the AFMA website:

[http://www.afma.gov.au/fisheries/sess/sess\\_commonwealth/publications/default.htm#orange\\_roughy](http://www.afma.gov.au/fisheries/sess/sess_commonwealth/publications/default.htm#orange_roughy)

AFMA's conclusion, based on the latest scientific evidence, is that orange roughy as a species should not be listed under the EPBC Act. However, if listing is to proceed for the species then it should be classified as conservation dependent. Alternatively, if the Minister accepts that separate orange roughy stocks exist in the AFZ then some stocks (mainly those around Tasmania) could be considered for listing as conservation dependent, whilst others (eg. Cascade Plateau and Great Australian Bight) should continue to be managed by AFMA utilising the government's Harvest Strategy Policy.

AFMA also sought the immediate development and implementation of regulations specifying criteria suitable for the consideration of marine fish species as provided for by section 180 of the EPBC Act. Orange roughy could then be considered for listing against these new criteria, appropriate for marine fish species.

## Recent nomination

The flesh-footed shearwater (Eastern Australian Population) (*Puffinus carneipes*) has recently been nominated as Vulnerable. The public comment period is open until 24 July 2006. AFMA has sought input from Eastern Tuna MAC in compiling its submission to DEH as the Eastern Tuna and Billfish fishery is specifically referred to in the supporting documentation for the nomination.

Information on nominations under the EPBC Act is available on DEH's website at: <http://www.deh.gov.au/biodiversity/threatened/nominations/index.html>. Any amendments to the above nomination list will be found under the heading 'Outcomes of nominations' at the above webpage.

For further information on nominations under the EPBC Act, please contact Paul Ryan, AFMA Environment Policy Section on (02) 6272 5266.

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## Seals

### National seal strategy group

The National Seal Strategy Group (NSSG) is a small government working group, established by the Marine and Coastal Committee (MACC) of the Natural Resource Management Standing Committee which identified the need to address the emerging national issue of human and seal interactions.

The NSSG is examining existing and emerging seal-human interaction issues with the view to developing strategies to mitigate adverse impacts on seal populations and on industries with particular reference to fisheries, aquaculture and eco-tourism. The NSSG released a strategy and report which assesses interactions between humans and seals for public consultation in October last year. The NSSG has incorporated the comments received into the strategy and report for consideration by the MACC in July 2006.

### Industry-based programme to monitor seal interactions in the South East Trawl Fishery

The Hon Gary Nairn MP, Federal Member for Eden-Monaro, Special Minister of State will launch Industry-based programme to monitor seal interactions in the South East Trawl fishery – educational tools in Eden, NSW on Friday 7 July 2006. The products being launched are part of a larger industry-based education and monitoring programme to encourage more accurate and regular reporting of seal–fisheries interactions in the South East Trawl Fishery.

For further information on seal issues please contact Paul Ryan AFMA Environmental Policy Section on (02) 6272 5266.

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## Sharks

### Shark meetings

The annual meeting of the National Shark Recovery Group will be held in July this year. Commonwealth and State government agencies and conservation NGOs will discuss progress with recovery plans for shark species listed as endangered, threatened or protected under the EPBC Act. Species that are currently listed are the grey nurse (*Carcharias taurus*), white shark (*Carcharodon carcharias*), whale shark (*Rhincodon typus*), Northern Rivers Shark and Spoutooth Shark (*Glyphis* sp). Outcomes from the meeting will be reported in the next edition of the Environment Update.

The Shark-plan Implementation Review Committee (SIRC) is also holding a meeting in July 2006 to consider drafts of regional Operational Plans for the conservation and management of shark. These regional operational plans are created under the national shark-plan and are designed to facilitate regional co-operation in shark research and data collection and use as well as complimentary fisheries management measures. Outcomes from the SIRC meeting will be reported in the next issue of Environment Update.

For further information on shark issues please contact Amanda Parr, AFMA Environmental Policy Section, on (02) 6272 5228.

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## Dolphins and Seals in the Small Pelagic Fishery

AFMA is continuing to lead the progress on the issues of the incidental catch of dolphins and seals in Zone A of the Small Pelagic Fishery. Progress which has been made includes:

- The Revised Small Pelagic Fishery Bycatch Action Plan (SPF BAP) has now been completed; and
- Stage 1 of research into mitigation strategies for dolphins and seals has been completed and stage 2 has started.

The Revised SPF BAP can be found on our website at:

[http://www.afma.gov.au/information/publications/fishery/baps/docs/FINAL\\_SPF\\_BAP\\_Dec%2005.pdf](http://www.afma.gov.au/information/publications/fishery/baps/docs/FINAL_SPF_BAP_Dec%2005.pdf)

Please contact Selina Stoute (02) 6272 3715 for further information regarding the Revised Bycatch Action Plan.

The report for Stage 1 of the research into the mitigations strategies for dolphins and seals "Monitoring marine mammal interactions in the Small Pelagic Fishery: stage one pilot study" can be found on our website at:

[http://www.afma.gov.au/fisheries/small\\_pelagic/publications/monitoring\\_report\\_october\\_2005.pdf](http://www.afma.gov.au/fisheries/small_pelagic/publications/monitoring_report_october_2005.pdf)

For further information on dolphins in the SPF, please contact Melissa Brown, Manager Small Pelagic Fishery, on (02) 6272 5465.

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## Seabirds

### **Draft TAP for the Incidental Catch (or Bycatch) of Seabirds during Oceanic Longline Fishing Operations**

The incidental catch (or bycatch) of seabirds during oceanic longline fishing operations has been listed as a key threatening process under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*, and a Threat Abatement Plan (TAP) has been approved by the Minister for the Environment on 2 August 1998 to alleviate the impact of this activity. This plan expired in August 2003, necessitating a review under subsection 279(2) of the EPBC Act.

A revised threat abatement plan has been prepared to coordinate national action to alleviate the impact of longline fishing activities on seabirds in Australian waters. The Department of the Environment and Heritage sought public comment from interested groups and individuals on the revised Threat Abatement Plan for the incidental catch (or bycatch) of seabirds during oceanic longline fishing operations.

The three-month public comment period closed on Friday 9 December 2005. Public comments, including those from AFMA, were considered by the TAP team at its meeting in Hobart on 19 December 2005. A revised *Threat Abatement Plan for the incidental catch (or bycatch) of seabirds during oceanic longline fishing operations* was submitted to the Threatened Species Scientific Committee and was discussed at its meeting on 7 to 9 March 2006. Following acceptance by the TSSC the revised TAP was submitted to the

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Minister for the Environment and Heritage.

For further information on seabirds please contact Paul Ryan, AFMA Environment Policy Section on (02) 6272 5266.

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## AFMA's Environment Update

If you have any comments or suggestions about Environment Update please contact Cate Coddington, AFMA Environment Policy Section on (02) 6272 4208.

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## Ecological risk management and a new look for AFMA's Environment Policy Team

The Environment Policy Team at AFMA has recently been injected with some additional staff, ahead of playing an enhanced coordination role in helping AFMA strive to implement Ecosystem Based Fisheries Management (EBFM). There have been four recent appointments to the team.

Dave Johnson has joined as team leader and Senior Manager. Dave has considerable management experience across a range of AFMA managed fisheries and previous experience in oceans policy and marine research.

Tim Smith will continue to coordinate Ecological Risk Assessments (ERA) and lead the development of the Ecological Risk Management (ERM) framework in his new role of Manager, Ecological Risk Management. Justine Johnston and Sarah Goldin have also joined the team to work with fisheries branch staff in continuing to develop ERAs and appropriate responses under the ERM.

Paul Ryan will continue to coordinate the Strategic Assessment process and assist AFMA to meet its other obligations under the EPBC Act as Manager, Environmental Assessments. Amanda Parr and Cate Coddington will continue to assist with Strategic Assessments and a host of other environmental issues. The Environment Policy Team is also now enjoying some enthusiastic assistance from Torres Webb and Mark Jones who are on short term placements as part of AFMA's graduate/cadet program.

Dave Johnson said that the team is now really looking forward to helping AFMA shift focus from the assessments (ERAs) to developing appropriate management responses (ERM), and is well placed to play an active role in pursuing ecosystem based fisheries management (EBFM).

For more information please contact Dave Johnson, AFMA Environment Policy Section on (02) 6272 4432.

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## Environment Policy Section contacts

### Senior Manager Environment Policy

Dave Johnson 02 6272 4432

[dave.johnson@afma.gov.au](mailto:dave.johnson@afma.gov.au)

### Manager Environmental Assessments

Paul Ryan 02 6272 5266

[paul.ryan@afma.gov.au](mailto:paul.ryan@afma.gov.au)

### Senior Environment Officer

Amanda Parr 02 6272 5228

[amanda.parr@afma.gov.au](mailto:amanda.parr@afma.gov.au)

### Environment Officer

Cate Coddington 02 6272 4208

[cate.coddington@afma.gov.au](mailto:cate.coddington@afma.gov.au)

### Manager Ecological Risks

Tim Smith 02 6272 5631

[tim.smith@afma.gov.au](mailto:tim.smith@afma.gov.au)

### Senior Environment Officer

Justine Johnston 02 6272 5184

[justine.johnston@afma.gov.au](mailto:justine.johnston@afma.gov.au)

### Environment Officer

Sarah Goldin 02 6272 3643

[sarah.goldin@afma.gov.au](mailto:sarah.goldin@afma.gov.au)

### Cadet

Torres Webb 02 6272 5520

[torres.webb@afma.gov.au](mailto:torres.webb@afma.gov.au)

### Graduate

Mark Jones 02 6272 5410

[mark.jones@afma.gov.au](mailto:mark.jones@afma.gov.au)

**Section fax** 02 6272 5167