



Australian Government

Australian Fisheries Management Authority

Fisheries Management Paper 14

AFMA's Ecological Risk Management

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Acronyms and abbreviations

For the purposes of this Fisheries Management Paper:

AFMA	Australian Fisheries Management Authority
CPFBS	Commonwealth Policy on Fisheries Bycatch
EBFM	Ecosystem Based Fisheries Management
EPBC Act 1999	<i>Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999</i>
ERAEF	Ecological Risk Assessment for the Effects of Fishing
ERM	Ecological Risk Management
ESD	Ecologically Sustainable Development
FAA 1991	<i>Fisheries Administration Act 1991</i>
FMA 1991	<i>Fisheries Management Act 1991</i>
FMF	Fisheries Management Framework
FMS	Fishery Management Strategies
HSP	Harvest Strategy Policy

1. Background

1.1 Purpose

This paper sets out the Australian Fisheries Management Authority's (AFMA's) policy for undertaking Ecological Risk Assessments (ERAs) and administering Ecological Risk Management (ERM) in pursuit of its fishery management objectives, particularly Ecologically Sustainable Development.

1.2 Need

AFMA is responsible for the efficient management and sustainable use of Commonwealth fisheries on behalf of the Australian community. Commonwealth legislation requires that AFMA's fishery management pursues Ecologically Sustainable Development (ESD) and, as one part of this, ensures the sustainability of species, populations and ecosystems with which its fisheries interact.

AFMA operates under a range of legislative instruments including the *Fisheries Administration Act 1991* (FAA 1991), the *Fisheries Management Act 1991* (FMA 1991) and the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act 1999). Their implementation is supported by fisheries policies and guidelines, principally:

- The Commonwealth Policy on Fisheries Bycatch (CPF 2000).
- The Commonwealth Harvest Strategy Policy and Guidelines (HSP 2007).
- Guidelines for the Ecologically Sustainable Management of Fisheries 2007.

AFMA pursues ecological sustainability through the implementation of:

- ERM which provides for ongoing monitoring and management of risks to ecological sustainability; and
- A scientific risk assessment process (within ERM) referred to as the Ecological Risk Assessment for the Effects of Fishing (ERA-EF) to identify and quantify these risks to ecological sustainability.

A 'Guide to AFMA's Ecological Risk Management' (the ERM Guide) has been developed to support this goal. The effective identification and management of the risks posed by fishing to the environment is a central issue for AFMA. Implementation of the ERM Guide will ensure that AFMA is able to mitigate the potential risks of not adequately pursuing its legislative objectives, losing industry and public credibility and reducing long term fisheries profitability.

2. Policy

2.1 Objectives

The primary ecological sustainability objectives that AFMA pursues via ERM are:

- To ensure that fishing (in Commonwealth commercial fisheries) does not reduce any species to or below a level at which the probability of recruitment failure is unacceptably high.
- Where such fishing impacts have occurred to rebuild the species to above that level to the extent fisheries management is able to do so.
- To ensure broader habitat security for non-living ecological components.

2.2 Scope

AFMA's ERM (including ERAEF) assesses and manages the impacts and risks posed by Commonwealth fisheries to the following ecosystem components:

- commercial species
- bycatch species
- protected species
- habitats and
- communities

2.3 Out of Scope

As AFMA only has authority to manage Commonwealth fisheries, this policy only applies to those fisheries and ecological impacts under its jurisdiction. However, where possible, AFMA will take into account impacts by other non-Commonwealth fisheries and develop joint management responses with the relevant agencies.

2.4 ERM Policy

In pursuing its objectives, AFMA has developed the ERM Guide (based on the ERAEF – a scientific methodology developed in association with CSIRO to identify and quantify risks posed by fishing to ecological sustainability).

The ERM Guide and its associated ERAs will be applied to all Commonwealth fisheries within AFMA's jurisdiction. The results of this will help to inform future management of the fisheries.

The ERM Guide has been written with the objectives of other Commonwealth policies (specifically the CPF and HSP) in mind, however, the ERM Guide may need to be updated to reflect changes to these policies in the future.

2.5 Outputs from the ERM Policy

ERM is one component of AFMA's broader Fisheries Management Framework. Results from ERAs will be incorporated into a Fishery Management Strategy for each Commonwealth fishery. This will include research priorities and an annual work plan.

2.6 Fishery reassessment and FMS development schedule

ERAs and its results will be incorporated into FMS for each Commonwealth managed fishery at least every five years. Progress against work plans, research priorities and mitigation measures will be monitored annually.

2.6 Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed every 5 years, or more frequently as required.

2.7 Policy Approval

This policy was approved by the AFMA Commission in June 2017.