



ATLANTIS
FISHERIES CONSULTING GROUP

Pair Trawling in the Small Pelagic Fishery

Proposal Supporting a 12-Month Trial



Who is the Proponent?

Atlantis Fisheries Consulting Group (AFCG) is acting on behalf of Muollo Fishing Pty Ltd (the Proponent).

Muollo Fishing Pty Ltd is a private Australian company whose owner is domiciled in Australia. This company already operates several vessels in Commonwealth fisheries and is a quota holder of various species in the Small Pelagic Fishery (SPF) and other fisheries. Related companies have seafood wholesale and retail marketing operations through De Costi Seafoods within the Sydney Fish Market.

What is being proposed and how will it gain community support?

The Proponent wishes to catch and then sell SPF quota species in order to make a return on investment and offset ongoing cost recovered levies and in doing so to contribute to Australia's food security, economic activity and employment.

The Proponent is mindful that there has been a level of community dissatisfaction and concern surrounding the use of large factory trawlers, specifically perceptions of the:

- use of large foreign trawlers able to process at sea,
- use of large trawls,
- export sales of fish,
- flow of profits to overseas companies,
- lack of obvious benefit to the recreational fishing community,
- potential for threatened, endangered and protected (TEP) species interactions

To address these community concerns Muollo Fishing Pty Ltd is proposing the use of small, Australian owned and flagged trawlers already operating within the south-east, that will use trawls 75% smaller than those used on large factory trawlers. All fish will be sold in Australia and include some bait sales.

However, the only way to tow a trawl with small vessels at speeds sufficient to catch fast swimming SPF species and then to mitigate TEP captures is to pair trawl. Pair trawling is not currently a permitted method under the SPF plan.

Therefore, the purpose of this document is to provide a level of detail sufficient to support the application for a 12-month trial of this method under largely normal SPF concessions. We note that AFMA has previously supported a similar trial in the SPF for the jigging method.





What is pair trawling?

Pair trawling is a fishing activity carried out by two boats, with each vessel towing two warps (cables that connect the vessel to the trawl) (see Figure 1). As the mouth of the net is kept open by the lateral pull of the individual vessels, otter boards are not required as is the case with stern trawlers. Each vessel operates two winches with one warp connected to the headline and the other to the footline of the trawl.

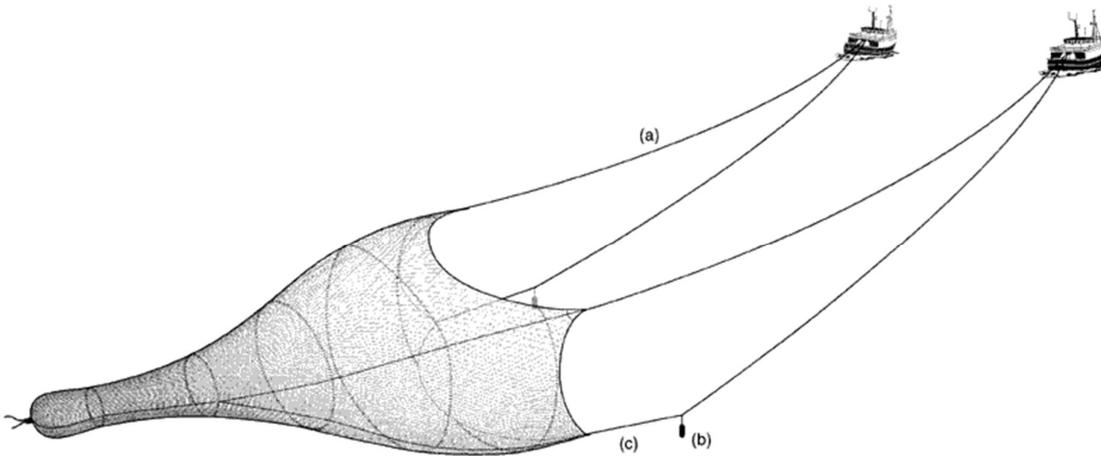


Figure 1 Schematic of a typical pelagic pair trawling operation. (a) footline warp, (b) weight, (c) sweep.

Pair trawling mitigates TEP interactions and allows the use of small vessels.

Pair trawling provides unique advantages that mitigate the risk of interactions with TEPs like dolphins and seals. The use of two vessels also effectively doubles the horsepower allowing the use of small Australian vessels. The Proponent is planning to reduce the risk of dolphins and seals entering the trawl through the use of three steps in the fishing operation:

1. When the trawl is deployed (shot) the headline and footline will be bound together so that TEPs cannot enter the trawl. This method is already successfully used in the MSC certified blue grenadier freezer vessel fishery.
2. Once at fishing depths (300-500m) power is applied and this binding breaks and the trawl opens. Research suggests that dolphins do not hunt at these depths so should not enter the trawl. Seals probably do hunt at these depths but general understanding is that most seal interactions occur at shallower depths.
3. Before hauling, the headline warp on each vessel will be tightened which will collapse the headline (veranda) effectively closing the trawl mouth while it is hauled through shallow depths (within which seals and dolphins are at risk).





What other environmental controls would be in place?

In addition to these operations dolphin “pingers” will be used.

This application also notes that while pair trawling in the SPF, the nominated vessels would cease fishing in other south-east fisheries. In this way, there would likely be a net reduction in seal interactions in south-east Australia.

The vessel will not use a third wire (net sonde cable) connecting the vessel to an electronic headline monitor. The third wire has been associated with seabird interactions in Australia and internationally (and are banned in New Zealand).

Both vessels will protect seabirds from warps using bafflers which are proven to reduce seabird interactions by 96% in south-eastern Australia. There will no processing at sea which further reduces the risk to seabirds.

The operation is exclusively mid-water trawling and there will be no demersal contact. Midwater trawling using a single trawler is already allowed under the SPF plan.

How will accurate reporting be assured?

Like all Commonwealth small vessel fisheries, the profitability of the proposed pair trawling operation cannot support 2*24/7 observers but the Proponent agrees that given this is a new method it is reasonable to install an electronic monitoring (EM) system which will provide validated data on TEP interactions. The Proponent suggests that (in line with the Act) all TEP interactions are reported at the end of each trip via the TEP logbook form but also by email to AFMA at the time of discharge.

All senior crew would complete eLearning modules which cover; TEP mitigation, listed species, reporting, closures and marine parks.

A Vessel Management Plan would cover SPF SFR requirements including the use of marine mammal excluders

As per existing SPF vessel SFR conditions the operation would be covered by a Vessel Management Plan (VMP) which would describe; the three-step fishing operation, the absence of a third wire, the use of dolphin pingers, short interval reporting of TEPs to AFMA, the use of EM, crew training and the use of bafflers.

The existing SPF vessel SFR also covers species limitations, gear requirements (which include the use of approved marine mammal excluders), the area of the fishery, sharks, observer and monitoring obligations, vessel requirements (applicability and licensing), reporting, quota balancing and VMS.





The planned vessels are small and will catch significantly less than a factory freezer trawler

The vessels will be the *Saxon Onward* (31m) and the *Lukina II* (35m). Both are significantly shorter than the 130m “Super Trawler” defined under regulations. Transshipping is not proposed. Neither pair trawler has any freezing capacity. The combined maximum fish capacity of both pair trawl vessels is approximately 10% of a large factory freezer vessel.

One of the proposed pair trawlers is currently operates in the Commonwealth Trawl Fishery (CTS) (South East Trawl) and holds vessel a CTS Statutory Fishing Right. The other works in a State licenced fishery but has worked in a Commonwealth fishery previously. The vessels will be domiciled in Ulladulla and Eden and this would likely continue.

All crew are already able to work in Australia and there are no plans to use foreign senior crew.

The operation is expected to catch significantly less than a large factory vessel and all catch will be covered by quota. Catch sensors will be fitted to maximise catch value by limiting and controlling catch.

Given the perishable nature of fresh fish and the size and seagoing ability of small trawlers means that voyage length will be less than four days.

All fish will be sold into the Australian market

Fish will be directed into one of four product cascade options:

1. Premium fresh sales into the Melbourne and Sydney fish markets
2. Bait for recreational fishers
3. Fish feed for aquaculture
4. Oil for pharmaceuticals

There will be no direct exports of catch.

