

TORRES STRAIT PRAWN**MANAGEMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING No. 18****Date: 13-14 June 2018: 9am-5pm and 9am – 2pm****Venue: QDAF Northern Fisheries Centre, 38-40 Tingira St Cairns****AGENDA****1 Preliminaries**

- 1.1 Chairs opening remarks, opening prayer and traditional owner welcome
- 1.2 Apologies
- 1.3 Adoption of agenda
- 1.4 Declarations of interest

2 Meeting Administration

- 2.1 Actions and/or business arising from previous TSPMAC meetings (EO)

3 Reports

- 3.1 Native Title update. **For Noting.**
- 3.2 a) Industry update. **For Noting.** (Industry – verbal update)
b) PNG update. **For Noting.** (PNG verbal update)
- 3.3 Management update. **For Noting.** (AFMA)
- 3.4 Compliance report - season update on activities. **For Noting.** (QDAF)
- 3.5 Data summary format (Clive Turnbull)
- 3.6 Data report – 2017 season and 2018 to date catch and effort trends. **For Noting.** (Clive Turnbull)

4 Management

- 4.1 Season dates – review of data and future. **For Discussion.** (AFMA/ Industry)
- 4.2 Stock assessment and gear survey. **For discussion.** (AFMA)
- 4.3 Harvest Strategy Review. **For Discussion.** (AFMA)
- 4.4 Total Allowable Effort limit 2019-2021. **For Decision.** (AFMA)
- 4.5 Where to from here? Fishery future focus. **For Discussion.** (AFMA)

5 Finance

- 5.1 Review of levy allocation formula (between licences and units). **For Discussion.** (AFMA)
- 5.2 TSPF 2018-19 budget

6 Other business

- 6.1 Seaswift briefing (Seaswift)
- 6.2 Dates and location for next meeting
- 6.3 Closing remarks and closing prayer



Individuals wishing to attend the meeting as an observer are required to contact the Chair (Mr. Stuart Richey: care of Lisa Cocking TSPMAC Executive Officer; lisa.cocking@afma.gov.au), notifying him of your desire to attend.

TORRES STRAIT PRAWN MANAGEMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE	TSPMAC 18 13-14 June, 2018
REPORTS Data Summary format	FOR DISCUSSION Item 3.5

RECOMMENDATION

That the Torres Strait Prawn Management Advisory Committee (TSPMAC)

- 3.5.1 DISCUSSES** the type of information presented in the annual “Torres Strait Prawn Fishery Data Summary.”
- 3.5.2 CONSIDERS** whether to continue having analytical commentary associated with the data summaries of whether to adopt the NPF style of summary that simply presents the data with some interpretation.
- 3.5.3 CONSIDERS** the level of involvement of the TSPMAC if it prefers to present a summary with analyses.

BACKGROUND

The TSPF Data Summary (Attachment A) is modelled partly on the annual NFP Data Summary. The NFP Data Summary contains little analysis of the data but does provides interpretation of tables, charts and graphs. The information is primarily sourced from logbook data. The summary is a public document.

Prior to 2015 the TSPF Data Summary was included in the “Logbook Statistics” section of the Torres Prawn Handbook along with any reports on research projects. The “Logbook Statistics” provided interpretation and analysis of the fishery information and also referenced relevant research and stock assessment work. This style of reporting carried over into the 2015 and 2016 editions of the Data Summary as a stand-alone document (no longer within the Torres Prawn Handbook).

This year’s edition (2017) has partly moved MORE towards just reporting the data with interpretation, more in line with the NPF summary.

DISCUSSION

The primary purpose of a data summary is to provide commercial fishers (and other interested persons/groups) with a collated summary report of catch and effort information, including trends in the fishery. This meets an expectation from fishers who provide the base information through the daily logbooks to be informed about this information in their fishery.

The summaries are rarely used for fishery-specific research or assessment. Raw data and quality checked data on AFMA’s Pisces data-base is normally accessed for these purposes.

AFMA would like the TSPFMAC to consider whether analyses of catch and effort data should be published within the data summaries, for example, is there a specific need from fishers to have the analyses. It is not that AFMA disagrees with the veracity of the analyses, but that there is

likely to be far more context and discussion of results of analyses in bodies of research and assessment and this is not generally possible within a summary. AFMA is also concerned that the commentary may not have been properly considered by TSPMAC before being published.

TORRES STRAIT PRAWN MANAGEMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE	TSPMAC 18 13-14 June, 2018
REPORTS 2017 and 2018 to date Data report	FOR DISCUSSION Item 3.6

RECOMMENDATION

The Torres Strait Prawn Management Advisory Committee (TSPMAC):

- 3.6.1 **DISCUSSES** the information presented in the “Torres Strait Prawn Fishery Data Summary 2017” and this paper and attachments.
- 3.6.2 **DISCUSSES** the analysis of the monthly trends in fishing effort, tiger prawn catch and tiger prawn CPUE for 2016, 2017, and 2018 compared with earlier years.
- 3.6.3 **DISCUSSES** the catch and effort patterns in the east coast otter trawl fishery compared to the TSPF.
- 3.6.4 **NOTES** information within this paper will be discussed in more detail during agenda items 4.1 and 4.5.

BACKGROUND

The analyses in this discussion paper are derived from the “Torres Strait Prawn Fishery Data Summary 2017”, but also includes some results from the first few months of 2018.

DISCUSSION

The key information from the 2017 Data Summary will be presented at the meeting, in addition to some extra figures and analysis exploring:

- The trends in catch and effort data by month, which will be discussed in detail when deciding on season dates moving forward for the fishery in agenda item 4.1.
- Catch and effort patterns in the east coast otter trawl fishery compared to the TSPF and whether there could be a problem with the tiger or endeavour prawn stocks and how these may shed light on why boats are not fishing in the TSPF as much.
- How the tiger prawn stocks are doing and if there is concern requiring further analysis.
- Spatial analysis, by six minute grid of the distribution of fishing effort, tiger prawn catch and tiger prawn CPUE for recent year compared to years when effort and catches were much higher.
- Analysis of changes in the fleet over the last 10 years.

2017 data summary

The key outcomes of the 2017 data summary include:

- The 2017 fishing season had the lowest catch of tiger and endeavour prawns and the lowest fishing effort since 1978 when catch records commenced for this fishery.
- The low fishing effort may in part stem from the initial low catches during the early months of the 2017 fishing season (Table 1). The tiger prawn CPUE for 2017 was still higher than the 1990’s but was low compared with recent years (2012 - 2016) and may have discouraged fishers from operating in the fishery.
- Monthly CPUE from the first few months of 2017 suggest that there may have been

unusually poor recruitment. This is generally when tiger prawn recruitment is strongest.

2018 Fishing data

The download of logbook data for 2018 on the 24/5/2018 had the complete data for February to April. Note that the data points for May of 2018 are based on only 8 daily vessel records at the beginning of the Month.

At the start of May 2018 only three vessels had fished in the TSPF so far this season. The two which undertook most of the fishing in February to April have fished during the first 3-4 months of every season since 2012; hence should provide a reliable CPUE index for the start of this season.

Annual catch and effort trends

Annual catch and effort trends will be discussed in detail during the presentation. Further detailed analysis can be read in [Attachment A](#). In summary:

- The years prior to 2005 had the highest number of vessels fishing, highest days fished and the lowest mean annual catch rates (CPUE) for tiger prawns since the start of full logbook records in 1989.
- The highest annual tiger prawn CPUE occurred in 2013 which was the end of a general upward trend that started in 2000.
- Although there has been a downward trend in tiger prawn CPUE from 2015 and that the very low level of effort during 2017 is noteworthy, the 2017 annual tiger prawn CPUE was still higher than the mean for the seasons 1991 to 2003 (Figure 1).
- The 2017 CPUE suggests that the tiger prawn stock biomass could be comparable or better in historical levels, but we cannot be certain given the current low effort.
- The highest catches of tiger prawn (Figure 2) occurred in 1992 and 1998 and were well above the estimate of Maximum Sustainable Yield (MSY).
- Since 2005 the annual tiger prawn harvest has generally been well below MSY (Figure 2). This could have allowed the tiger prawn stock to increase in size which would be one explanation for the higher annual and monthly CPUEs after 2005. The large reduction in the number of vessel fishing and days of fishing effort would have reduced competition between vessels for the tiger prawn stock on the trawl grounds. Therefore the available biomass would be fished down at a slower rate resulting in generally higher CPUEs for the vessels fishing and a slower decline in CPUE over the season.

Table 1. Monthly tiger prawn CPUE (kg/vessel/day)

year	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov
1989			129	82	64	59	56	42	41	34
1990			113	79	85	80	60	50	43	36
1991		92	118	100	75	57	61	49	39	40
1992		114	104	78	66	61	75	60	47	36
1993		83	83	65	64	66	52	40	33	31
1994		80	60	57	54	47	36	30	28	30
1995		118	98	95	78	64	55	48	43	41
1996		146	85	80	83	65	55	49	41	29
1997		105	75	72	56	65	62	61	52	51
1998		159	138	107	101	86	72	58	42	33
1999		95	68	66	51	59	51	45	37	36
2000		65	50	48	59	52	46	34	29	27
2001		74	80	66	64	61	54	45	36	37
2002		104	96	80	68	65	66	51	50	52
2003		101	87	76	101	103	81	55	47	47
2004		126	98	93	91	83	69	57	50	69
2005		176	144	107	88	84	80	74	52	57
2006		170	135	138	130	143	141	108	93	96
2007		123	148	163	141	121	112	99	83	73
2008		172	162	146	123	141	121	114	94	89
2009		189	175	190	162	153	151	153	128	116
2010		200	195	193	217	205	192	173	143	130
2011		200	178	188	168	163	152	120	108	89
2012		233	251	213	200	180	148	123	125	120
2013		252	256	250	257	214	194	157	154	119
2014		176	201	187	168	156	152	159	142	127
2015		265	233	215	201	192	170	148	125	95
2016	103	165	198	189	193	188	161	142	117	106
2017	102	109	122	138	134	168	152	135	111	93

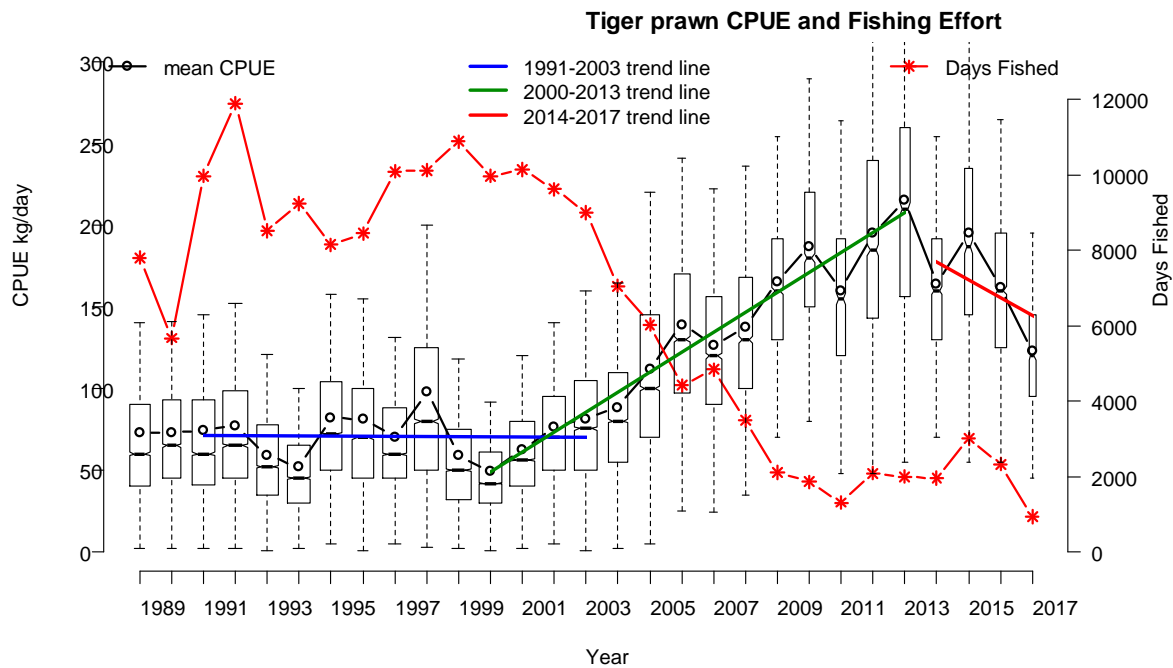


Figure 1 Summary of tiger prawn CPUE and fishing effort for 1989 to 2017 fishing seasons. The boxplots show the mean and distribution of CPUE in the daily vessel logbook records. The red line shows the number of days fished.

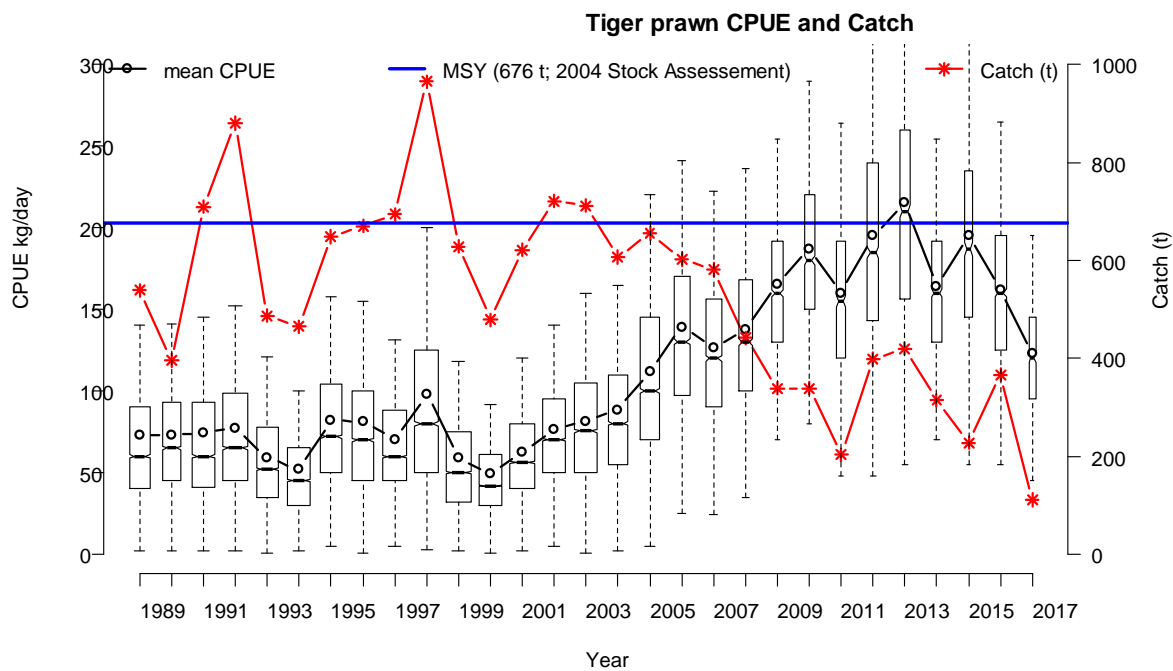


Figure 2. Summary of tiger prawn CPUE and catch for 1989 to 2017 fishing seasons. Tiger prawn catch per unit of effort (kg/boat/day; black line), annual tiger prawn catch in tonnes (red line) and the boxplots show the mean and distribution of CPUE in the daily vessel logbook records.

Comparisons to the Queensland East Coast Otter Trawl Fishery

The annual trend of tiger prawn CPUE for Torres Strait is similar to that of northern and southern tiger prawn sectors of the Queensland East Coast Otter fishery (ECOT). Since 2000 the CPUE of all three fisheries (Figure 3) has increased while fishing effort has decreased. Post 2005 the

TSPF has generally had the highest CPUE but since 2016 the annual TSPF CPUE has decrease and is now lower than both sectors of the ECOT fishery. Therefore TSPF vessels with sufficient ECOT days would be more likely to fish nearer home.

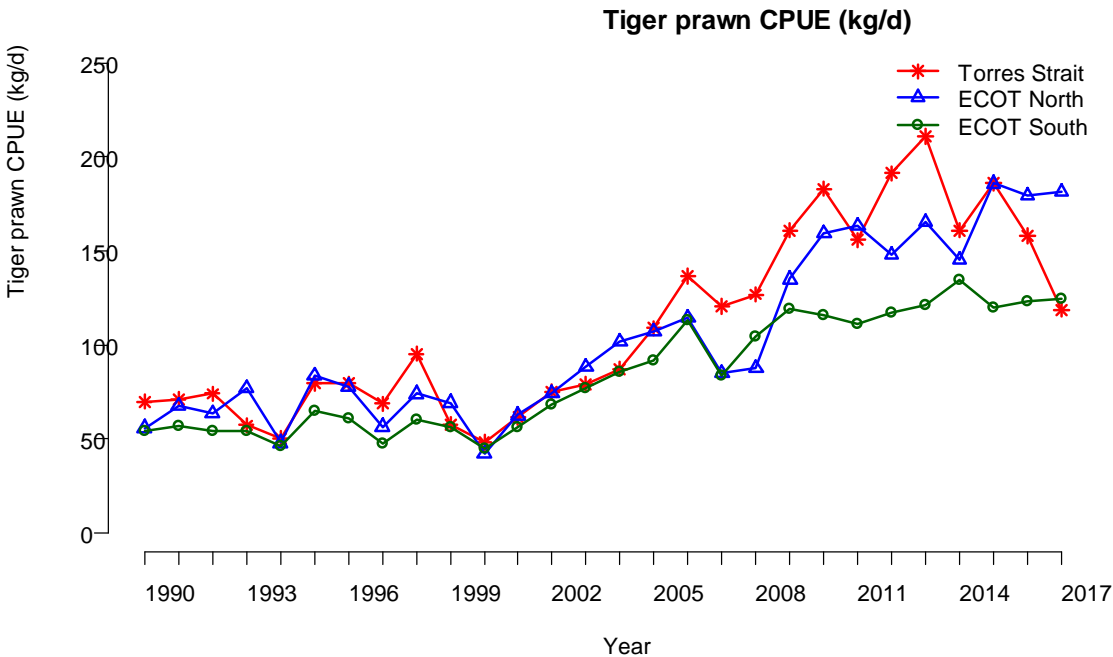


Figure 3. Comparison of tiger prawn CPUE (kg/boat/day) between the TSPF and the northern and southern sections of the tiger prawn sector of the ECOT fishery.

Monthly Trends in catch and effort

Fishing years 1991 to 2003 were chosen as a baseline against which to compare recent levels of catch and effort. Those years were a period of consistent fishing effort and high numbers of vessels operating in the TSPF. In general over the years, monthly effort, numbers of vessels fishing, catch and CPUE steadily decrease from March to November (Figs. 4 – 9). In recent years, however, overall effort, vessels fishing and catch have decreased substantially from the highs of 1991-2003. Meanwhile, CPUE for all prawns been generally greater than that seen historically – particularly from March to May of the fishing season when recruitment is strongest. The years 2016 and 2017 are exceptions to this in that both total and tiger prawn CPUE started off low and increased towards mid-season (May - July). The start of 2018 fishing season shows a similar pattern of CPUE to 2016-17, but with historically high catch rates.

The size distribution of tiger prawns in the TSPF is fairly constant across the fishing season (Fig 10). The relatively static size distribution over the fishing season is evidence of continuous recruitment in the area open to fishing. The main difference in size distribution is spatial rather than temporal. Prawns tend to be smaller in the shallower western areas and larger in the deeper areas of the fishery.

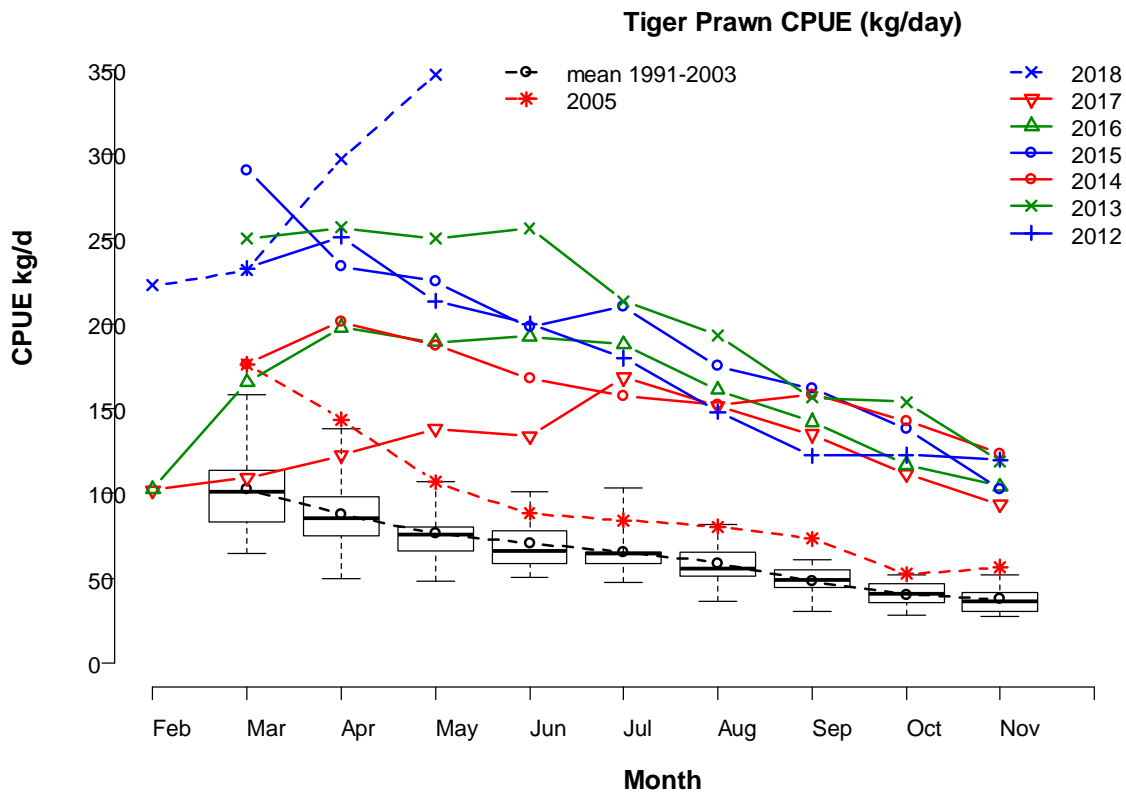


Figure 4. Tiger Prawn CPUE for each month of 2012 to 2018 compared to the mean CPUE for 1991-2003 and 2005 – the year before the pro rate fishery effort reduction. The boxplots show the distribution of the monthly CPUE for the years 1991-2003. Note that May of 2018 is based on only 8 records at the beginning of the month.

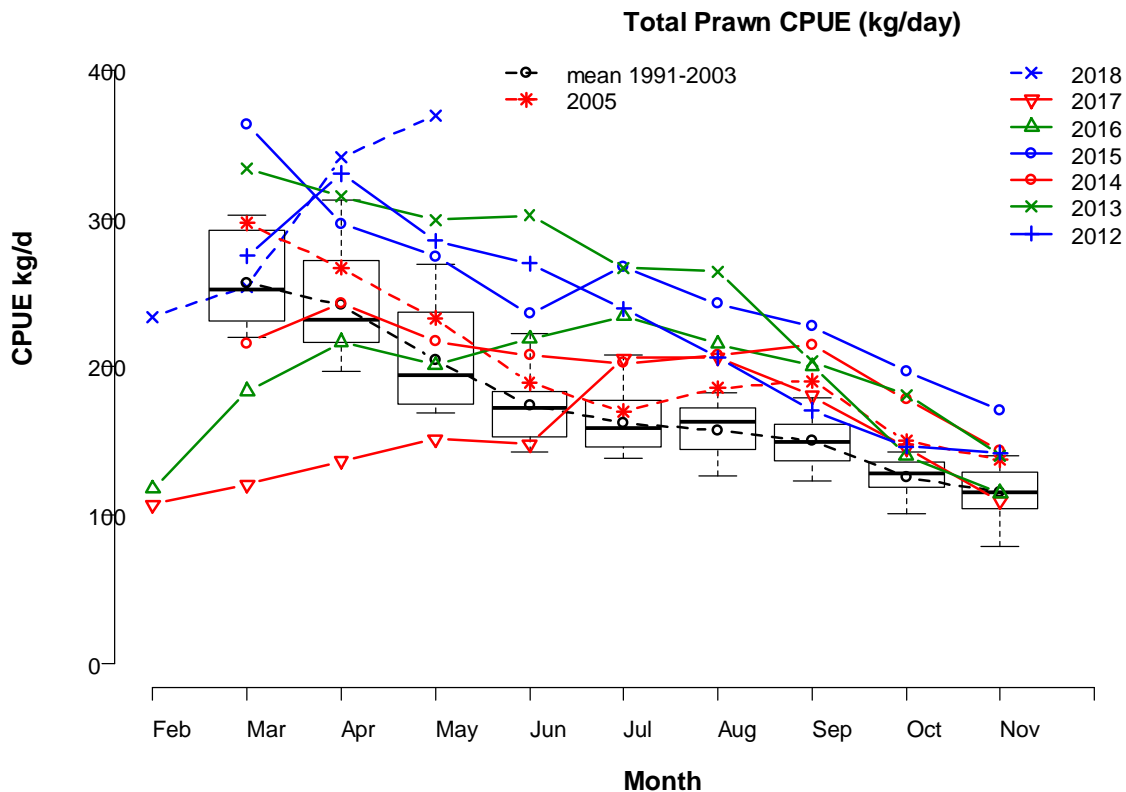


Figure 5. Total Prawn CPUE for each month of 2012 to 2018 compared to the mean CPUE for 1991-2003 and 2005 – the year before the pro rate fishery effort reduction. The boxplots show the distribution of the monthly CPUE for the years 1991-2003. Note that May of 2018 is based on only 8 records at the beginning of the month.

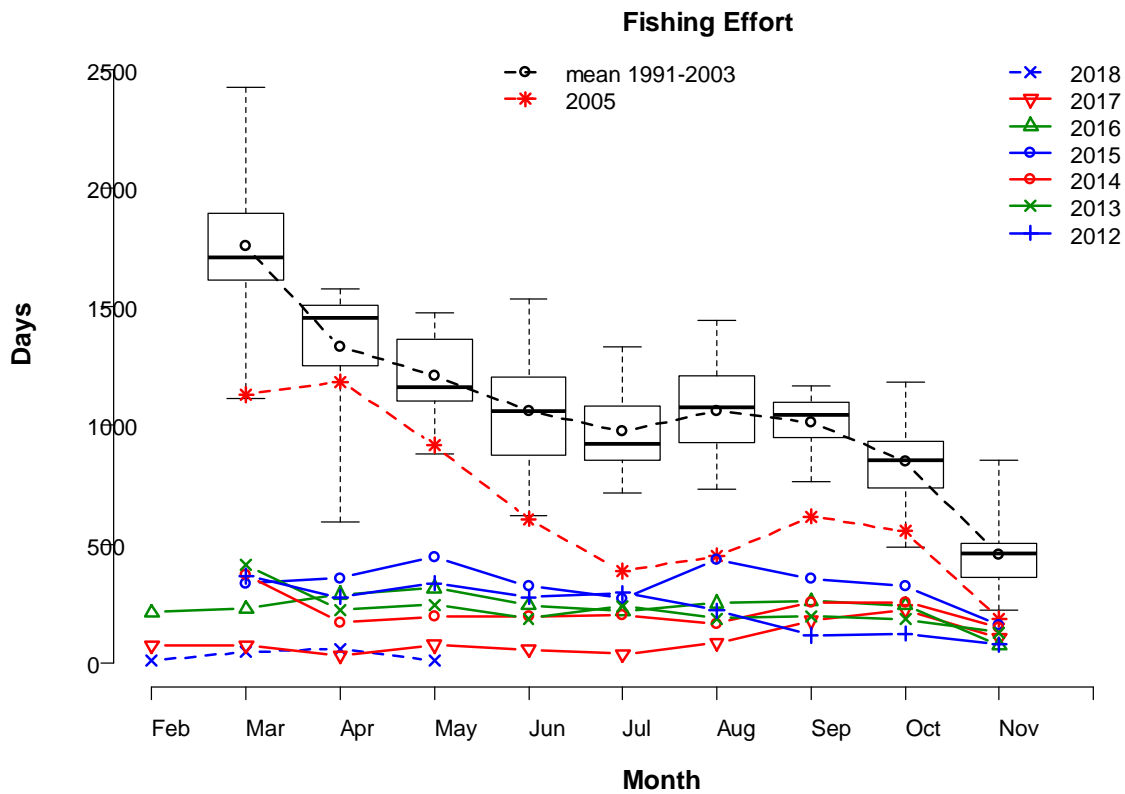


Figure 6. Days fished for each month of 2012 to 2018 compared to the mean for 1991-2003 and 2005 – the year before the pro rate fishery effort reduction. The boxplots show the distribution of the fishing days for the years 1991-2003.

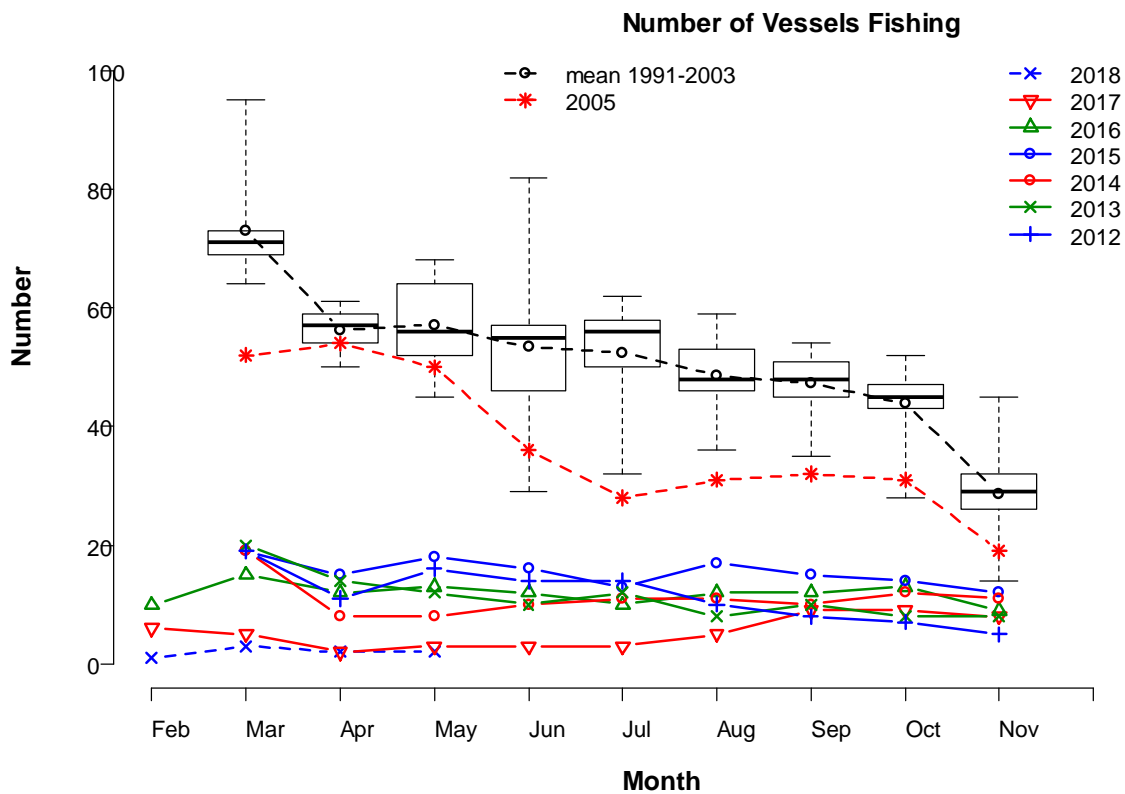


Figure 7. Number of vessels fishing each month for 2012 to 2018 compared to the mean for 1991-2003 and 2005 – the year before the pro rate fishery effort reduction. The boxplots show the distribution of the number of vessels for the years 1991-2003.

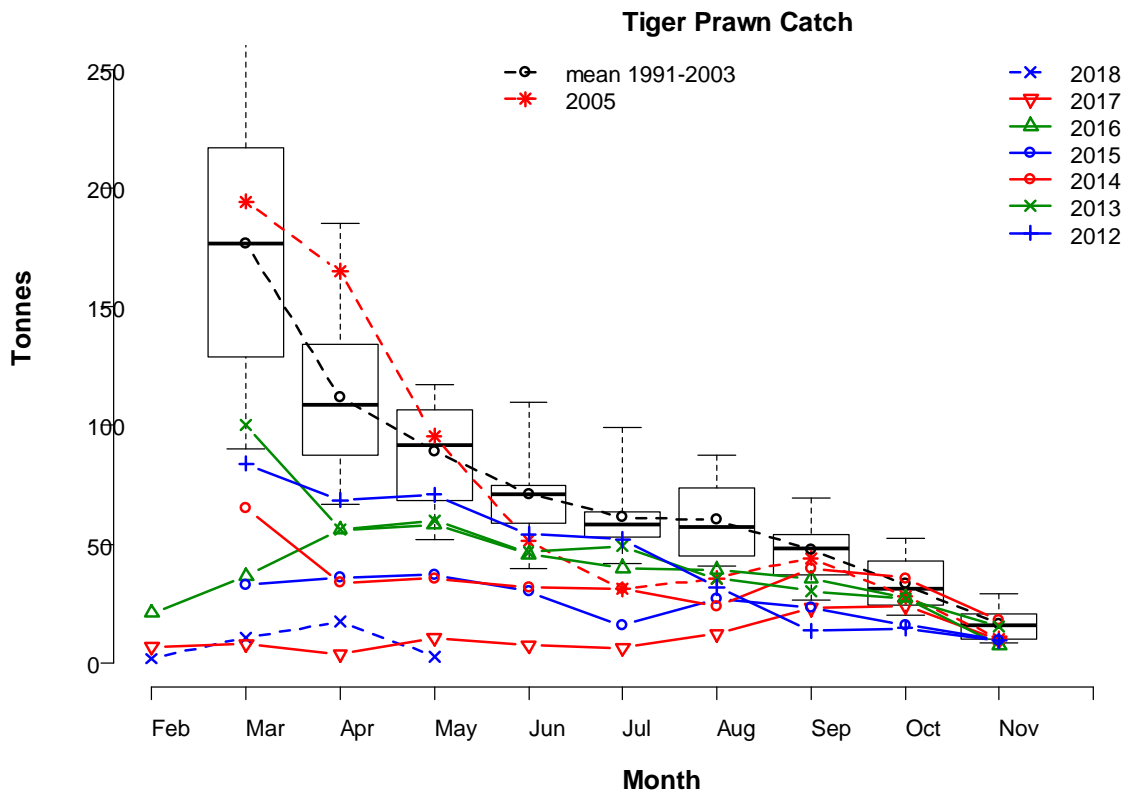


Figure 8. Tiger Prawn catch for each month of 2012 to 2018 compared to the mean catch for 1991-2003 and 2005 – the year before the pro rata fishery effort reduction. The boxplots show the distribution of the monthly catches for the years 1991-2003.

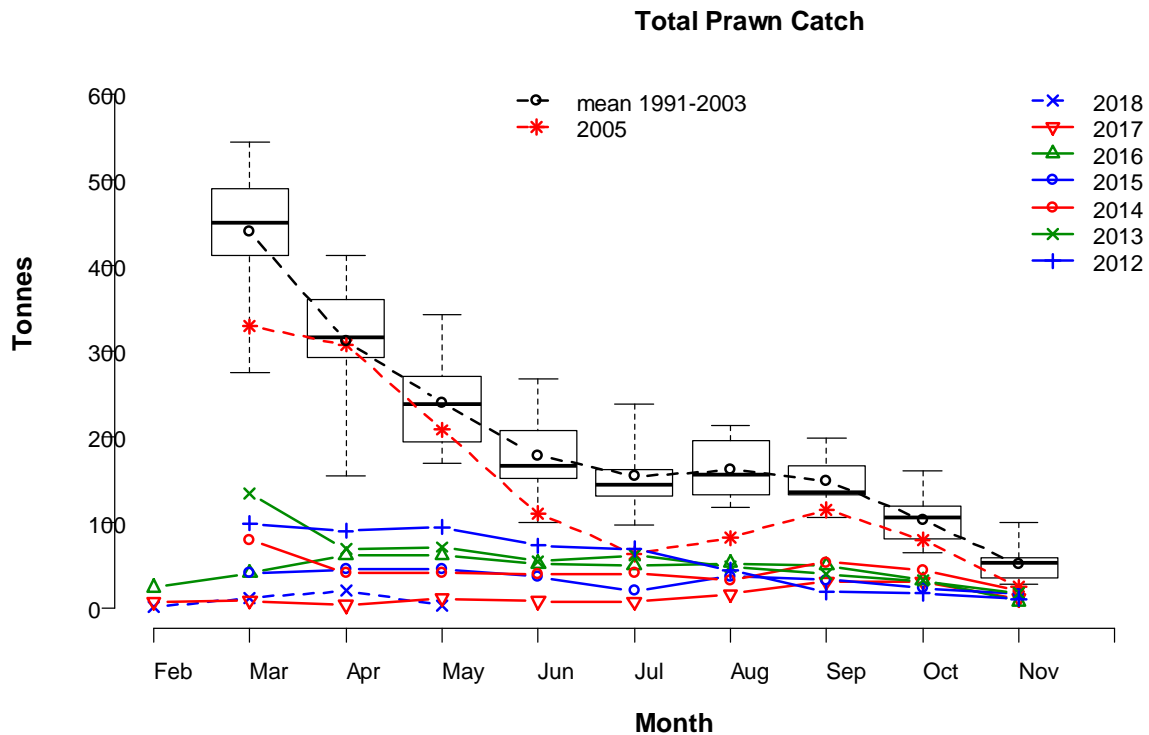


Figure 9. Total Prawn catch for each month of 2012 to 2018 compared with 2005 and to the mean catch for 1991-2003 and 2005 – the year before the pro rate fishery effort reduction. The boxplots show the distribution of the monthly catches for the years 1991-2003.

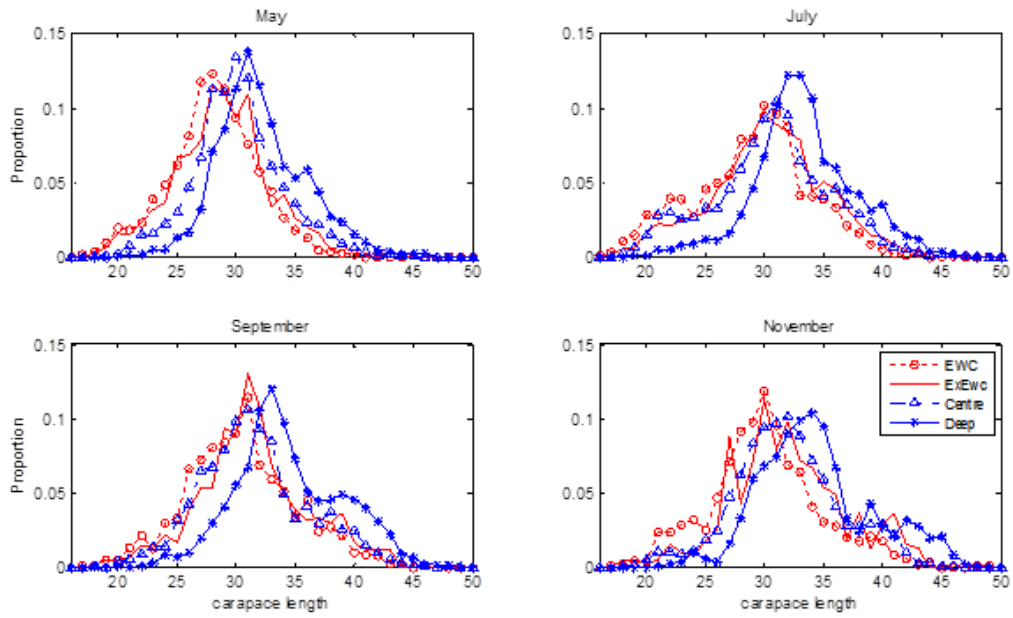


Figure 10. The relative size distribution of tiger prawns by month and for the EWC, ExEWC Centre and Deep regions. The Y-axis is the proportion of individuals in each 1mm carapace length class size. Note that prawns ≤ 25 mm CL are 30+ grade and 26-29 are 21/30 grade.

Attachment A – additional analysis and discussion regarding TSPF historical data trends. Prepared by Clive Turnbull

This document compares the annual trends in tiger prawn CPUE, fishing effort and catch with the tiger prawn sector of the ECOT fishery. The monthly trends in CPUE, effort and catches for recent seasons (2012 – 2018) are compared with 2005 and the mean data for the seasons of highest fishing effort (1991 to 2003).

This analysis was done:

- 1) As a preliminary examination of this year fishing season.
- 2) To provide background information for the “Season Dates” agenda item.
- 3) As background information for a discussion of why effort and catches in the TSPF have dropped significantly in recent years and the question of whether there is a problem with the tiger prawn stock?

I will discuss and expand on the results provided in this attachment during a presentation at the meeting.

2018 Fishing data

The download of logbook data for 2018 on the 24/5/2018 had the complete data for February to April. Note that the data points for May of 2018 are based on only 8 daily vessel records at the beginning of the Month.

At the start of May only three vessels had fished in the TSPF this year. The two that did most of the fishing in February to April this year have fished during the first 3-4 months of every season since 2012; hence should provide a reliable CPUE index for the start of this season.

Annual catch and effort trends

The years prior to 2005 had the highest number of vessels fishing, highest days fished and the lowest mean annual catch rates (CPUE) for tiger prawns since the start of full logbook records in 1989. The highest annual tiger prawn CPUE occurred in 2013 which was the end of a general upward trend that started in 2000. Although the downward trend in tiger prawn CPUE from 2015 and the extremely low level of fishing during 2017 are of concern it is worth noting that the 2017 annual tiger prawn CPUE was still higher than the mean annual tiger prawn CPUEs of the seasons 1991 to 2003 (Figure 1).

Although the annual tiger prawn CPUE calculated from the daily vessel logbook records is influenced by changes in the fishing power of the fleet it is still a useful indicator of the biomass of tiger prawn on the fishing grounds. The 2017 CPUE suggests that the tiger prawn stock could be comparable or even larger than 1991-2003, but we cannot be sure given the low level of effort.

The catch for the fishery each year is the result of the catch rate (CPUE) and time fished (Catch = CPUE x Effort). The highest catches of tiger prawn (Figure 2) occurred in 1992 and 1998 and were well above the estimate of Maximum Sustainable Yield (MSY). Since 2005 the annual tiger prawn harvest has generally been well below MSY (Figure 2). This could have allowed the tiger prawn stock to increase in size which would be one explanation for the higher annual and monthly CPUEs after 2005. The large reduction in the number of vessels fishing and days of fishing effort would have reduced competition between vessels for the tiger prawn stock on the trawl grounds. Therefore the available biomass would be fished down at a slower rate resulting in generally higher CPUEs for the vessels fishing and a slower decline in CPUE over the season.

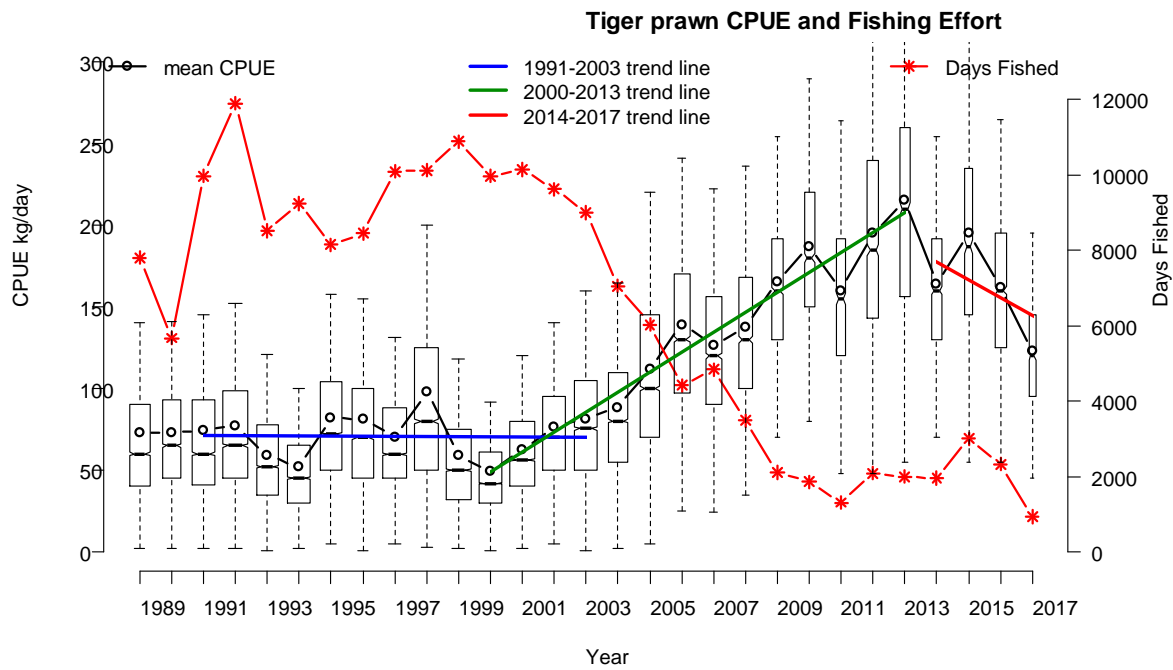


Figure 10 The boxplots show the mean and distribution of CPUE in the daily vessel logbook records. The red line shows the number of days fished.

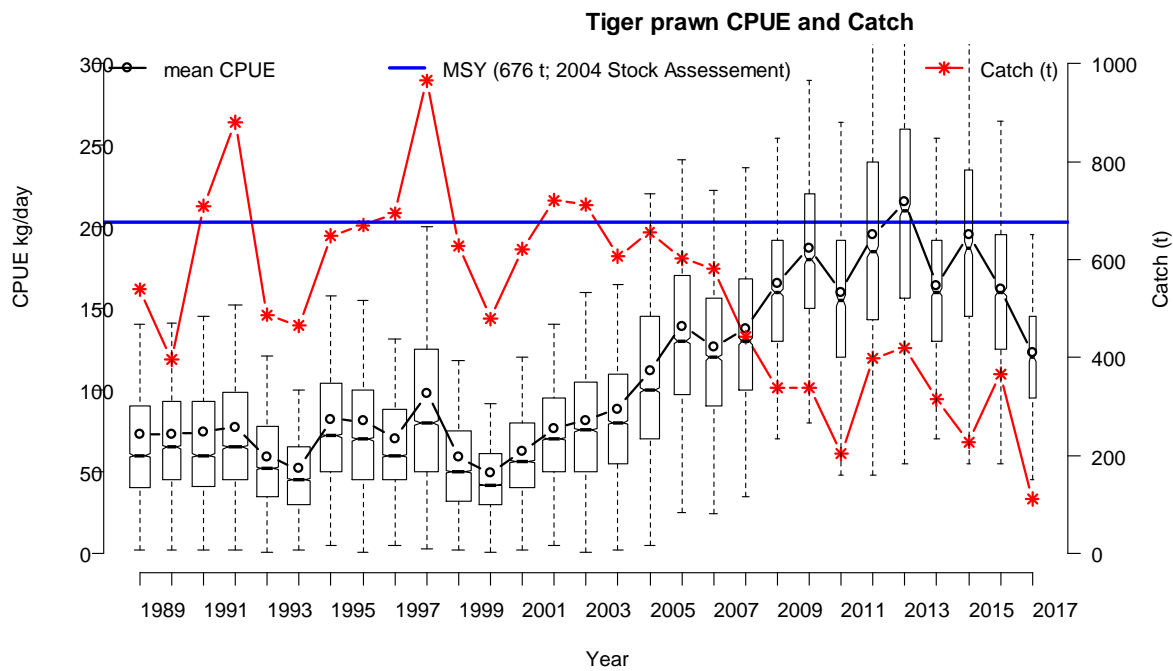


Figure 11 The red line shows the annual tiger prawn catch in tonnes. The blue line is the estimate of Maximum Sustainable Yield (MSY) for tiger prawn.

The annual trend of tiger prawn CPUE for Torres Strait is similar to that of northern and southern tiger prawn sectors of the Queensland East Coast Otter fishery (ECOT). Since 2000 the CPUE of all three fisheries (Figure 3) has increased while fishing effort has decreased. Post 2005 the TSPF has generally had the highest CPUE but since 2016 the annual TSPF CPUE has decrease

and is now lower than both sectors of the EOCT fishery. Therefore TSPF vessels with sufficient ECOT days would be more likely to fish nearer home.

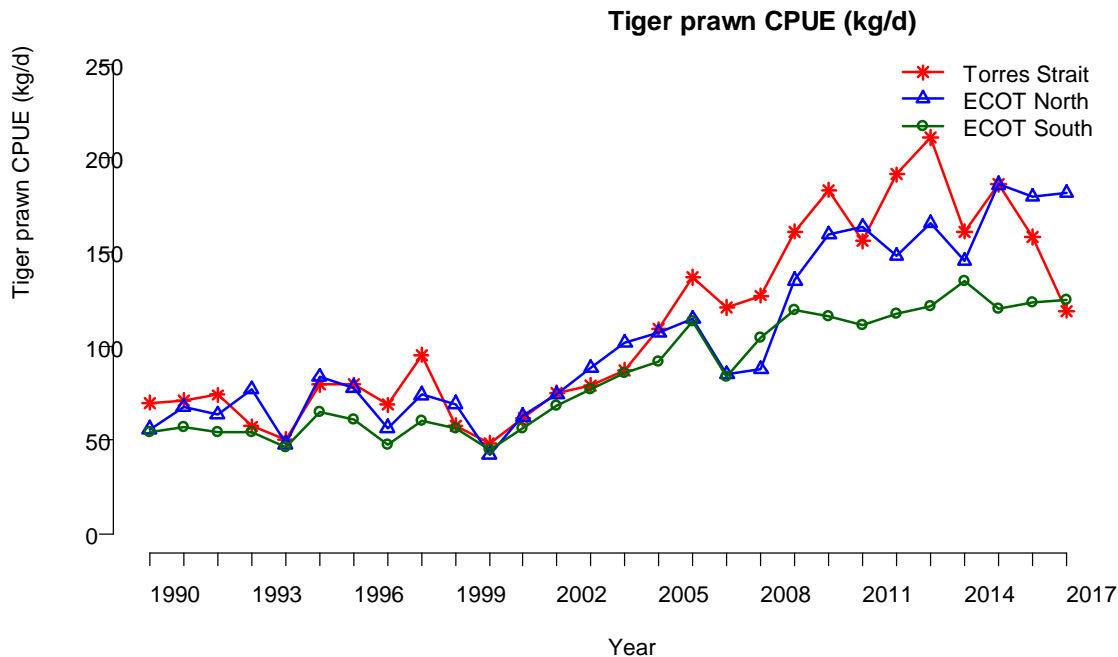


Figure 12 Comparison of tiger prawn CPUE between the TSPF and the northern and southern sections of the tiger prawn sector of the ECOT fishery.

Monthly Trends in catch and effort

The time period 1991 to 2003 was chosen as a baseline against which to compare the catch and effort of recent years as it was the period of highest catches, fishing effort and number of vessel operating in the TSPF. The year 1989 and was omitted as only the southern half of the TSPF (south of 10 degrees 13 minutes) opened on the 7th March and the rest of the fishery opened on the 15th April. The fishery closed on the 15th December in 1989 and closed on the 1st December in all subsequent years. The 1990 fishing season was also omitted as it didn't open until the 15th April. All of the 1991-2003 fishing seasons were the same timing and duration. The East of Warrior Closure was first implemented in 1991.

During 1991-2003 when fishing effort was much higher, March usually had the highest tiger prawn CPUE (Figure 4). However in recent years when fishing effort has been a lot lower and CPUE has often increased over increased during the early months of the season. This is probably the combined result of strong recruitment occurring during the months of February to May and the tiger prawn stock on the fishing grounds being fished down at a slower rate due to the large reduction in the number of vessels and fishing effort (i.e. lower fishing mortality).

Tiger prawn CPUE at the start of this season (2018) was considerable higher than in 2016 and 2017 for the same months indicating a stronger recruitment than in the previous seasons (Figure 4). Although the March 2017 tiger prawn CPUE was the lowest in recent years it was similar to the mean CPUE for March of 1991-2003. In contrast the total prawn CPUE at the start of 2016 and 2017 was lower than during 1991-2003 (Figure 5) due to the very low endeavour prawn CPUEs in recent years.

The 1991-2003 monthly tiger prawn CPUEs were significantly lower than post 2005 and steadily decreased through the season (Figures 4). Similarly tiger prawn catches (Figure 8) were generally

highest in March and decreased through the rest of the season. This is a result of the decrease in fishing effort and CPUE over the season.

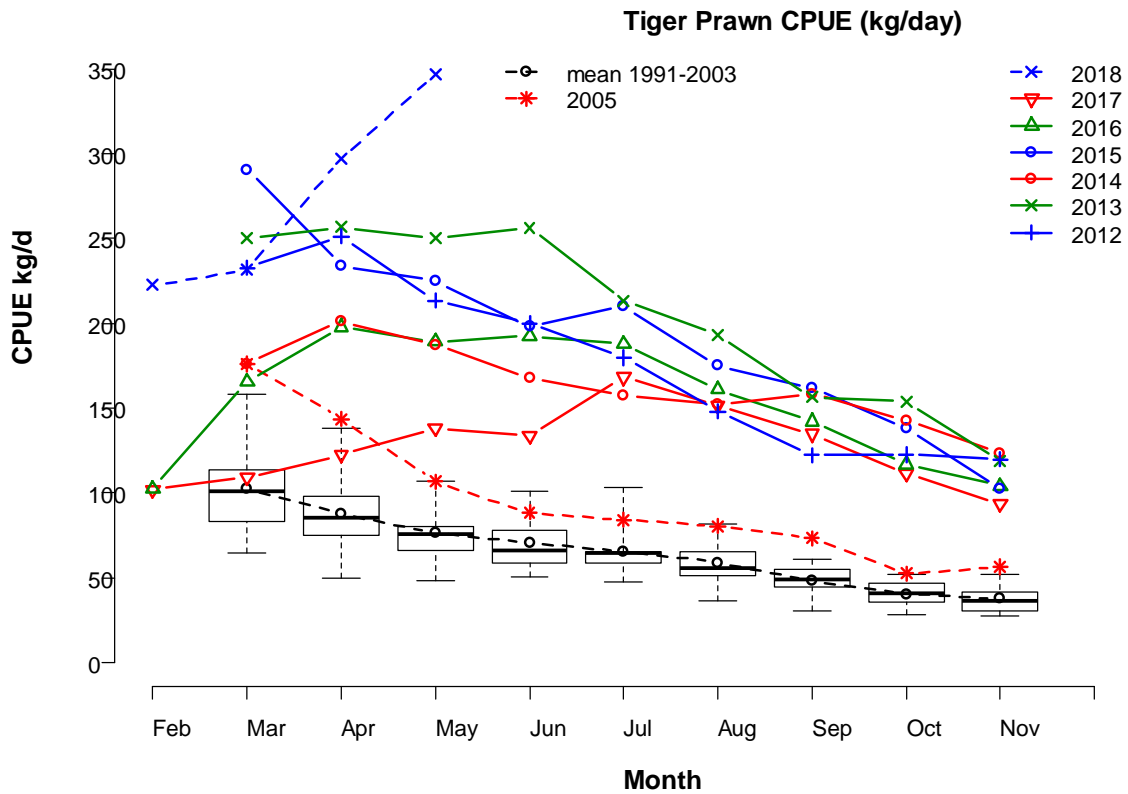


Figure 13 Tiger Prawn CPUE for each month of 2012 to 2018 compared to the mean CPUE for 1991-2003. The boxplots show the distribution of the monthly CPUE for the years 1991-2003. Note that May of 2018 is based on only 8 records at the beginning of the month.

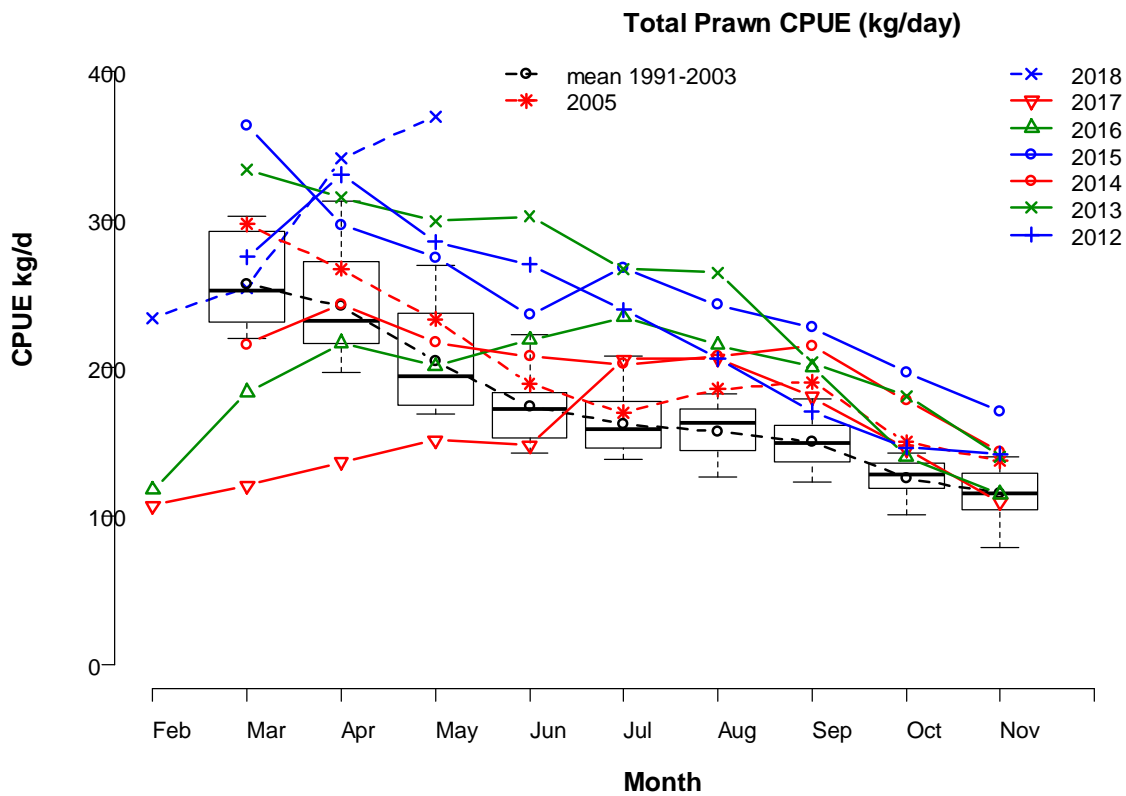


Figure 14 Total Prawn CPUE for each month of 2012 to 2018 compared to the mean CPUE for 1991-2003. The boxplots show the distribution of the monthly CPUE for the years 1991-2003. Note that May of 2018 is based on only 8 records at the beginning of the month.

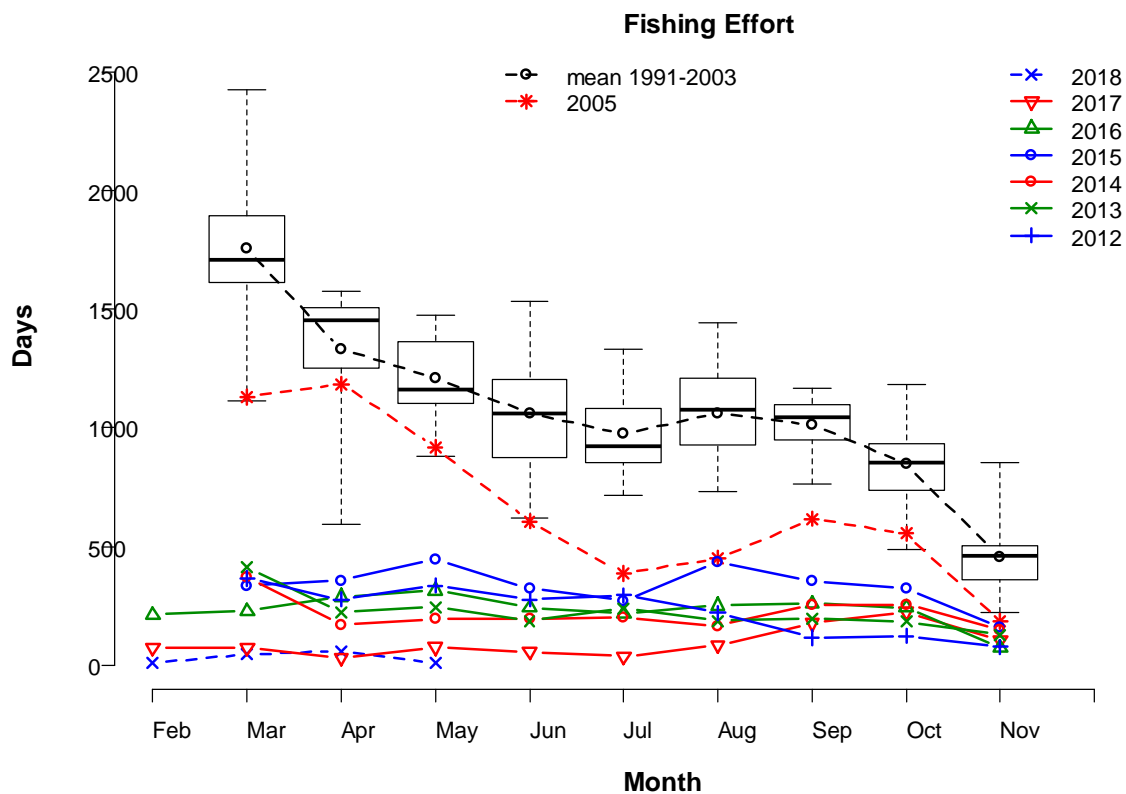


Figure 15 Days fished for each month of 2012 to 2018 compared to the mean for 1991-2003. The boxplots show the distribution of the fishing days for the years 1991-2003.

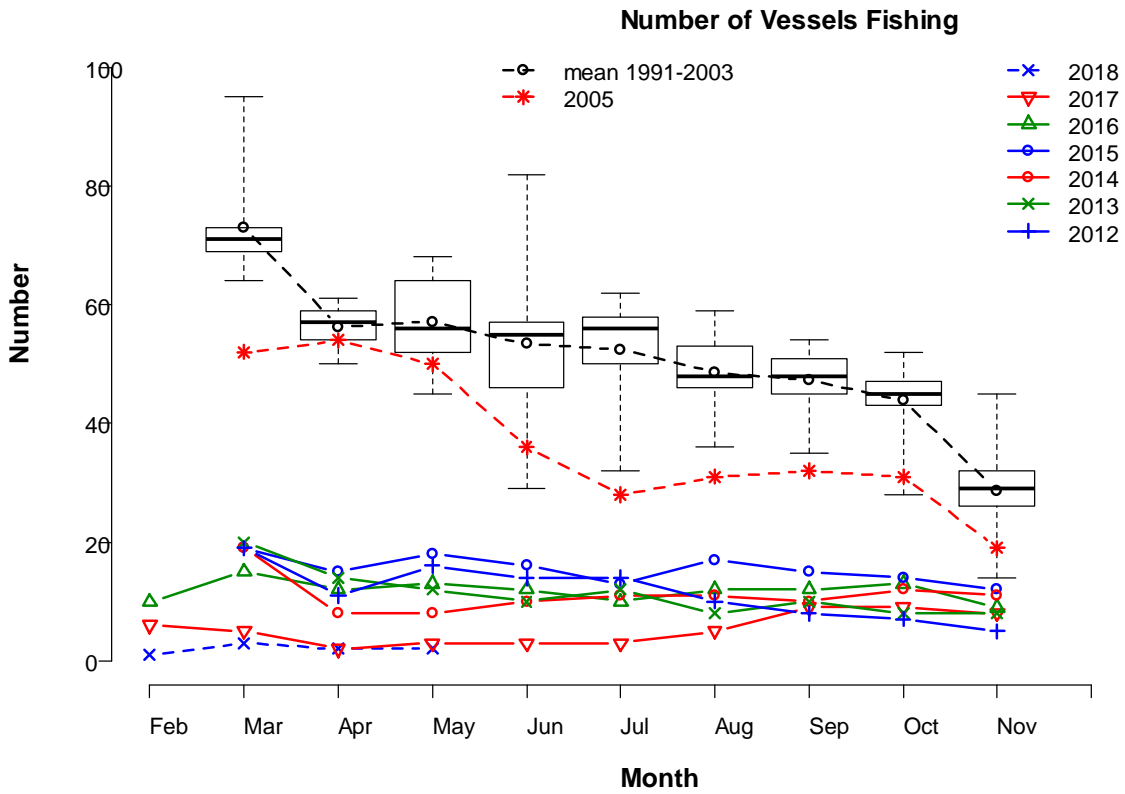


Figure 16 Number of vessels fishing each month for 2012 to 2018 compared to the mean for 1991-2003. The boxplots show the distribution of the number of vessels for the years 1991-2003.

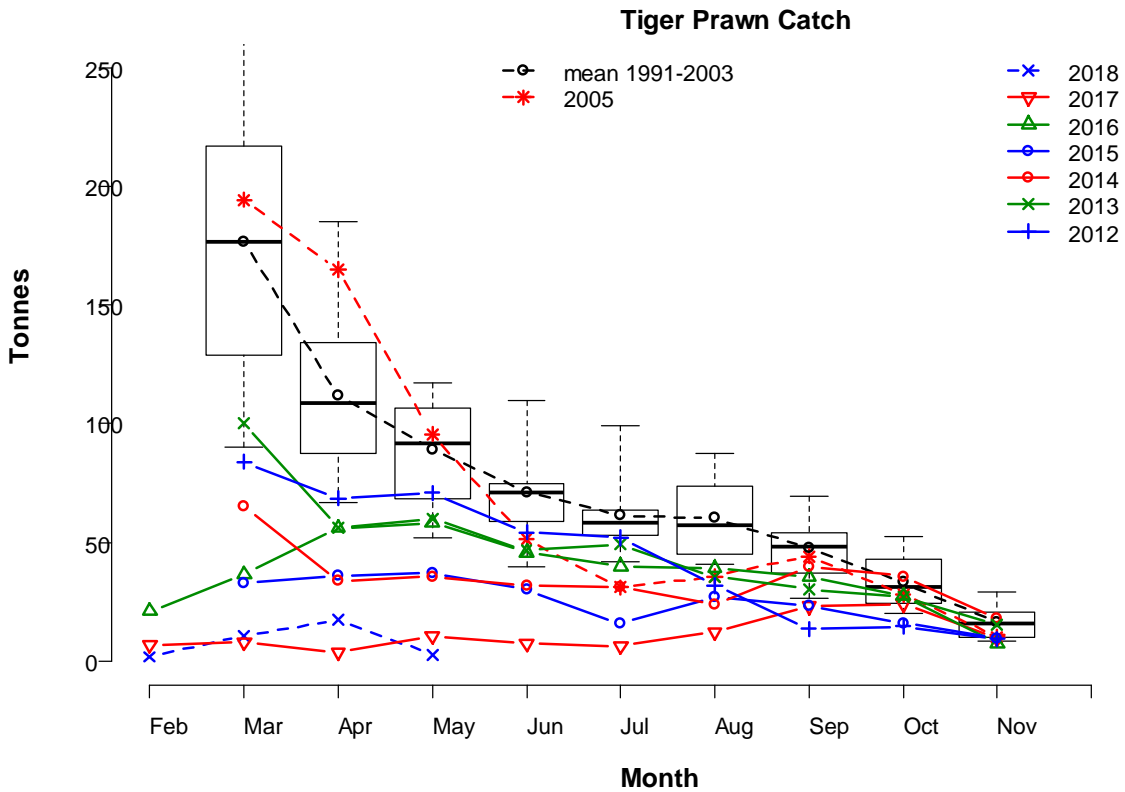


Figure 17 Tiger Prawn catch for each month of 2012 to 2018 compared to the mean catch for 1991-2003. The boxplots show the distribution of the monthly catches for the years 1991-2003.

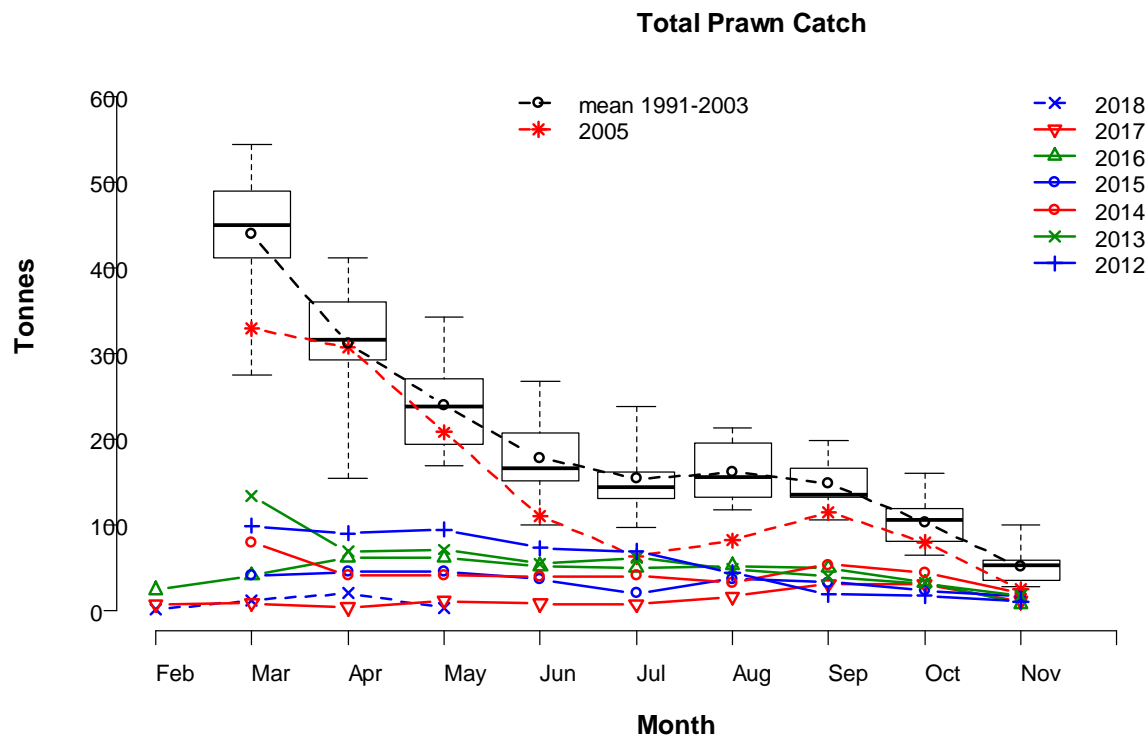


Figure 18 Total Prawn catch for each month of 2012 to 2018 compared with 2005 and to the mean catch for 1991-2003. The boxplots show the distribution of the monthly catches for the years 1991-2003.

During the years 1991-2003 March generally had the most vessels and highest number of days fished (Figures 6 and 7). In contrast the number of vessels and fishing effort in recent years has been much lower and fairly consistent across the season.

Except for April of 2018 fishing effort was lower than in the same months of 2017. The highest 2017 fishing effort was in the last half of the season when the tiger prawn CPUEs had increased and were at a similar level to the equivalent months of the 2015 and 2016 seasons.

Figures 8 and 9 compare the monthly trends in tiger prawn catch and total prawn catch for recent seasons (2012 – 2018) with 2005 and the mean and distribution of catches during 1991-2003. The monthly catches of recent years are much lower but more stable across the season. In contrast, the 1991-2003 catches were nearly always highest in March with a large decrease in April and followed by a more gradual decline through to the end of the season.

The size distribution of tiger prawns in the TSPF is fairly constant across the fishing season (see Fig 3.18 below which is from the 2009 Spatial Management Report). The main difference in size distribution is spatial rather than temporal; tending to be smaller in the shallower western areas and larger in the deeper areas of the fishery. The plots are based on data from intensive fishery independent trawl surveys conducted during 2007 and 2008. Most prawns within the open area of the fishery are of export size (21-30 grade or larger). The relatively static size distribution over the fishing season is evidence of continuous recruitment in the area open to fishing. Therefore there would be little if any advantage in delaying the start of the fishing season. If fishers are interested in protecting undersized prawns they would be better to consider the extension to the East of Warrior Closure that was proposed at the 2005 Prawn Workshop. This area (ExEWC) was identified by fishers as often having a higher proportion of small prawn during March/April. The proposal was to close this area for the first two months of the season.

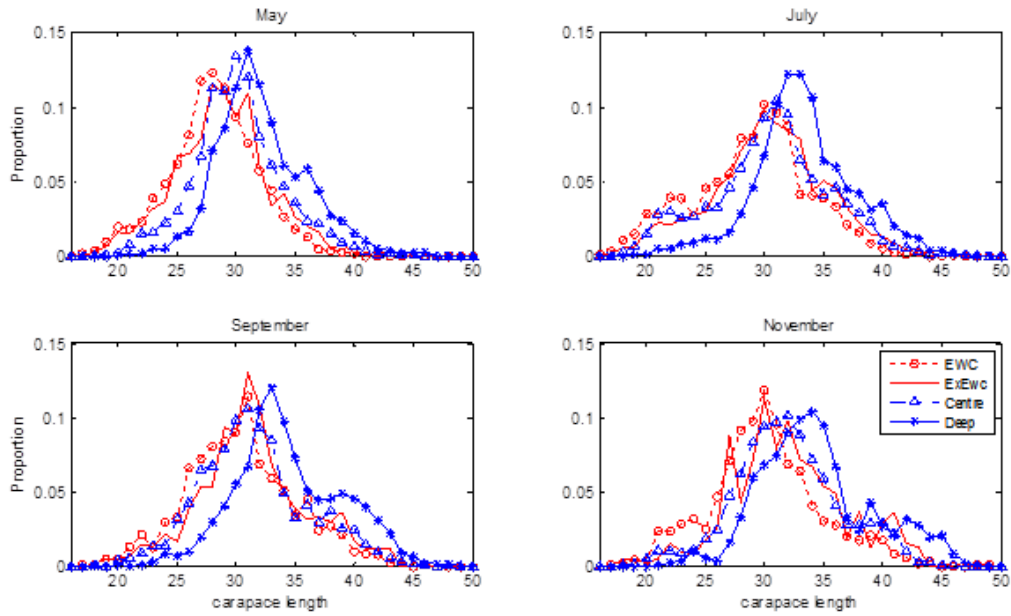


Figure 10 The relative size distribution of tiger prawns by month and for the EWC, ExEWC Centre and Deep regions. The Y-axis is the proportion of individuals in each 1mm carapace length class size. Note that prawns ≤ 25 mm CL are 30+ grade and 26-29 are 21/30 grade.



TORRES STRAIT PRAWN MANAGEMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE	Meeting No. 18 13-14 June 2018
MANAGEMENT Where to from here for the TSPF?	Agenda Item No. 4.5 For Discussion

RECOMMENDATION

That the Torres Strait Prawn Management Advisory Committee (TSPMAC)
4.5.1 NOTES the lack of effort and reduced performance of the fishery over recent years; the economic pressures on the fishery; and, past/recent research which has been undertaken to assess and improve the fishery.
~~That the Torres Strait Prawn Management Advisory Committee (TSPMAC) **NOTES** the lack of effort and reduced performance of the fishery over recent years; the economic pressures on the fishery; and, past/recent research which has been undertaken to assess and improve the fishery.~~

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4.5.2 ~~That the TSPMAC~~ **DISCUSSES** the need and potential steps for action to improve participation and economic performance of the fishery.

BACKGROUND

The Torres Strait Prawn ~~fishery~~ Fishery (TSPF) ~~have~~ has undertaken extensive discussions, and research for more than 6 years, trying to find ways to improve utilization of the fishery.

Two research projects have been undertaken:

- Targeted Indigenous Community Consultation in the Torres Strait: gaining an understanding of Indigenous communities' perceptions regarding boat and gear length in the Torres Strait Prawn Fishery.
- Improving Torres Strait Prawn Fishery Profitability & the Flow of Benefits to Island Communities.

Results indicated that fishery economics (e.g. low prawn prices, high fuel and other operating costs) ~~was~~ is a major cause of reduced fishing effort in the fishery. ~~along with~~ Limits on fishing inputs such as gear and boat size also appear to hold the fishery back. ~~restrictions and in the absence of~~ Traditional owner support for the fishery is limited due to seemingly few opportunities for Traditional Inhabitant participation, there is little scope for attracting more effort.

Conflicting views from different stakeholder groups and uncertainty about the real drivers have made the PZJA reluctant to ~~support~~ consider the ~~increasing~~ flexibility of gear and boat size restrictions, which were identified as ~~something which may support~~ needed for better economic performance of boats and the fishery.

In a recent survey conducted by AFMA, ~~license licencelicense~~ holders were asked to provide reasons of why they are not currently fishing in the TSPF. There were twenty respondents (just under 50 percent response rate). Most of the respondents indicated that economics played a major role in their decision not to fish the TSPF as well as the relative benefits of fishing in the Queensland East Coast Otter Trawl fishery (ECOT), especially with recent decreases in prawn prices. Economic disincentives to fish TSPF included:

- fishery remoteness
- fewer prawns (than ECOT)
- high fuel prices
- high repair costs
- inconsistent mother ship
- costs of freight in Torres Strait

Other reasons found from the survey for lack of effort in the fishery included:

- difficulty in obtaining crew
- no interest in fishing in TSPF, but ~~license licencelicense~~ has no value for sale or lease
- management arrangements make it difficult to fish
- gear/boat restrictions make it uneconomical/impractical (e.g. vessels <20m)
- potential for 100% traditional ownership

DISCUSSION

The TSPMAC ~~should-can~~ discuss options for improving profitability in the TSPF, noting ~~all-the~~ past research, discussions and investment in this topic. Fishery economics has been identified to play a major role in the decision making for fishers to participate in the TSPF, with a variety of other factors also affecting ~~decision-making~~ fishing. These have led to increased participation in the ECOT relative to the TSPF.

The TSPF has been showing an unusual drop in CPUE in recent years relative to Queensland's East Coast Otter Trawl, whereas in the past the TSPF CPUE was similar or slightly greater than ECOT (Fig. 1). There is no historical precedence for this. Recent catch rates in 2018 suggest improvement may be taking place, though participation is still low in terms of boat numbers. ~~If high catch rates continue, along with increased participation, then TSPF may need to look at an MEY target, rather than MSY.~~

There are a number of points that should be discussed by the TSPMAC, including what the overall financial goal of the fishery is moving forward, i.e to return GVP to historical levels or continue as usual, but minimize management cost.

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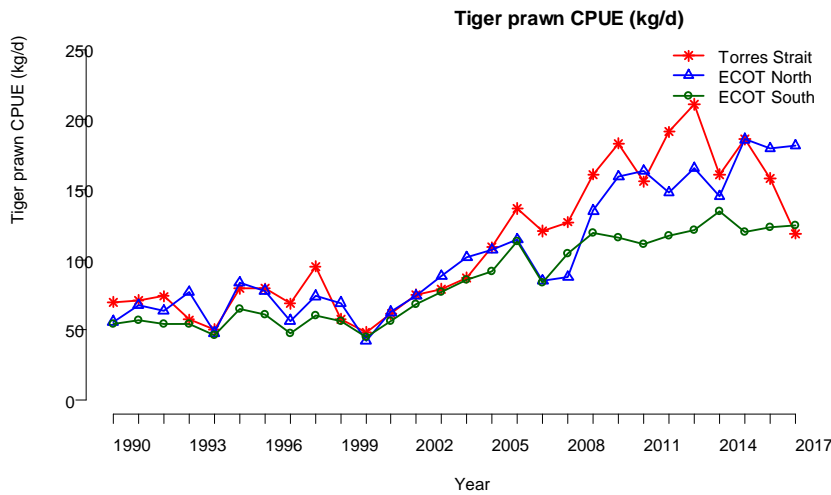


Figure 1. Comparison of tiger prawn CPUE (kg/boat/day) between the TSPF and the northern and southern sections of the tiger prawn sector of the ECOT fishery.

What is the goal for the fishery?

- Return GVP to historical levels?
- Continue as usual, but minimize management cost?

A variety of options are available to the fishery, including no action at all. The TSPMAC should also discuss a number of potential options for the fishery moving forward. These options are outlined briefly below, however will be discussed at the meeting.

Option 1e:

Do nothing

- Temporary lull in fishery relative to benefits of fishing in other fisheries
- ~~Current~~ Early 2018 catch rates higher than ever (low numbers of boats/effort still)

Option 1 - Consolidation into a shorter season (short (April opening) or very short (e.g. NPF)

- May mean increased support from mother shipping etc if more boats fish at the same time given shorter season (e.g. mothership, offloading, freezer space)
- Potentially higher stock levels for greater CPUE
- Crew availability

Option 3 - Expand fishery area?

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- Have prawn stocks moved?
- Is this even an option Are fishers searching widely
- Is low boat numbers limiting the above?

Option 4 - Be flexible regarding vessel size?

- e.g. Negotiate shorter season but flexible vessel size
- Is there any interest to increase activity by other operators (eg. NPF)?
 - Only two of fifty-two NPF boats are less than 20m (i.e. eligible to fish of the correct size to be able to fish in TSPF). If NPF boats wanted to fish in the fishery and were eligible it could open a market for leasing and sale of latent TSPF licences.

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Other options?

TORRES STRAIT PRAWN MANAGEMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE	Meeting No. 18 13-14 June 2018
MANAGEMENT 2018-19 Budget	Agenda Item No. 5.2

RECOMMENDATION

That the Torres Strait Prawn Management Advisory Committee (TSPMAC) **NOTES** the 2018-19 budget.

BACKGROUND

Attachment A is a comparative budget summary for the financial years 2017-18 and 2018-19. The budget has reduced marginally from last financial year by 1.3%.

AFMA normally consults the TSPMAC on the draft budget but mistakenly, this did not occur this year. AFMA consulted the Commonwealth Fisheries Association and a number of significant adjustments were found that reduced the budgets of some fisheries, including TSPF.

AFMA will endeavor to manage the TSPF budget carefully through 2018-19 with a view to returning any unspent money to industry. Final acquittal of expenditure against the 2017-18 budget is currently being made and AFMA expects there to be a modest underspend to offset against cost recovery for the 2018-19 budget.

Australian Fisheries Management Authority

Commonwealth Fishery Budget Comparison from 2017-18 to 2018-19

Torres Strait Prawn

Cost Recovery Summary By Output and Activity Group	2017-18 Budget	2018-19 Budget	Budget Variance	
			\$'s	%
A. Management of Domestic Commercial Fisheries				
Species and environmental management	30,559	40,959	10,400	34.0%
Risk Management	10,943	10,469	(473)	(4.3%)
Bycatch	12,062	10,168	(1,894)	(15.7%)
MAC & RAG	39,155	34,415	(4,740)	(12.1%)
Consultation and Engagement	6,695	4,402	(2,293)	(34.3%)
Strategy, Governance & Leadership	10,457	9,349	(1,107)	(10.6%)
	109,871	109,762	(109)	(0.1%)
B. Data Collection & Management				
Electronic Monitoring	-	-	-	-
Observers	82,059	41,700	(40,359)	(49.2%)
Vessel Monitoring	30,637	52,844	22,207	72.5%
Catch Disposal Records (CDRs)	-	-	-	-
Fishery-specific monitoring & data collection	-	-	-	-
Logbook Data	10,639	12,306	1,667	15.7%
Data Management	8,836	5,135	(3,701)	(41.9%)
	132,171	111,984	(20,187)	(15.3%)
C. Licensing Administration and Revenue Collection				
Licensing Administration and Revenue Collection	11,399	-	(11,399)	(100.0%)
Licensing Administration and Revenue Collection Systems	16,117	15,472	(645)	(4.0%)
	27,515	15,472	(12,043)	(43.8%)
D. Domestic Fisheries Compliance Enforcement				
Compliance and domestic illegal fishing	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-
E. Research				
Research Contract Administration	-	966	966	-
Research Projects	-	22,500	22,500	-
	-	23,466	23,466	-
F. Policy Support				
Policy	10,885	15,666	4,781	43.9%
	10,885	15,666	4,781	43.9%
G. Input into defining international treaty standards & developing regulation				
International relations	-	-	-	-
International capacity bldg	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-
H. Foreign Fisheries Compliance Enforcement & Capacity Building				
International illegal fishing	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-
I. Management of Traditional, Indigenous & Non-Commercial Fisheries				
Trad/Non Commercial Fisheries Mgt	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-
Total Expenditure	280,443	276,351	(4,092)	(1.5%)
Fee for Service	(11,724)	(11,060)	664	(5.7%)
Cost-recovered levy budget	268,719	265,291	(3,428)	(1.3%)