

31st Protected Zone Joint Authority Meeting

Meeting outcomes

Monday 1 (Wednesday 3*) April 2019

Teleconference

Welcome and Apologies

The Chair opened the 31st meeting of the Protected Zone Joint Authority (PZJA) 4:00pm AEDT. An attendance list is provided at [Attachment A](#).

1. Torres Strait Tropical Rock Lobster Fishery Harvest Strategy: Period for public comment

- 1.1. The PZJA **AGREED** to release the draft Harvest Strategy for the Torres Strait Tropical Rock Lobster (TRL) Fishery for public consultation for a period of 8 weeks
- 1.2. The PZJA **NOTED** the draft Harvest Strategy has been developed in close consultation with the PZJA TRL Resource Assessment Group (TRLRAG) and TRL Working Group (TRLWG) at meetings held since 2016. Releasing the draft Harvest Strategy for public consultation was supported at the most recent meetings of the TRLRAG and TRLWG (held on 5 February and 19-20 February 2019, respectively).
- 1.3. The PZJA **NOTED** the draft Harvest Strategy applies an empirical Harvest Control Rule (eHCR) to calculate a recommended biological catch annually in accordance with pre-agreed operational objectives, reference points and decision rules. A stock assessment will be conducted every three years to evaluate the performance of the eHCR.
- 1.4. The PZJA **NOTED** that the final Harvest Strategy, taking into consideration comments received during the public consultation period, will be presented to the PZJA for adoption later in 2019, with it intended for implementation for the 2019 20 fishing season of the TRL Fishery, commencing 1 December 2019.

2. Total Allowable Catch for Spanish mackerel and coral trout for the 2019-20 Fishing Season

- 2.1. The PZJA **DECIDED** that the Torres Strait Finfish Fishery Spanish mackerel Total Allowable Catch (TAC) will be 82 tonnes and the coral trout TAC will be 134.9 tonnes for the 2019-20 fishing season which commences on 1 July 2019.
- 2.2. The PZJA **NOTED** that the Finfish Resource Assessment Group (FRAG) met on 13-14 March 2019 and recommended:
 - a. a Recommended Biological Catch (RBC) for the Spanish mackerel Fishery for the 2019-20 fishing season of 94 tonnes;
 - b. that the best estimates of Spanish mackerel catches taken outside the Fishery are 10 tonnes for traditional (subsistence) fishing and 2 tonnes for recreational fishing (total 12 tonnes);
 - c. no change to the current coral trout TAC of 134.9 tonnes in light of the likely status of the stock and recent catches being substantially below the TAC.

- 2.3. The PZJA **NOTED** that the Finfish Working Group (FWG) met on 15 March 2019 to consider the FRAG advice, and recommended a Spanish mackerel TAC of 82 tonnes and coral trout TAC of 134.9 tonnes for the 2019-20 fishing season. The FWG noted that it would be appropriate to reconsider the coral trout TAC once a final harvest strategy is agreed for the Fishery and the stock assessment is further developed.
- 2.4. The PZJA **NOTED** that the recommended Spanish mackerel TAC is a reduction from the present 2018-19 season TAC of 115 tonnes. The reduced Spanish mackerel TAC is a precautionary response to address biomass decline and CPUE reductions observed in recent stock assessments, with the aim to minimise potential economic impacts on the Fishery. Further information on the basis for the RBC and TACs is provided in Attachment C of the relevant PZJA paper.
- 2.5. The PZJA **NOTED** that Spanish mackerel is a species for which catch-sharing arrangements can be agreed with Papua New Guinea (PNG) under the *Torres Strait Treaty 1985*. At the Fisheries Bilateral Committee meeting held on 4 March 2019 both Australia and PNG declined to enter into catch-sharing arrangements.
- 2.6. The PZJA **NOTED** that AFMA (as the PZJA delegate) will complete relevant administrative processes to implement the TACs for the Finfish Fishery for the 2019-20 fishing season, in particular:
- amending conditions on sunset licences with respect to individual catch allocations recommended to AFMA by the Torres Strait Regional Authority (TSRA) by varying the licence conditions under section 22 of the *Torres Strait Fisheries Act 1984*;
 - in agreeing the total catch to be allocated to sunset licences regard will be had to likely catches expected under Traditional Inhabitant boat (TIB) licences. TIB licences are not subject to catch limits in the Finfish Fishery; and
 - if required, additional measures will be developed to ensure catches do not exceed the agreed TACs.

3. Policy for developmental permits*

- 3.1. The PZJA **AGREED** to reconvene its meeting on Wednesday 3 April to allow members more time to consider recommendations in the PZJA decision paper for agenda item 3 relating to developing a Policy for developmental permits.

* The PZJA reconvened its meeting on Wednesday 3 April 2019 and met from 3:15pm to 3:25pm to consider the recommendations in the PZJA decision paper for agenda item 3 relating to developing a Policy for developmental permits.

- 3.2. The PZJA **AGREED** to the immediate development of a policy, in consultation with fishery stakeholders, for the granting of developmental permits in Torres Strait fisheries.
- 3.3. The PZJA **AGREED** that until a policy has been agreed by the PZJA, the PZJA will not consider a developmental permit application seeking an exemption of the policy for traditional inhabitant boat (TIB) vessels to be fully crewed and operated by traditional inhabitants.
- 3.4. The PZJA **AGREED** that developmental permits that do not seek an exemption to current TIB licensing policy may be considered by the PZJA on a case-by-case basis in the interim period.
- 3.5. The PZJA **AGREED** to issue a PZJA media release to announce the outcomes of this decision.

4. Consultation on removing the Western Line Closure

- 4.1. The PZJA **AGREED** to undertake public consultation on making a new Torres Strait Management Instrument under section 16 of the *Torres Strait Fisheries Act 1984* to replace the current *Torres Strait Fisheries Management Instrument No. 8 - Torres Strait Finfish Fishery*, noting that the new instrument will provide for the removal of a closure to commercial fishing for finfish west of Longitude 142°32'E (the Western Line Closure).
- 4.2. The PZJA **NOTED** that the Western Line Closure reflects a historic jurisdictional boundary that was carried over when the Finfish Fishery was transferred to single jurisdiction under the PZJA. The closure is not based on a specific management need for the Fishery.
- 4.3. The PZJA **NOTED** that the PZJA Finfish Resource Assessment Group advise that the removal of the Western Line Closure is unlikely to cause additional stock impacts and is supported by the PZJA Finfish Working Group.
- 4.4. The PZJA **NOTED** that in making a new instrument for the Finfish Fishery, current fishing gear restrictions on Australian Traditional Inhabitants engaged in traditional fishing for finfish in the area of the Torres Strait Finfish Fishery will need to be removed to reflect that the PZJA does not have jurisdiction to regulate traditional fishing.
- 4.5. The PZJA **NOTED** that outcomes of consultation will be provided to the PZJA for consideration together with a proposed new instrument.

5. Torres Strait Protected Zone Joint Authority (PZJA) Annual Report 2015-16

- 5.1. The PZJA **APPROVED** the *Torres Strait Protected Zone Joint Authority Annual Report 2015-16* for tabling in the Australian Parliament in accordance with Section 41 of the *Torres Strait Fisheries Act 1984*.
- 5.2. The PZJA **ENDORSED** the report by signing the signature page for inclusion in the final report.

6. TSRA Fisheries Regional Ownership Framework

- 6.1. The PZJA **NOTED** the current status of the TSRA project to establish an independent entity to manage community owned commercial fishery assets under the *Fisheries Regional Ownership Framework* project.
- 6.2. The PZJA **NOTED** the intention of the TSRA to transfer fishery assets and current functions for managing access to PZJA fisheries, which the TSRA currently manage on behalf of traditional inhabitants, to this entity once established.

7. TSRA Fisheries Roadmap to 100 per cent ownership

- 7.1. The PZJA **NOTED** the community consultation outcomes on the draft *Roadmap to 100 per cent Ownership of Torres Strait Commercial Fisheries by Torres Strait Islander and Aboriginal Traditional Owners and Communities*.
- 7.2. The PZJA **NOTED** that the TSRA previously agreed to work with other PZJA agencies to revise the exposure draft of the Roadmap based on comments received, but now intends to significantly refocus the Roadmap into a more activity orientated public reporting and monitoring framework.
- 7.3. The PZJA **NOTED** that the TSRA will continue to lead on the development of the Roadmap, and will seek PZJA Standing Committee consideration on a draft at a future date.

8. Torres Strait Beche-de-mer Fishery Harvest Strategy: Period for public comment

- 8.1. The PZJA **AGREED** to release the draft Harvest Strategy for the Torres Strait Beche-de-mer Fishery for public consultation for a period of eight weeks.

- 8.2. The PZJA **NOTED** that the draft Harvest Strategy has been developed in consultation with the PZJA Hand Collectables Working Group and a number of broader industry representatives at meetings and workshops since 2016.
- 8.3. The PZJA **NOTED** that the draft Harvest Strategy applies a tiered, hierarchical approach which accounts for understanding that more data and information reduces the risk to a resource and reduces the need for precautionary management to achieve the operational objectives of the harvest strategy. Each tier applies a range of pre-agreed decision rules (harvest control rules) that guide advice on changes to Total Allowable Catches (TACs) for a species or species group (species basket) depending on available data.
- 8.4. The PZJA **NOTED** the final Harvest Strategy, taking into consideration comments received during the public consultation period, will be presented to the PZJA for adoption later in 2019.

Close

The Chair closed the meeting at 4:15pm AEDT.

NB: The PZJA reconvened its meeting on Wednesday 3 April 2019 and met from 3:15pm to 3:25pm to consider the recommendations in the PZJA decision paper for agenda item 3 relating to developing a Policy for developmental permits (see item 3 above).

Meeting attendance

1 April 2019

PZJA members

Chair

- Senator the Hon. Richard Colbeck, Assistant Minister for Agriculture and Water Resources

Member

- Mr Napau Pedro Stephen AM, Chair Torres Strait Regional Authority
- Ms Bernadette Ditchfield, A/Executive Assistant to Deputy Director-General, Fisheries and Forestry, as Deputy for The Hon. Mark Furner MP, Queensland Minister for Agricultural Industry Development and Fisheries

Government Delegations

Australian Fisheries Management Authority

- Ms Anna Willock, Ag/Chief Executive Officer
- Mr Steve Bolton, Senior Manager, Northern Fisheries and Co-management
- Ms Selina Stoute, Manager, Thursday Island
- Mr Steve Hall, Senior Management Officer

Queensland Government Department of Agriculture and Fisheries

- Ms Bernadette Ditchfield, A/Executive Assistant to Deputy Director-General, Fisheries and Forestry (as Deputy for The Hon. Mark Furner MP, Queensland Minister for Agricultural Industry Development and Fisheries)

Torres Strait Regional Authority

- Stan Lui, Ag/Chief Executive Officer
- Mark Anderson, Manager, Fisheries Program

Office of Senator the Hon. Richard Colbeck

- Mr Matthew Flood, Advisor – Fisheries

Apologies

PZJA member

The Hon. Mark Furner MP, Queensland Minister for Agricultural Industry Development and Fisheries

3 April 2019

PZJA members

Chair

- Senator the Hon. Richard Colbeck, Assistant Minister for Agriculture and Water Resources

Member

- Mr Napau Pedro Stephen AM, Chair Torres Strait Regional Authority
- Ms Bernadette Ditchfield, A/Executive Assistant to Deputy Director-General, Fisheries and Forestry, as Deputy for The Hon. Mark Furner MP, Queensland Minister for Agricultural Industry Development and Fisheries

Attachment A

Government Delegations

Australian Fisheries Management Authority

- Ms Anna Willock, Ag/Chief Executive Officer
- Mr Steve Bolton, Senior Manager, Northern Fisheries and Co-management
- Ms Selina Stoute, Manager, Thursday Island
- Mr Steve Hall, Senior Management Officer

Queensland Government Department of Agriculture and Fisheries

- Ms Bernadette Ditchfield, A/Executive Assistant to Deputy Director-General, Fisheries and Forestry (as Deputy for The Hon. Mark Furner MP, Queensland Minister for Agricultural Industry Development and Fisheries)

Torres Strait Regional Authority

- Mark Anderson, Manager, Fisheries Program

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- Mr Matthew Flood, Advisor – Fisheries

Apologies

PZJA member

The Hon. Mark Furner MP, Queensland Minister for Agricultural Industry Development and Fisheries

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Torres Strait Regional Authority

- Stan Lui, Ag/Chief Executive Officer