

PROTECTED ZONE JOINT AUTHORITY

GUIDELINES FOR THE VESSEL MONITORING SYSTEMS (VMS) REQUIREMENTS WITHIN THE TORRES STRAIT PRAWN FISHERY

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Prepared by the Australian Fisheries Management Authority (AFMA) on behalf of the
Protected Zone Joint Authority (PZJA)

These VMS guidelines are published on **08 October 2024** by the PZJA and apply to the
Torres Strait Prawn Fishery from that date until 28 days after new VMS guidelines are
published.

These Guidelines are in force under paragraph 5.6(1)(a) of the *Torres Strait Prawn Fishery
Management Plan 2009*.

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1. Acronyms/Definitions

For the purposes of this document:

AFMA	Australian Fisheries Management Authority
ALC	Automatic Location Communicator
DoA	Commonwealth Department of Agriculture and Water Resources
FMP	Fisheries Management Paper
MTU	Mobile Transceiver Unit
PZJA	Protected Zone Joint Authority
QDAF	Queensland Department of Agriculture and Fisheries
the Plan	<i>Torres Strait Prawn Fishery Management Plan 2009</i>
TSPF	Torres Strait Prawn Fishery
TSPMAC	Torres Strait Prawn Management Advisory Committee
TSPZ	Torres Strait Protected Zone
VMS	Vessel Monitoring System - A satellite based, near real time, positional tracking system for monitoring the location of vessels equipped with the appropriate technology

2. Purpose

These guidelines set out the PZJA policy on the requirements for the operation of Vessel Monitoring System (VMS) equipment and reporting requirements for the Torres Strait Prawn Fishery (TSPF).

3. Introduction

The primary use of VMS in the TSPF is to provide an efficient automated mechanism for monitoring (counting) fishing days held by each TSPF licence holder, and to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the compliance program through monitoring and assessing the position of vessels in the Torres Strait. VMS also provides up-to-date effort data, which PZJA agencies can use, along with other data sets such as catch reports, to assess trends in fishing activity.

The VMS function for the TSPF is administered by the Australian Fisheries Management Authority (AFMA) on behalf of the PZJA. Licence holders are sent a "Torres Strait Prawn

Fishery Use of Fishing Days” statement by AFMA on behalf of the PZJA each month to assist operators in monitoring the number of fishing days which remain for a given season.

4. PZJA VMS installation and maintenance standards

4.1. *Installation*

The license holder and/or vessel operator must ensure the VMS unit is correctly installed, configured and maintained by a certified marine technician suitably qualified to carry out installation in accordance with the recommended manufacturer guidelines.

4.2. *Approved Satellite Transceivers*

AFMA maintains a list of approved VMS units, that are permitted for use in PZJA fisheries, which is routinely updated via its website:

<http://www.afma.gov.au/fisheries-services/vessel-monitoring/>

Concession holders must reference this list when selecting a VMS unit for installation. When a (new) unit is installed, concession holders will need to complete a 'tracking authorisation' form which is available on the AFMA website at:

<https://www.afma.gov.au/monitoring-tools/vessel-monitoring-systems/national-vms-vessel-tracking-authorisation-form>

Depending on experience or specific requirements for a particular fishery, the VMS requirements outlined in this document may be changed by AFMA in order to accommodate the future integration of new and emerging VMS technology.

4.3. Continuous Operation

The holder of a TSPF boat licence or a TSPF treaty endorsement must ensure that a VMS unit is fitted to the boat that is installed and maintained in accordance with methods set out within these Guidelines.

The VMS unit, also known as the Automatic Location Communication or Mobile Transceiver Unit (ALC/MTU) must be operational at all times unless arrangements have been entered into with the PZJA (AFMA) in writing or manual position reporting is authorised as a result of a unit failure.

4.4. Malfunctioning or Broken Units and Manual Reporting

If the boat is in port and the ALC is not operating or malfunctioning the boat must not leave port until the ALC is functioning in accordance with the PZJA specifications. Further, the VMS unit, including the antenna and cabling, must not be altered, damaged, disabled or tampered with.

If a unit malfunctions while at sea, the master or operator may be granted permission to report their position manually by the PZJA.

Please refer to the manual reporting fact sheet below for details around when manual reporting is permitted, and the requirements.

[Manual Reporting Procedure Factsheet](#)

4.5. Applying for an Exemption from reporting via the VMS

An operator may apply for permission for a temporary switch off of a VMS unit under specific circumstances:

1. A TSO will only be granted where a vessel has a VMS unit installed which has been polling for AFMA.

2. TSOs will not be issued for vessels without a continuously operational VMS unit polling for AFMA.
 3. A TSO may be granted to a concession holder in cases where:
 - a. A nominated vessel is undergoing maintenance or repair-type activity and electrical equipment on board this vessel is required to be shut down.
 - b. A nominated vessel is not undertaking any fishing activity and this vessel is in an extended berth at a single port.
 - c. A nominated vessel is in circumstances which make continual operation of the VMS impractical and AFMA deems it necessary, on a case-by-case basis.
- A fact sheet detailing requirements and methods for applying for a temporary switch off is available here: [TSO Fact Sheet](#).

4.6 Allocated fishing days and VMS detection

Licence holders are sent a 'Torres Strait Prawn Fishery Use of Fishing Days' statement by the PZJA each month. The statement lists the fishing days recorded as "fished" for that month. If a licence holder considers that a fishing day should not have been recorded as "fished" for their boat for any of the days listed, they should submit evidence to demonstrate that the boat was not fishing on that particular day.

To avoid delays in processing such applications, they should be lodged as soon as possible after receiving the notice. These applications are subject to the decision of the PZJA delegate. Licence holders should not use a trawl fishing day on the presumption that such an application will be successful. A day remains "fished" until the Delegate has made a decision.

If a licence holder uses fishing days in excess of those held, compliance action may be taken. It is the operators' responsibility to monitor daily usage.