



Australian Government

Australian Fisheries Management Authority

Torres Strait Prawn Fishery

Bycatch and Discarding Workplan

2024–2029

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1 Introduction

1.1 Background

The *Torres Strait Prawn Fishery Bycatch and Discarding Workplan* will detail a program of actions to address priority bycatch issues in accordance with legislative and policy responsibilities.

An objective of the *Torres Strait Prawn Fishery Management Plan 2009* is to develop an Environmental Management Strategy (EMS) that includes a bycatch reduction strategy (now referred to as a Bycatch and Discarding Workplan). This strategy will support the Protected Zone Joint Authority (PZJA) to ensure that:

- information is gathered about the impact of the TSPF on bycatch
- all reasonable steps are taken to avoid incidental interactions with Threatened, Endangered and Protected Species; and
- bycatch levels and impacts on the ecosystem are sustainable and consistent with legislative requirements.

There are five guiding principles that AFMA uses to identify issues and to minimise and avoid general bycatch and bycatch of protected species for Commonwealth fisheries. These are outlined in the AFMA Bycatch Strategy 2017–22. Although Commonwealth policies do not apply to PZJA-managed fisheries, AFMA strives to follow these where suitable, and where they align with PZJA fishery legislative objectives.

Five guiding principles for identifying bycatch issues:

Principle 1. Management responses are proportionate to the conservation status of bycatch species and Ecological Risk Assessment results.

Principle 2. Consistency with Government Policy and legislative objectives (including to avoid and minimise) and existing national protected species management strategies such as the threat abatement plan and national plans of action.

Principle 3. Incentives should encourage industry-led solutions to minimise bycatch of protected species utilising an individual accountability approach.

Principle 4. Accounting for cumulative impact of Commonwealth Fisheries on protected species when making management decisions on mitigation.

Principle 5. Appropriate and consistent monitoring and reporting arrangements across fisheries.

The Bycatch Workplan outlines the management actions that the PZJA aims to achieve by 2029 in response to bycatch and discarding of species of high ecological risk in the Torres Strait Prawn Fishery (TSPF).

1.2 Supporting documents

This Workplan only forms part of the PZJA's management response under the broader Ecological Risk Assessment (ERA) framework, and should be read in conjunction with:

- *Torres Strait Prawn Fishery Management Plan 2009*
- Environmental sustainability assessment update for habitats, assemblages and bycatch species in the Torres Strait Prawn Fishery
- Commonwealth Policy on Fisheries Bycatch
- AFMA's program for addressing bycatch and discarding in Commonwealth fisheries – an implementation strategy.

1.3 Fishery snapshot

The TSPF is located between the tip of Cape York and Papua New Guinea. It consists of over 100 islands and many more reefs. Eighteen of the islands are inhabited. The fishery is managed by the Torres Strait PZJA, established under the *Torres Strait Fisheries Act 1984*. Currently, all licenses in this fishery are held by the non-Indigenous Transferable Vessel Holder (TVH) sector.

The TSPF is managed through the *Torres Strait Prawn Fishery Management Plan 2009* using a series of input controls, including a limit on the number of boat licenses and tradable fishing nights combined with other restrictions on gear and vessel characteristics (DAFF, 2009). Brown Tiger Prawns are the main species targeted in the fishery followed by Blue Endeavour prawns. Red Spot King Prawns are essentially a by-product species. The commercial catch is also made up of a number of other by-product species which include finfish, cephalopods, crabs, scallops. Catch of these species is minimal.

The fishery adopted the Torres Strait Prawn Fishery Harvest Strategy in 2011 (AFMA, 2011), which was updated in 2024. The Harvest Strategy defines a set of trigger, target and limit reference points based on catch rates (catch per unit of effort) for tiger prawns, and outlines decision rules for each of the triggers. Triggers have been set at a conservative level, considered to be in alignment with the estimated Maximum Economic Yield for the fishery. The harvest strategy provides for revision and update when necessary to reflect any changes in activity and increased fishing effort.

More information on the fishery can be found in the *Torres Strait Prawn Fishery Management Arrangements Booklet* available on the PZJA website.

The first Bycatch Action Plan was developed in 1999 to address growing public concern regarding prawn trawl operations and in recognition of initiatives being undertaken in adjacent trawl fisheries. The second Bycatch Action Plan followed in 2005, incorporating any changes regarding management of bycatch species.

Over this time, the Fishery has achieved significant milestones in the management of bycatch, including the implementation of trawl exclusion zones in various areas of the TSPF since 2008, as well as the

introduction of mandatory turtle exclusion devices (TED) and bycatch reduction devices (BRD) in 2002 and 2004 respectively. During the last iteration of the plan, the following objectives were achieved:

- Gear surveys to determine which BRDs were being used in the fishery.
- Trials of new BRDs, and updates to legislation introducing more effective and removing less effective BRDs ([Federal Register of Legislation – Torres Strait Prawn Fishery \(Bycatch Reduction Devices\) Instrument 2024](#)).
- Turtle Excluder Device legislation was updated to ensure consistency with United States legislation to support export approval and improve effectiveness of devices.
- Targeted biannual (approximately) surveys of Turtle Excluder devices in port.
- Communications with licence holders to remind them of the importance of reporting TEP species through their logbooks.
- Update of the TSPF sustainability assessment in 2011, which noted that all assessed risks to species were negligible at current low effort. More information is in section 2 below.

1.4 Workplan objectives

The key objectives of this Workplan for 2024–29 are:

- Improve reporting of bycatch and TEP interactions.
- Explore methods to gain a better understanding of any seasnake hotspots in the fishery or at certain times of day or year.
- Fishing operations take all reasonable steps to avoid the mortality of, or injury to, species listed under the EPBC Act, with particular focus on sea snakes.
- Improve mitigation measures to reduce interactions with TEP species.
- Avoid and/or minimise interactions with general bycatch species.
- Investigate and implement options, where feasible, to improve understanding of bycatch compositions across the fishery by species, area and season.
- Improve the reporting of incidental TRL take in the TSPF.
- Improve understanding of possible ongoing habitat impacts from trawling.

The following projects and management actions have been or will continue to be undertaken in pursuit of the above objectives over the period of this Workplan. The proposed management actions will focus on developing and implementing cost-effective strategies to pursue continual improvement in bycatch reduction, fill critical information gaps about ‘at risk’ bycatch species, or about bycatch and discarding more generally. These strategies will be incorporated into a more strategic approach to the management of bycatch and discarding within the fishery. During the annual review of the Workplan, further research priorities and projects can be added if consistent with the overall aim of the Workplan and there is a capacity to fund any further projects.

2 Ecological Risk Assessment

2.1 Process

In moving towards Ecosystem Based Fisheries Management, the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO) undertake ERAs for all AFMA-managed fisheries. ERA proceeds through four stages of analysis: scoping; an expert judgement-based Level 1 analysis (SICA – Scale Intensity Consequence Analysis); an empirically based Level 2 analysis (PSA – Productivity Susceptibility Analysis); and a model-based Level 3 analysis. This hierarchical approach provides a cost-efficient way of screening hazards, with increasing time and attention paid only to those hazards that are not eliminated at lower levels in the analysis. Risk management responses may be identified at any level in the analysis and result in a list of species that are at high risk to the effects of fishing of which AFMA should focus management attention.

The level 1 analysis has been undertaken in the TSPF. AFMA has not applied the SAFE method to the TSPF due to the current low level of effort in the fishery and the relatively high cost of such assessments. Nevertheless, an alternative sustainability risk assessment has been completed for the TSPF for 2005 (“Torres Strait Seabed Mapping and Characterisation Project”, Pitcher et al 2007 or “sustainability assessment”), which provides an analogous approach and equivalently effective quantitative level 3 outputs.

2.2 Sustainability assessment

In 2005, the CSIRO undertook a project looking at the effects of trawling on seabed habitats, species and assemblages in the TSPF (Pitcher, 2011). This project was reviewed in 2011 by overlaying maps of seabed habitats, species and assemblages from the previous project with a summary of the 2011 effort data for the fishery. This has provided updated information on the potential impact that the TSPF may have on non-target species giving consideration to current levels and pattern of effort.

The 2005 study found that a few species were at risk from trawling in the TSPF. The 2011 review found that the risks identified in 2005 were now minimal given the current low level of effort in the fishery.

Effort in 2005 (6,957 days) was just above the Australian effort cap of 6,867 nights (introduced in 2006). This effort level is more than four-times greater than when the assessment was repeated in 2011 (1,663 days) and found minimal risk to species at current effort levels.

Since 2017, fishing effort in the TSPF has been less than 1350 days, except in 2018 and 2019 when it was 2135 and 2652 consecutively. In 2023, effort was only 827 days. Advice in 2011, with the last assessment, was that no future assessment was critical while effort in the fishery remained so low. Given effort even less than the 2011 assessment levels, which already showed minimal risk to bycatch, AFMA does not plan to complete a new sustainability assessment unless effort increases.

2.3 Threatened, endangered and protected species

Under the EPBC Act, there is an obligation to ensure the protection of native species and, in particular, prevent the extinction of, and promote the recovery of, threatened species. Consequently, AFMA develops measures to mitigate interactions for all threatened, endangered and protected (TEP) species regardless of their risk level under the ERA framework.

The TSPF interacts with several groups of TEP species including sea snakes, turtles, syngnathids, dugongs and sawfish. Seasnake bycatch represents the largest number of individuals captured in the TSPF. A summary of TEP species interactions is detailed in Table 1.

Table 1. Summary of TEP species interactions for 2021–2023.

Year	2021			2022			2023		
<i>Life Status</i>	Dead	Alive	Unknown	Dead	Alive	Unknown	Dead	Alive	Unknown
Turtle					1			1	
Sawfish		1	1					4	
Syngnathids									1
Seasnakes	32	119	203		53	150	10	143	711

Six of the seven existing species of marine turtle are found in Australian waters, including the Loggerhead turtle, Green turtle, Hawksbill turtle, Olive Ridley turtle, Flatback turtle and Leatherback turtle. These species are vulnerable to local depletion and therefore bycatch reduction is vital for the long-term viability of these species. Turtle mitigation has been largely addressed through mandatory use of Turtle Excluder Devices (TEDs) in the TSPF (see section 4).

3 Species of Interest

Management of all fisheries in the Torres Strait is pursued under the objectives and framework of the Torres Strait Treaty. The treaty is concerned with the sovereignty and maritime boundaries in the area between Australia and Papua New Guinea and the protection of the way of life and livelihood of traditional inhabitants and the marine environment. In this context, the traditional inhabitant members of the Torres Strait Prawn Management Advisory Committee (TSPMAC) and the Torres Strait Regional Authority (TSRA) have compiled a list of species which are significant to the traditional inhabitants of the Torres Strait and at risk of interaction with fishing efforts within the TSPF (Table 2). Observers collect information

on the take of these species, and this information is provided to the TSPMAC. The TSPMAC discuss whether any management action is recommended depending on the catches.

Table 2. Species of interest compiled by the traditional inhabitants of the Torres Strait Prawn Management Advisory Committee and the Torres Strait Regional Authority.

Caab Code	Scientific names	Common Names	Traditional names
37 381002	<i>Mugil cephalus</i>	Sea Mullet	THURUD WAP
37 438010	<i>Siganus lineatus</i>	Goldlined Rabbitfish	PARASA
37 384010	<i>Choerodon Schoenleinii</i>	Black spot Tusk Fish / Parrot fish	BILLA
37 311040	<i>Epinephelus quoyanus</i>	Gold Spot Rockcod / Long fin rockcod	THUKUM
37 350017	<i>Plectorhinchus chrysotaenia</i>	Painted Sweetlip / Goldlined Sweetlips	KWIKUMUK
37 350003	<i>Diagramma labiosum</i>	Painted Sweetlip / Slatey Bream	PECOO
37 311045	<i>Cephalopholis sonnerati</i>	Tomato Cod	PELIT
37 437008	<i>Acanthurus dussumieri</i>	Pencil Surgeonfish	SABAI
37 437031	<i>Naso unicornis</i>	Bluespine Unicornfish	EEBAI
28 820006	<i>Panulirus ornatus</i>	Ornate rocklobster	

4 Current Measures Addressing Bycatch

4.1 Gear requirements

- There are a range of minimum and maximum mesh size requirements in order to reduce risk of species entanglement, and support escapement of bycatch through bycatch reduction devices.
- There are maximum ground chain and weight requirements to reduce impacts on the benthos.
- Mandatory use of TEDs and BRDs (see below).

4.2 Bycatch reduction devices and turtle excluder devices

The use of TEDs and BRDs is known to reduce the volume of bycatch taken in fisheries. Since they were introduced in 2002, TEDs have proven most successful in the reduction of large bycatch species including turtles, sharks and rays. The prevention of large animals from entering the codend greatly enhances their chance of survival, reduces damage to the prawns and sorting time, and minimises the risk to deck crew from being bitten, stung or injured. Within the TSPF, the introduction of TEDs has reduced interactions with turtles from 500–600 (Robins, 1993) each fishing season to less than 4 turtles each season since 2016. Of these recorded interactions since 2016, there have been no recorded turtle deaths since 2002. BRDs have also been mandated for the fishery to reduce the volume of fish bycatch.

4.3 Temporal and spatial closures

The TSPF is subject to temporal and spatial closures. These have been initiated for various reasons, including protection of juvenile prawns (seasonal closure from 1 December to 31 July each year), protection of pearl shell beds and protection of breeding population of marine turtles (temporal closures). The spatial and temporal management regime reduces the area and time available for fishing generally, thereby protecting critical habitats and providing sanctuary for a number of species. Protecting the diversity of complex seagrass beds, reef communities and the epibenthos that they support, has significantly reduced the footprint of the fishery and its impact on the ecology of the area.

With the implementation of the management plan in 2009, some of the closures were changed to being excluded from the defined fishery area. Given the importance of these closures and no plans to change them, excluding them from the fishery was a more committed option for closing these areas to fishing permanently. A seasonal (temporal) closure (0600 hours local time on 1 December and 1700 hours local time on 1 February the following year) to trawling for the entire fishery also limits the impact of the fishery on bycatch.

4.4 Fishing effort

Although a reduction in fishing effort is not an active and mandated bycatch management effort, lower effort in the fishery directly reduces risks to bycatch species and the ecosystem (see section 2.2). The total allowable effort for Australian licence holders is 6,867 fishing days. The total percentage of Australia's allocated fishing days used annually since 2019 has been less than 50% each fishing season.

Since 2017, less than 20% of Australian effort has been fished each season, except in 2018 and 2019 when it was 31% and 39% consecutively. In 2023, only 12% of the Australian allocated effort was fished, the lowest year on record. The decrease in fishing effort is largely a result of economic pressures of operating in a remote fishery, given tiger prawn catch rates are at historical highs indicating a healthy stock.

5 Bycatch Reduction Workplan

The updated bycatch and discard workplan for 2024–2029 includes largely new actions, which streamline past interactions, and bring a strong focus on collecting more information on bycatch species interactions. Table 3 shows the new bycatch and discard workplan for the fishery, and Table 4 shows the progress that occurred against the previous bycatch and discard workplan.

Table 3. TSPF bycatch and discard workplan for 2024–2029. The workplan includes objectives, the risks being addressed by the objective and performance indicators for measuring progress against the objectives, and actions for working towards the objectives.

Objective	Risks being addressed	Performance indicator	Actions
Improve reporting of bycatch and TEP interactions.	Possible underreporting of interactions with threatened, endangered, and protected (TEP) species and general bycatch.		Data collected through observer program (2.6% of actual effort coverage with scientific observers) and logbooks. TSPMAC to discuss methods for improving reporting of ETP species interactions. Update seasnake ID guide and provided to licence holders to improve species level ID. Work with Fisheries Queensland to consider any collaboration to increase exposure of Torres Strait licence holders to their Endangered, Threatened and Protected Species training programs. Consider suitability of rolling out similar methods for reporting sea snakes (photos) as being trialled in the Fisheries Queensland trial Crew Member Observer program.

Objective	Risks being addressed	Performance indicator	Actions
			Contact active TSPF fishers by phone or a video conference to remind licence holders of requirements for reporting ETP species and risks for not doing so (other measure that may need to be implemented without improved reporting such as e-monitoring).
Fishing operations take all reasonable steps to avoid the mortality of, or injury to, species listed under the EPBC Act, with particular focus on sea snakes.	Interactions with seasnakes and other TEP species.	Ongoing collaboration with Queensland Fisheries regarding transition of TSPF fleet to newly introduced BRDs (2024), noting dual endorsed boats require matching arrangements between fisheries. Continue to monitor gear advances and research in the Northern Prawn Fishery and Queensland ECOTF and adopt new measures to avoid and/or minimize interactions with high-risk species where appropriate. Increased uptake of newly approved BRDs (2024 legislative instrument). Understanding of hopper use in the TSPF and improved uptake by industry.	Update seasnake handling guide in TSPF management arrangement booklet. During this process, consider recent research into sea snake identification occurring in Western Australia which is reviewing identification of and handling safety for sea snakes. Attempt consistency in the handling guide across jurisdictions (TSPF, NPF and QECOTF). Consider development of Industry guidelines code of conduct for responsible handling of bycatch, particularly ETP species. Work with other jurisdictions where feasible to ensure consistency between fisheries. (particularly the Qld ECOTF). Active fishers to complete annual gear surveys to support understanding of which BRDs are being used. Review number of licence holders using hoppers and promoting their use for ETP species protection and improving prawn

Objective	Risks being addressed	Performance indicator	Actions
			catch quality. Undertake education for promotion of hopper use. AFMA compliance continue to take gear, BRD and TED measurements to ensure compliance with minimum standards. Annual review (including TSPMAC discussion) of progress on research and technology and management advances in the NPF and Qld ECOTF including: • ECOTF BRD trials • ECOTF bycatch handling education programs • NPF seasnake electronic monitoring research • NPF BRD research and advances. Continue regular TED accreditation with the US, thus meeting world best practice standards.
Improve mitigation measures to reduce interactions with TEP species.	Interactions with seasnakes and other TEP species.	Ongoing collaboration with Queensland Fisheries regarding transition of TSPF fleet to new BRDs, noting dual endorsed boats require matching arrangements between fisheries. Continue to monitor gear advances and research in the Northern Prawn	All TSPF operators reporting interactions with seasnakes. Where possible, all species identified to species level, noting this may not be possible with high catch trawl shots. Monitor uptake of new approved BRDs through annual gear surveys.

Objective	Risks being addressed	Performance indicator	Actions
		Fishery and Queensland ECOTF and adopt new measures to avoid and/or minimize interactions with bycatch where appropriate. Increased uptake of newly approved BRDs (2024 legislative instrument).	Review number of licence holders using hoppers and promoting their use for TEP protection and improving prawn catch quality. Consider developing industry code of conduct regarding bycatch interactions.
Avoid and/or minimise interactions with general bycatch species.	General bycatch.	Ongoing collaboration with Queensland Fisheries regarding transition of TSPF fleet to new BRDs, noting dual endorsed boats require matching arrangements between fisheries. Continue to monitor gear advances and research in the Northern Prawn Fishery and Queensland ECOTF and adopt new measures to avoid and/or minimize interactions with bycatch where appropriate. Increased uptake of newly approved BRDs (2024 legislative instrument).	Consider developing industry code of conduct regarding bycatch interactions. Active fishers report which BRDs are used via annual gear survey. AFMA compliance continue to take gear, BRD and TED measurements to ensure compliance with minimum standards. Provide information to industry, on avenues for industry to trial new BRD technology through a scientific permit. TSPMAC to consider opportunities for utilisation of certain species of bycatch.

Objective	Risks being addressed	Performance indicator	Actions
		Fisher compliance with minimum gear standards.	
Investigate and implement options, where feasible, to improve understanding of bycatch compositions across the fishery by species, area and season.		Data collection and monitoring in place for general bycatch through independent scientific observer program and analysis undertaken as required.	Independent scientific observers collect data on catch compositions (ongoing). Identify options to improve understanding of catch compositions across the fishery for consideration by TSPMAC.
Improve the reporting of incidental TRL take in the TSPF.	No reporting of incidental take of TRL species, despite voluntary reporting being requested from the 2023 fishing season.	Increased reporting of TRL in NP16 logbooks. Implementation of new measures to support logbook reporting of TRL.	Review logbook data to monitor the voluntary reporting of TRL in logbooks. Consider whether more strict reporting requirements should be introduced such as mandated reporting of incidental take (and discarding) of TRL. Undertake additional education around the importance of reporting incidental catches of TRL, including during any port inspections.
Improve understanding of possible ongoing habitat impacts from trawling.	Impacts on trawling on habitat.	Review of Queensland methods for monitoring trawl footprints using VMS. AFMA to consider costs and benefits of an assessment of trawl footprint in the TSPF as a	Review of Queensland methods for monitoring trawl footprints using VMS. AFMA to consider costs and benefits of an assessment of trawl footprint in the TSPF as

Objective	Risks being addressed	Performance indicator	Actions
		mechanism for understanding changes to the fleets trawl footprint.	a mechanism for understanding changes to the fleets trawl footprint.

Table 4. Progress against past objectives in the Bycatch and Discards workplan 2015–2017.

Objective	Risks being addressed	Milestones	Performance Indicators	Progress
Get a better understanding of the current BRDs used in the TSPF, and improve the uptake of the most effective BRDs. Clarify gear specifications in the relevant legislative instruments and review and streamline the TSPF gear legislation.	Potential use of less effective BRDs and TEDs than are best practice. Compliance with minimum gear standards (align with US standards). Industry understanding and compliance with gear regulations. Inconsistency in regulations between similar fisheries	Permitted gear types complied with. Improved compliance rates with gear regulations.	Removal of any outdated BRDs from the fishery (September 2015). Increased use of the most effective BRDs in the fishery Review minimum gear standards (i.e. align TEDs with US standards). Simplify legislation. Update the TSPF gear legislation.	A gear survey was completed to understand which BRDs were being used by active operators. Trials of the Tom’s fisheye over 3 fishing seasons on 3 different boats were completed. Amendments were made to the list of allowable BRDs in the TSPF to remove the less effective v-cut flap, square mesh codend, square mesh panel and radial escape panel and introduce the Tom’s Fisheye, FishX, KCF. Changes were also made to the specifications of the standard Fisheye BRD and Bigeye BRDs to align them with Queensland East Coast Otter Trawl Fishery (QECOTF) specifications, and changes to the Popeye Fishbox to require installation at 70 meshes. A new BRD instrument was approved by the PZJA in March 2024 to implement the changes to allowable BRDs including aligning requirements between the TSPF and QECOTF.

Objective	Risks being addressed	Milestones	Performance Indicators	Progress
				The legislative instrument relating to gear (Turtle Excluder Devices) for the TSPF was updated in 2017, to ensure the requirements for TEDs were aligned with the US standards for floats. Previously certain floats were allowed which were not in alignment with US standards.
Continue to improve the quality of scientific data collected by scientific observers.				The scientific observer program continues to operate, and the observer team complete periodic reviews of data collection procedures to ensure best practice.
Reduce the risk to key high priority species, TEPs and species of interest in the TSPF.				This objective was pursued through review of the BRDs for the fishery. Seasnakes are the TEP species that are most interacted with in the TSPF, and the newly introduced BRDs have found to be more effective at reducing seasnake bycatch. Observer data has shown very little interactions with species of interest (Table 2).
Provide protection for areas that are important habitat for vulnerable species of marine life.				A number of closures are already in place in the TSPF that support this objective: • West of warrior reef exclusion zone, protecting important TRL fishing grounds. • Deliverance, Kerr and Turu exclusion zones protecting Turtle nesting areas and seagrass beds.

Objective	Risks being addressed	Milestones	Performance Indicators	Progress
				No further progress was pursued during the last plan. Because prawn trawling occurs in the same areas, and occurs on sandy bottom with little substrate (no coral etc) over and over, risks to habitats may be lower than in other fisheries and methods.
Improve reporting of bycatch and TEP interactions.				AFMA sent a letter to licence holders reminding them of the requirement to report interactions with TEP species. The TSPMAC also discussed at its last meeting, ideas around trying to introduce Torres Strait community observers that may be able to collect data on TEP and species of interest. This action didn't progress to date due to COVID-19. The TSPMAC should discuss this options relevance again at this meeting.
If catch/effort increases to within trigger limits as described in the Harvest Strategy then a review of moderate/high risk ERA species will be undertaken.	Risk to bycatch species found as moderate/high risk through the ERA process.	Monitor catch and effort triggers. Review of high risk ERA species undertaken within AFMA and management options discussed by TSPMAC if triggers are reached.	If triggers are reached, TSPMAC recommendation is made regarding necessary management actions for moderate/high risk species.	Triggers have never been reached with the TSPF HS, meaning effort has remained low, therefore keeping risk to other species lower than if the fishery was operating at a higher capacity. The sustainability assessment was updated for the fishery in 2011, which noted that all assessed risks were negligible at current low effort. The report also noted that should the fishery effort increase in future, it is likely that some management action may be required to ensure sustainability of all bycatch and benthos. An increase in effort has not yet occurred.

6 Data and Research

6.1 Monitoring programs

The monitoring program in the TSPF is implemented through logbooks and observer coverage to record bycatch and interactions with endangered, threatened and protected species. The observer program aims to observe 2.6% of the actual days fished in a given year. Because we cannot be certain of the fishing days that will be achieved, this percentage is higher in some years and lower in others.

In 2023, 824 days of fishing effort were recorded with 29 days observer coverage (3.39% of active effort) and in 2024 1295 days of fishing effort were recorded with 19 days observer coverage (1.47% of active effort).

Monitored Bycatch Groups	Logbook	Scientific Observers
Turtles	Yes	Yes
Sea Snakes	Count only	Yes
Syngnathids	Count only	Yes
Sawfish	Yes	Yes
Other elasmobranchs	No	Yes
Bycatch estimates	No	Yes
Bycatch composition	No	Yes
TRL	Yes	Yes
Mackerel	Yes	Yes

7 Review Process

The Workplan will be reviewed five yearly, however monitored throughout to ensure the progress in meeting the objectives of the Workplan. This will allow risks to the fishery to be mitigated as they arise.

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