



28 November 2018

Dear Torres Strait Tropical Rock Lobster Fishery licence holder

Introduction of the Tropical Rock Lobster Fishery Management Plan and Key Management Arrangements for the 2018/19 Fishing Season

I am writing to inform you that on 26 November 2018, having considered outcomes of consultation, the Protected Zone Joint Authority (PZJA) decided to determine the *Torres Strait Fisheries (Quotas for Tropical Rock Lobster (Kaiar)) Management Plan 2018* (the Management Plan) and to amend the *Torres Strait Fisheries (Tropical Rock Lobster) Management Instrument 2018* (the Instrument).

The Management Plan and amendments to the Instrument will come into force for the 2018/19 fishing season starting on 1 December 2018.

These decisions mean that, unless delayed by legal appeals, a quota management system will be fully operational in the Torres Strait Tropical Rock Lobster Fishery (TRL Fishery) for the 2019/20 fishing season. A review of existing PZJA licencing policies and management arrangements, including input controls, will be conducted periodically after the quota management system is operational.

Please find enclosed copies of the Management Plan and amending Instrument along with a supporting guide describing how the Management Plan will work. Further information can also be found on the PZJA website at www.pzja.gov.au.

Management Arrangements for the 2018/19 fishing season (in line with the Instrument)

The 2018/19 fishing season for the TRL Fishery will commence on 1 December 2018. In the interim, as the TRL Fishery undergoes the transition to a fully operational Management Plan, some key management arrangements that will apply this season are as follows.

Sectoral split

Separate total allowable catch (TAC) shares will be implemented on an interim basis for the Traditional Inhabitant and Transferable Vessel Holder (TVH) sectors:

- **Traditional Inhabitant sector** – will be able to take a 66.17 per cent share of the TAC. This will be exclusively available to all Traditional Inhabitant Boat (TIB) licence

Canberra
PO Box 7051
Canberra Business Centre ACT 2610
P 02 6225 5555 F 02 6225 5500

Darwin
PO Box 131
Darwin NT 0801
P 08 8943 0333 F 08 8942 2897

Thursday Island
PO Box 376
Thursday Island QLD 4875
P 07 4069 1990 F 07 4069 1277

holders. If all of this catch is taken by TIB licence holders before the end of the fishing season, a notice will be issued requiring fishing by this sector to cease.

- **TVH sector** – the remaining 33.83 per cent of the TAC will be individually apportioned to TVH licence holders, via licence conditions, in accordance with individual provisional allocation notices dated 1 October 2007. The TVH licence holders will be able to trade within the sector. Once TVH licence holders have exhausted their individual portion, including any leased quota, they will be required to cease fishing. Each TVH licence holder will receive a letter outlining the licence condition setting their portion of the TAC. This portion may not reflect the allocation of quota under the Management Plan, which will be subject to a catch verification and appeals process.

Interim and final TACs

In order to give effect to the sectoral split, the PZJA further agreed to open the 2018/19 fishing season with an interim TAC of 200 tonnes. This decision is based on advice received from the TRL Resource Assessment Group and TRL Working Group, which advised that an interim TAC derived from the maximum annual catch amount over the years 2005-2018 for the period 1 December and end of February should be implemented.

This means that, from the opening of the 2018/19 fishing season:

- **Traditional Inhabitant sector** – can take a combined total of 132.34 tonnes of TRL.
- **TVH sector** – can take the amount of TRL specified in their individual licence conditions. The total amount that can be taken by the TVH sector will not be more than 33.83 per cent of the TAC.

The interim TAC will apply until a final TAC for the 2018/19 fishing season can be agreed. A final TAC is expected to be decided in early March 2019 and will follow the consideration of the updated stock assessment to be undertaken by CSIRO (including the results of the November 2018 pre-season survey), consultation with the TRL Resource Assessment Group and TRL Working Group and having regard to Australia's obligations under the Torres Strait Treaty.

Moon-Tide Hookah Closures

On 26 November 2018, the PZJA reaffirmed existing management controls currently applied to the TRL Fishery, to be implemented under the Instrument and licence conditions. This includes periodic closures to the use of hookah gear for three days either side of the full or new moon each month based on the largest difference between high and low waters.

In this letter, for the purpose of subsection 13(2) of the Instrument, I provide notice that the use, possession or control, on a boat, of hookah gear to take, process or carry TRL will not be permitted during the 2018/19 fishing season during the moon-tide hookah closure periods shown in the enclosed calendar (dated 28 November 2018). The first scheduled moon-tide hookah closure period starts on 17 February 2018.

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These moon-tide hookah closures are in addition to the hookah closure period from 1 December and 31 January each fishing season. Free-diving, lamp fishing and traditional fishing are permitted during all hookah closure periods.

This letter only covers some of the key management arrangements that will apply this season. Licence holders should familiarise themselves with all management arrangements that apply in the TRL Fishery prior to the commencement of fishing. Further information can be found on the PZJA website at www.pzja.gov.au or by contacting AFMA.

Should you have any questions concerning the matters covered in this letter, please contact the AFMA Thursday Island office on 07 4069 1990 or FisheriesTI@afma.gov.au. If you would also like to receive future management updates by email or SMS please contact the AFMA Thursday Island office to update your contact details.

Yours sincerely

Anna Willock
Acting Chief Executive Officer

Attachments

- A Guide to the *Torres Strait Fisheries (Quotas for Tropical Rock Lobster (Kaiar)) Management Plan 2018*
- B Explanatory statement for the *Torres Strait Fisheries (Quotas for Tropical Rock Lobster (Kaiar)) Management Plan 2018*
- C *Torres Strait Fisheries (Quotas for Tropical Rock Lobster (Kaiar)) Management Plan 2018*
- D Explanatory statement for the *Torres Strait Fisheries Amendment (Tropical Rock Lobster) Management Instrument 2018*
- E *Torres Strait Fisheries Amendment (Tropical Rock Lobster) Management Instrument 2018*
- F Moon-tide hookah closure calendar for the 2018/19 fishing season (dated 28 November 2018)

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