

TORRES STRAIT PRAWN MANAGEMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE	Meeting No. 2 19-20 September 2006
2007 SEASON ARRANGEMENTS Management Arrangements	Agenda Item No. 3.1

THE TSPMAC RECOMMENDS

That the PZJA **AGREES** that management arrangements for the Torres Strait Prawn Fishery for 2006 be rolled over for the 2007 season, while the Management Plan for the fishery is being developed. Specific roll-over provisions, which will be resolved in the long term through the development of the management plan and the introduction of an effort-based unit system, include:

- (a) a total allowable effort cap of 9,200 days for the fishery;
- (b) allowing the trade in any quantity of whole days;
- (c) maintaining a minimum holding of 34 days during 2007; and
- (d) the boat replacement policy being suspended during 2007 in order to further assist the industry to restructure itself.

BACKGROUND

A number of management arrangements for the fishery were altered or suspended for the 2006 season following the tender process. This included the boat replacement policy, minimum holding requirement and trading of effort policy. These issues will be considered longer term in the development of the Management Plan for the fishery, which is planned to be implemented by the beginning of the 2008 fishing season.

As the Management Plan cannot be implemented until 2008, management arrangements for the 2007 fishing season need to be determined. It is proposed therefore to roll over of the current (2006) provisions while the Management Plan is finalised.

DISCUSSION

A review of the tiger prawn stock assessment for the fishery will be undertaken late in 2006. Work on the development of an endeavour prawn stock assessment model will also commence in late 2006, but results from that process are not expected to be available until mid 2007. It is recommended that the TSPMAC review the tiger stock assessment model outcomes and the endeavour stock assessment outcomes in mid 2007 with a view to recommending a revised TAE for the fishery for the 2008 season. In light of the pending assessment work, it is recommended that the TAE for the 2007 season be maintained at 9,200 days.

Changes for management arrangements for the 2006 season were made following the tender process to allow for further adjustment in the industry. It is recommended that these arrangements be maintained for the 2007 season while the long term arrangements for the fishery are developed and implemented through the Management Plan to commence from the 2008 season.

TORRES STRAIT PRAWN MANAGEMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE	Meeting No. 2 19-20 September 2006
Outcomes of Papua New Guinea Bilateral Discussions	Agenda Item No. 3.2

THE TSPMAC RECOMMENDS

That TSPMAC and the PZJA **NOTES** the outcomes of the bilateral discussions with Papua New Guinea (PNG) in relation to the prawn fishery.

BACKGROUND

On 23 August 2006 Australia and Papua New Guinea held bilateral fisheries discussions in relation to the Torres Strait Protected Zone (TSPZ) prawn fishery.

PNG was informed of the following update on activity and management arrangements in the Australian jurisdiction:

- The total effort cap for the Australian area of the Prawn fishery for 2006 was set at 9,200 days, including PNG's entitlement, by the PZJA in November 2005 based on scientific advice regarding resource sustainability. This was a reduction from 13,454 in 2005.
- Following the tender process in early 2006, Australian operators now hold 6867 days of the 9,200 total. There are also up to 2,333 days in reserve to assist the Australian Government to meet its catch sharing obligations to PNG. The actual number of days granted to PNG will be determined by the catch sharing negotiations.
- The implications for PNG and joint management are that the Australian Government is able to fully meet its obligation to share the catch in the Australian jurisdiction with PNG without making further calls on Australian operators.
- A unit based effort system is being developed for the fishery so that effort levels in the fishery can be adjusted without affecting the relative positions of operators. This system will be implemented under a Management Plan for the fishery. This plan is scheduled for introduction during 2007 and is likely to commence in 2008.

PNG informed Australia that while there are currently two active PNG licences for the TSPZ prawn fishery, there had been no activity on either the Australian or the PNG side of the TSPZ in the past three years. It was noted that the principle reason for this was the lack of infrastructure combined with the cost of fuel. It was also noted that the Asian Development Bank would not be proceeding with its previous proposal to build infrastructure in Daru at this time. Finally, the requirements to fish in the area are largely the same as those in Australia, including area closures. However, there is currently no requirement for TEDs.

In addition to the research proposals discussed under TSPMAC agenda paper 6.2, PNG agreed to fund further research in their area of jurisdiction.

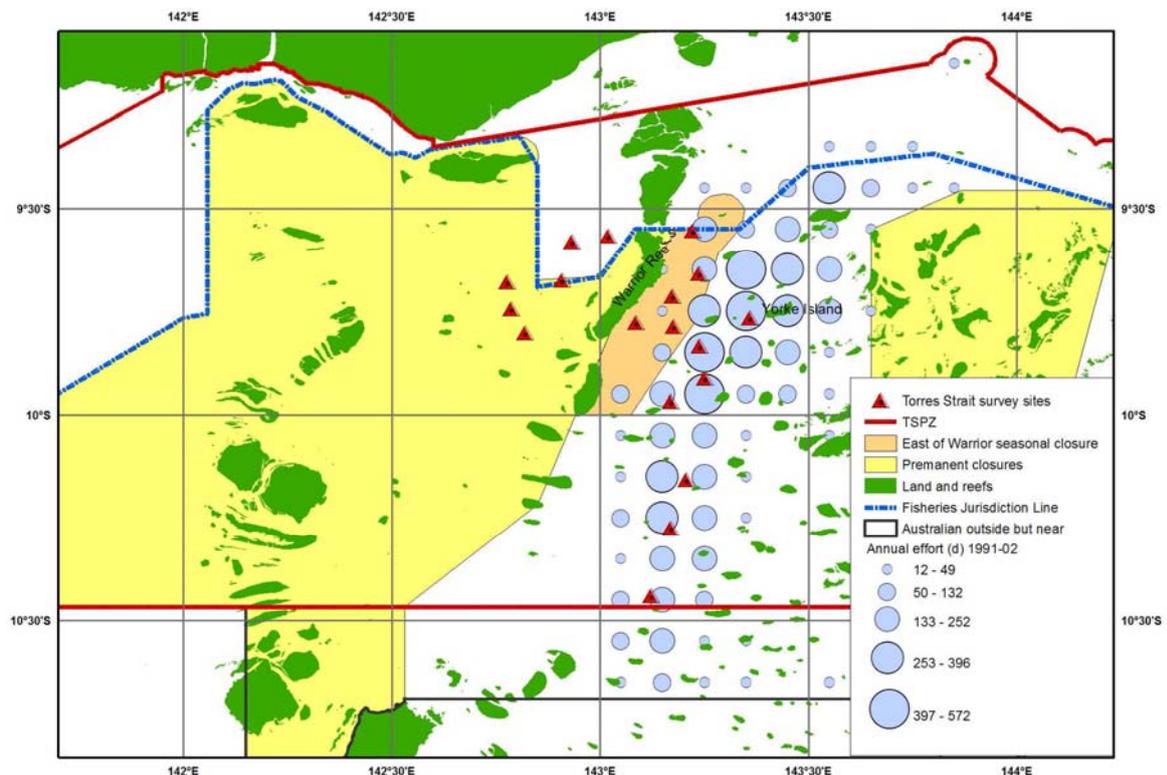
The current catch sharing arrangements with PNG use a nominal estimate of 200 tonnes of catch for the PNG water of the TSPZ. The level of commercial fishing data for this area has been very low to date and research trawl surveys could provide alternative means of

estimating the stock of prawns available for harvesting within this area. Ideally several surveys spread throughout the season should be conducted, as the prawn stocks change following growth, movement and natural mortality.

PNG agreed to fund two surveys of the prawn stocks present in PNG waters of TSPZ between Warrior Reef and Bramble Cay at a cost of \$50,000. The first would occur at the start of the season (1st March) and will be conducted in association with the current LTMP survey¹ to ensure cost effectiveness. The area would be stratified by depth and fixed one nautical mile sample sites would be randomly allocated throughout each stratum. This would provide a snap-shot of the distribution of commercial prawn stocks within PNG TSPZ waters at the start of the season. A second identical survey would be conducted during August/September 2007. The objectives of the surveys would be to:

1. Provide information on the density and size distribution of commercial prawn stocks in PNG waters of the TSPZ between Warrior Reef and Bramble Cay.
2. Estimate the stock of commercial prawns that are available to fishing in PNG waters of the TSPZ for use in the implementation of the catch sharing arrangements for the TSPF.

The areas currently surveyed are set out in the following figure:



¹ The LTMP trawl surveys in the tiger / endeavour fisheries along the Queensland east coast and in Torres Strait each February using the DPI&F's research trawler, Gwendoline May.