

<b>TORRES STRAIT PRAWN MANAGEMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE</b>	<b>Meeting No. 3 9 February 2007</b>
<b>Torres Strait Prawn Fishery logbook changes</b>	Agenda Item No. 8.1

## **RECOMMENDATION**

That TSPMAC **APPROVE** the proposed NP15 Logbook.

## **BACKGROUND**

The proposed change of the Torres Strait Prawn Fishery Logbook from NP14 to NP15 is in response to concerns of the vulnerability of sawfishes in northern Australia. Sawfishes (family Pristidae), are considered by the World Conservation Union (IUCN) Shark Specialist Group to have all species at least vulnerable, with most endangered or critically endangered. Sawfishes are the focus of increasing international concern, because their populations are declining worldwide. In addition CSIRO researchers have identified sawfishes as ‘at risk’ species and are currently the focus of research efforts. Due to a paucity of data on sawfish interactions with commercial fishing operations CSIRO researchers have requested Northern and Torres Strait Prawn fishers to include interactions on daily catch logsheets.

Despite a current lack of data on sawfishes in northern Australia at least one sawfish species is known to be captured in the Torres Strait Prawn Fishery (TSPF). CSIRO scientists also expect other species of sawfish to be encountered in the TSPF as more data becomes available.

Sharks and rays are more vulnerable to human exploitation than bony fishes because of their different life-history strategy (Walker, 1998; Stevens et al., 2000). Sawfishes are even more at risk because they combine these biological characteristics with all the problems associated with a reduced habitat and inland development. Bycatch Reduction Devices (BRDs) and Turtle Excluder Devices (TEDs) have the potential to reduce elasmobranch bycatch. In the TSPF, there has been some research into effectiveness of BRDs and TEDs. However, there has been particular concern for the inability for BRDs and TEDs to exclude sawfishes due the tendency for their rostra (saws) to become entrapped in the meshes of trawl nets.

## **DISCUSSION**

The proposed changes to the Northern and Torres Strait Prawn Fisheries logbook are minimal and involve the inclusion of one extra field of data to be completed for each day of fishing. As seen in Attachment 8.1.1 the proposed NP15 logbook will include sawfish interactions under the turtle interaction section. The format of sawfish interactions will be the same as turtle interactions, with a three letter code for each species and the number and condition encountered.

Additional costs of the logbook change will be minimal as the design changes are minor. In addition, due to current stocks of NP14 logbooks being low reprinting was to be undertaken early this year. Costs for the NP15 logbooks will be shared with Northern Prawn Fishery operators.



<b>TORRES STRAIT PRAWN MANAGEMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE</b>	<b>Meeting No. 3 9 February 2007</b>
<b>Torres Prawn Handbook 2007</b>	<b>Agenda Item No. 8.2</b>

### **RECOMMENDATION**

That the TSPMAC **NOTES** the update provided in regard to the Torres Prawn Handbook 2007.

### **BACKGROUND**

Each year the Torres Strait Prawn Fishery management agencies review and update the Torres Prawn Handbook (the handbook). The handbook contains information relevant to the fishery, including details of the rules and regulations in the fishery, historical fishery information and research information.

### **DISCUSSION**

The 2007 Torres Prawn Handbook is currently being compiled. It is anticipated that it will be printed and released before the beginning of the TSPF season. Once completed, hard copies of the handbook will be sent to all licence holders and electronic versions will be published on the PZJA website ([www.pzja.gov.au](http://www.pzja.gov.au)).

Members are invited to provide comments on any further inclusions or changes they would like to see made before the finalization of the 2007 handbook.