

TORRES STRAIT PRAWN MANAGEMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE	Meeting No. 4 14-15 June 2007
ERA for the Torres Strait Prawn Fishery	Agenda Item No.6

RECOMMENDATION

That the TSPMAC:

- **NOTES** the update on the ERA project and particularly the status and timeframe for the Torres Strait Prawn Fishery ERA;
- Consider and comment on the explanation of particular level 1 assessment results.

BACKGROUND

The Torres Strait Prawn Ecological Risk Assessment (ERA) was drafted to a level 1, semi-quantitative assessment by QDPI&F in May and June 2006. This assessment was discussed briefly at the first TSPMAC on 13-14 June 2006.

At the TSPMAC held on 19-20 September 2006, members were presented with an outline of the ERA process, including the associated steps in completing the ERA. A discussion on the details of the level 1 assessment provided members with a better understanding of the assessment and the results obtained from this.

The results of the level 1 assessment were discussed in detail at the TSPMAC held on 17 February 2007. In particular, members were asked to review the species list compiled for target, byproduct and bycatch species, as well as comment on the results of the level 1 assessment (particularly on risks identified as medium or high).

Two further developments in the ERA/ERM process were outlined to members at the TSPMAC held on 17 February 2007. The categorisation of results from the ERA will help identify what components caused a high risk score, and will aid with implementing appropriate management responses. In addition, further development of a formal process to determine the residual risk once current management measures have been considered was discussed.

At the TSPMAC held on 17 February 2007, members raised concerns that some consequence scores from the level 1 analysis appeared to be too high. Members agreed that an explanation should be given in regards to these consequence scores, as well as what the effect is if a consequence score is incorrectly or inappropriately calculated at the level 1 analysis.

DISCUSSION

Level 1 assessment:

The specific components from the level 1 analysis that raised concern were:

1. TEP species component – External impacts – Other fisheries – Population size of dugongs – Consequence score of 4.
2. Habitat Component – Addition/Movement of biological material – Translocation of species – Habitat structure and function of biogenic, low outcrop, seagrass, and coastal margin – Consequence score of 4.

Explanation of these two consequence scores is given below:

1. External impacts are the impacts of other fisheries to the broader ecosystem in which the Torres Strait Prawn Fishery operates. It has been assessed that other fisheries that operate in the area (i.e. the Dugong traditional fishery) may have a major impact on the population size of dugongs within the area of the Torres Strait Prawn Fishery, thus was given a consequence score of 4. This assessment indicates that there is a major impact of other fishing activities on dugong populations, and while this is not a direct issue for the TSP fishery, it gives context to the environment the fishery operates in.
2. This assessment indicates that the movement of species, primarily through hull fouling, has the potential to be a high risk to the ecosystem for the fishery. This would be through the movement of pests from harbours and moorings to seagrass beds and reefs where the vessels anchor in the fishery. CSIRO has recently checked the outcome of the ERAs in relation to translocation of introduced species, and found that there were inconsistencies across fisheries. These inconsistencies have now been rectified and the result is that this translocation of species needs to be considered further in the Torres Strait Prawn Fishery.

If an incorrect consequence score was assigned at the level 1 assessment stage, there could be two possible outcomes. If a lower consequence score was assigned to a unit of analysis, it would be dropped from the risk assessment process; therefore a potentially high consequence activity may not be assessed as such. In contrast, if an inappropriately assigned high consequence score was given, the unit of analysis would be incorrectly prioritized as needing to be addressed further. This could be either by performing a level 2 assessment, performing some other assessment, or by implementing some form of management response.

Please direct any questions or comments on the Level 1 methodology and results to Tim Smith, Manager Ecological Risk, on 1300 723 621, (02) 6225 5322 or tim.smith@afma.gov.au.

Level 2 assessment:

The level 2 assessment for the Torres Strait Prawn Fishery has not progressed since February 2007. This has been for a number of reasons, principally:

- The inability to schedule training of AFMA staff to undertake the level 2 assessment;
- Additional methodology changes to the level 2 assessments to refine the results;
- A focus by AFMA and CSIRO to finalise fishery ERA reports (the ERA report for the Torres Strait Prawn fishery, along with a number of other fisheries, will be finalised at the level 1 assessment stage); and
- The re-focusing of AFMA efforts on further refining the ERA level 2 outcomes to better incorporate current management arrangements and categorising the high risk results.

It is AFMA's intention to draft the remaining level 2 ERAs, including the Torres Strait Prawn fishery, during the second half of 2007. This will be dependent on the availability of CSIRO staff to provide formal training to AFMA staff, who will then complete these assessments. AFMA will keep the TSPMAC informed of progress with this assessment.

ERA/ERM further developments:

Two key developments of the ERA/ERM process that have been underway since late 2006 are the categorisation of the high risk results and the establishment of a formal process to incorporate all current management measures in the risk assessment.

The categorisation of the high risk species is intended to indicate the reason for the high risk rating. This categorisation will help fisheries in responding to the various high risks, as what is an adequate response will vary depending on the cause of the risk. The categorisation process is currently being developed by CSIRO and should be completed by 30 June 2007.

As mentioned in the February 2007 TSPMAC, a formal process is being developed to consider the mitigating affects of current management measures. A set of guidelines are being developed to determine the residual risk, once current management measures have been applied to the results from the initial ERA. Contained within the residual risk guidelines are various decision rules and considerations that apply directly to the risk scores of species and habitat components. These guidelines are currently being reviewed by an expert working group, and should be finalised by mid 2007.