

TORRES STRAIT PRAWN MANAGEMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE	Meeting No. 4 14-15 June 2007
Observer program – 2007 program update	Agenda Item No. 7.1

RECOMMENDATION

The TSPMAC **NOTES** the activity in the Torres Strait Prawn Fishery Observer Program for 2007 to date.

BACKGROUND

Observers have been deployed into the Torres Strait Prawn Fishery during the 2007 season to meet recommendations arising from the Strategic Assessment process by the Department of the Environment and Water Resources (DEW) and to provide data for the fishery to assist in making management decisions.

DISCUSSION

The Observer Program has budgeted 180 days observer coverage in the fishery for the 2007 season (1 March – 1 December). This equates to approximately 2.5% coverage for the fishery (based on 6,867 allocated days to the Australian industry). As of 1 January 2007, 72 of these days have been achieved, which represents 1% of all allocated fishing days.

Attachment 7.1A provides details of the vessels that have participated in the Observer Program for the 2005, 2006 and 2007 fishing seasons along with the percentage of observer coverage achieved each season. A total of 19 vessels have participated, with three of those vessels participating in both the 2005 and 2006 seasons and one vessel participating in all three seasons from 2005 – 2007.

AFMA observers expressed their thanks for the cooperation of vessel crews involved in the Program. Also, a number of skippers and crews have provided positive feedback on both the Program and the observers themselves.

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Any feedback on the Program should be provided to Steve Auld, AFMA Observer Coordinator, for consideration in the development of the Observer Program for the 2008 season.

Attachment 7.1A: Vessels that have participated in the Observer Program, 2005-2007.

VESSEL	2005 Observer days	2006 Observer days	2007 Observer days
Impact	15	13	
Valkyrie Voyager	9		
K Maree II	12	34	
Maggie Jo	11		
Ida G	4	4	
Faysea G	8		
Judy B	13	12	1
Cassandra	29		
Signet	13		
Gold Coaster	4		
Aquarius 6		6	
Ankh Cross		9	
Danny B		4	
Violetta		26	
Crystal Enterprise		22	
Relentless		14	
Darden Star			15
Samantha J			28
Bounty Hunter			28
Total days	116	144	72
Australian Industry Allocated Nights	13,400	6,867	6,867
Observer Coverage	0·8%	2·1%	1·0%

TORRES STRAIT PRAWN MANAGEMENT ADVSIORY COMMITTEE	Meeting No. 4 14-15 June 2007
Observer program – Level of coverage for 2008 program	Agenda Item No.7.2

RECOMMENDATION

The TSPMAC **AGREES** to maintain the level of observer coverage at 180 days for the 2008 season and review the level of observer coverage as part of the 2008 Strategic Assessment.

BACKGROUND

The Observer program in the Torres Strait Prawn Fishery (TSPF) was implemented in the 2005 season, in accordance with the Bycatch Action Plan and the Strategic Assessment done by the Department of Environment and Water Resources (DEW). The current level of observer coverage for the fishery is 180 days, which equates to approximately 2.5% of the effort available to Australian operators.

At the 3rd meeting of the TSPMAC there were a number of questions raised in regard to the observer program and an action item in regard to observer coverage for the TSPF was added. The action item in regard to observer coverage is provided below.

***TSPMAC3 Action item 21:** “Seek advice from the AFMA Observer and Environment Sections as to what level of coverage is required in the TSPF.”*

DISCUSSION

The issue of observer coverage has been discussed with the AFMA Observer program and the DEW. The Strategic Assessment and the Bycatch Action Plan do not prescribe a specific level of coverage and there does not appear to be a standing agreement between AFMA and DEW for a specific level of observer coverage for the TSPF.

The draft budget for the 2007/08 financial year maintains the observer coverage at 180 days, which represents approximately 2.5% of the effort available to Australian operators. This is the same level of coverage as the South-East Trawl Fishery, which is a similar type of fishery to the TSPF that is managed by the Commonwealth. As a further comparison, the AFMA Observer program was recently advised that coverage in trawl fisheries in North America are between 30% and 100%.

A review of the Strategic Assessment for the TSPF is due to occur in 2008. It would therefore be more appropriate to review the level of observer coverage as a part of this process to ensure the level of coverage will meet the objectives/recommendations of the 2008 Strategic Assessment. If a level of coverage is to be prescribed in the Strategic Assessment, this would be done in consultation with all stakeholders and if a change is made to the level of coverage, it would be implemented for the 2009 season.