

<b>TORRES STRAIT PRAWN MANAGEMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE</b>	<b>Meeting No. 16 23-24 June 2015</b>
<b>MANAGEMENT Total Allowable Effort Limit</b>	<b>Agenda Item No. 4.2 For Decision</b>

### RECOMMENDATION

That the Torres Strait Prawn Management Advisory Committee (TSPMAC):

- 4.2.1 DISCUSSES** the process for setting the TSPF total allowable effort limit for 2016-2018.
- 4.2.2 RECOMMENDS** that the PZJA set the Total Allowable Effort in the TSPF at 9,200 days for either the 2015 season only, or the 2015, 2016 and 2017 seasons.
- 4.2.3 NOTES** that the proposed TAE is consistent with the TSPF management plan, harvest strategy and PZJA sustainability reference points.

### BACKGROUND

In order to minimise regulatory burden, the PZJA has tried to move towards setting the TAE for three years at a time. This was first done for the 2010-2013 fishing seasons.

The PZJA reverted to a one year TAE in 2014 following the native title ruling. Timing became very tight for undertaking consultation under the Native Title Act prior to setting the TAE in line with the TSP Management Plan.

Given the additional time needed to consult effectively with native title holders about the TAE, the PZJA needs to start the process earlier than previously.

### DISCUSSION

Under subsection 2.5(1) of the *Torres Strait Prawn Fishery Management Plan 2008* the PZJA must determine the Total Allowable Effort (TAE) for the TSPF prior to the start of a season, "based on the reference points determined under section 2.4, or other management strategy". Under these guidelines the TAE must be set before 1 March 2014 to allow boats to start fishing.

The TAE can be set for a maximum of three years. A three year TAE was first set for the 2011 fishing season. The move to a three year TAE reduces the administrative processes of setting the TAE every year and is a cost saving. A three year TAE is presently viable in this fishery given the stable stock and low effort in the fishery.

The *TSPF Harvest Strategy 2008* outlines the rules for setting the TAE. The TAE is currently set at the amount of effort that will allow the maximum sustainable yield ( $E_{MSY}$ ) of tiger prawns; currently 9,200 days.

This estimate is based on the estimate of  $E_{MSY}$  from the 2004 Tiger Prawn stock assessment. This value had a 90 percent confidence interval of 7,116 to 12,231 days and was based on catch and effort data from the years 1980 to 2003 using the Beverton-Holt stock recruitment relationship. Until the stock assessment is updated, it isn't possible to calculate an updated estimate of the current biomass for the Tiger prawn stock and an updated estimate of  $E_{MSY}$ .

Given the low level of effort in the fishery and sustained high catch rates for Tiger prawns, scientific advice indicates that stocks are at around or above 74 percent of virgin biomass  $B_{74}$ . Given this, a 9,200 day TAE is still considered the appropriate. As  $B_{74}$  is well above the target biomass level of  $B_{28}$  (28 percent of virgin biomass) the risk of over fishing tiger prawn stocks at present is considered to be low.

Under section 2.6 of the management plan, the TAE can be increased during a season or within the three year period by determination. The TAE can also be decreased during a season or within the three year period by emergency determination. This acts as a safeguard if changes to the stock occur during the three year TAE period.

PZJA agencies aim to set the TAE for a given season as early as possible to provide operators adequate time to make necessary business decisions before the commencement of the season.

#### **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

A TAE of 9,200 days is cost neutral to fishers as the proposed levy regulations for the 2014 season are based on a flat rate per licence and per unit allocated, not on the number of days available to fish. There may be some costs associated with the determination of the TAE. Information will be provided on this out of session later in the year.