



02 September 2020

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Dear Torres Strait Tropical Rock Lobster Fishery licence holder

Management Arrangements for the 2020-21 Fishing Season

The 2020-21 fishing season for the Torres Strait Tropical Rock Lobster Fishery (TRL Fishery) will commence on 1 December 2020. This letter details some key management arrangements that will apply this season.

Total Allowable Catch

On 27 August 2020, Senator the Hon. Jonathon Duniam determined a total allowable catch (TAC) of 200,000 kilograms of tropical rock lobster (TRL) in the Australian waters of the TRL Fishery for the 2020-21 fishing season. This TAC was agreed by the Protected Zone Joint Authority (PZJA) at its meeting on 27 August 2020 and will apply for the fishing season commencing 1 December 2020. It is expected that the TAC will be increased once the outcomes of the scientific assessment processes and the TAC sharing arrangements under the Treaty between Australia and Papua New Guinea (PNG) have been taken into account. Any increase in the TAC is expected to be determined by the end of February 2021.

Under this TAC, the value of each quota unit and available catch for each TRL Fishery sector is outlined in the table below. All weights are provided in unprocessed weight in kilograms.

TRL Fishery sector	TAC (kilograms)	Number of quota units	Value of each quota unit (kilograms)	Available catch per sector (kilograms)
Traditional Inhabitant Boat (TIB) licence holders	200,000	662,016*	0.200	132,403.597
Transferable Vessel Holder (TVH) licence holders		337,981		67,596.403

* Held by the Torres Strait Regional Authority (TSRA).

A further explanation of how TACs are determined for the TRL Fishery, how catch is shared between Australia and PNG, and how each sector's catches will be managed for the 2020-21 fishing season, is provided in the TRL Management Arrangements Booklet 2020-21.

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Moontide Hookah Closures

At its meeting on 26 November 2018, the PZJA reaffirmed existing management controls currently applied to the TRL Fishery, to be implemented under the *Torres Strait Fisheries (Tropical Rock Lobster) Management Instrument 2018* (the Instrument) and licence conditions. This includes periodic closures to the use of hookah gear for three days either side of the full or new moon each month based on the largest difference between high and low tides, known as 'moontide hookah closures'.

For the purpose of subsection 13(2) of the Instrument, I provide notice that the use, possession or control, on a boat, of hookah gear to take, process or carry TRL will not be permitted during the 2020-21 fishing season during the moontide hookah closure periods shown in the calendar provided in **Enclosure A** to this letter. The first scheduled moontide hookah closure period starts on 9 February 2021.

These moontide hookah closures are in addition to the hookah closure period from 1 December and 31 January each fishing season. Free-diving, lamp fishing and traditional fishing are permitted during all hookah closure periods.

Draft amendment to the TRL Management Plan open for public comment

At its meeting on 27 August 2020, the PZJA agreed to release the draft *Torres Strait Fisheries (Quotas for Tropical Rock Lobster (Kaiar)) Management Plan Amendment 2020* (the Plan Amendment) for public comment (**Enclosure B**). The purpose of the Plan Amendment is provide an extended timeframe for reviewing the allocation of quota units to the Traditional Inhabitant sector under subsection 17 of the TRL Plan by the PZJA. The Plan Amendment extends the period for the PZJA to commence the review to within 4 years. Further information on the proposed amendment is attached.

TRL Fishery licence holders are encouraged to provide comment on the draft amendment enclosed to this letter. Comments may be submitted by email to fisheriesTI@afma.gov.au; by post to PO Box 376, Thursday Island QLD 4875 or by calling 07 4069 1990. Comments close on 15 October 2020.

Torres Strait Fisheries (Furnishing of Logbooks) Instrument 2020

At its meeting on 27 August 2020, the PZJA agreed to remake a legislative instrument relating to the furnishing of logbooks. The purpose of the Logbook Instrument, made under section 14 of the *Torres Strait Fisheries Act 1984* (the Act), is to require the master of a licenced boat, who uses that boat in the course of commercial fishing (other than community fishing) to complete a Daily Fishing Logbook. Relevantly, this applies to the Transferable Vessel Holder (TVH) sector of the Tropical Rock Lobster Fishery.

TVH operators should understand that the requirement to complete logbooks has not changed. Prior to remaking this instrument, the requirement to complete a Daily Fishing Logbook was enforced through licence conditions.

As always, licence holders should familiarise themselves with all management arrangements that apply in the TRL Fishery prior to commencing fishing. Further information can be found on the PZJA website at www.pzja.gov.au or by contacting AFMA.

Should you have any questions concerning the matters covered in this letter, please contact the AFMA Thursday Island office on 07 4069 1990 or FisheriesTI@afma.gov.au. If you would also like to receive future management updates by email or SMS please contact the AFMA Thursday Island office to update your contact details.

Yours sincerely



Wez Norris

Chief Executive Officer

Enclosures

- A TRL Fishery moontide hookah closure calendar for the 2020-21 fishing season
- B Exposure draft *Torres Strait Fisheries (Quotas for Tropical Rock Lobster (Kaiar)) Management Plan Amendment 2020*

Background information and Exposure Draft *Torres Strait Fisheries (Quotas for Tropical Rock Lobster (Kaiar)) Management Plan Amendment 2020*

Under subsection 17 of the TRL Plan, the PZJA must undertake a review of the allocation of quota units to the Traditional Inhabitant sector within two years of the TRL Plan commencement (which will be 30 November 2020).

Relevantly, at its meeting on 19 November 2019 the PZJA:

- a. agreed in principle that the review of allocation be undertaken by an Independent Allocation Advisory Panel (IAAP), in accordance with the PZJA's Fisheries Management Paper No. 2. Guidelines for the formation of allocation advisory panels for the allocation of fishing concessions in Torres Strait Protected Zone Joint Authority Fisheries where fisheries management arrangements change significantly (FMP 2); and
- b. directed the PZJA Standing Committee to provide draft Terms of Reference (ToR) for an IAAP, including its proposed membership and process, to the PZJA by April 2020 for the PZJA to confirm its in principle decision.

The Australian and State Government response to COVID-19 risks redirected the focus of state and Commonwealth public services on preparedness and assisting impacted industries and stakeholders. It also impacted the way the government has been able to conduct business with stakeholders. For the same reasons, the Torres Strait Regional Authority *Fisheries Regional Ownership Framework* (FROF) project has also been delayed. The PZJA agreed in November 2019 to commence the allocation review following the completion of the FROF project, which was anticipated at that time to be by 30 June 2020. For these reasons an IAAP process was not able to be properly resourced or effectively conducted before the end of the review period specified in the TRL plan (30 November 2020). In particular, central to an effective IAAP process will be consultation based heavily on face-to-face meetings, which in the current environment cannot be undertaken effectively.

Having regard to the above, the review period strikes a reasonable balance between an extended timeframe for reviewing the allocation and providing reassurance to stakeholders that the PZJA's original commitment to develop quota allocation approaches for the Traditional Inhabitant sector remains.